

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: BEYOND STORYTIME:
WHOLE CLASS INTERACTIVE READING ALOUD
IN KINDERGARTEN

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Existing research has established the value of reading aloud to young children and suggested a lens with three elements to describe when a teacher reads aloud to an entire kindergarten class during a planned period of instruction (CIRA): teacher practice, student activity, and text. Over four months, I observed and interviewed four experienced kindergarten teachers in the naturalistic setting of their public school classrooms. To analyze the data, I created bounded collective and individual case studies that answer my central questions: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity, and text during kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across teachers?

Across the four classrooms, teachers read with inflection; employed a transparent proactive style of classroom management; purposefully selected texts to read; embedded instruction of concepts of print, vocabulary, and comprehension while they read; and differentiated for their students, especially English Language Learners (ELL). Students demonstrated nearly exclusive *on task* behavior including spontaneous responses. Texts

were primarily narrative, chosen to support the literacy skills or content to be taught, but often did not reflect the cultural or linguistic backgrounds of the students.

CIRA also differed within the four classrooms. At one end of a continuum, CIRA sessions were characterized by little apparent planning on the part of the teacher (similar to the features of parent/child read aloud sessions), impulsive student responses, and complex texts. At the other end of the continuum, the teacher planned highly controlled CIRA sessions (with many of the characteristics of a scripted lesson), students' answers were constrained by the teacher's questions, and the texts were simplistic. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002) appeared to directly influence state and local policy that impacted the practice of all four teachers. Differences within classrooms paralleled the continuum: the teacher with the less structured sessions had the highest SES students and was least impacted by NCLB, and the teacher with the most highly-controlled sessions had the lowest SES students and was most impacted by NCLB. Results from the study inform both future research and teacher education.

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By

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DEDICATION

To my children: Lauren, Emma and Sean

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As I observed in my study, CIRA does not exist in a vacuum and I, the researcher, did not live in a vacuum as I completed this dissertation. Thus, numerous individuals in both my professional and personal life helped make this work possible.

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Chapter 1

Interactive Reading Aloud in the Kindergarten Classroom

The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading. It isn't achieved by the book alone, nor by the child alone, nor by the adult who's been reading aloud—it's the relationship winding between all three, bringing them together in easy harmony. (Fox, 2001, p. 10)

Reading aloud to children in a school setting is no doubt as old as schools themselves. The kindergarten classroom is no exception. Reading aloud can be an effective tool for teaching many of the emergent literacy skills that children need to become competent readers (Bobys, 2000; Henk, Moore, Marinak & Tomasetti, 2000; Lesiak, 1997). Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985) summed up early literacy research by stating “the single most important literacy activity for building knowledge and skills that are eventually required for reading is having an adult or adults who read aloud to children on a continuing basis” (p. 35). Baumann, Hoffman and Duffy-Hester (2000) and Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) surveyed teachers about their literacy practices. Both of these studies discovered that the majority of the teachers surveyed reported devoting moderate or considerable amounts of time to reading aloud to their students.

Most research studying an adult reading aloud to children has focused on the three most salient elements of reading aloud: the reader, child(ren) and the text. My review of the literature reveals that these elements of reading aloud to children have been studied,

most often, in isolation from one another. As I will start to show here in chapter 1 briefly and at length in chapter 2, no previous studies have been as comprehensive, naturalistic and multi-layered as this study I conducted for my dissertation.

For instance, Hammett, van Kleeck and Huberty (2003) focused on the reader. The readers in this case were the parents of preschoolers reading aloud to their own children. The researchers called this behavior a “read aloud,” and they observed and coded the behaviors of the readers into four categories. In a similar study, Martin and Ruetzel (1999) called this practice “sharing books.” Martin and Ruetzel coded the deviations that the reader, in this case mothers of 6-, 12- and 18-month old infants, made while reading aloud to her child. Finally, Fisher, Flood, Lapp and Frey (2004) observed the practice of another set of readers, teachers who read during what Fisher and colleagues termed “interactive read alouds.” The researchers first observed 25 expert teachers as they read aloud followed by observations of 120 teachers who were chosen randomly. The expert teachers exhibited seven patterns of behavior whereas the teachers chosen randomly only exhibited three of the seven practices consistently. In all these studies, the researchers examined the behavior of the reader closely and either ignored the particular texts being read and the activities of the child (or student) or mentioned them only briefly.

Another central element of the practice of reading aloud to consider is the student (or students) who are listening to the adult read. Sipe (2000a) conducted a longitudinal, descriptive, qualitative, naturalistic study of first and second graders during what he termed “picture book reading.” He coded the oral responses of the students and came up with seven categories to describe these responses. Sipe did not examine the actions of the

teacher and only briefly discussed the text being read. A systematic description of the use of, or the characteristics of, the text was not a part of the study, however.

The third significant element of reading aloud--and an element referred to in the quote from children's author, Mem Fox (2001), which opens this chapter--is the text. Presumably the most successful "emotional sparks" occur when an adult reads a worthwhile text to a child, begging the issue of what makes a text worthwhile. I could not find any studies that exclusively focused on the text in lieu of mentioning the other two elements. However, both Pappas (1993) and Duke and Kays (1998) did focus on exposition (informational text), studying how children responded to an adult reading exposition aloud to them. I did not find comparable studies focusing on narrative or poetry.

A small group of studies has considered all three elements of reading aloud. Neuman (1996) studied parents' "storybook reading" to their preschool children. After the parents participated in a book club intervention to learn how to read aloud, Neuman observed the parents reading aloud to their children and coded the parents' interactions with their children by the type of text that was read. In a study of first grade children, Smolkin and Donovan (2002) coded the student and teacher interactions when informational texts were read in order to determine the student's level of acquisition of the information in the text being read. Smolkin and Donovan controlled the types of text that the teachers in the study read. Unlike these two studies that controlled certain elements of adults reading aloud to children, my study is a qualitative descriptive study that created a comprehensive picture of the practice of reading aloud of four experienced kindergarten teachers, their students' actions, and the texts they read.

My work builds on all of these studies, studies which, alongside other literature foundational to my study, are described in detail in chapter 2. My brief review of the literature thus far suggests that researchers used various terms to describe what they were studying: read aloud, book sharing, picture book sharing, reading informational books aloud, and so forth. However, one can see that what all these researchers were studying was the same phenomenon: an adult reading aloud to a child(ren). What changed with each study was the focus of the study: the reader (e.g., Hammett et al., 2003), the child (Sipe, 2000a), relationships between the text and the child (Duke & Kays, 1998), or the relationships among the reader, the child, and the text, (Smokin & Donovan, 2002).

As I have briefly shown here and will do so in greater detail in chapter 2, previous research has focused on the three elements of reading aloud: reader, children, and text. Hammett, van Kleeck and Huberty (2003), Martin and Rutzel (1999) and Fisher, Flood, Lapp and Frey (2004) chose to examine the behavior of the reader. Sipe (2000a) focused on the utterances of the students listening to the text. Pappas (1993) and Duke and Kays (1998) examined a certain type of text and how that type of text influenced the student listening to the text. Neuman (1996) and Smolkin and Donovan (2002) focused on all three elements; however, their studies were interventional in nature. My study describes all three of the elements of reading aloud in ways that previous research has not. I explicitly describe the characteristics of the elements and the interconnected relationship (referred to in the above quotation) between the book, the child and the adult reader by studying the patterns between teacher practice, student activity, and text in the classrooms of four experienced kindergarten teachers. My study is a descriptive study in a naturalistic setting much like Sipe (2000a), Duke and Kays (1998) and Smolkin and

Donovan (2002). However, unlike the study by Sipe I examine the practice of not one but four teachers, and I take under consideration not a single element but all three elements and the relationships existing among them. Unlike Duke and Kays (1998), who examined what students learn from informational text, I do not control the text the teacher read. I also do not measure any student outcomes but focus instead on students' reactions as the text is read.

Through my review of the literature and informed by my own experience in education, I proposed a model to use as a lens for my study: the Kindergarten Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) model (Figure 1). This model systematically characterizes what previous research suggests should optimally occur when a kindergarten teacher, aiming to enhance student literacy, is reading aloud. The CIRA model depicts the overlapping areas where teacher practice, student activity and text relate to one another during this planned instructional period.

The following sections of this chapter present and briefly review the research for the Kindergarten CIRA model (Figure 1) and describe pilot work that also suggests the model. Finally, I discuss the problem my research addresses based on my review of the literature and on my personal experiences with reading aloud to children, state my research questions, and provide definitions to terms relevant to this dissertation.

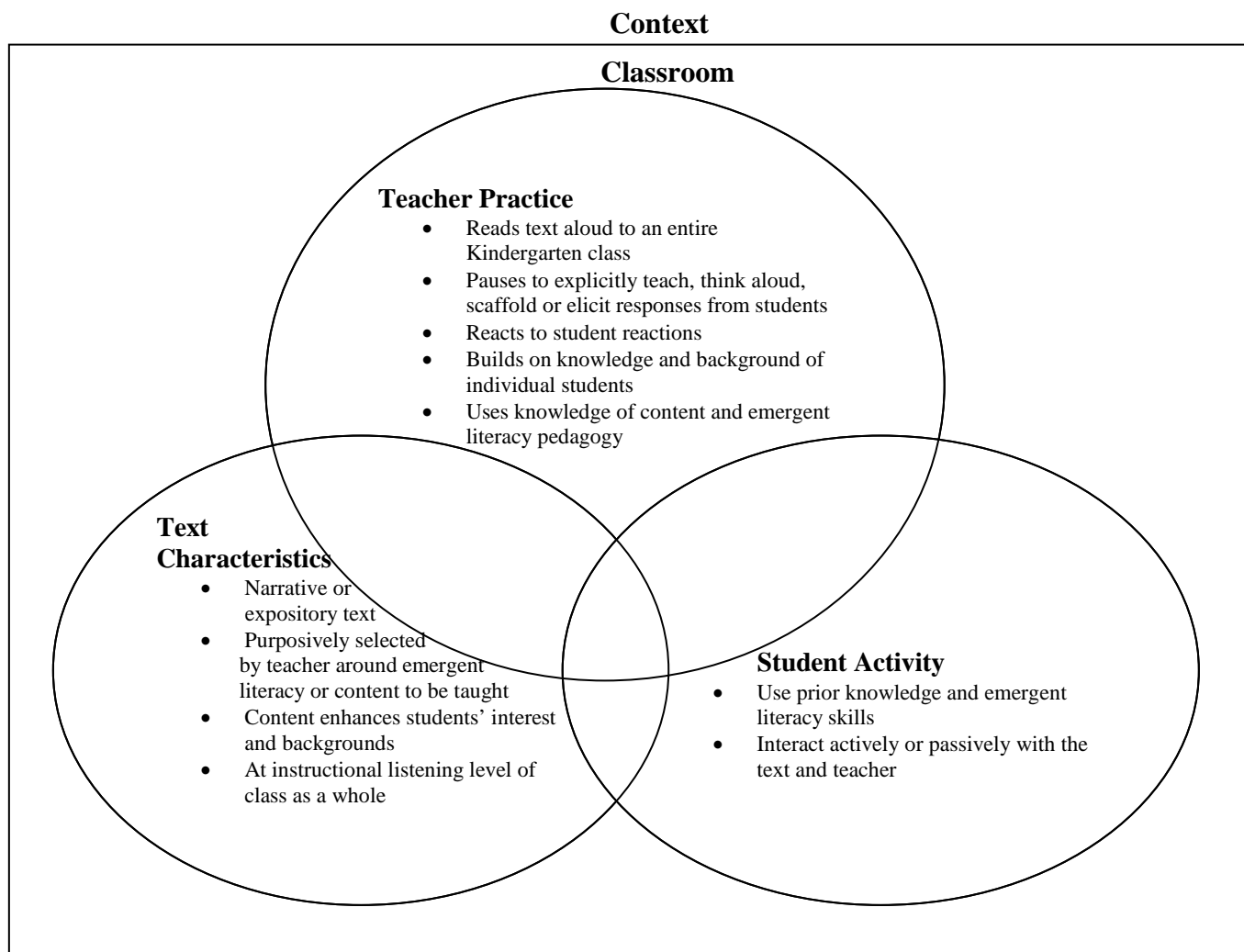
Kindergarten Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) Model

Studies have suggested that interacting with a child while reading aloud may enhance a child's literacy development (Hammett et al., 2003; Morrow, 1988). The CIRA model summarizes research of what may optimally occur for the three separate elements of the model and focuses attention on areas where the elements may overlap. For my

study, the model occurs in a whole class setting (see Figure 1) during the time when a kindergarten teacher is reading texts aloud to an entire class of students during a planned period of instruction. Potentially, the model could also be used with smaller groups of children. However, I chose to study periods of instruction when the teacher was reading aloud to the whole class because this is how teachers are most often directed to conduct interactive reading aloud (Walker, 1995). The model also places interactive reading aloud

Figure 1

Kindergarten Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA)



within a context that may well influence teacher practice, student activity, and text.

Finally, for the purpose of this descriptive and qualitative dissertation, the term “interaction” is defined as “mutual influence or reciprocal effect as an interaction between people and their environment” (Harris & Hodges, 1989, p. 160). It does not refer to a statistical interaction found in quantitative research.

Teacher Practice

Figure 2 explicitly states characteristics of teacher practice during Kindergarten CIRA that are suggested by research and are included in my model. Kindergarten CIRA takes place when teachers read a text aloud to an entire class on a regular if not daily basis (Purcell-Gates, 1996). The kindergarten teacher interacts with the text and with the students throughout reading aloud sessions.

Figure 2

Teacher Practice

The Teacher:

- Reads text aloud to an entire kindergarten class
 - Pauses to explicitly teach, think aloud, scaffold or elicit responses from students
 - Reacts to student reactions
 - Builds on knowledge of individual students
 - Uses knowledge of content and emergent literacy pedagogy
-

During interactive read alouds, the teacher relies on strategies that are appropriate to the students as well as to the text itself (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Ewers & Brownson, 1999). In addition, the teacher pauses while reading the text to explicitly teach skills,

either emergent literacy or kindergarten content (Robbins & Ehri, 1994) and often uses think alouds to help the students make connections to the text (Martin & Reutzel, 1999; Sipe, 2000a). The teacher, however, is conscious of pacing so that the scaffolding is not distracting and does not take away from the enjoyment of the text as a whole. Scaffolding and teacher reactivity in read alouds must be balanced with the students' pleasure in hearing stories since students may lose interest if there are too many interruptions or if the teacher strays too far from the text. The teacher also facilitates the students' engagement with the text, (Moll 2001; Teale, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers are reactive throughout the Kindergarten CIRA session by responding to the students' interactions and adapting the reading accordingly (Oyler, 1996; Oyler & Barry, 1996).

Within the model, the teacher adjusts to the level of understanding of the class as a whole if student interactions show that the literacy concepts being taught are too difficult for students to understand. Conversely, if the concepts are too easy, the teacher scaffolds up to a higher level of content or emergent literacy skill. This evaluative effort informs the process of read alouds throughout each session. If the teacher does not react to the responses of the students and simply stays with the original plan of instruction, the students can become unmotivated and disengaged from the CIRA session because they either do not understand what the teacher is reading and teaching or they know the material too well to be excited by it. Teachers are generally sensitive to individual student needs and build on individual strengths (Morrow, 2001). Teachers strive, however, to make sure that their instruction is at an "optimal level of challenge" for all students (Boyd, 2002, p. 261).

Teachers select texts purposefully in order to engage students by choosing texts with the students' interests and background in mind (Hall, 2008; Hinton-Johnson & Dickinson, 2005; Sipe, 1998; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003). Smolkin and Donovan (2003) concluded that children at this age are not able to decode text independently, quickly, or at a high enough level in order to gain in-depth comprehension of complex texts. Their study implies, especially for emerging and struggling readers, that the key elements of comprehension are lively interaction, teacher awareness of the text's structures and content, and an adequate provision of time for in-depth reading and comprehension. In my CIRA model, teachers engage the students in order to provide modeling for expert meaning making, reasoning, and comprehension processing. Interactive reading aloud sessions have the potential to provide emergent readers access to higher level texts than they would be able to negotiate on their own (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002; Proctor, Dalton & Grisham, 2007).

Student Activity

Figure 3 explicitly states the student activities during Kindergarten CIRA that have research to support them and are included in my model. The whole kindergarten class listens and interacts with the text while the teacher is reading (Sipe, 2000a). Students use their prior knowledge of the world and their emergent literacy skills during CIRA sessions. Students also bring individual characteristics to these sessions, such as varying levels of home literacy, academic ability, and personal interest. Not all students have the same level of prior knowledge, nor are they at the same level of emergent literacy skills, so the teacher scaffolds the group as a whole as well as individuals during the CIRA sessions (Neuman, 1996).

Figure 3

Student Activity

Students:

- Use prior knowledge and emergent literacy skills to make meaning
 - Interact actively or passively with the text and teacher
-

Formal instruction of emergent literacy skills, such as phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and the alphabetic principle, begins for most children when they enter pre-school or kindergarten. Most children cross from an emergent stage of literacy to one that is focused on the actual independent decoding and comprehension of words and text by the time they reach second grade. The focus for this later stage of early literacy is for young readers to become proficient readers so that by the time they reach the end of elementary school and are at a more mature stage of literacy, they will be capable of using text as a tool for learning. The saying that children first learn to read and then read to learn fits this paradigm (Morrow, 2001; Teale, 1995).

Students also make meaning as adults read to them. In this case, they gain content knowledge as well as literacy skills that help them comprehend what they are listening to. This suggests a constructivist view of language comprehension (Spiro, 1980). It has been argued that meaning derives from the interaction between new information (contained in textbooks and teachers' presentations, in this case Kindergarten CIRA) and the learner's purposes, language skills, motivation, and prior knowledge (Durst & Newell, 1989).

The CIRA model suggests students do not just simply sit and listen to the text in a disengaged manner when teachers read aloud interactively; instead, students are attentive

so that they can connect their prior knowledge and personal background to the text. Their reactions to the text can occur spontaneously or with the assistance of the teacher (Gambrell, 1996; Oyler, 1996; Robinson, Ross, & Neal, 2000; Sipe & McGuire, 2006; Smolkin & Donovan, 2002). The reactions can be passive and not readily observable; for example a student may appear to be listening attentively and thinking about what is being read, but it is impossible to know what a quiet child is actually thinking. The observer would not be sure if the student was actually attending to the text unless the student was questioned. The interactions can also be active and quite visible, for example, in the form of acting out the text or verbally interacting with other students or the teacher in an on-task manner (Sipe, 1998, 2000a, 2002; Sipe & Bauer, 2001).

Several researchers discovered that an interactive style of reading aloud can support literacy acquisition. In Morrow's study (1988) children who took part in interactive reading experiences developed greater metacognitive skills, which are necessary to become independent readers. Bus and van Ijzendoorn (1995) reported that children who were reactive during read alouds had greater pre-literacy skills. Hammett et al. (2003) found that interaction during read alouds fosters emergent reading skills

Text Characteristics

Figure 4 explicitly states the types of texts that teachers purposefully select and read aloud during Kindergarten CIRA. Optimally, a teacher will select a narrative, an expository text (usually a picture book), or a poem for CIRA that is interesting to the students. While such a text may be too difficult for students to read independently, it can be made available to their understanding through an interactive reading during which students, as a group, can collaboratively establish understanding (Wolfenburger & Sipe,

2007). Also, according to the model (see Figure 4) teachers will take into consideration the emergent literacy skills or kindergarten content they want to teach, as well as the backgrounds and prior knowledge of their students (Hall, 2008; Hinton-Johnson et. al., 2005).

A text that is too easy or too difficult to comprehend is not in the students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and thus has less of a positive impact on students' construction of meaning. Kindergarten students are a unique population for whom to select texts because of the disparity between the level of text that they can read independently and the level of text they can comprehend while listening. Texts that emergent readers can decode independently have limited and simplistic vocabulary, content, and concepts. CIRA provides an avenue of access to complex texts for students who otherwise would not be able to manage the texts on their own. As students move from emergent levels of literacy to become competent, mature readers, the gap between reading proficiency and listening proficiency levels narrows. Eventually, students are able to decode and make meaning from complex texts, whether read or spoken.

As stated above, teachers can select a narrative, an expository text, or a poem for CIRA. Narratives and expository texts have the potential to help build prior knowledge so that children increase their engagement, and thus their learning, when they are studying content (Chapman, 1999; Oyster & Barry, 1996; Pappas, 1999). There is a common assumption that children like and are able to respond better to narrative text as opposed to expository text. However, some children are more comfortable with and respond better to exposition and thus read more on their own if offered alternatives to narrative readings (Duke, 2000; Duke, Bennett-Armistead & Roberts, 2003; Duke & Kays, 1998; Moss,

1995; Pappas, 2006; Varelas & Pappas, 2006). Additionally, poetry is often read to emergently literate children in order to develop phonemic awareness (Juel, 1991).

Figure 4

Text Characteristics

A Text Is:

- At the instructional *listening level* of the class as an average
 - Narrative text, expository text or poetry
 - Purposively selected by the teacher around emergent literacy or content to be taught
 - Has content interesting to and reflective of the backgrounds of students
-

Context

Figure 1 surrounds Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text within Context. I did not originally set out to describe the larger context of my study, and it is not a focus of my work. However, my data revealed that the context in which my participating teachers taught (state, school district, community, school) influenced their CIRA sessions to varying degrees. The context of federal, state, and county school system governance, especially in response to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), cast a shadow over the practices of the four participating teachers. While I do not cite research on the effects of a larger context on instructional practices, I do characterize the influence of context whenever its influence was impossible to ignore.

Pilot Study

The pilot study I conducted prior to this dissertation study also suggested the CIRA model. This work helped illuminate what experienced kindergarten teachers do during what I then called Read Aloud sessions (see Appendix K). The teachers in my pilot study purposefully selected texts to read aloud to their entire kindergarten classes. In selecting texts, teachers focused on kindergarten content and developing emergent literacy. All four of the teachers in the pilot study read interactively from texts they had carefully selected based on the emergent literacy skills and the content they wanted to develop. Each teacher embellished the text in order to accomplish stated goals. In every case, the students responded to the teacher and text while they listened to the teacher. I did not at any time see students sitting passively while the text was read. These activities further suggested to me the three elements of the CIRA model.

Statement of the Problem

Research taken as a whole suggests the importance of reading interactively to children. However, no researcher has studied interactive reading aloud in kindergarten as conceptualized in my model for Kindergarten CIRA (Figure 1). The pieces have been studied in isolation, and the relationships among the three elements in a classroom setting have not been synthesized, except in my Pilot Study. My experiences as an educator, mother, and child further support the value both of interactive reading aloud and of describing what excellent kindergarten teachers do to interact with children around a text with the intent of enhancing children's literacy and content knowledge.

My personal experience with reading aloud to children mirrors the research that I have read. I first became intrigued by reading aloud to students during my years as a

kindergarten and first-grade teacher. At that time, I used various texts daily to teach emergent literacy skills as well as to teach content, such as social studies and science. I had no instruction in my university methods classes on reading aloud to students. I saw my kindergarten colleagues reading aloud to their students, so I incorporated reading aloud into my daily schedule. “Story time,” as I called this planned period of instruction when I read aloud to my whole kindergarten class, quickly became my favorite teaching moment of the day. My class and I became caught up in the wonder of stories and in what we were learning from various texts. These sessions, which over time became well-planned and executed, transformed my class of 30 usually lively and energetic kindergarteners into captivated and engaged co-deconstructors of texts. Students hung on every word and felt the power of quality literature. Over the ensuing years in my various roles in the field of education, I have gained first-hand experience reading many books to children in school settings, and I have watched other teachers, both expert and novice, read to children as well.

As a mother, I spent countless magical hours reading to my own three children. Many a bedtime was delayed as my children begged to hear just one more book or one more chapter. Some of my most treasured early childhood memories are of my own mother reading to me. She read to me before school each morning during my early elementary school years. We lived within walking and hearing distance of the public school I attended. I still remember the times my mother and I were brought back to the real world from the captivating world of literature by the jarring sound of the school bell announcing that school was about to start. I was so completely engaged in my mother’s reading that the rest of the world ceased to exist.

As a teacher as well as a mother, the texts I read were often a springboard for discussions during and after reading. These experiences have made me think a great deal about reading aloud to students, particularly kindergarten students. I want to know how the elements of teacher practice, student activity, and text can be understood in relationship to kindergarten children's emergent literacy skills and content knowledge.

I did not become adept at interactively reading aloud to children overnight; it has taken time to perfect this continuously developing craft and tool. As I have shared my ideas for this dissertation research with educators, I have often been met with thoughtful looks. The conversations that have followed have made it clear that reading aloud in a classroom setting is not simply about reading a book. Reading aloud is a complex teaching act. Many teachers with whom I have spoken have been told to read aloud to their students as part of a comprehensive reading program, but none had any substantial training in the planning and execution of read aloud sessions. As I have discussed, the research literature supports these teachers' perceptions. However, because each study has focused on only a part of CIRA, research so far may well have failed to give teachers the guidance they need. My study has the potential to add research support to the intuitive understanding that educators already have of interactive reading aloud sessions and to inform teacher education in this area. Outcomes have both research and practitioner implications.

Research Questions

Using my Kindergarten CIRA model (Figure 1) as a lens, I sought to answer the following research questions in order to gain a better understanding of what kindergarten

teachers do when reading texts aloud to an entire kindergarten class during planned instructional time.

Central Questions

What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced Kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers?

Sub Questions

1. What are the characteristics of teacher practice during CIRA and how does teacher practice relate to student activity?
2. What are the characteristics of student activity during CIRA, and how does student activity relate to teacher practice?
3. How can the text be characterized during a CIRA session?
4. How can literacy or other kindergarten content be characterized during CIRA?

Definitions

Here are definitions of terms that I refer to throughout my study. They are organized alphabetically.

Balanced Literacy Program. A program of reading instruction including Read Aloud sessions, Guided Reading, Shared Reading, Independent Reading, Modeled Writing, and Independent Writing Activities (Walker, 1995).

CIRA. Whole class interactive reading aloud. CIRA is a planned period of instruction when a teacher purposively reads aloud from text, asking questions and embellishing on the text to scaffold student comprehension and learning while

reading aloud to the entire class. The teacher takes into account the students' reactions and considers these reactions while reading aloud.

Content Area. The concepts, principles, and skills within a particular subject discipline, such as science, social studies, reading, or math (Shulman, 1986).

Emergent Literacy. Begins at birth and continues throughout early childhood during which time children acquire knowledge about reading, writing, and language before they engage in formal schooling (Clay, 1972, 1991). The concept of emergent literacy was first defined and coined over 30 years ago (Clay, 1972). There is a dynamic and recursive relationship between communication skills such as oral language, listening, reading, and writing. Such skills do not develop in isolation, and each influences and informs the development of the others as a child matures. This development occurs in everyday contexts such as home, school, and community through functional natural settings, activities, and interactions. Children learn these skills through literacy activities that are embedded purposefully within authentic activities. The settings for the acquisition of reading and writing proficiency are the social interactions between the learner, adults and other children (Teale, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). The participants are sensitive to the individual needs of children and build on their individual strengths (Morrow, 2001). At the beginning of the kindergarten year, the majority of students are at an emergent stage of literacy, which is a precursor to formal reading (Whitehurst & Longman, 2001).

Exposition. Non-fiction text that is structured to inform, argue, persuade, or explain (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998; Duke & Kays, 1998; Duke, 2000; Oyer & Barry,

1996). Expository texts often contain such features as a table of contents, headings, bolded text, and an index.

Frustration Reading Level. Text that is too difficult for a student to read successfully, even with classroom instruction and support. Although suggested criteria for determining a student's frustration level vary, less than 90% accuracy in word identification and less than 50% comprehension are often used as standards (Harris & Hodges, 1989).

Independent Reading Level. Text that is not too difficult for a student to read successfully alone, with few word-identification problems and high comprehension. A student should have 99% word-identification accuracy and 90% comprehension level for the text to be judged at an independent reading level (Harris & Hodges, 1989).

Individual Characteristics. The characteristics that an individual student may have, such as gender, socio-economic status (SES), home literacy background, English language proficiency, cognitive challenges, and so on (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Interactive. Mutually influencing each other. For the purpose of this study interactive does not carry the quantitative, statistical meaning of "interaction." (Harris & Hodges, 1989).

Kindergarten. A class usually for five-year olds conducted in a public school or private school setting that emphasizes physical, socio-emotional, and intellectual aspects of child development (Harris & Hodges, 1989).

Listening Comprehension Level. The highest readability level that a student can comprehend at 75% accuracy without assistance when a text is read aloud by

someone else (Harris & Hodges, 1989). Materials that are read aloud should be slightly above the child's vocabulary and syntax level.

Narrative. A coherent text that has characters, a setting, a plot, and often a theme.

Narratives can be realistic fiction, fantasy/science fiction, historical fiction, mysteries, fables, tales/myths/legends, autobiography, biography, and plays. Even though autobiography and biography are not fiction, they are characterized as narrative because of the presence of characters, a setting, and a plot (Harris & Hodges, 1989; Chambliss & Calfee, 1998). Narratives can be fiction, for example *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1920); non-fiction, as in *Going Lobstering* (Pallotta, 1990); or realistic fiction, similar to *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Cole, 1995).

Oral Reading. The process of reading aloud to communicate to another person or to an audience (Harris & Hodges, 1989).

Pedagogical Content Knowledge. "Identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction." (Shulman, 1986, p. 4).

Picture Book. A book that has both pictures and text to communicate meaning (Hallberg, 1982; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000).

Poetry. A rhythmical literary composition that often rhymes. The structure of the poetry can be traditional poetry, limericks, haiku, free verse, and nursery rhymes (Harris & Hodges, 1989, Valli, et al., 2006).

Prior Knowledge. The knowledge and understanding that stems from previous experience. Prior knowledge is a key component of reading comprehension schema theories (Harris & Hodges, 1989). Prior knowledge is what children (or any learner) build on to acquire new knowledge. The teacher connects new information to what a child already knows in order to move the child's understanding forward.

Read Aloud. A period of time when a competent reader (teacher or parent) reads text aloud to a child or children.

Scaffolding. A teacher giving support to students through instruction, modeling, questioning, and feedback. Teacher support gradually evolves to the next stage of learning as students master skills (Harris & Hodges, 1989).

Note: Other definitions of coding categories can be found in Appendix I.

Conclusion

Until now, interactive reading aloud has been studied with an up-close lens that has focused on the reader, the students, and the text either individually or more narrowly than I did in this dissertation study. This study builds on that previous work and examined adults reading aloud to children, using the Kindergarten CIRA model (Figure 1) as a lens. My longitudinal descriptive study in a naturalistic setting of four experienced kindergarten teachers took a broader, more comprehensive view to bring further understanding of the relationships among the teacher, the students, and the text when kindergarten teachers plan and execute read aloud sessions. As we turn to chapter 2, I discuss more completely the research that supports the elements of Kindergarten CIRA.

Chapter 2

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud

My study focuses on one component of an emergent literacy program in kindergarten: the whole class interactive reading aloud session (CIRA). As discussed in chapter 1, I created a model to use as a lens in order to study interactive reading aloud to an entire kindergarten class during a planned period of instruction (Figure 1). This model is suggested by the research I briefly described in chapter 1. Here in chapter 2, I describe the supporting literature in detail.

First, I describe studies that discuss the prevalence of reading aloud to young children. Next, I address studies that support the three separate elements of whole class interactive reading aloud: teacher practice, student activity, text. In the teacher practice section I describe the research support for characteristics of parents and teachers reading aloud. The literature regarding teacher practice includes studies of the “knowledgeable other” (Moll, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978), either parents or teachers reading aloud to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and early elementary school children in a variety of settings, at home as well as in school, because what occurs in the classroom often mirrors this parent/child reading aloud. I next discuss studies related to the second element of CIRA: student activity. This body of literature includes reports on students’ interactions with teachers, on student-to-student interactions, and on the activation of the student’s prior knowledge during interactive reading aloud sessions. Finally, I discuss research related to text, the third element of CIRA; specifically, I examine the purposeful selection of text level and text structure by the participating teachers.

The Prevalence of Reading Aloud

Reading storybooks to young children in school settings is a traditional part of the kindergarten experience. The read aloud time is one part of a “balanced literacy program” (Walker, 1995) recommended, if not mandated, in kindergarten classrooms across the United States. Jacobs, Morrison and Swinard (2000) found in their study that reading aloud is a common practice through sixth grade. They mailed out a detailed survey to elementary school teachers to determine the in-class reading practices of the surveyed teachers. They received 1874 surveys, which represented a 53% response rate. Of the respondents, 9% were males and 91% were females. The researchers found that reading aloud to children occurred most frequently in kindergarten and declined consistently through sixth grade. Primary-grade teachers used more picture books than their upper-grade counterparts; upper-grade teachers relied on novels. All teachers reported that they infrequently used expository texts during their read aloud sessions. All teachers, regardless of grade level, reported that reading aloud was either a very important or an important part of their instructional day. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (95%) read aloud to their students at least three times per week. As stated earlier, kindergarten teachers read more frequently than teachers at other grade levels. One can conclude from these data that kindergarten teachers most likely read aloud more than three times per week.

Read alouds are conducted on a frequent (if not daily) basis in kindergarten. There are research studies which support the inclusion of the omnipresent read aloud session in the kindergarten day, not just because it is a tradition but because it is a valuable literacy experience. Pressley, Mohan, Raphael and Fingeret (2007), in a quest to understand why

Bennett Woods Elementary School had high achievement in reading and math, conducted a qualitative study over the course of six months. Bennett Woods Elementary School is a middle-class school with a 10% FARMS rate and with 25% English Learners. Through persistent observation, interviews, and the collection of artifacts, the researchers developed grounded theory to answer their research questions. All aspects of Bennett Woods were analyzed, including the reading and math curriculum, the various methods of instructional delivery, the principal, the teachers and students, and the physical building. The researchers reported results across all of these areas, including reading aloud to students.

The researchers reported that the teachers at Bennett Woods Elementary School (including kindergarten) read aloud daily to their students from texts that were at the average listening comprehension level of the class as a whole. These texts were more advanced than the texts used in small-group reading work. All of the teachers read with enthusiasm and expression. In all cases the teachers discussed the text. The researchers analyzed the formal reading instruction as well as the read aloud sessions. They concluded, however, that “most elements of reading instruction at the school occurred in the context of reading great stories and books” (Pressley, et al., 2007, p. 229). Thus, read aloud sessions of “great stories” were one (of many) practices leading to success in this high-achieving elementary school.

Elements of Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud in Kindergarten

In this section, I comprehensively review research presented in chapter 1 that supports the three elements of kindergarten CIRA: teacher practice, student activity, and text. I did not find research that supports the CIRA model as a whole in the same way I

have conceptualized it. Previous research has been piecemeal and has only looked at each element either alone, in conjunction with only one other element, or out of the context of the natural setting of a kindergarten classroom (Barr, 1986, 2001; Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax & Penney, 2003).

In my kindergarten CIRA model of (Figure 1), teacher practice, student activity, and text work together, producing a classroom practice which has the potential to teach literacy and kindergarten content. The presence of each of these elements as ongoing structural components of kindergarten classrooms is supported in the research.

Teacher Practice: the “Knowledgeable Other” and Reading Aloud

The practice of the teacher is one of the essential elements of kindergarten CIRA. The teacher reads text aloud to the students and builds on the knowledge of the individual as well as the group as an aggregated whole. The practice on the part of the teacher is supported by research: the teacher acts as Vygotsky’s knowledgeable other. However, in order to understand the benefits of reading aloud to children, researchers have also studied the relationships between parents of preschool children and those children while the parents read text aloud. In this case the parent acts as Vygotsky’s knowledgeable other.

Social constructivist theories, specifically the work of Vygotsky (1978), guide many reading studies. Vygotsky (1978) perceived learning in general as a social activity whereby learning is assisted by a knowledgeable other. The knowledgeable other can be an adult or a child who knows more than the learner. The knowledgeable other teaches the learner at the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). The ZPD is “the difference between what a child can accomplish with guidance, and what he or she can achieve

through individual effort and solo performance” (Valsner, 1998, p. 396). The knowledgeable other scaffolds the child to a new level of understanding and skill level until the child has mastered the skill; after this level is achieved, the ZPD shifts forward.

The next two sections describe studies of both parents and teachers reading aloud to children. It is important to include and examine the body of research on parent and child read alouds because the findings of these studies parallel the findings in the studies of teacher practice during interactive reading aloud. Teacher practice often mirrors parent practice: when teachers read aloud to young children these teachers assume a role very similar to the role of a parent reading aloud to a child. Thus, the research described below in the Teacher Practice section starts with research on the characteristics of parents reading aloud to their children.

Characteristics of parent practice and reading aloud. Research has shown that children benefit not only from being read aloud to but also from being read to in a recursive, interactive manner. Interaction in this sense means parents (or teachers) do not simply read a text straight through, but interact and react, both verbally and non-verbally, with the children while reading. The term ‘interaction’ as used here does not refer to the statistical term. Rather it describes the relationship between the reader, those being read to and the text being read from. This body of research starts with studies that examine parents of children who are infants. Bus and van Ijzendoorn (1995) investigated the differences between 82 children (42 males and 40 females) who were between the ages of 11 and 14 months. Researchers determined, based on the behavior of children observed in an experimental setting, if the children were secure or insecure in their attachment to their mothers. Mother-child read alouds were videotaped. Researchers viewed the videotapes

and coded the children's motor activity and responses to the book as well as to the mothers' didactic or disciplinary behavior.

Measured by the coding of video-taped observations, the researchers found a greater level of literacy development in the securely attached children. The mothers of securely attached children frequently interacted with their children while reading aloud to them. The researchers found that the parents pointed to the pictures, defined a word, or connected the text to the child's experiences. The securely attached children were more engaged in the reading of the text than the less securely attached children and, as a result, sat with their mothers and listened longer. Bus and van Ijzendoorn (1995) concluded that children, even at this young age, are able to develop literacy skills more fully when they are read to by a person who interacts with the text and reacts to the child. Frequent and higher-quality interactions result in a greater amount of time being spent, by both parties, engaged with the text. Reading aloud in this interactive manner, even to pre-verbal children, is an important factor in the development of literacy skills.

Other researchers found similar interaction patterns when parents read aloud to their children. Martin and Reutzel (1999) found that mothers of children as young as 6- to 18 months old deviated from the print when reading to their children. Twenty-five volunteer mother-child pairs from a large Midwestern university participated. The researchers divided the mother-child pairs into five groups depending on the age of the child: 6, 12, and 18 months, 2, and 4 years old. Next, the researchers videotaped the pairs during a read aloud session on three different occasions. Finally, after the three read aloud sessions, the researchers interviewed the mothers in order to ask them questions about their read aloud practices. Martin and Reutzel taped and transcribed the interviews

and then coded the observation and interview transcripts. They analyzed the data to determine patterns and trends in read aloud behavior.

Martin and Reutzel (1999) found the mothers made three major types of deviations: *simplification deviation* (replacing hard words or rephrasing), *elaborate deviation* (giving additional and clarifying information), and *engagement deviation* (focusing and maintaining the children's attention). The mothers reported that these deviations were made in order to scaffold their children to a higher level of understanding of the text so that the text was more comprehensible. *Simplification deviation* was the most common among mothers of 12-month olds. *Elaboration deviation* occurred across all age groups; however, labeling was more common with younger children, and clarification was more common for older children. The conclusion of this study supports Bus and van Ijzendoorn's (1995) findings that mothers interacted with their children in order to explain concepts of vocabulary and to connect the text to the experiences of the children. The mothers in the study explained that if they did not deviate from the text, their children had a tendency to become restless and not attend to the story. The researchers characterized the mothers as intuitive teachers who made complex and purposeful decisions as they read to their children. Just as Bus and van Ijzendoorn concluded, the deviations from print resulted in the children staying engaged with the text. Thus, deviation from print often supported a greater level of pre-literacy skill acquisition.

In a related study, Neuman (1996) conducted an experimental study of how children engage in storybook reading at home. Her primary purpose for this study was to examine the patterns of how parents who were proficient and non-proficient readers

interacted with different types of texts when they read aloud to their child at home. She selected 41 parents and their children: 26 of the parents were African American, 14 were Latino and 1 was white. Through self report, 18 parents described themselves as low proficient readers, and 23 described themselves as proficient readers. All of these parents had children in one of three different Head Start classrooms, and 85% of the children were from single parent households. Most of the parents reported that they had limited resources at home to help their children with their literacy development, and none of the parents reported that they read aloud to their children prior to the beginning of the study.

At the beginning of the study, the children of the participating parents completed the concept of print test (COPT) in order to determine their knowledge of print conventions. Then, the parents participated in a 12-week book club. A parent facilitator and bilingual teacher conducted the sessions at the Head Start center once a week. The parent facilitator or instructor read a book each week to the parents and modeled how to stop while reading to ask questions, how to add background knowledge, and how to check for understanding. The parent facilitator or bilingual teacher did not explicitly teach these techniques; he/she simply modeled them. After the text was read, the parent facilitator, bilingual teacher, and parents discussed the book. The parents received a copy of the book to take home to share with their child and to keep. The facilitators did not give any specific instructions to the parents on how to read the book to their child. The book club read and talked about a different book each week of the 12-week study. At the conclusion of the 12 weeks, the children completed a COPT posttest to measure growth of print conventions (Neuman, 1996).

Neuman (1996) tape recorded the parents reading to their children each week at the school immediately after the parent book club. She transcribed, coded, and analyzed the tapes. She discovered parental proficiency in literacy influenced conversational interactions and determined how text types were used as scaffolding. Parents who had self-reported reading difficulties used the interaction strategy of simply repeating the text twice as often as more proficient parents. More proficient parent readers used bridging (contributing additional information to the text in order to make it more comprehensible to their child) and recalling (discussing the story in their own words) more often. Those of higher proficiency engaged in conversation that extended the text beyond literal text-based comprehension, while lower proficient parents more often engaged in book-focused discussions. Low-proficient parents tended to respond more readily to predictable books, whereas higher proficient parents tended to elicit more comments from their children with the use of a more complex narrative text structure. All parents displayed the book sharing techniques that had been modeled for them-including stopping to ask questions while reading, adding background knowledge, and checking for understanding-in spite of the fact that the parents were not explicitly taught how to use the book-sharing techniques.

The most significant finding was the effect of the book club on the participating children. All of the children, regardless of whether their parents were low or high proficient readers, made significant gains in the area of print concepts as measured by the (COPT) pretests and posttests. The children who actually showed the most growth were the children of the low proficient parents (pretest, 13.06; posttest, 37.5). These children made twice the gains of the children with the more proficient parents (pretest, 14.61;

posttest, 28.41). Neuman (1996) concluded that reading aloud to emergently literate children is essential for their literacy development. These reading strategies enabled all children to make significant gains in their growth as readers even when the strategies had been practiced by inexperienced readers, in this case the children's parents. Neuman stated that this strategy is most likely even more effective in the hands of a skilled reader/teacher. She also concluded from her research that reading aloud allowed for children to connect books to the child's life situations, adding that this connection was probably essential for cognitive growth.

Numerous other studies have come to the same conclusion that Neuman (1996) did. Leslie and Allen (1999) conducted a study similar to Neuman's with school age children. Their experimental study was conducted in Wisconsin with 52 low-income first through fourth graders from two private secular schools located in the inner city. Ninety percent of the students were African American and 85% qualified for the free or reduced lunch program. All of these children were involved in a supplemental literacy project involving reading aloud at school and at home. After participating in the program, all of the students made significant growth in the area of literacy as measured by pretest and posttests using the QRI-II, an informal reading inventory. Vivas (1996) also conducted a study similar to Neuman's (1996) and to Leslie and Allen's (1999) studies. Vivas conducted an experimental study of 222 preschool and first-grade students, dividing the children into two experimental groups and one control group. The control group participated in their regular activities at school and at home. One experimental group participated in a reading aloud program at school and the other group participated in an in-home reading aloud program. Posttests on the QRI-II showed that the children in both

of the experimental groups made more gains in language comprehension than the control group. The school based reading aloud produced more gains in receptive language than the in-home program. Vivas (1996) concluded that reading aloud to preschool and first-grade children at home and in school settings was an essential part of a literacy program. Many other researchers, including Baker, Mackler, and Sonnenschein (2001), Bobys (2000), Burgess, Hecht, and Lonigan (2002), Henk, Moore, Marinak, and Tomasetti (2000), Lesiak (1997), Leseman and DeJong (1998), National Research Council (1999), Neuman and Celano (1996), Robinson, Larsen, and Haupt (1995, 1996), Saracho (2000, 2001a, 2001b, and 2002), and Storch and Whitehurst (2001) have conducted similar research and have reached the conclusion that reading aloud is essential to a child's literacy growth.

Like Neuman (1996), other researchers have explored reading aloud with low socio-economic (SES) parents. The findings of Hammett, Van Kleeck, and Huberty (2003) support Bus and van Ijzendoorn's (1995) and Martin and Reutzel's (1999) studies, concluding that parent interactions during reading aloud lead to high levels of literacy skill. Additionally, Hammett, Van Kleeck, and Huberty (2003) concluded that this increase in literacy occurred no matter what the parents' SES status.

Finally, Purcell-Gates (1996) also studied home literacy activities with low-income children. She found in her study that low-income children may not perform as well as their more affluent peers on literacy measures. However, after home literacy activities such as reading aloud were introduced to parents, the children picked up literacy skills. Purcell-Gates concluded that low-income children are capable of learning if they have home environments that are set up to foster literacy.

Characteristics of teacher practice and reading aloud. Many researchers have focused on reading aloud to preschool as well as to elementary-school age children in school settings. Just as research supports the premise that parents reading aloud to their children builds greater levels of pre-literacy, research supports that this is the case when the reader is a teacher in a school setting. In the case of the school setting, the knowledgeable other is the teacher, and the best teacher practice during a read aloud utilizes various forms of interaction and reaction with the students and/or with the text being read. Research supports the premise that teacher reaction and interaction during a read aloud session has is related positively to children's literacy skills development. In a study that examined the practices of upper elementary grade teachers, Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) conducted a large-scale case study to find out what "expert" third-through eighth-grade teachers did while reading aloud to students. The researchers knew there was a research base that supported reading aloud to literate children (most children have some level of independent literacy by third grade). However, they had not found any studies that explored the mechanics of what third-grade through eighth-grade teachers do while reading aloud to students. First, the researchers selected 25 teachers who were recommended as expert reading teachers by their administrators. The 25 expert teachers were observed once while they were reading aloud. The notes from these observations were transcribed and coded into observable characteristics of read aloud practice.

Seven characteristics of expert practices emerged. First, all of the experts chose books based on the interests and developmental level of their students. The experts almost always previewed and practiced reading the texts ahead of time. The teachers had a clear purpose for reading text selections, and this purpose was often shared with the

students. The teachers modeled fluent oral reading and were animated and used expression, especially when reading dialogue. The teachers seldom read straight through the text. They stopped periodically to ask the students questions and focus them on specific characteristics of the text. Finally, the expert teachers made connections between the readings and the subsequent writing assignments which students completed independently (Fisher et al., 2004).

These findings are supported in an earlier study by Morrow (1988), who worked with younger students in a classroom setting (79 four-year-old children from low SES backgrounds). Her research focused on one-to-one reading aloud. By surveying parents, she determined that 90% of children were read aloud to at home once a month or less. For this reason, she concluded that any growth of literacy skill development that occurred over the course of the study could be attributed to class intervention and not to interventions at home.

For the 10-week study, the children were divided into two experimental groups. Group 1, consisting of 27 children, were read 10 different texts over the course of the study, one new text for each week of the study. Group 2 had 25 students who participated in repeated readings of only three texts over the ten weeks. A control group of 27 children participated in decontextualized reading readiness tasks during this same 10-week period. Both experimental groups listened to adults read texts aloud. The adults attended two days of training. Morrow (1988) instructed the adults to introduce each text with a brief discussion of the book before reading it and to prompt for student responses while reading the text. She also instructed the adults to give the students support information by explaining those parts of the text that the students did not understand.

Adults were further advised to react to the students' comments and to give examples from the students' lives.

At the end of the ten-week intervention Morrow (1988) trained the adults to administer the story retelling/comprehension questions to measure literacy skills growth. The adults asked the students in the experimental group 16 researcher-made, probe and free-recall questions on the final book that was read aloud to them. The adults asked the students in the control group, who listened to the texts without interaction, these same 16 questions. Next, Morrow transcribed and coded the responses into four major categories and sub-categories. Finally, she analyzed the codes using Analysis of Variance. Both experimental groups outperformed the control group in all areas of analysis. The major categories were responses that focused on story structure, print, or illustrations.

Overall, this reading style increased verbal participation and the complexities of verbal exchanges between the adult readers and the children. The children in group 1 (the different book each week group) made more responses focused on illustrations and asked more questions than the children in group 2, the repeated reading group, or the children in the control group. The children in group 2 made more overall comments about the books and focused more on the actual print. Both experimental groups benefited from the interventions. Based on these findings Morrow (1988) believed that, because of the relationships between the adults and children, the children asked not only more questions but more complex questions as well.

One finding Morrow (1988) had not anticipated was that adult readers in both experimental groups would respond in direct relation to the number and richness of responses that the children made; however, this reciprocal relationship was present.

Morrow divided the adult readers into three categories: directing/managing to help children pay attention to text; prompting with questions or comments for the purpose of eliciting more responses or thinking; and supporting/informing by giving additional background information. To determine differences, the researcher used Analysis of Variance for each major category. These adults were all trained to interact while reading to the children. However, these teacher-initiated interactions were more complex and numerous in the cases where the children responded to the interactions. The adults reading to group 1 (the different book group) made the fewest number of directing and the highest number of supporting/informing responses. The adults working with the control group made the most directing/managing responses. In group 2, the repeated reading group, the adult readers' responses most often were not formed in isolation but were shaped to some extent by the responses of the children.

Morrow (1988) also found that children taught during read aloud sessions with and without re-readings made more progress in both the number of and complexity of questions they asked. The control group, which worked with traditional readiness activities, did not make progress in these areas. The children in the re-reading group made more interpretive responses and more responses that focused on print and story structure. Although Morrow found that an interactive style of reading aloud led to richer and more complex interactions, she concluded further investigation was needed to determine if these interactions would lead to enhanced literacy development.

Morrow (1988) found that an interactive style of reading aloud yielded richer and more complex responses from teachers and students. Other studies have supported the fact that teacher interaction during interactive reading aloud has the potential to foster

literacy skills. Three studies that directly supported Morrow (1988) and Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) were Dickinson and Smith (1994), Knapp and Windsor (1998) and Santoro, Chard, Howard and Baker (2008). Dickinson and Smith (1994) studied storybook reading in emergent reading classrooms. They found that children whose teachers engaged them in discussions that included analysis, prediction, and vocabulary instruction while they read out-performed their peers who had more heavy-handed teachers (teachers who kept firm control over the discussion or limited discussions altogether). The researchers did not identify one optimal discourse pattern that was the most effective. However, the students in classes with the more interactive and less didactic discourse patterns scored better on language and literacy measures, a finding more in line with the constructivist theoretical framework. The researchers found this approach was especially effective for low-income students who are often at risk for developing reading problems. The work of Dickinson and Smith (1994) supports explicit instruction embedded in reading for authentic purposes, in order to develop both pre-existing and emergent literacy skills.

Scaffolding and modeling were methods of interaction central to the study conducted by Santoro, Chard, Howard and Baker (2008). The researchers created a framework to enhance comprehension as well as science and social studies content knowledge during read aloud times in first-grade classrooms. The study included principles for selecting text for the read alouds as well as strategies for interactive discussion before, during and after reading the text. The students were scored on their retellings of the texts that had been read to them before and after the study. Students in the group that were read expository and narrative texts about science and/or social studies

themes had longer and richer retellings than the control group. The researchers found that this framework was equally effective for at-risk and average-achieving students. The framework also proved effective for science and social studies instruction, which the teachers in the study reported had been reduced due to the emphasis on reading and math achievement. This framework enabled the teachers to meet reading as well as science and social science content goals.

A number of studies on reading aloud specifically target vocabulary development during interactive reading aloud sessions. Perhaps this is because vocabulary growth is relatively easy to measure in young children compared to other literacy skills. Robbins and Ehri (1994) discovered that a teacher simply reading or re-reading a text is not enough to build vocabulary, particularly for at-risk readers. The researchers conducted an experimental study of 33 English-speaking kindergarteners from middle to low SES families in public elementary schools. They pretested the children using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and then divided them into high, medium, and low vocabulary ability groups. The children in each level listened to an unfamiliar text read by their teacher and, after three days, they were read the text again. The researchers found that children who had heard the story twice and who had no other vocabulary instruction did significantly better on the vocabulary posttests compared to the group of children who heard the story only once. Additionally, children in the low-ability vocabulary group made much smaller gains compared with the gains made by the children in the high ability group.

Robbins and Ehri (1994) concluded that the results of this study support the hypothesis that children learn vocabulary when the words are used in meaningful

contexts, such as in storybook reading. However, children who already have large vocabularies make the greatest gains. Therefore, children with smaller vocabularies may need more explicit explanations of new words while being read to; they may also need more than a simple rereading of the text and may benefit from interactive and explicit instruction embedded in meaningful tasks.

In a subsequent study with similar findings Ewers and Brownson (1999) conducted a foundational study that supported the conclusion that teacher interactions while reading aloud had positive effects on vocabulary development. Ewers and Brownson (1999) built on Robbins and Ehri's (1994) research on preschool children's acquisition of expressive and receptive vocabulary. Ewers and Brownson (1999) studied vocabulary acquisition in the context of interactive reading aloud, not just simple reading or rereading of texts. The researchers conducted an experimental study with 66 (36 female, 30 male) kindergarteners in a middle-class New York suburb. They pretested the children using the PPVT and identified them as having either high or low vocabulary ability. The researchers then assigned the children to two groups sorted by vocabulary ability. Their teacher read a single age-appropriate new narrative using one of two methods. The first group experienced the *passive participation* method: the teacher simply read the text and in no way highlighted or explained target vocabulary words. The second group participated in the *active participation* method, which consisted of the teacher asking a *what* or *where* question immediately after reading a target word in the story. The children were then administered a posttest on the PPVT. The researchers used an ANOVA to analyze the pretest and posttest scores. The researchers found that children who participated in the *active participation* method scored higher on the vocabulary

posttests than children of the same ability level who participated in the *passive participation* method. The researchers concluded that kindergarteners are able to learn a significant number of new vocabulary words by listening to a single reading of a text if teachers use additional interactions, in this case questioning. As in Robbins' and Ehri's study, the children who started out with the largest vocabularies made the largest gains. Ewers and Brownson hypothesized that children with smaller vocabularies may need additional scaffolding during a read aloud session in order to maximize their potential to learn new vocabulary.

In a similar study with four-year olds, Justice and Lankford (2002) measured the effects of interactions during reading aloud on receptive and expressive vocabulary development. Both receptive and expressive language grew. However, receptive language vocabulary experienced the greatest gains. Justice and Lankford concluded that shared storybook reading interactions provide children with frequent incidental encounters with novel words in a contextual format leading to significant growth in vocabulary development. Beck and McKeown (2001) in a subsequent study corroborated these findings. In a study of 20 low-SES preschoolers, the researchers labeled their own version of Ewers and Brownson's (1999) interactive questioning strategy as *Text Talk*. Most importantly, Beck and McKeown found that this style of teacher interaction during a read aloud session yielded greater vocabulary gains for children.

In their most recent study, Beck and McKeown (2007) again researched the vocabulary acquisition in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms of low-achieving schools. The researchers designed an intervention based on their earlier work. This intervention was delivered during the course of the experiment by regular classroom

teachers. The teachers were taught vocabulary development strategies developed in Beck's and McKeown's 2001 study and refined in Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2003).. The strategies targeted sophisticated/advanced words to be used during read aloud sessions. Once again, this style of instruction yielded greater vocabulary gains for all students, including those in low-achieving schools.

Other studies of interactive read alouds conducted with primary grade children, including those conducted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) and McGhee and Schickedanz (2007), have come to the same conclusion. Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) concluded that “verbally mediated, interactional, and performance read aloud styles are more effective for vocabulary acquisition than just reading aloud with no discussion” (p. 471). Proctor, Dalton and Grisham (2007) came to the same conclusion in their study of a fourth-grade class that involved English Language Learners: embedded support benefits vocabulary acquisition.

Teacher Practice is one of the three central elements of CIRA. As I have shown, a large body of research exists which has investigated the effectiveness of different methods of teacher interaction in read aloud sessions. I have also established in this section that the initial interactions between parents and their children, in read aloud sessions in the home, are precursors of the type of interactions these children may encounter in the school setting. Foundational studies, of parents reading aloud to their children, when linked with studies of teachers reading aloud in classroom settings, suggest the central importance of the presence of a “knowledgeable other” in the child's acquisition of literacy skills. A trajectory therefore exists in which emergent literacy, begun in the home, develops further positive characteristics as initial levels of adult to

child interaction are enhanced by a teacher practice that motivates further student involvement with text, with listening skills and with the “knowledgeable other.”

Characteristics of Student Activity and Reading Aloud

The second element of my kindergarten CIRA model is Student Activity (Figure 1). Students do not simply sit passively during a CIRA session. They are actively involved during the reading. Sometimes this active involvement is observable and sometimes it is not. Most studies of reading aloud focused on the activities of the person reading aloud, either a teacher or parent as I discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Here, I discuss studies that focused on student activities during times when teachers read to students in school settings. The studies examined specifically how students interacted with the teacher and with the text as the teacher read aloud. The studies reviewed here also considered how students activated and used their literacy skills and prior knowledge of the world around them while taking part in read aloud sessions.

Oyler (1996) conducted a year-long ethnographic study as a participant observer of 31 read aloud sessions of expository books in one low SES first-grade class (all of the children in the school qualified for free and reduced lunch). A teacher with twenty years of teaching experience conducted all the read aloud sessions. The teacher read the stories in an interactive manner. The teacher purposively selected texts around student interests. The teacher read the text and paused to explain or ask probing questions. Most importantly, she allowed the children to take control of the discussions that occurred throughout the reading. The teacher shared authority with the children while continuing to correct misconceptions, to facilitate the students’ interactions to stay focused on the text, and to keep the pace of the story moving smoothly.

Oyler (1996) took field notes and audio taped the sessions. After each session, she transcribed only the portions of the audiotapes that captured student initiations. She analyzed the teacher initiations during the course of the read aloud session and created eight codes for these initiations. They were as follows: (a) *directing process*, which referred to giving the students directions about the logistic process of reading, such as how to hold the book or turn the pages; (b) *questioning for understanding*, which referred to questions that asked students to clarify the understanding of a picture, text, vocabulary, topic, or concept; (c) *understanding the text*, which referred to the child actually reading the text, or pointing to a word, picture or phoneme pattern; (d) *personal experience*, which referred to the child relating an imaginary or real personal experience to the text; (e) *intertext link*, which referred to responses that linked to other texts; (f) *claiming expertise*, which referred to responses where the child offered knowledge from outside the text; and (g) *affective response*, which referred to a response that expressed a personal feeling about the text.

Oyler (1996) concluded that providing students with multiple opportunities to speak and act as experts, in this case during the interactive read aloud session, is essential if children are going to become producers, and not simply consumers, of knowledge. Students who are able to produce and construct knowledge from the world around them have a greater, more complex, understanding of the world than do students who simply learn only when taught by others. Other researchers, such as Smolkin and Donovan (2002), Reading Study Group (2002), Morrow (2001), National Institute of Health and Human Development (2000), Robinson, Ross, and Neal (2000), Gambrell and Mazzoni (1999), Gambrell (1996), Ehri (1995), and Durst and Newell (1989) conducted similar

studies, and these studies corroborated Oyster's (1996) findings. In all of these studies the common finding was that in social situations, in this case read aloud sessions, children's cognition was shaped by adult responses to children's verbal contributions. The richness and quality of the adults' responses produced language outcomes in the children which varied in relation to the adult input.

Sipe (2000a) focused on the students during read aloud sessions in a classroom setting. He conducted a qualitative study as a participant observer with first and second graders to see if their literacy understanding could be increased via a teacher reading aloud. Over the course of seven months, in a single class of first and second graders, in a Midwestern working-class school, Sipe observed one teacher conducting read aloud sessions. Clear routines characterized the read aloud sessions. The teacher previewed and selected narrative picture books with the students' interests in mind; additionally, the teacher always had a specific teaching objective. The teacher read the texts in an interactive manner, encouraging children to talk and discuss the story at anytime during the read aloud sessions. Sipe took field notes and audio recorded the read aloud sessions. After transcribing the recordings, he analyzed the data. Analysis began after the first observation and continued in a continuous, recursive, and interactive manner after each subsequent observation.

From this comprehensive analysis, five categories emerged that characterized the children's literacy understanding. The first category was *analytical responses*. These responses stayed within the text as a cultural product produced by authors. The second category was *intertextuality*. Sipe used this category whenever children made associative, analytical, and synthetic links in order to make generalizations and conclusions about the

text in reference to other texts, movies, or television programs. The third category was *personal understanding of the text*. Responses in this category were characterized by connections to personal experiences that happened outside of, but in connection with, the text. *Transparent* response was the fourth category and occurred when children talked back to the text as if they were a part of it. (For example, when the wolf is about to eat Little Red Riding Hood, the children cry out to Little Red Riding Hood to run away.) In the fifth category, *performative*, children actually manipulated the text. (Sipe 2000a, 2000b).

Sipe (2000a, 2000b) concluded much like Oyler (1996) that what the teacher does during a read aloud session influences children's responses and interactions. An interactive and collaborative style of reading aloud allows children to demonstrate "impressive literary critical abilities" (2000a, p. 273). Thus, student response and activity during read aloud sessions can be rich and can, potentially, impact literacy growth if students are nurtured by the teacher's expert interactions with the text.

In a follow up study by Sipe and Bauer (2001), the kindergarten teacher (Bauer) and the researcher (Sipe) together examined oral responses to fantasy picture storybooks using Sipe's five categories of literacy understanding (Sipe 2000a). In their study, Sipe and Bauer wanted to see how often these student response categories occurred during interactive reading aloud sessions in a novel setting. They used the same naturalistic approach as a participant observer, just as Sipe had done in his previous study. However, for this study, Sipe was in Bauer's urban kindergarten class of 26 students.

Sipe and Bauer (2001) applied Sipe's (2000a) previously developed theory of literacy understanding to this group of children. Sipe's data collection methods were

identical to those used in his previous study. From the new data set he coded the students' interactions into the same five response categories. *Analytical responses* occurred the most frequently, 75% of the time. These responses took the form of several sub-categories: making meaning of narratives, analysis of illustrations, and analysis of story language. The second most frequent response was *intertextual*, accounting for 11% of the responses. Children in this category made connections to prior texts, video, or television programming. *Personal connections* came in a very close third and accounted for 10% of the responses. In these responses, children made connections between their own lives and literature. Only 3% of the responses fell into the fourth category, which Sipe (2000a) labeled *transparent* (talking to a character in the text). Finally, the fifth category, which accounted for 1% of the responses, was *performative* (children literally moving in reaction to events in the story). Sipe and Bauer concluded the children's responses showed they were psychologically involved in the stories they heard. For example, the children not only shouted out to the main characters to warn them of impending danger, but the children also shared their personal connections to the story. These responses moved well beyond surface-level responses characterized by simple teacher-directed questioning.

Sipe and Bauer (2001) also concluded that children need to build *cultural capital*, a knowledge base that is highly valued by the dominant class. Children who are lacking in cultural capital are often at a severe disadvantage for succeeding in school because school instruction is traditionally oriented around the values of those in power. Sipe also concluded that interacting with the text and engaging children during read aloud sessions has the potential to build cultural capital while connecting texts to the students' lives.

Previous studies by Fawson and Fawson (1994) and Pressley (1998) came to similar conclusions.

In a follow-up study of 74 kindergarten, first, and second graders Sipe and McGuire (2006) found that students are resistant to stories that they are unfamiliar with or that are dissimilar to versions that students already know. Sipe and McGuire (2006) found that teachers can use the resistance of the students to help students generate a deeper level of comprehension and thoughtful interpretation of the texts that are read aloud. Thus, a teacher's reaction to the student's actions/activity (in this case student resistance) can foster the development of "critical readers rather than passive consumers of texts" (p. 12).

Characteristics of Text and Reading Aloud

The third central element of a CIRA session is the text that is read aloud by the teacher to the students. This element is equal in importance to teacher practice and student activity. Text can actually work as the "knowledgeable other" that Vygotsky (1978) describes. Once children can decode and comprehend text on their own, then they can extract meaning from a text much as if the text itself were a knowledgeable other that interacted with each child at the child's independent reading level. However, with emergently literate children, such as kindergarteners, the teacher's role is crucial to the formation of the student's capability to learn from a text and to build the cultural capital previously mentioned. The teacher reads the text aloud and assists the child in translating the text into the spoken word in order to unlock the knowledgeable other of the text. As students build up their cultural capital, their accessibility to the information contained in

future texts will grow. This newly developed accessibility will enhance the student's ability to create their own knowledgeable other out of the subsequent texts that they read.

In order to maximize engagement, text used during CIRA sessions should be purposively selected by the teacher at the appropriate listening level of the students. Furthermore, both the students' interests and backgrounds and the literacy skills and content to be taught should be seriously considered. Donovan, Smolkin, and Lomax (2000) studied first-grade students of varying independent reading levels. The researchers wanted to know which books students chose for recreational reading, why they selected them, and what the reading levels of the texts were compared to the independent reading levels of the students. The researchers observed first-grade students choosing texts for recreational reading. They observed the students reading their books and took field notes. After the recreational reading time had concluded, the researchers asked the students probing questions to determine why they had selected the texts. The researchers compared the books' reading level with the students' independent reading levels.

From the data they collected, Donovan, Smolkin, and Lomax (2000) found that students selected books above their reading level 50 percent of the time when selecting storybooks and 75 percent of the time when selecting expository texts. Based on the researchers' observations, in most cases the children appeared to be motivated and engaged with the books during recreational reading times even if they could not successfully decode the texts. The children reported that when they selected their books, they were primarily concerned with how interesting the books were and not how difficult they were to read. High interest texts were more appealing to readers than easier books of minimal interest.

Donovan, Smolkin, and Lomax (2000) believed that children in the study were drawn to more difficult books because typical emergent literacy materials are not very stimulating. These easy, limited vocabulary texts are appropriate and necessary for guided reading when decoding is the priority. Using texts with limited vocabulary during guided reading activities can be beneficial during the emergent stage of literacy because students can decode them independently. Thus, they feel successful. The researchers recommended that emergent reader classrooms need to have a wide variety of high quality narrative and expository texts in order to build students' prior knowledge and match their interests. Limiting children to a diet of easy books is not advisable because "students transcend the frustration level when the text is of high interest" (Donovan, Smolkin, & Lomax, 2000, p.126). More complex texts lend themselves to higher order questioning and reasoning strategies. Emergent readers cannot decode these texts alone, yet are highly motivated by them. Thus, interactive reading aloud sessions are a good way to motivate students to see the potential benefit of selecting more difficult texts to read; with the teacher acting as a facilitator, the students enjoy the choice of a more difficult text.

Donovan, Smolkin, and Lomax (2000) concluded that emergent readers should be allowed to select books above their independent reading level during recreational reading times because allowing students time during the instructional day to read independently from texts is one part of a balanced literacy program. Exclusively reading texts that are too difficult, however, is ineffective in building independent reading comprehension. In the CIRA model, students do not select texts. The teacher does. However, the teacher selects texts with the students' interests and listening levels in mind in order to increase

motivation and engagement during the reading, thus enhancing the quality of the interactions among students, teacher, and text.

Along the same lines researchers have found that interactions among teacher, students and text are of a higher quality when the texts are selected to reflect the backgrounds of the students. Via non-participant observations in first-grade classrooms, Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, and Johnson (2007) found that low SES students made more and more sophisticated connections to texts that reflected their backgrounds than they did to those texts that were further removed from their backgrounds. Thus, the researchers concluded that teachers should strive to make sure the texts selected for read alouds and other literacy activities are varied and reflect the diversity in their classrooms. Dowhower and Eagle (1998), Hall (2008), Hinton-Johnson and Dickinson (2005), Kletzien and Dreher (2004), Morrow (1992), Simcock and DeLoache (2006), and Van Kraayenoord and Paris (1996) have also conducted research that led them to similar conclusions.

Studies show that children need to be read to from a variety of text structures and genres. In various studies, different terms are used to explain the same types of texts. Most consistently, researchers use the term “narrative” for texts that have a story grammar containing such elements as setting, characters, and plot. Sometimes narrative text structure is referred to as stories, picture books, or storybooks. Narrative text structure can be fiction or non-fiction and can address a variety of genres such as historical fiction, fantasy, or legends. Exposition is another type of text structure. According to Chambliss and Calfee (1998), these texts are written to inform, argue/persuade, or explain. There is no story grammar in expository texts. Expository

texts can be characterized by features such as bolding, headings, and indexes. For the purpose of my study I will use the term “expository” to refer to informational text, arguments, and explanations.

Pappas (1993) wanted to explore the assumption that narratives (text with characters, plot, conflict and resolution) are somehow innate in a child’s ability to understand and compose stories. To investigate this belief Pappas conducted an experimental study with 20 kindergarteners from two classes in a suburban Midwest school. The participants were 10 boys and 10 girls from working- and middle-class families. The researcher read one-on-one to the children three times during the year. Each set of three sessions consisted of a narrative and expository text being read to each child. None of the children in the study could read independently, so they were asked to pretend to read the text for the researcher. The researcher repeated this procedure the next day using the same texts.

The texts were parsed into clause units called t-units. These units were then used to analyze the children’s pretend reading of the books. The researcher transcribed the recorded sessions and analyzed the content of the children’s pretend readings based on the t-units parsed from the actual texts.

Pappas’ (1993) analysis revealed that the children were equally successful in sustaining the text structures of either narrative or expository texts in their pretend readings. The children used a variety of strategies and actually improved their use of these strategies over the course of the three intervention sessions. The children understood the two worlds of text, and they were not only successful in pretend

re-readings of the expository books, but they also actually appeared to enjoy these retellings the most.

Pappas (1993) concluded that narrative text structures are not innate in young learners. It is simply the case that children are usually exposed to narrative text structures far more often than they are exposed to expository text structures. As a result, beginning readers are more adept at incorporating familiar narrative structure into their oral retelling and their eventual writing. Pappas believes we have underestimated emergently literate children's sensitivity to different text structures and to written language in general. She concluded that teachers need to use a wide variety of genres and text structures in order to make sure that children are equally adept at learning from multiple genres and text structures.

Similarly, Smolkin and Donovan (2002) conducted a qualitative study with emergent and struggling first-grade readers in a public school. The researchers focused on comprehension acquisition by using expository texts for interactive readings. The researchers conducted their study at two different schools in the same school district over the course of two years. The first year's study was conducted at a school on a military base with students from lower middle-class backgrounds, and the second year's study took place at a school with children from upper middle-class backgrounds. Over the course of the two years, the researchers observed a first-grade teacher reading aloud during twice-daily, whole-class reading aloud sessions. The teacher selected and read narrative-type texts. The teacher also read six expository texts that the researchers selected.

Smolkin and Donovan (2002) took field notes and audio taped the reading aloud sessions. They transcribed, coded, and analyzed the conversations between the teachers and students and found that the reading of expository texts resulted in more in-depth discussions of concepts and topics. In addition, by reading expository texts teachers more fully supported students' reasoning abilities. Smolkin and Donovan found that the conversations occurring during exposition read alouds were more complex and included higher order comprehension than the conversations occurring during narrative read alouds. The narrative conversations centered more on aesthetics than on critically thinking about what was read. The adult and child conversations appeared much different within these two different text structures owing to the diverging functions of the two structures.

Smolkin and Donovan (2002) concluded that first-grade children are not able to decode text independently, fast enough, or at a high enough level in order to gain in-depth comprehension of complex texts, either narrative or expository. Thus, Smolkin and Donovan recommended that teachers read aloud a variety of text structures and model expert meaning making, reasoning, and comprehension process strategies, so young readers can use these skills in developing their independent reading abilities. Implications from this study, especially for boys and for emergent and struggling readers, suggest that the most important instructional elements are teacher-student interaction, teacher awareness of the text structures and content to be explained, and adequate time for in-depth reading.

Smolkin and Donovan's conclusions (2002) and subsequent study (2003) support the earlier work of Oyler and Barry (1996). Oyler and Barry studied in-class, whole-class

expository text read alouds in an urban Chicago first-grade classroom. They found that interactions during the oral reading of expository text led to more student initiation and creation of intertextual connections than did the reading of narratives. They concluded, much like Pappas (1993), that expository text read alouds help children make connections across a variety of texts. This variety of interactive encounters with different texts helped to develop important knowledge and reading strategies. Oyler and Barry (1996) concluded that teachers need to acknowledge that intertextual connections can be a good way to connect students to the greater community of shared understandings and reading pleasure. This conclusion supports Sipe's (2000a) notion of the importance of students obtaining cultural capital.

Duke and Kays (1998) examined this central question: What do children know about the language of exposition at two points in time? They studied 20 students (10 girls and 10 boys) in a New England classroom. All of the students spoke English fluently, and their mean age was 5.7 years. All but 3 qualified for free lunch; 6 students were Latino, 5 were African American, 5 were Haitian, and 4 were White. The researchers pre-tested these emergently literate students by having them "read" aloud from an expository text by looking at the pictures in the text. These readings were audio-taped. The researchers then read expository books aloud to the students three to four times a week. After three months, the children repeated the pretest using a different expository text.

Duke and Kays (1998) analyzed the transcripts of the pretest and the posttest "readings" by coding and then counting the different language patterns. They concluded that reading expository books did help students learn differences in the structural characteristics of narrative and expository writing. After three months of being read

expository texts, the children used twice as many “timeless” expressions. This meant they started talking about what “happens” rather than what happened in the past or will be happening in the future. The students more frequently referenced the book topic and used more expository-text-like beginnings and more comparative and classificatory language at the end of the study compared to the beginning. All of the children also used more generic language, which is another hallmark of expository text.

Duke and Kays (1998) discussed the implications of this study for teachers of young children. Based on their findings, they suggested that the inclusion of exposition in the early years of schooling may be well-advised: children can benefit from the chance to explore expository texts. Finally, they noted that children were not only capable of interacting with expository texts, but that, as readers, they actually enjoyed doing so.

As I have shown, abundant evidence exists which suggests that it is necessary for children to be exposed to a wide variety of text genres and structures in order for them to be able to deconstruct these various genres and structures. Duke (2000) found that exposition was not prevalent in the first-grade classrooms she studied. Duke answered these questions: How much exposure to and experience with exposition is offered to students in their crucial first-grade year? What kinds of experiences are offered? Her study examined the nature and degree of expository text experiences offered to children in 20 first-grade classes in different SES settings in Boston. She randomly selected 10 classes from the highest and 10 classes from the lowest SES districts in Boston. The low SES classrooms were ethnically diverse, while the high SES classes were mostly white. Duke visited each class for four full days throughout the school year. She field-noted the

texts she saw in each classroom. She did not require that she see the texts being used; texts were counted if she simply saw them.

Duke (2000) coded each text for text type or genre, with the text's function and linguistic features considered. She counted and coded a total of 6,023 pieces of displayed print and 18,393 books and magazines in class libraries (12,160 were coded for genre) over the course of the study. Duke discovered an overall scarcity of expository texts in all classrooms, with the scarcity being most acute in low-SES classrooms. On average, only 2.6% of the displayed print met the definition of "expository text" used in the study (a non-narrative text structure used to explain or persuade). After further examination Duke discovered there was a difference in the amount of displayed exposition: 1.5% for low SES schools versus 3.6% for high SES schools. Classroom libraries in high SES classrooms contained nearly twice the number of expository texts as their lower SES counterparts, both in raw numbers (738 versus 449) and in proportion (12.7% versus 6.9%). High SES classes enrolled an average of four fewer students per class, which meant there were also more expository texts per student.

Overall, classes spent an average of 3.6 minutes per day with expository text. Low SES students spent even less time, on average, than their high SES counterparts (1.9% versus 3.8%). Seven out of the 20 classes visited spent no observable time with expository text on the days they were visited. Subsequently, Duke has argued that expository texts should be brought into primary grade classrooms in order to support literacy development (Duke, Bennett-Armistead & Roberts, 2003). Other researchers have supported this finding (Dreher, 2003; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007).

Conclusion

The numerous studies reviewed in this chapter support the central importance to literacy development of the three elements of my CIRA model Teacher practice, student activity, and text (Figure 1) are distinctive and important components of successful literacy development. However, in my comprehensive review of the literature I failed to discover any naturalistic studies conducted in kindergarten classrooms that examined how all three of these elements work together, during whole class interactive reading aloud sessions, to teach literacy skills and kindergarten content. I turn now to chapter 3 where, applying the analytical lens of my CIRA model, I will describe my methodology for studying the interrelationship of teacher practice, student activity, and text during whole class interactive reading aloud sessions in kindergarten.

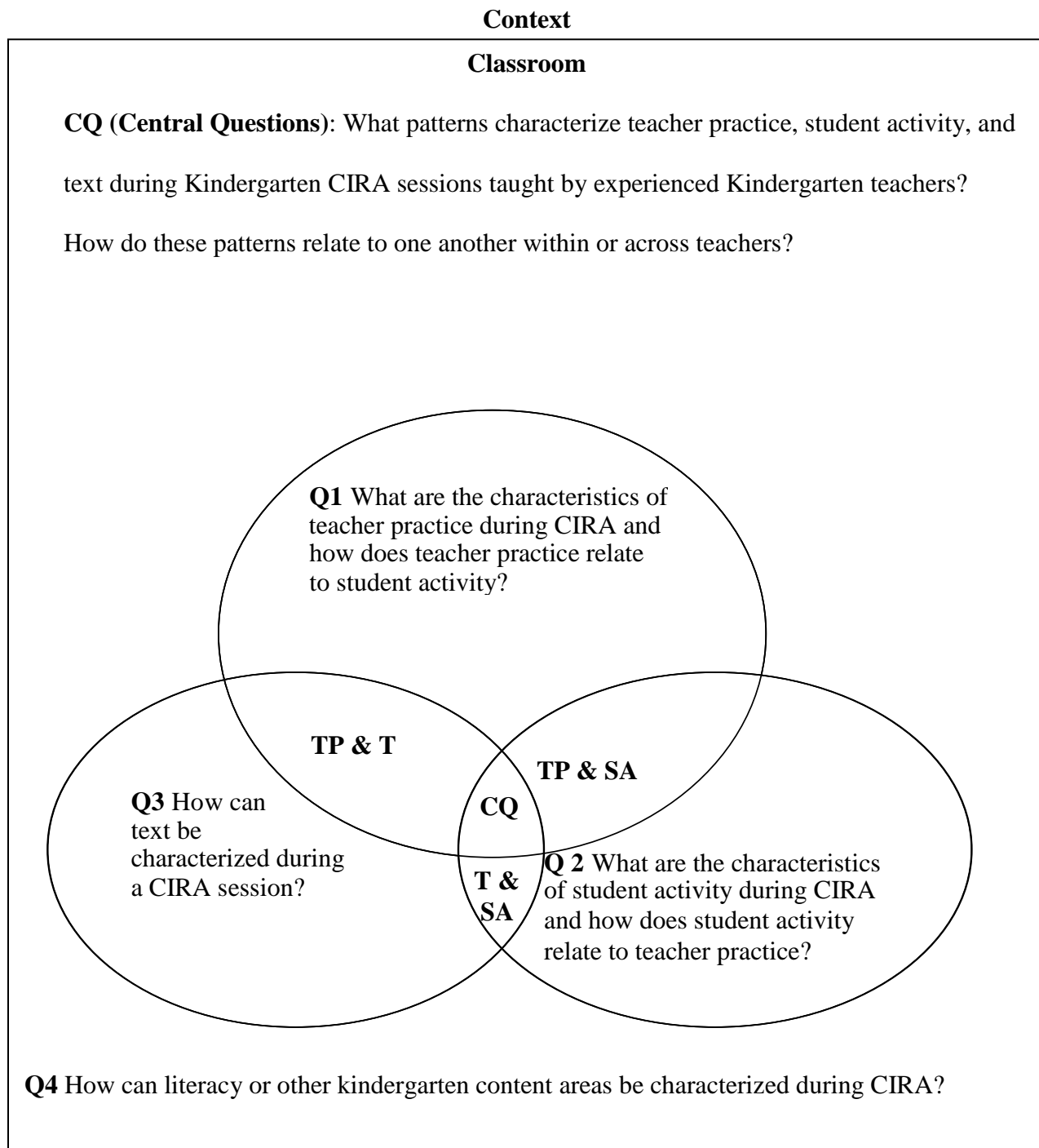
Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of my dissertation is to understand how four kindergarten teachers use whole class interactive reading aloud sessions during planned periods of instruction in their classrooms. In order to study whole class interactive reading aloud sessions, I conducted individual and collective case studies to build a complex, holistic picture (Creswell, 1998; Meloy, 2002; Nolen, 2001; Sipe & Ghiso 2004) that describes, illuminates, and brings understanding to this practice. I defined whole class interactive reading aloud (CIRA) sessions in detail in chapter 1. Simply stated a CIRA session is a planned portion of the kindergarten instructional day when a classroom teacher reads a text aloud in an interactive manner to a kindergarten class (Figure 1). During CIRA the teacher relates and reacts to the students with whom she is reading as well as to the text from which she is reading. The teacher pre-plans this instructional period and has specific goals, either in the area of literacy or kindergarten content. I used the Kindergarten CIRA model as a lens in order to gain a greater understanding of how teacher practice, student activity and text work together during these planned interactive reading aloud sessions.

Figure 5 illustrates how my central questions and sub-questions fit in the CIRA model. In the following sections, I describe the participants of my study, the measures I used, and my procedures for data collection and data analysis.

Figure 5
Kindergarten Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) Questions



TP & T = Teacher Practice and Text, TP & SA = Teacher Practice and Student Activity,
T & SA = Text and Student Activity

Gaining Access

At the time of the study I was the Professional Development School (PDS) Coordinator for the Early Childhood program at the University of Maryland, College Park. Refer to Appendix A for a complete job description. I have been in this position since Fall 2003.

My duties include teaching Reading Methods I and II and administering the year-long internship for seniors. The year-long internship takes place in a finite network of public schools. I work closely with a liaison from the district office, principals, and professional development teachers to secure mentors for the interns and to assure that all aspects of the internship run smoothly. I spend approximately 30% of my time out at PDS sites observing interns, meeting with mentors or principals, conducting mentor trainings, and other miscellaneous duties. I have become very familiar with each of my PDS schools.

Scholarly qualitative research is characterized by thick description that is used to provide descriptions with a high level of detail in order to build rich case studies (Creswell, 1998). In order to obtain thick description a researcher needs to achieve *data saturation*. Data saturation is achieved at a point when a further number of participants or observations do not yield new data (Creswell, 1998; Nolen, 2001). I found in my pilot study (Appendix K) that studying four teachers led to data saturation. I discovered strong patterns across the four teachers whom I studied. They were from schools with very different characteristics (e.g., SES populations). There were strong common patterns across teachers, but the strongest patterns existed among teachers who were from schools with similar characteristics. Therefore for this dissertation study, I limited the selection of

schools to the Professional Development School Network that I work with and the four schools that I selected within the network were demographically quite similar. Thus, I expected that patterns, if they existed, would be clearly prevalent across the practice of four teachers. The context of the study potentially would have the same influence on all of the teachers because the context of all four schools was very similar. Based on the results of the pilot study, fewer teachers might not have yielded sufficient data to define patterns, and more than four teachers might not have been necessary in order to find patterns.

To make initial contact, I set up a meeting with the PDS liaison from the district office after I secured the approval of my research from the University's Institutional Review Board. I have worked with this liaison over the past four years in my role as PDS Coordinator. At our meeting I explained my study in detail. He gave me permission to contact the principals at my PDS sites in order to explain my study and to secure participating teachers. If the principals gave me permission, no other permission would be necessary at the district level. I contacted the principals at four of the schools where I work and set up individual meetings with each of them to explain my study and to secure an experienced kindergarten teacher for participation. Within a week of meeting with the district liaison representative I had met with the four principals; each principal, in the course of our discussion, identified for me a potential participating teacher at her school. I believe that I gained quick access in all four schools because I had an established relationship with each of the principals due to my work as a PDS coordinator. They knew and respected me and did not hesitate to give their permission.

For the purpose of this dissertation study the principal at each school site became my gatekeeper (Creswell, 1998). A gatekeeper is someone who has knowledge about the potential participants and the authority to allow the researcher, in this case me, to contact them. Together with the principals, I purposefully selected teachers for CIRA observations based on their years of teaching experience, on their reputation for being competent early literacy teachers, as well as on their overall reputation of being experienced and competent kindergarten teachers (Creswell, 1998). All four teachers were experienced kindergarten teachers whose students routinely met kindergarten benchmarks and expectations at the end of the instructional year. The principals at the participating schools are knowledgeable about these kindergarten teachers' abilities, especially in the area of language arts, an area which routinely included planned sessions of whole class interactive reading aloud. The principals selected teachers whose students typically progressed satisfactorily in the areas of math and reading as a measure of teacher effectiveness. The 2002 *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) requires student testing to assure that students are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). NCLB does not require AYP data until the students are in third grade. However, while I was preparing for this dissertation proposal, I discovered that the district where I conducted my research requires all teachers, starting in kindergarten, to collect assessment data in the areas of reading and math at least quarterly. These assessment measures are criterion based and are not standardized test measures.

The teachers selected for participation in this study all have students who are achieving AYP in both reading and math based on the district's expectations. The principals secured the kindergarten AYP data for me. Since I will not be reporting

individual student or teacher scores, there is not a problem of confidentiality. In fact, this information is available to the general public; schools report their AYP results on their information websites. The principals also selected teachers who had taught for a minimum of two years at the kindergarten level and who were tenured or on track to becoming tenured. In order to become tenured, teachers must demonstrate a level of acceptable competence.

I purposively did not select inexperienced teachers, or teachers whom the principals did not recommend as strong kindergarten and/or literacy teachers, because I wanted to know I would be observing good teaching. Once each principal and I had identified a potential participating teacher, the principal then contacted that teacher to see if she showed interest in participating in my study. Based on my experience as a former kindergarten teacher and administrator, and after conducting the first observation of each of the four participating teachers, I agreed fully with the recommendations of the principals.

In all cases the first teacher each principal recommended agreed to participate. In my role as PDS Coordinator I do not evaluate the teachers who mentor student interns in any way, so my presence in the classroom could not be considered evaluative. Also, even though I had not worked directly with the participating teachers, I had worked directly with many of their colleagues, and I have established a positive relationship with most, if not all, mentor teachers. I suspect that my reputation in the schools alleviated the participating teachers' fears of me and increased their comfort level with me. I believe that although I did not know the teachers in the study personally before commencing my study, the teachers all knew of me (and my reputation) and thus could make up their

minds quickly. I believe they all considered participation in my study an honor and a compliment to their teaching ability.

After I secured participating teachers, I did not discuss the study further with the principals. At no time did any principal ask for my observation schedule, ask about how my study was going, or ask what a teacher had done during any of the observations.

After the principals identified potential kindergarten teacher participants I contacted the potential teacher participants to arrange individual meetings. Table 1 lists the dates of these initial informational interviews. At these meetings, I described the study in detail and answered questions. I made it clear that the teacher was in no way obligated to participate in the study, and that each of them could discontinue participation at any time. I assured the potential participating teachers their identity would remain anonymous at all times, including for this dissertation and any subsequent articles or presentations that I might make based on the data collected. I did not take field notes or record this first meeting with each teacher because the purpose of this initial contact was to explain the study and gain consent, not to gather data.

Table 1

Dates of Initial Teacher Interviews

Teacher	Day	Date
Emery	Friday	1/19/07
Torben	Thursday	1/18/07
Ragner	Thursday	1/18/07
Dubbury	Friday	1/19/07

Participants

The participants for my dissertation included schools, teachers and classes. I studied four kindergarten teachers from one school system. By confining my study to a single school system, any differences I found were likely due to individual teacher differences and not due to system-wide differences such as reading programs, textbook adoptions, or staff development in the area of literacy instruction. As I will explain in detail, for the purpose of this dissertation I selected participants with characteristics as similar as possible in order to maximize the possibility that I would discover patterns. If my spectrum of participants had been too broad, I might have found only differences and no patterns among and between participating teachers.

Throughout this dissertation I refer to the participating teachers and their schools with a pseudonym. The pseudonym is known only to me and is not associated with the name of the participating teacher, or school, in order to assure anonymity.

Schools

As I have already explained, I selected schools within the Professional Development School Network in which I work. The schools in my PDS network are all located in the same district school system. This system is located in a Mid-Atlantic state and encompasses urban, suburban, and rural areas. As strongly suggested by the State Department of Education, the schools in the PDS network are broadly characterized as schools with at-risk populations as evidenced by high numbers of English Learners (EL), high Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) rates, and substantial levels of Title 1 funding. The rationale is that PDS activities support the schools and students who need such activities the most. The schools in my PDS network all fit these state guidelines and are

in an urban area of the district school system. Table 2 displays the characteristics of the schools where the participating teachers were employed.

Table 2

School Site Characteristics

School	Enrollment	Kindergarten Enrollment	Special Education	English Learners	FARMS	Mobility	AYP	Title I
Evanston	244 (K-2)	56	9.8%	37.7%	64.8%	35.6%	yes	yes
Thomas	416 (K-2)	122	4.8%	16.8%	32.5%	12.7%	yes	no
Dorchester	453 (K-5)	82	13.7%	8.4%	28%	17.8%	yes	no
Rasmussen	515 (K-5)	78	7.2%	41.6%	77.7%	39.1%	yes	yes
District	137,745			10.6%	24.7%			

Dorchester and Rasmussen Elementary Schools are K-5 schools, and Evanston and Thomas Elementary Schools are K-2 schools. Evanston and Thomas Elementary Schools are paired in the district with schools that serve 3rd through 5th grade students. Evanston Elementary School is moving away from this primary grade model and will be moving to a K-5 configuration over the next several school years. According to Table 2, the percentage of students receiving FARMS in each of the four participating schools is above the percentage of the district as a whole. Evanston and Rasmussen Elementary Schools receive Title 1 funds and have the highest FARMS rates of the four schools as well as the highest numbers of EL students and the highest percentage of students who move in and out of the school during the school year (the mobility rate). Thomas

Elementary School had higher FARMS and EL numbers five years ago; however, the neighborhood the school is in has been gentrifying, and the school demographics have shifted to a more middle-class population with fewer EL students. Each school has been making AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) as required by *No Child Left Behind* (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). In spite of the risk factors associated with high numbers of EL and FARMS students, these schools are succeeding.

Table 3

Ethnicity by School Site

School	African			
	American	Asian	Hispanic	White
Evanston	57%	9.8%	20.1%	13.1%
Thomas	34.4%	6.3%	15.1%	44.2%
Dorchester	30.7 %	9.5%	13.2%	46.1%
Rasmussen	15.7%	11.7%	62.7%	9.9%
District	22.9%	15.2%	21.5%	40.1%

Table 3 shows the ethnicity of the students by school site. The student body at all four schools is diverse. Rasmussen Elementary has a higher number of Hispanic students. Evanston, Thomas and Dorchester Elementary Schools fall below the district average. White students are the slight majority at Thomas and Dorchester Elementary Schools. Evanston, Thomas and Dorchester Elementary Schools have higher numbers of African American students than the district average.

Teachers

For the purpose of this dissertation I wanted to study four teachers at four different schools. Teachers at the same school tend to collaborate and use the same instructional materials and methods. By studying teachers from the same school district, but from different schools, I was able to attribute similarities and differences to individual teaching styles rather than to the curriculum and materials adopted across the school system. Also, conducting my study at four different sites reduced the chances that the participating teachers would talk to each other and possibly contaminate my findings (Meltzoff, 2001).

Table 4 presents the characteristics of the four participating teachers. All are white females. One had earned a Master's degree, two had Master's *equivalents* (equivalents are earned by taking staff development classes offered within the district school system and are recognized only by that district), and the fourth teacher was in the process of earning a Master's degree. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 25 to four years and the number of years in kindergarten from 12 years to two. Ms. Dubbury had the fewest years of experience teaching overall as well as in kindergarten. However, I found her to be a very skilled teacher in spite of her limited experience in kindergarten.

I have not identified my participating teachers to anyone and have not discussed my study in my role as Professional Development Coordinator. To my knowledge the four participating teachers remain unknown to one another and have at no time discussed my study.

Table 4

Teacher Characteristics

Teacher	Ethnicity	Gender	Years teaching	Years in K	Years at site	Education
Emery	white	female	25	12	10	MA equivalency
Torben	white	female	9	3	3	Leadership BS
Dubbury	white	female	4	2	1	education MA
Ragner	white	female	10	10	7	equivalency

Classes

My unit of analysis for my dissertation study is the teacher. Since I am not collecting data on students I was not required by IRB, the school district in which the study was conducted, the school principals, or the participating teachers to obtain parental permission for this study. As I stated earlier, I did not directly select groups of students for my study. I purposely selected only the *teachers* who I wanted to study, basing my selection criteria on the teachers' experience at the kindergarten level and on their reputation for proficiency both as kindergarten teachers and as reading teachers.

Table 5

Class Characteristics

Class	Special	English	African	Asian	Hispanic	White		
size	Boys	Girls	Education	Learners	American	Asian	Hispanic	White
		Ms. Emery	at	Evanston	School			
14	8	6	1	5	6	5	3	0
			7%	37%	42%	36%	21%	0%
		Ms. Torben	at	Thomas	School			
15	9	6	1	4	4	2	2	7
			6%	27%	27%	13%	13%	47%
		Ms. Dubbury	at	Dorchester	School			
15	8	7	0	3	5	3	1	6
			0%	21%	33.3%	20%	6%	40%
		Ms. Ragner	at	Rasmussen	School			
16	10	6	1	9	1	2	12	1
			6%	56%	6.2%	12.5%	75%	6.2%

Table 5 shows the characteristics of the classes I observed. Class size was about the same in all four class rooms. All of the schools in my study, due to FARMS and EL

rates and/or Title 1 status, qualified for funds that lowered class size to a maximum of 15 students. This number was below the district average for kindergarten class size. Ms. Ragner was one student over the mandated class size of 15.

Table 5 also illustrates the percent of identified Special Education students in each of the classrooms. Ms. Emery, Ms. Torben and Ms. Ragner had only one identified Special Education student, and Ms. Dubbury had none. This rate is below the school average (see Table 3). This is typical because in order to be identified for special education services students need to show a two-year discrepancy between their ability and their achievement. Kindergarteners who are placed in regular education settings rarely have the achievement gap necessary in order to be placed in special education. The kindergarten year is often the time when students with learning disabilities are first recognized and the testing process begins.

Finally, Table 5 illustrates the ethnic make up of the classes. Ms. Torben and Ms. Ragner roughly have the same percentage ethnic make up as the school as a whole (see Table 3). Ms. Emery and Ms. Dubbury have roughly the same percentage ethnic make up as the school as a whole with the exception of Asian and Hispanic students. I believe that this is related to the fact that all teachers have about equal or higher rates of EL students in their classes. In the formal exit interviews, all of the teachers stated that they were often given EL students over their colleagues due to their expertise as kindergarten teachers overall and especially due to their work with EL students. According to all of the teachers, the EL students are predominately Spanish speaking students from Central America.

Materials

The following sections outline the materials I used to collect data. These materials include the Teacher Information Sheet (Appendix B), Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log (Appendix F), and two observation measures I created for my study: the CIRA Observation Protocol (Appendix G) and the Whole Class Interactive Read Aloud Transcript Counts Sheet (Appendix H).

Teacher Information Sheet

During the initial interview of my four participating teachers (see Table 1 for dates), I gave each participating teacher a copy of the Teacher Information Sheet (Appendix B). I collected this sheet at the final formal interview of each individual teacher that was conducted after the four observations. Using this sheet, I collected information on the teacher's educational background, number of years teaching (overall and in kindergarten), years at present school, prior experience outside of teaching, experience/training in emergent literacy/reading, and experience/training related specifically to interactive reading aloud. I did not use the teachers' names on this sheet in order to protect their identity. I assigned each teacher a code that was used on this and all other materials that I used in my study.

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log

At the time of my initial interview with each of the teachers, I gave each participating teacher a Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log (Appendix F) for each of the four months of the study. In addition I gave them a Text Characteristics Guide (Appendix C) and a Text Characteristics Guide Glossary (Appendix D) that I developed in order to make sure that all of the participating teachers characterized the

texts using the same terms and the same definitions of these terms. I adapted the Text Characteristics Glossary from the HQT protocol glossary and *A Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms* (Harris & Hodges, 1989). I also consulted district curriculum guides and professional development materials to make sure the language I used in the definitions was in alignment with what the participating teachers used. The participating teachers recorded the books that they used for their daily interactive reading aloud sessions during the four-month observation period. They only included books for instructional time that was characterized as CIRA and not for other times they read a book (e.g., during math, science, or social studies instruction, or as activity to fill unexpected time before lunch or prior to going home).

Measures

Appendix G is the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol I developed. This observation protocol was influenced extensively by the protocols used in the High Quality Teaching (HQT) study at the University of Maryland, College Park (Valli, Croninger, Alexander, Chambliss, Graeber & Price, 2006). As a graduate assistant, I helped with the creation and use of the HQT protocols. I also assisted with the development of the glossary for HQT, writing some of the definitions. All HQT observers had to know the glossary and the protocol items well. Before becoming part of the team that collected data in classrooms, I initially had to pass criterion on use of the protocol, applying it to videotapes of classroom instruction. Additionally, once a semester I co-coded an observation with an expert to check for inter-rater reliability, and participated in bi-weekly meetings with other observers to resolve any problems and to counteract observer drift.

I judged these protocols, with modifications I made both before the study and through the data analysis process, to be well-suited for recording and coding data to answer my research questions. The modifications I made were based on my experience and knowledge of kindergarten literacy curriculum as well as on my findings from my pilot study. The HQT measures were developed to be used in fourth and fifth grade classrooms. I eliminated from the HQT protocol indicators that were not relevant to kindergarten in general and to literacy in particular. Conversely, I added indicators that I needed in order to cover all aspects of CIRA. For example, I added the Student Activity code *Act Out Text* because unlike older students kindergarteners are sometimes asked or spontaneously act out the text as it is being read. Another example is the section on Session Content. I added codes for content such as *Concepts of Print, Letter Identification*, and *Sight Words* because this content is present in kindergarten and not usually taught in fourth and fifth grade.

Appendix I is the glossary for my Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol (Appendix G). This protocol glossary was adapted from the HQT protocol glossary. The adaptations I made to the glossary were informed extensively by the findings of my pilot study as well as by my experience as a classroom teacher, PDS Coordinator and university reading instructor. For example, many definitions were written for the context of fourth and fifth grade. I added definitions that are more applicable to kindergarten such as *Concepts of Print, Picture Walk* and *Act Out Text*.

The CIRA Observation Protocol (Appendix G) and CIRA Interactive Reading Aloud Protocol Glossary (Appendix I) answer the central research question: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA

sessions taught by experienced Kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers? To answer sub-questions, the protocol is divided into three sections: Teacher Activity, Student Activity, and Emergent Literacy Skills and/or Kindergarten Content. These sections match sub-questions 1, 2, and 4 (see Figure 5) respectively. Data for sub-question 3—How can text be characterized during a CIRA session?—were not collected with this protocol.

At the end of each observation, when appropriate, I asked the teacher the following questions:

1. How did the session go today?
2. To what extent did my observation today reflect what usually happens during your read aloud sessions?
3. What were your goals and objectives for this read aloud session?
4. (No standard question here, but I would ask specific questions if student interactions/behavior, teacher actions/interactions, or text/context needed any further explanation.)
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

I asked the following questions at the formal interviews:

1. To what extent did my observations reflect what usually happens during your read aloud sessions?
2. What do you see is the purpose of read aloud sessions in your classroom?
3. How do you select the books for interactive reading aloud sessions?

4. What were your goals and objectives for your read aloud sessions? How do these goals and objectives match up with the curriculum that you are required to cover?
5. Does what happens during a read aloud session carry over to the rest of the instructional day? In what way(s)? How frequently does this happen?
6. When do you feel that a read aloud session is particularly successful?
7. (If I had taken notice of any individual student(s) throughout my observations, I asked the following question.) I noticed student A during the session(s). What can you tell me about him/her? Do you make any special accommodations for him/her during an interactive reading aloud session?
8. (If something in the context of the study, e.g., school, governance, or families, seemed particularly salient, I asked questions to gain a better understanding of these characteristics.)
9. Is there something that I haven't asked about read aloud sessions that you would like me to know?

Analytical Tool

I used the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) Observation Protocol (Appendix G) during the observations, and then after all of the observations, to analyze the data collected from the protocols. I used this analysis to create the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) Protocol Transcript Counts (Appendix H). I found that I needed to add indicators to the transcript counts in order to cover all observed characteristics that I had not anticipated before conducting my study. The CIRA Protocol

Transcripts Count is divided into the same sections as the CIRA Observation Protocol (Appendix G) and corresponds to my research questions concerning teacher practice, student activity, emergent literacy, and kindergarten content.

Data Collection Procedures

In the following section, I describe my data collection procedures for the initial informational interview, scheduling, conducting, audio taping, transcribing, and field noting observations of CIRA sessions as well as for the use of the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol and for the field noting of informal interviews and audio taping of formal interviews.

Initial Informational Interview

I conducted an informational interview with each participating teacher before I began my study. Although I did not collect any data at the initial interview (Table 1), I did give the teachers a packet of data collection materials that included the following: Teacher Information Sheet (Appendix B), Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log (Appendix F), Text Characteristic Guide (Appendix C), and the Text Characteristics Glossary (Appendix D). I also obtained a signed consent form at this meeting.

Observations

In this section I describe the process for scheduling and conducting the observations.

Schedule for observations. Qualitative research relies on persistent observations to insure that enough rich data are obtained. These rich data lead to a “thick” description that gives a full and detailed account of the case in point (Creswell, 1998; Goatley, 2000; Nolen, 2001). In order to obtain thick description through persistent observations I

conducted observations of four CIRA sessions of each of the four teachers. At the initial interviews the teachers and I mutually agreed to the dates and times of the observations. I sent a confirmation letter to the teachers in January 2007. It listed the dates and times we had agreed to as well as my contact information in case they needed to reschedule an observation. Table 6 lists the dates and times of each of the 16 observations. I tried to vary the day of the week in order to capture trends across a week of instruction.

I conducted the observations systematically over the course of four consecutive months during the school year within a time frame that allowed for the make-up of any missed observations due to unexpected school closures or absences on the part of the participating teachers. The columns in Table 6 show one observation was conducted for each of four months, January through April; also, each row in Table 6 represents each of the four participating teachers. Conducting all data collection within the time frame of four months helped to control for history, or potential outside influences that could impact the data (Meltzoff, 2001; Nolen, 2001). Although it was necessary only on two occasions, this schedule allowed for any rescheduling due to unforeseen circumstances and assured that the observations were spread evenly across the study's four months. By controlling the observation schedule I also controlled for student maturation and the teachers' increased proficiency.

Table 6

Observation and Formal Interview Schedule

	Emery	Torben	Ragner	Dubbury
Observation	Friday	Tuesday	Monday	Tuesday
#1	1/26/07	1/30/07	1/29/07	1/30/07
Observation	Wednesday	Wednesday	Friday	Tuesday
#2	3/1/07	2/21/07	2/23/07	2/27/07
Observation	Monday	Thursday	Wednesday	Monday
#3	4/25/07	3/22/07	3/21/07	3/26/07
Observation	Wednesday	Wednesday	Tuesday	Thursday
#4	4/25/07	4/18/07	4/22/07	4/26/07
Formal interview	Thursday	Tuesday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	5/10/07	5/22/07	5/8/07	5/8/07

Conducting observations. To control for the observer/Heisenberg effect, which occurs when the researcher's presence influences and affects the subjects' actions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Nolen, 2001), I was a non-participant observer and conducted the observations as discretely and unobtrusively as possible. During the whole class reading aloud session students were seated in the front of the room facing the teacher. I positioned myself behind the students and far enough back so that they became increasingly less aware of my presence and were not tempted to engage me in conversation. However, I was seated close enough that I could always clearly hear both teachers and students.

Because CIRA sessions are not an independent activity where children circulate around the room, reactivity (when the researcher influences and changes the participants' actions) was less likely to occur (Maxwell, 1996). On only one occasion during the 16 observations that I conducted did a student directly acknowledge my presence by talking to me. I redirected the child by putting my finger to my lips as a signal to be quiet and pointed at the teacher. This student immediately directed his attention back to the teacher.

I attribute the lack of attention to my presence to the fact that I am in these schools frequently. Also, these classes always had a lot of adults (ESOL teachers, Special Educators, Instructional Aides, and so on) coming and going or staying to help or observe students. I was just one more person in the continuing parade of adults. The teachers did not change their practice because I was observing. On one occasion I arrived after the teacher had begun her CIRA session; her schedule had been altered during the day by an unexpected assembly. Instead of waiting for me she went ahead as she usually would. We rescheduled the observation for another time

Audio-taping sessions. In order to obtain thick description, I discretely audio taped the CIRA sessions. The kindergarten classes were composed of only 14 to 16 students; during CIRA sessions students were seated directly in front of the teacher, and I was able to place my tape recorder close enough to the teacher and students so I did not have to have the teacher use a microphone. I knew this arrangement would work because I had used the same methodology for my pilot study.

Transcribing audio tapes. I transcribed each audio tape immediately after the observed session, keeping the experience memorable and fresh. I could readily remember

passages that were hard to hear. Over the course of my study, I was able to hear and transcribe all but one teacher and three student utterances.

Field notes. I took field notes during the CIRA sessions with a pencil on a pad of paper. Because I audio taped the sessions, my field noting captured the nonverbal actions of the teacher and students (Emmerson & Neely, 1988).

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol. I used the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) Protocol (Appendix G) to collect data on each of the 16 classroom observations either during or immediately after each observed CIRA

Table 7

Logistical Information Collected from CIRA Protocol

Teacher code

Date of observation

Number of students present during observation

Time of start of observation

Time of end of observation

Did the number of students change over the course of the session?

Note location of students and teacher

session. I collected logistical information for each session, including the date, the start and end time of the observation, the location of the students and teacher for the CIRA session, and how many students participated in the session and if this number changed during the observation (Figure 6). Either during each observation or immediately after I rated each of the indicators in each section of the protocol and associated these ratings

with distinct research questions related to Teacher Practice, Student Practice and Session Content. Based on my observation, and using a 5-point scale, I rated each indicator between 1 (non-existent) and 5 (pervasive).

Interviews

In this section I describe my process for field noting the informal interviews and for conducting formal interviews.

Field noting informal interviews. The participating teachers sometimes had time to chat before and/or after the CIRA sessions. These chats built rapport and trust. The conversations were not extensive, but during this time I gained quite a bit of information. I collected this information, via notes with a pencil and pad of paper, either while chatting or immediately after I left. I believe these data were a valuable addition to the formal interview data that I collected. After only 5 of the 16 observations was I able to ask these questions. The teachers were often very engaged with teaching and were unable to speak with me. I believe this is further evidence that the teachers did not alter their practice due to my presence.

Conducting formal interviews. After the four CIRA observations for each teacher had ended, I conducted individual interviews with each teacher at a mutually acceptable time when the students or other adults were not present (see Table 6). This allowed for the full focus of the interview to be on the interview questions. I audio-taped the interviews and took field notes when necessary to make sure I captured all the information. I included questions that validated what I had observed during my four observations, questions that determined the teacher's personal definition of a whole class interactive reading aloud session, and questions that revealed how the teacher selected

books for a whole class interactive reading aloud session. In addition, I asked an open-ended question to assure that I had captured all the teacher's activities during the whole class interactive reading aloud sessions. I had used similar questions in my pilot study and found them very successful in eliciting useful data.

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log. I collected data to answer sub-question 3 ("How can the text be characterized during a CIRA session?") with the use of the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Book Text Log (Appendix F). At the initial informational interview I provided each teacher with this log and a Text Characteristics Guide Glossary (Appendix D) so that she could characterize the types of texts she selected for CIRA sessions over the course of the study. I asked teachers to record all texts they used for their daily CIRA sessions, not just for the sessions I observed. I read over and discussed the log and log glossary with each of the participating teachers in order to make sure they understood the log definitions. The use of the log and log glossary ensured that all of the teachers characterized the texts in the same way. From these data sheets, I analyzed what the teachers read during whole class interactive reading aloud sessions when I was not present. If I had relied simply on the four days of observation, I might not have had an accurate representation of the texts the teachers used. I collected the CIRA Text Logs from each teacher at the formal interview.

At the time of the final interview I referred the teachers to the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log (Appendix F). I was not able to ask the teachers at the time of the observations why they had selected the texts that they had read, so it was during the formal interview that I asked how they had selected texts for their CIRA sessions.

Teacher information sheet. In order to collect information on the four participating teachers in my study I created the Teacher Information Sheet (Appendix B). This sheet was used to collect demographic information on each teacher, such as educational background, number of years teaching, number of years teaching kindergarten, number of years at their current school, prior experience outside of teaching, experience/training in teaching reading and/or emergent literacy, and experience and/or training directly related to CIRA. I gave the Teacher Information Sheet to the participating teachers at the initial interview and collected it at the formal interview held after the four formal observations of each teacher.

Data Analysis

In this section I explain my process for data analysis. First, I give an overview of my data and how they are linked to each of my research questions. Then, I describe how I analyzed my data, gathered with the following methods: CIRA Protocol (Appendix G); the observation transcripts and field notes; informal interview field notes; CIRA Protocol Counts (Appendix H); the formal interview transcripts and field notes; the CIRA Text Logs (Appendix F); and, finally, the Teacher Information Sheets (Appendix B). I spent “considerable time” with my participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as my study took place over the course of five months, thus yielding great amounts of rich description, the hallmark of qualitative research.

Table 7 shows data collected to answer each of my research questions. The column on the left lists my data sources, and the row across lists my research questions.

Table 8

Data Collection by Research Question

	C	Q	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Observation Field Notes	X	X	X			X
Observation Transcripts	X	X	X			X
Formal Interview Transcripts/Field notes	X	X	X	X	X	X
Informal Interview Transcripts/Field Notes	X	X	X			X
Teacher Information Sheet		X				
CIRA Text Log	X	X			X	X
CIRA Protocol	X	X	X	X	X	X
CIRA Protocol Transcripts Count	X	X	X			X

Classroom Observations

In this section I describe the procedures for classroom observations.

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) Observation Protocol. I evaluated each CIRA session using the CIRA Observation Protocol (Appendix G). After I completed four observations of each teacher, I summed the ratings from the CIRA Observation Protocol for each indicator across the four sessions for each of the four teachers as well as across all 16 sessions of the four participating teachers. I looked for patterns within and across these teacher observations. Based on my findings I made

modifications to the CIRA Observation Protocol Counts (Appendix H). In some cases I added codes for characteristics that were not captured with the CIRA Protocol. The data gained from the CIRA Protocol provided me with the general patterns of characteristics of CIRA sessions within and across teacher observations. These data informed the analysis of the transcripts, which I report in the next section.

In order to describe the context in which the CIRA sessions took place I analyzed the Teacher Information Sheet (Appendix B). These information sheets provided me with demographic data on each teacher, such as how long they had been teaching, how long they had been at their school site, how long they had been teaching kindergarten, what level of education they had attained, and what training they may have had in the area of Read Alouds and/or emergent literacy. Analysis of this information consisted of creating charts from the information and reporting on the relationships.

As soon after the formal interview as possible I transcribed the audio tapes of the teacher interviews. In all cases I could hear all utterances on the tape. I then imbedded my field notes of each formal interview into the transcript of each formal interview. I then analyzed the formal teacher interviews to determine if any salient characteristics of federal policy, of district policy, or of the communities and the families of the students affected the CIRA sessions.

In order to answer my questions on teacher practice and student activity I also created transcripts of each CIRA session. As soon as possible after each of the 16 observations, I transcribed these audio tapes. This immediacy both insured the observations were fresh in my mind and maximized the probability that I remembered what was said, or at least retained the context of what was said in the event I could not

understand some part of the audio tapes. In only four instances—once by a teacher and three times by students—was I unable to make out what was said on the audio tape. Though I could not hear these four utterances, I was still able to code them because I knew the context in which the utterances took place.

Next, I imbedded my field notes of each CIRA session into the transcript of that session in order to create a complete picture of each CIRA session. In the five cases in which I had recorded field notes for informal interviews, I added these notes to the CIRA transcripts of each observation.

I then read and re-read the transcripts of the 16 observations and coded one observation of each of the four participating teachers using the CIRA Protocol Transcripts Counts (Appendix H) which was modified from my analysis of the CIRA Protocol (Appendix G). I then made Further and final modifications to the CIRA Protocol Count after preliminary coding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). I found that I needed to add indicators to the protocol to cover those observed characteristics which I had not anticipated before conducting my study.

Finally, I coded all of the transcripts of the 16 observations using the final version of the CIRA Observation Protocol Transcripts Counts (Appendix H). All portions of each transcript were coded. The data produced from the CIRA Observation Protocol Transcript Counts provided me with counts of all indicators for each teacher and each observation. These data allowed me to answer my research questions on teacher practice and student activity during CIRA, as well as to show both the significance of the text selected and the relationship of texts with teacher practice and student activity (Figure 5).

I then waited until after I had coded and counted the codes of the transcripts of the CIRA sessions (using my CIRA Protocol) to code the formal interview transcripts. First, I read and re-read the formal interview transcripts and matched each section of the transcript to each of my research questions. I then looked for patterns within and across teacher observation sessions. In order to more thoroughly answer my research questions, I located and used rich description to identify and support trends within and across the practice of the four participating teachers and used quotes from the transcripts to act as evidence of the suggested trends

These data provided me with a rich description of each of the four CIRA sessions of each of the four teachers. From these rich descriptions I was able to create a collective case study that revealed characteristics common to CIRA across the practices of all four participating teachers. Such rich descriptions aided me in answering my research questions and, in turn, allowed me to compare observed and coded CIRA behavior to the findings contained in prior research on reading aloud to children.

CIRA text logs. Each of the participating teachers recorded all of the texts read during CIRA sessions over the course of the four months of the study using the CIRA Text Log (Appendix F). I retyped each log and created a spread sheet listing the name of each text, the name of the author, and the characteristics code the teacher had assigned to the text. I then created counts of each type of text used (e.g., poetry, narrative, expository, etc.) for each teacher. I compared the counts of each teacher to the other teachers and also summed types of texts across teachers. I looked for patterns within each teacher's selected texts and across teacher practice and analyzed these data by creating counts of the various categories of texts, looking for patterns of texts used within and between

teachers. Finally, I analyzed the Text Data Collection section of my protocol. Reading this section and recording the data on a spread sheet for each of the teachers for each of their four CIRA sessions allowed me to answer research question number 3: What were the characteristics of the texts used in CIRA sessions and how had the teachers selected the texts?

Reliability

Inter-rater reliability is achieved if the same data set when coded a second time by someone else yields the same results (Meltzoff, 2001). This concept is also described as external auditing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984): a process in which an external consultant who is involved with or has a vested interest in the study examines the findings to make sure they are supported by the data. I established inter-rater reliability in two ways. First, I gave a fellow doctoral student with expertise in the area of reading (my external auditor) the transcript of one CIRA session for each of the four teachers, the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol Transcript count (Appendix H), and the Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Protocol Glossary. I asked her not only to code the transcripts using the same codes I had, but also to look for portions of the transcripts that were not accurately captured by my codes. I gave her no additional information or training. She did not see my coded transcripts at any time. The fellow doctoral student reported that the codes accurately captured the transcripts and found that no additional codes were needed. A correlation of $r=.81$ between my codes and the fellow grad student was achieved. A correlation of $r=.80$ is the minimum for establishing reliability (Cresswell, 1998). As stated earlier, my protocols are based on the one used in the HQT study (Valli et al, 2006). The HQT protocol was used by multiple

researchers and retained reliability. The measures in my study demonstrated reliability as evidenced by the correlation of my codes with my fellow doctoral student's findings.

I established intra-coder reliability by coding some portions of the transcripts using my protocols more than once, just as I had done in my pilot study (Meltzoff, 2001). I randomly selected two transcripts of sessions, from two different teachers, and recoded them a month after I coded them for the first time. When I checked the recoded portions with the original coding, the coding had a correlation of .95. This established reliability because a correlation of $r=.80$ is the minimum for establishing reliability (Cresswell, 1998).

Verification

I verified the analysis of my data in several ways. I did a cross-case analysis (Creswell, 1998) by triangulation across and between observations and interviews. To establish patterns, I verified my findings by checking to make sure there was evidence of the patterns from all of my data sources for all of the participants: observations, informal teacher interviews and formal teacher interviews. For example, to make sure texts were coded consistently by all teachers, I coded the texts used at the 16 observations. I looked at the CIRA text log to see how the participating teachers had coded the texts. Finally, I shared the texts that were read at the observations and then asked the teachers how they were coded to make sure the coding made at each of the points matched. In all cases they did match. I believe this correlation can be attributed to the consistent and detailed information I gave the participating teachers at the onset of the study in the form of the CIRA text glossaries.

I also used member checks to verify my analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984). After I analyzed the data and created codes, I shared a portion of the results with the four participating teachers in order to get their feedback and to insure that my coding accurately reflected what I observed. For example, after coding the transcripts I noticed that one of the teachers always called on one particular student. In the formal interview I asked her about this student and shared portions of the transcripts that illustrated their interactions. She told me the student was an EL student and that in order to keep him engaged in the story she routinely called on him at regular intervals during a CIRA session. I used this participating teacher's input to inform my final analysis of the data, particularly in the instance of those individual case studies that answer my Central Questions: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced Kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers?

Conclusion

I conducted a qualitative study of the CIRA practice of four experienced kindergarten teachers over the course of a four month period in order to describe and understand CIRA in this context. Here in Chapter 3 I have described the participants in my study, the measures I used, and my procedures for data collection and analysis. Next, in Chapter 4, I begin to build an understanding of my Central Questions, as well as my four sub questions (Figure 5), in the form of a collective case study of the four participating teachers.

Chapter 4

Characteristics of Kindergarten CIRA Across the Practice of Four Experienced Teachers

In the form of a collective case study this chapter will bring preliminary understanding to my central questions: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers? Patterns within the practice of individual teachers will be described in chapter 5, and patterns across the practice of the four teachers are described here in chapter 4. In addition, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

- What are the characteristics of teacher practice during CIRA and how does teacher practice relate to student activity?
- What are the characteristics of student activity during CIRA, and how does student activity relate to teacher practice?
- How can the text be characterized during a CIRA session?
- How can literacy or other kindergarten content be characterized during CIRA?

This chapter describes the collective case study of a bounded system (Cresswell, 1998) of whole class interactive reading aloud (CIRA) sessions that took place in the classrooms of four experienced kindergarten teachers located in public schools in a large school system in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. I examined the characteristics of teacher practice, student activity and text during CIRA sessions over a four month period via non-participant observations. I observed each teacher four times at regular intervals during planned periods of instruction over the course of the study. At the conclusion of the observations I interviewed each participating teacher. Here in chapter 4

I illuminate themes common to all four teachers that emerged via cross-case analysis as described in the previous chapter.

Although not originally a research question, I describe the context of the study as context influenced the practice of all four participating teachers. Next, I describe the characteristics of the three central elements of CIRA. I first discuss findings in the area of teacher practice and the answer to sub-question 4: How can literacy and other kindergarten content areas be characterized during CIRA? In all cases literacy and content instruction took place at the direction of the teacher. I then discuss the findings in the area of student activity, examining how student activity related to teacher practice. Finally, I describe the characteristics of the text read during CIRA across the practice of the participating teachers.

Throughout this chapter and in chapter 5 I use excerpts of the transcripts of the CIRA sessions of all four teachers in order to illuminate and give a thick description of the CIRA sessions I observed. In this collective case study I selected excerpts from the sessions of each teacher to represent the practice of all teachers. I identify the teacher in the excerpt simply as “Teacher,” and I do not specify which teacher. In order to protect their identity, students are named Student, Student 1, Student 2, and so on. I have punctuated the excerpts as follows. The outermost double quotation after “Teacher” indicates text being read aloud. This is the case for only “Teacher” as the students did not read text at any time. Single quotation marks inside of double quotations are used to denote the dialogue of characters in the text. In order to place the excerpts within the full context, I provide stage directions inside brackets. I also insert my coding in brackets. The complete definition of all codes referred to in this chapter can be found in my Whole

Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA) Observation Protocol Glossary (Appendix I).

Below, I begin this chapter with an analysis of the influence of Context on the CIRA sessions.

Context of CIRA Sessions

Teaching does not occur in a vacuum, and the CIRA sessions of the four participating teachers during the course of the study were no exception. Because issues at the federal, state, county, and local school level influenced teacher practice to varying degrees, the outer square of Figure 1 denotes the context of the study, which includes governance and community influences. Using these important contexts, I describe here the influence of federal policies (including No Child Left Behind), county school system policies, and school site level policies, as well as influences related to students' communities and families.

Federal Influences of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The outer most square of my model (Figure 1) is Context. The context of federal government will be discussed first as the federal government is farthest from the teachers in my study. Each of the four teachers reported during their formal interviews that NCLB [No Child Left Behind] had not directly affected their choices of texts or their delivery methods during CIRA sessions; however, my analysis shows that NCLB *had* impacted their teaching over all. All four teachers did report that the central emphasis for all students was on raising test scores and achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) since NCLB's inception. NCLB requires that students be tested to assure that they are making AYP (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) in the areas of reading and math. Although NCLB does not require AYP data until the students reach third grade, I discovered on the

county public access website that the district in which I conducted my research (comparable to many school districts across the United States) was requiring all teachers, starting with kindergarten teachers, to collect assessment data in the areas of math and reading at least quarterly. These assessment measures are all criterion based and are not standardized test measures.

The teachers at the two Title 1 schools in my study reported more concern over this testing focus than did the two teachers at the non-Title I schools. Even though teachers at the non-Title I schools have high English Learners (EL) populations and Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) rates, they reported they achieve AYP each year, and the pressure to focus on test scores has not been as great for them as it has been at the lower-performing schools. All four teachers reported that it had become increasingly difficult to fit in all areas of the curriculum. The following comment by one of the teachers at the time of the final interview succinctly sums up the other three teachers' opinion of NCLB: "I have in my mind well the constant assessing of No Child Left Behind. I have that in the back of my mind at all times. This is what they (students) are going to need to know for the tests. Don't get me started!"

All four teachers reported during the formal interview that each year they are required to do additional test preparation with their students, especially with EL students and at-risk students with IEPs. Despite this emphasis on testing, the teachers reported conducting their CIRA sessions much as they always had. The only major difference was that they stated they were more diligent about making sure their CIRA sessions connected to a required objective. All four teachers reported independently, however, that

the number of science and social studies lessons had been reduced in order to allow for additional reading and math instruction as well as for additional test preparation.

State Policy

State government is closer to the teachers than the federal government. The state for this study has a state department of education that oversees and greatly influences education in grades Pre-K through 12. In spite of the fact that this department of education has a great influence, the four participating teachers reported at the time of the formal interview that other than the state's emphatic stance to enforce NCLB—either in the form of written directives or personal intervention—they did not believe state regulations affected their teaching (including CIRA) very much.

The County School System

The next closest type of governance is the school district, which in this case is a large county school system that serves approximately 137,000 students and is one of the 20 largest school systems in the United States. All four teachers reported that the county school system had greatly influenced their teaching. The four teachers reported that they attended monthly meetings with their grade-level peers and principal and/or assistant principal to discuss the assessment data of their students in order to determine if students were on target to make quarterly benchmarks in reading and math. Intervention plans created at these meetings assisted students not on target. Each of the four teachers reported that in response to NCLB the district placed a greater pressure to get the children to read independently than there had been prior to NCLB thus affecting the teacher's literacy instruction. In the case of CIRA, each teacher reported making sure that what was

taught during CIRA was directly and explicitly connected to the county curriculum, whereas prior to NCLB they were not as vigilant about the connection to the curriculum.

The teachers reported in the formal interview that their CIRA sessions would vary in content due to the day of the week because they tended to introduce specific literacy concepts based on the school systems' curriculum guides on Mondays and then spend the rest of the week reinforcing and elaborating these concepts. My observations, held on varying days of the week, confirmed this.

The following exchange from the formal interview between me and one of the teachers is representative of all of the teachers and explains where teachers obtained their goals and objectives for the sessions. "We have a curriculum guide that has lessons in it. So we look at what does the county want us to cover, what is the voluntary state curriculum, and what skills match up there? [The guide] tells you what to do week by week, so any given week kindergartens across the county are doing similar lessons. We have to pull the resources together."

I observed in all cases that the teachers explicitly shared these literacy goals with their students at the beginning of the CIRA session. For example, the teacher in one excerpt stated to the class that they are to listen to the text for enjoyment. In a second excerpt, the teacher explained that the class will be listing important terms (vocabulary development) after they have listened to the story.

The School Site

The school site is closest to the classroom teacher. According to the participating teachers, by far the greatest influence on instruction at each site was the school's principal. All four teachers reported, either in the informal chats or in the concluding

formal interview, that their principal had an indirect influence on their CIRA sessions in the form of legislating the benchmark reading levels for kindergarteners. The influence was strongest in the two Title I schools. Teachers reported that overall their reading instruction was profoundly influenced by the principals' attention to test scores. Within their overall reading instruction, CIRA was only indirectly influenced, however.

One trend at all four schools was the tendency, in the opinion of the participating teachers, for the principals to push children too quickly beyond what is reasonable for kindergarteners to master in the area of literacy. According to the teachers this tendency often resulted in the children having a breadth of literacy skills but little depth. The following example from my interview of one of the participating teachers is illustrative of the experiences of all four teachers. The teacher reported that the first-grade teachers at her school complained that the students who were at grade level at the end of kindergarten, were often below grade level at the end of the first quarter of first grade, because academic regression over the summer left them short of the expected reading level at which the school's first graders were suppose to enter first grade. The teacher further reported that the solution legislated by the principal was to raise the end of year kindergarten benchmark by several levels. The kindergarten teachers were opposed to this decision: although they could get students to this new level, the students would not have been able to spend enough time at the new level to have achieved the proficiency to maintain the level over the summer. This scenario had played out to varying degrees at each of the participating schools. The following quote from another of the participating teachers at the time of the final interview illuminates this same scenario at her school. "One of the problems in kindergarten," she noted, "is that they are suppose to be reading

at a level 3, and in first grade they have to take them from that 3 to 16 by the end of first grade. So really, the first-grade teachers are saying that if they come in on a 3 they are almost immediately below grade level in reading, and the first grade teachers have to move them so fast.” All four teachers, generally, much preferred to work in depth at the previously required level in order to give all students a solid foundation that could withstand any potential erosion over the summer.

None of the principals had any primary grade teaching experience. They all made the same decision to raise the expected year-end reading benchmark of kindergarten students. One of the teachers reported that she had seen many principals come and go. She reflected that she was going to try to be a team player and do what was asked; however, she reported, she would not pursue ends that, in her opinion, would prove to be detrimental to her students.

Involvement of Families With Literacy Development

The outer rectangle of my model also contains the families of the students in the participating teachers’ classes. All of the teachers reported that their EL students receive little support with English literacy at home. The teachers believe that the parents care a great deal about their children but do not have enough skill in English to assist their children with homework. They believe the families work very hard to provide food and shelter for their children, so there is not a lot of time left at the end of the day to assist with homework. They also believe the parents do not understand the homework because they can not read or speak English and, perhaps, because many of these parents are not entirely literate in their primary languages.

The teachers reported that many of their students were bused to school from areas near the schools that are not within walking distance; thus, the parents are not at school very frequently. The teachers reported they had not met many of the parents. (My formal teacher interviews were conducted in May, at the end of the school year.)

One of the participating teachers shared an anecdote with me during the formal interview. Though it is about one of her students it is reflective of the student population of all of the participating schools. She reported that one child had attended a play on Broadway in New York City over the winter break. At first she was not sure what the student was talking about because this was a far from typical experience for her students. She reported that one of the annual kindergarten field trips at her school (as it was at the other three schools) was to attend a local production of a play for children. Many of the children were in awe of this field trip because they had never been in a theatre before. She had to explicitly teach the children how to act (to not talk, to show appreciation, etc.) during the performance because none of the children had seen live theatre before. The teacher reported that, usually, her students had not seen any plays, not to mention a play 200 miles away on Broadway.

The students in the participating teachers' classes had limited emergent literacy skills when they entered kindergarten. Their families were able to give them limited support. The teachers were under pressure to do well on reading assessment tests and had to make a concerted effort to make sure their students passed such assessments. The teachers stated in the formal interviews that it was important they made the most of their reading instruction. Thus, CIRA sessions were likely to be influenced by the characteristics of the students and their families.

The Classroom Logistics of CIRA

Another characteristic of the context was the logistics of the sessions themselves. All four teachers taught “all day kindergarten” (a seven-hour day). In the past children attended kindergarten for a half day which varied from two and a half to nearly four hours in length depending on the school district. Over the past several years the trend is moving towards “all day programs” for kindergartens.

All four teachers conducted CIRA sessions on a daily basis. They also reported that they read books at other times of the day as well. For example, reading took place as an activity to fill extra minutes before lunch or before leaving for the day or to support instruction in other content areas such as Math or Social Studies. All four teachers reported they read on average at least one or two other books a day in addition to what they all referred to as “read aloud time” and I define as CIRA.

Time of day. All four teachers conducted their CIRA sessions after what are considered traditional kindergarten opening activities. These activities include interactively reading a large calendar and a chart with the daily plan on it. These activities introduce, teach, and reinforce literacy and math skills. The opening lasted approximately 15-20 minutes in each of the four classrooms. Two of the teachers conducted their opening activities as soon as the students came into the classroom in the morning. Due to the scheduling of specials (music, media time, physical education, and so on) the other two teachers conducted their CIRA sessions right after students came in from lunch and recess. The CIRA sessions of all four teachers were held after these traditional kindergarten opening activities, whether they occurred in the morning or in the afternoon.

Location and class size. I observed that all of the teachers taught in rooms that were designed for kindergarten. Typically, kindergarten rooms are larger than rooms for other grades in order to accommodate learning centers, a classroom library, block area, dramatic play area, sink, and bathrooms. These amenities are not usually found in grades beyond kindergarten. All of the teachers sat in a rocking chair, and the students sat at the teacher's feet on a carpeted area of the classroom. The carpeted area was large enough in all cases for the students to sit on the floor comfortably and not bump into other students. Table 5 in chapter 3 lists the number of students in attendance for the observed CIRA sessions. All of the schools had a lower than average (for the district) class size in the primary grades due to additional funding to assist at risk students especially in the area of reading. All teachers had an average class size of 15, and the average for the district is 20.

Setting the stage for CIRA. The students did not have assigned seating during the CIRA sessions in any of the classes. However, on several occasions I observed all four teachers proactively request certain students to sit next to them. In no cases were the students acting inappropriately. The request was not done in a punitive way but in a positive, upbeat manner. At the time of the formal interviews I asked the teachers why they had done this, and in all cases the teachers reported that the student(s) they asked to sit next to them had a tendency to not pay attention and that the students listened better when seated right next to the teacher. All of the sessions were prefaced with reminders of how to conduct oneself during a CIRA session, as illustrated by the following quotes:

“Make sure you are sitting next to a person that you can be a *good* listener with.”

“OK, boys and girls, turn toward me [*Teacher gestures to herself*] Magic 5.....4.....get your bodies ready.....3.....2.....eyes on me, and [*Spoken in a whisper*] we didn’t have to make it to zero! Good job!”

“If I can see you that means you are really going to be able [*Said slowly and distinctly*] to see the pictures in the book. If you are sitting Magic 5 you are definitely ready. OK.”

All of the participating teachers used the behavior management technique called *Magic 5*. *Magic 5* is a common technique used in the primary grades. Children are sitting *Magic 5* when they are seated flat on their bottoms on the floor, legs crossed and hands folded in their lap. The posture is taught explicitly, and the term *Magic 5* is used as a reminder to students as to how to position their bodies properly while sitting on the floor during group instruction. Currently, some teachers also refer to this technique as *Criss, Cross Applesauce*. Having come of age in an era that was not always respectful toward minority groups, my teachers would use the term *Indian Style* to refer to the same posture.

Another strategy used by all of the teachers to set the stage for CIRA was to ask one student to remind the entire class verbally of good listening strategies as illustrated by the following example from one of the observations:

- Teacher: On your bottoms. So, who knows one good thing to do before we read a book?

Student: To, to, to get comfortable and stop twitching and twitching and twitching.

Teacher: Exactly!

The mean length of all 16 of the sessions was 15 minutes, the median length was 15.5 minutes, and the mode was 16 minutes.

Teacher Practice

This section will answer sub-question 1: What are the characteristics of teacher practice during CIRA and how does teacher practice relate to student activity? This is one of the circles of the CIRA model.

Most Frequently Occurring Patterns of Teacher Practice During CIRA.

All four of the participating teachers possessed excellent classroom management skills. I did not have a specific or single code for classroom management. I base this observation on my overall impression of the sessions I observed as well as an overall analysis of the codes as a whole, especially the lack of *Extrinsic Reward* and *Redirects Conversation or Continues Reading* codes. In all cases I observed each participating teacher simply give a child who was starting to act inappropriately a small yet powerful glance that immediately caused the student to stop. I never observed any of the teachers becoming flustered or perturbed, nor did any of them raise their voices. They read engagingly with inflection and emphasis, and directed student attention to the illustrations or photographs in the text. None of the teachers used extrinsic rewards (marbles in jars, stickers, team points, and so on) to entice the students to stay on task during the sessions.

All four school sites had elaborate school-wide behavior management systems, and at no time during the 16 observations did teachers refer to these systems. All four teachers had a warm and friendly demeanor while being very business-like. There was no doubt, either to the students present in the CIRA session or to me as an observer that these four teachers were in charge of the class. There were a few extremely minor

behavior issues. All 16 of the sessions I observed were characterized by engaged, focused students and positive, caring teachers. To an outside observer the orchestration of these sessions on the part of the teachers appeared transparent and effortless.

The most common response to student misbehavior (again, which did not occur very often) was no response at all, as coded by *Redirects Conversation or Continues Reading*. A typical minor behavior issue would be students talking out of turn. (These behaviors will be discussed at length in the subsequent section on Student Activity.) The most common response from all four teachers was to simply ignore the students who were calling out and call on a student who had his or her hand raised. In all cases, the misbehaving students had their attention redirected back to the teacher. The redirection most often would involve not simply ignoring the behavior but the continuance of instruction, maximizing rather than minimizing instructional opportunities during CIRA. This practice is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “He trained Princess to fetch and to do what he said.”

Student [*Out of Turn/On Topic*] A big dog!

Teacher [*Ignores Student 1*] Ok, so let’s look back and see some of the causes and effects. [*Holds up picture*]

There were some cases when the teacher explicitly redirected a student; instruction, in this case, was maximized because no instructional time was lost by the *Out of Turn* behavior as illustrated by the following excerpt from a CIRA session:

Teacher [*Low Order*] What did we do with the pocket chart? We had all of these cards and the pocket chart? Student 1? [*Speaking slowly and drawing out words*].

Student 2 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] And we put them in order from the book.

Teacher [*Uses name of Student 2*] Student 2 I am sorry you did not raise your hand. I will call on you if you raise your hand. Student 1? [*Directs question again to Student 1*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] We put them in order.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes, we put all those words in order that the wolf and the pigs were saying so many times in the book: "Let me in, let me in!" [*In a wolf voice*]

Another pervasive pattern across the practice of the four teachers was illustrated by the code *Reads Aloud with Inflection*. This code was the most pervasive single code in the area of Teacher Practice. I do not report the number of *Reads Aloud with Inflection* codes because virtually every passage that each of the teachers read was read with fluency, prosody, expression, and inflection as illustrated by the excerpts throughout chapters 4 and 5. All four teachers would vary the tone, tempo, or volume of their voices in order to act out the various characters in the story. Their voices would reflect the emotions the texts conveyed, such as fear, happiness, or sadness. Each of the teachers changed the volume of her voice in order to portray the various moods and emotions of the text or to emphasize a certain point. The quotes that I use throughout this section to illustrate other characteristics will also illustrate reading aloud with inflection and emphasis.

Finally, all of the teachers during the 16 observations brought attention to the illustrations or photographs in the texts, making explicit reference to pictures as they went through the story. If there was not a lot of text on a page and the teachers needed the

students to look at the picture for a longer period of time, the teachers would pause after reading and rotate the book to the class to make sure students could see what was illustrated.

Table 9

In Addition to the General Patterns, the Most Frequently Occurring Codes of Teacher Practice

1	2	3	4
Evaluation Feedback	Explains Rules procedures	Scaffolds	Low order
(26%)	(13%)	(12%)	(10%)

Most Frequently Occurring Codes of Teacher Practice in Addition to General Patterns

In addition to having excellent classroom management, reading with inflection, and referring to the illustrations while reading, the four teachers gave evaluation with feedback, explained rules and procedures, scaffolded instruction, and asked low order questions. See Table 9 for the next four most frequently occurring Teacher Practice codes for all of the participating teachers. These codes add detail to the over all general patterns.

Evaluation Feedback. The code *Evaluation Feedback* accounted for 26% of the codes across the practice of all four teachers. *Evaluation Feedback* occurred when the teacher told or suggested that an answer or student performance was correct, valued, incorrect, or not valued and then told the student why. The following excerpt from a CIRA session illustrates this practice:

Teacher [*High Order*] You thought Sam I Am was hurting this guy's feelings?

Why did you think that?

Student 1 [*Explanation*] He was going after him all the time

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes Sam went after him, and he was trying to get away. Good! Sam I Am kept bothering him, didn't he? He kept asking him and asking him. In this classroom we would use our debug strategy then, wouldn't we? [*Rhetorical Question*]

Students [*Simple Answer as Group*] Yeah.

Teacher [*High Order*] Let's share one more friend. Student 2 [*Uses Student 2's name*], what part are you thinking of?

Student 2 [*Alternate Answer*] I like the tree.

Teacher [*Elaboration of Student Response*] Why?

Student 2 [*Elaborated Answer*] Because the tree was funny.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] You liked the tree because it was funny. Good! Yes, it was funny because it acted so silly! [*Very dramatically*] My favorite part is at the very beginning, when they say, "I am Sam, I am Sam. That Sam I am. That Sam I am. [*Rereads and shows pictures*] I do not like that Sam I am!"

[*Scaffolding*] I like that part because it is really funny to read it. I think it is funny to hear, "Sam I Am, I do not like that Sam I Am" so many times.

Explains Rules and Procedures. The code *Explains Rules and Procedures* accounted for 13% of the codes across the practice of all four teachers. *Explains Rules and Procedures* is defined as follows: "The teacher explains the rules or procedures for listening to the text or for the follow up activity after the text has been read. No

instruction of literacy skills or content (e.g., Math, Social Studies, Science, etc.) is involved.” This is illustrated by the following excerpt, which shows how a teacher used this practice to explain simple procedures:

Teacher and Students [*Teacher Reads with Inflection and Students spontaneously join in.*] “Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain!”

Teacher [*Explains Rules/Procedures*] Stop, I have got to turn the page! When I say stop you need to stop. [*Students are immediately quiet, and Teacher continues to Read with Inflection*] “Rain on the green grass, rain on the black road.”

The following excerpt, illustrates a teacher using *Explains Rules/Procedures* for behavior management:

Teacher [*Explains Rules/Procedures*] Remember; quietly look with your eyes and no talking. Student 1 Magic 5. [*Reads title*] “Construction Site.” Magic 5 on your bottoms; all our friends look up here.

And, finally, here is an excerpt that captures the teacher explaining the more detailed procedures of a follow up activity to be done after she read the text:

Teacher [*Explains Rules/Procedures*] Student 1, you can work with Student 2. [*Students work on task discussing story, talking in troll voices. Teacher refocuses students after approximately 30 seconds*] OK, turn back around. [*Students quiet down immediately and some students have hands up*] Put your hands down. Instead of telling me, I am going to tell you what we are going to do. You are going to get this paper here [*Holds up paper*]. You are going to put what at the top?

Students [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] Name!

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Right! Your name goes right here. [*Points to place name goes on page*]. And then what goes on this side? [*Points to one side of the paper, nods at Student 1 to answer*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] The character.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Good, the character goes on this side. [*Points to side of paper where character goes*] So, you are going to draw a picture of the character and write well. When you are done you are going to bring it to the carpet, and we are going to share our answers together. [*Dismisses students one by one, hands them paper, and they go to their seats*].

Scaffolding. The code *Scaffolding* accounted for 12% of the codes across the practice of all four teachers. *Scaffolding*, as defined in the CIRA Glossary is “Instruction that adds background knowledge and/or models in an interactive manner to move students’ thinking forward.” Scaffolding usually involved a number of exchanges between the teacher and the students. All four teachers appeared to scaffold for the class as a whole as well as target certain students to make sure those students understood the text.

In the following exchange between a Teacher and her students, the Teacher had just finished reading *The Three Little Pigs* and was scaffolding the students’ understanding of the concept of characters via a whole class discussion:

Teacher [*Low Order*] We have been talking about characters in our story. Who were the other characters? [*Nods at Student 1 to answer*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] The house, the house!

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] We are not there yet. The house is the setting. Are there any other good characters? There are the three pigs in the story that we just talked about. Student 2? [*Low Order*]

Student 2 [*Alternate Answer*] The Mom.

Teacher And their Mom, OK? [*Pauses to allow for students to think and then asks Low Order question*] Are there any bad characters in this book, Student 3? Are there any bad characters in this book?

Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] Yes.

Teacher [*Question back to Student*] Who is bad in there? [*Pauses then asks Low Order question*] Who do you think of when you think of a character who did bad things?

Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] A wolf.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] So, are there bad characters? Yes, the wolf. He is the bad character in the book. The only bad character.

This excerpt illustrates *Scaffolding* because the teacher was modeling her thinking via the use of carefully crafted questions in an interactive manner in order to move the thinking of the class as a whole forward.

Low Order. The code *Low Order* accounted for 10% of the codes across the practice of all four teachers. *Low Order* is defined as follows: “The teacher asks a question or presents a problem that can be answered directly from the text or from a student’s memory.” The excerpt above illustrates the *Low Order* code.

Teacher Practice characteristics rarely or never coded. I designed my protocol to characterize teacher practice during CIRA based on the review of the literature, my pilot

study, my work on the High Quality Teaching Study and my personal experience. It is interesting to note the characteristics of Teacher Practice which I never coded. I never coded *Extrinsic Reward* for any of the teachers. *Manages Material* accounted for only a total of 8 codes across all of the 16 sessions. The students were always seated on the rug and were not given materials during the reading portion of the CIRA session. On the rare occasions that there were codes in this area it was materials to be used for a follow up activity that directly related to the text read.

Teacher Practice in Support of Literacy and Content Instruction

The practices that I have reported so far have been generic, independent of content. I now turn to sub-question 4: How can literacy, or other kindergarten content areas, be characterized during CIRA? This section focuses on the content of the CIRA sessions. Table 10 shows the top three codes for literacy content for all four teachers. I report only three codes here instead of the four I reported for Teacher Practice because the next closest code for content was only 3%. I did not feel it occurred often enough to justify description.

Concept of Print. The most common code across the practice of the four teachers was *Concept of Print* (29%). The CIRA Glossary defines *Concept of Print* as “Instruction of the elements of concepts of print, such as directionality (from left to right, top to bottom), how to turn the pages of a book, or the parts of a book (cover, title page, table of contents, author, illustrator, and so on).”

Table 10

Top 3 Codes for Session Literacy Content

1	2	3
Concept of Print (29%)	Vocabulary (18%)	Comprehension (11%)

In all cases for each of the 16 observations all of the participating teachers always discussed the title and author before reading. The following exchange between a teacher and her students is an example of how the teachers focused the attention of the students on the title and author:

Teacher [*Scaffolds*] Our job today is to label this book with important terms. But before we can do that we have to find out what is inside the story. Before we can even open our story we have to take a look at the cover. What do we find on our cover? Student 1 can you tell me one thing we find? [*Low Order*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] A birdy?

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] You are right. We find a picture that gives us a clue as to what is inside the story. What else do we find on our cover, Student 2? [*Low Order, points to name of author and illustrator printed on cover*].

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] The illustrator?

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes. We find the illustrator [*emphasis on illustrator*]. And along with the illustrator we find another important person. Who is that? [*Low Order, points to Student 2*]

Student 2 [*Simple Answer*] The author.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] The author! We find the author and illustrator together.

Vocabulary. The second most common code across the practice of all four teachers was *Vocabulary* (18%). *Vocabulary* is defined in the CIRA Glossary as “Instruction and activities designed to help students learn the meaning of new or important words and concepts.” *Vocabulary* includes strategy instruction (e.g., how do we figure out the meaning of words with three or more syllables?).

Vocabulary instruction was very much embedded in the reading of the text. In all cases this attention to vocabulary took place while the teachers were reading the text. In no case did the teachers introduce a list of vocabulary before they started to read. All four of the teachers paused on certain words to give them emphasis or to quickly define the words during the read aloud. The following excerpt from one CIRA session illustrates this practice:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “‘Well, I think this is a meal fit for a goat.’ said mother goat as she chewed on an old shoe. ‘It certainly is,’ said father goat as he ate a shirt button and all. ‘I do not know why you are such a fussy eater Gregory.’” [*Teacher looks up from text and asks the students a Rhetorical Question*] How many of you are fussy eaters? What is a fussy eater?

Students [*Many raise hands*]

Teacher [*Vocabulary Development*] Fussy means like if your Mom makes green beans and you say, “Oh I don’t like them.” Or your Mom makes pizza and you

might say, “I don’t want pepperoni on my pizza.” It means you are very picky.

You only like it a certain way. [*Continues to Read with Inflection*].

All four teachers would also on occasion ask the students what words meant. The teachers reported in the formal interview that they did this for vocabulary that they felt was essential to the understanding of the text. They believed definitions provided by the students themselves were the most meaningful to the rest of the class. The following excerpt illustrates the content of *Vocabulary*.

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “‘Do something! Or that dog must go!’ warned Mom. [*Emphasis on entire sentence*] So, Rob trained her.” [*High Order*] What does that mean? “Rob trained her.” [*Emphasis on trained, nods at Student 1*]
 Student 1 [*Explanation*] To be good!

Teacher [*Question Back to Student, Scaffolds*] For whom?

Student 2 [*Explanation*] To do what he says.

Teacher [*Elaboration of Student Response, Scaffolds*] He trained Princess to obey and to do what he said. That’s right. [*Continues to Read with Inflection*] “Then everyone was happy, even Princess! Until we got Prince.”

Comprehension. The third most common code across the practice of all the teachers was *Comprehension* (11%). *Comprehension* is defined in the CIRA glossary as “Instruction, activities, discussion, and so on, designed to improve the understanding and help the students construct meaning from the text.” Most often across the practice of the four teachers *Comprehension* consisted of the teacher reading a passage from the text and then asking a question to make sure that the students understood the actions of a character as illustrated by this excerpt. The excerpt also illustrates how the teachers emphasized

certain parts of the text in order to draw attention to them, thus increasing student comprehension of the plot.

Teacher “Rosemary Wells, *Max’s Dragon Shirt*” [*Reads with Inflection, title page, pauses, turns page*] And the dedication page says “For April” [*Without pause starts to Read with Inflection*] “Max loved his old pants more than anything. ‘These pants are disgusting [*Emphasis on disgusting*] Max!’ said Max’s sister Ruby. [*Pause*] They were worn, but he loved [*Emphasis on loved*] them. ‘We are going to the store to buy you a pair of brand [*Emphasis on brand*] new pants,’ Ruby said. ‘Dragon [*Emphasis on dragon*] shirt!’ said Max [*Uses different voices for Max and Ruby*]. ‘No, Max!’ said Ruby. ‘Mother only gave me \$5 to buy pants. After that there will be no [*emphasis on no*] money left.’ [*Said slowly and distinctly*] On the way to the boy’s store Ruby saw a red dress that she absolutely loved. [*Emphasis on loved, pauses, turns page*] She thought she would try it on. Ruby wanted to find another dress. ‘Wait here and don’t leave! And don’t move!’ [*Said in loud voice*] said Ruby. ‘Dragon shirt!’ said Max. Ruby said, ‘After we buy your new pants we will have no [*Emphasis on no*] money left over.’” Why do you think Max keeps saying, ‘Dragon shirt’? [*Rhetorical Question, continues to Read with Inflection*]

The next excerpt also illustrates comprehension instruction. In this case the teacher has the students focus on the illustrations to support their understanding of the text. She also asks the students a series of questions, first to see if they understood what was read and then to set them up for what she wanted them to gain from the text as she continued reading.

Teacher [*Rhetorical Question*] What is happening? [*Reads with Inflection*] “Sam wanted to play.” Look at what he is doing! [*Points to the picture*] Everyone in his house is busy, and no one wanted to play with him. So right away on the very first page we know there is a problem in this book. What is the problem Student 1?

[*High Order*]

Student 1: Ummmm... Sam can't play with anybody. Nobody will go outside [and] he has to play by himself.”

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback, nods affirmatively to Student 1*] So we are going to listen to this book and see if this problem gets solved and see what happens to Sam. [*Reads with Inflection*] “Sam walked into the kitchen where his mother was peeling apples for pie.”

There were many clear patterns across the practice of the four participating teachers. All four teachers demonstrated a high level of skill at classroom management as evidenced by the fact that nearly every part of every transcript was coded *On Task*. Additionally, every time a teacher read aloud the passage was coded *Reads with Inflection* because all four teachers consistently read with a great deal of inflection and prosody, which probably contributed to the low number of *Off Task Student Activity* codes. In order to bring a more detailed level of understanding of my data I coded the transcripts once again, and four Teacher Practice codes were responsible for 61% of the codes: *Evaluation Feedback, Explains Rules/Procedures, Scaffolds* and *Low Order*. 58% of the Content codes were represented by *Concepts of Print, Vocabulary* and *Comprehension*.

Student Activity

This section focuses on a second circle in the center of my CIRA model: Student Activity (see Figure 5). The following sections will answer sub-question 2: What are the characteristics of student activity during CIRA and how does student activity relate to teacher practice? The highly relational nature of CIRA means that student activity and teacher practice jointly influenced classroom performance and involvement. The salient characteristics of student behavior and student reaction during the read alouds were linked directly to the practice of the teacher. Additionally, student receptiveness was dependent on the classroom management and presentational format of the teacher. Teachers who demanded good listeners got not only good audiences but good resulting discussions. The sections that follow examine specific characteristics of student activity that relate to learning.

Frequently Occurring Student Activity Codes

In all cases the students appeared to be fully engaged during all of the 16 sessions that I observed. I could feel their energy directed to the teacher. As I stated in the previous section to Teacher Practice all four of the teachers had excellent classroom management skills as evidenced by the students' lack of misbehavior. The most pervasive code across all of the observations was *Listens*. The Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol Glossary (CIRA Glossary, Appendix I) defines *Listens* as "The majority of the students are listening to or watching the teacher, another student, or other sources of literacy-related information."

Almost all of the Student Activity I coded was considered *On Task*, defined as "Students are academically engaged in the topic at hand." This category includes

listening to directions. Generally, students did not acknowledge my presence. In only one case did a child ever look at me for a prolonged time before asking me who I was. I simply put my finger to my lips and pointed to the teacher. The child turned to face the teacher and did not look at me again.

Over the course of my observations I recorded very few moments of frivolity unrelated to the text or disinterested behavior on the part of student listeners. Student Activity termed *Play or Socialize/Off Task* was so rare as to be non-existent (only 8 of 1049 codes). Students occasionally discussed non-lesson related topics or were given to “socializing.” But these activities took place in the spaces between readings or in moments before the teacher would officially bring the class to order. It appeared to me that *Behavior Management* was linked more to the ritual of the CIRA session: having students find a comfortable space, shutting out distracting noises, and getting primed for the story with a brief introduction of the day’s reading. Each of these practices by the teachers proved to create a more favorable space for true listening. As such, student behavior was seldom off task or unengaged. Students would, for example, listen to the teacher manage another student’s behavior. If a student were to ask a question of the teacher that was unrelated to the day’s lesson, e.g., “What is for lunch?” the teacher would use this opportunity to tell the questioning student that he or she was off task and off topic, a remonstrance that was not lost on the listening students, who took the opportunity to become refocused on their own listening.

In order to gain a deeper level of understanding, I coded the portions of the transcripts that were coded *Listens* and *On Task* again. Table 11 lists the top 3 codes in the area of Student Activity (excluding the pervasive patterns of *Listens* and *On Task*)

across all of the CIRA sessions of the participating teachers. Thus, the data were coded with *Listens* and *On Task* in addition to only one of the following characteristics listed in Table 11.

Table 11

Frequently Occurring Student Activity Codes Excluding Listens and On Task

1	2	3
Simple Answer (32%)	On Topic Out of Turn (17%)	Spontaneous Oral Utterance (13%)

Simple Answer. The CIRA Glossary defines *Simple Answer* as follows: “The student gives a short straightforward answer or statement, gives a definition of a term, says I don’t know, says yes or no.” This code represented a total of 32% of the codes for all teachers. The most common simple answer from students across the observations was a one word utterance—such as Yes or No—or a one or two word answer. This is not surprising because two common codes of Teacher Practice were *Poses Low Order Task/Problem/Question* and *Evaluation Feedback*. It follows that a common student response to a *Low Order Question* would be a *Simple Answer* and that a teacher’s response to the *Simple Answer* would be *Evaluation Feedback*. The following excerpt from an observation of one of the teachers illustrates the *Low Order, Simple Answer*, and *Evaluation Feedback* pattern followed by all four teachers:

Teacher [*Student Reflection on Learning*] This book is by Rosemary Wells. We have her picture over in our reading center. Raise your hand if you can remember

the name of the book that we read by her. [*Low Order, Students' hands go up and teacher nods at one Student*]

Student [*Simple Answer*]Yoko.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes, you remembered the name of the other book.

Teachers depended on students for the right answer, but in addition they set up questions so that students could succeed. More than anything, I observed that *Simple Answers* were again a part of the students' ability to listen well. They made quick and decisive answers because they were *On Task* and ready and willing to be a part of a learning experience. Here, then, is another example of this sort of pattern:

Teacher [*Builds Background Knowledge*] Before the title page the author has a very [*emphasis added on very*] detailed page. Take a good look. [*Slight pause*]

Where do you think this story is taking place? Where is the setting? [*Low Order*]

Student 1 Ahhh [*Waving hand in air*].

Teacher [*Pauses, then calls on Student 1*] Student 1.

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] At the store.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback, nodding head affirmatively*] At the store. At a big [*Emphasis on big*] department store.

And finally, this excerpt from an observation shows how eliciting a *Simple Answer*, even when wrong, can move the lesson along so that learning takes place seamlessly. An incorrect response by Student 1 is quickly corrected by another student.

Teacher [*Low Order*] There was a character in this book that had a big part.

[*pause, nods at Student 1 to answer*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] The Mom.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] The Mom. [*Directed at Student 1*] You are good at remembering the characters. What do we find on our cover that reminds us of an important character? [*Directed at Student 2*] Can you tell me one thing we find? [*Low Order*]

Student 2 [*Simple Answer*] A frog?

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback/No Feedback*] I don't think so. [*Nods at Student 3 to answer*]

Student 3: [*Simple Answer*] A picture of the Dad.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] You're right. We find a picture that gives us a clue as to what is inside the story. [*Low Order, Directed to Student 3*] What else do we find on our cover? [*Points to words author and illustrator printed on cover*]

Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] The illustrator?

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] We find the name of the illustrator. [*Emphasis on illustrator*] And along with the illustrator we find another important person. Who is that? [*Low Order, nods at Student 4 to answer*]

Student 4 [*Simple Answer*] The author?

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] The author! We find the author and illustrator together. And this book was written by Suzanne Casaris and Daniel Bote.

On Topic/Out of Turn. The second most common code of Student Activity across the 16 observations was *On Topic/Out of Turn*, defined as "The student(s) answer is about the text or the topic that the teacher is discussing but the student was not called on." As I have already stated, the students were consistently engaged and on task. They reacted to teacher read alouds with excited outbursts, both while the text was being read

and while the teacher was pausing to ask questions before, during and after the reading. Because the teacher did not call on the student, these outbursts are typically coded off task; however, they are on topic because the outbursts have to do with the text being read. The following excerpt (part of which I used earlier as an example of *Comprehension*) is evidence of the code *On Topic/Off Task*:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “‘Wait here and don’t leave! [*Raises voice*] And don’t move!’ said Ruby. ‘Dragon shirt,’ said Max. ‘Max,’ said Ruby, ‘after we buy your new pants we will have no [*Emphasis on no*] money left over.’”

[*Rhetorical Question*] Why do you think Max keeps saying, “Dragon shirt?”

Student [*On Topic/Off Task*] Because he wants a dragon shirt.

Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Because he wants a dragon shirt. [*Nods affirmatively and continues to Read with Inflection*].

In the above example the teacher positively acknowledges the outburst and continues reading. In the following example the teacher corrects the student before continuing to read:

Teacher [*States Objective*] These are some of the key things we are going to look for in the story. So while I read you the words, [*Begins to add emphasis*] I bet you can quietly look with your eyes for some of these pictures [*Emphasis on eyes*].

Student 1 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] I see a truck! I saw a truck like that before!

Teacher [*Reprimands/Redirects Student*] Remember: quietly look with your eyes.

Student 1, Magic 5. [*Starts to Read with Inflection*]

Spontaneous Oral Utterance. A code related to *On Topic/Out of Turn* is

Spontaneous Oral Utterance defined in the CIRA Glossary as follows: “The student(s)

spontaneously reacts as the text is being read with an oral utterance” (e.g., Wow, aaahhh, and so on). This code was the third most common (13%) across Student Activity of all observations. These *Spontaneous Oral Utterances* can be characterized by the children making sounds of animals in the story, for instance growling when a bear appears, or laughing at the appropriate time while the teacher was reading. The major difference between *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* and *On Topic/Out of Turn* is that a *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* is just a word or two that a student makes in response to the text but never requires or expects the teacher to respond. On the other hand *On Topic/Out of Turn* is usually a longer response to the text for which the teacher would expect the child to raise a hand to be called on before speaking. This excerpt from an observation illustrates the code of *Spontaneous Oral Utterance*:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “Now bear was very annoyed so he went home and got a hammer and some nails so he could nail his shadow to the ground.”

Students [*Spontaneous Oral Utterance*] NO!

Teacher [*Ignores students and continues to Read with Inflection*] “He hammered and hammered and hammered but no matter how many nails he hammered he couldn’t nail [*Emphasis on nail*] his shadow down.”

Many Students [*Sounds of giggling, Spontaneous Oral Utterance*]

The next excerpt illustrates how during a reading of *The Three Little Pigs* the students, without prompting from the teacher, huffed and puffed like the wolf in the story:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “‘Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house in!’ said the big bad wolf. ‘Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house in!’ he said again.”

Many Students [*Spontaneous Oral Utterance, make huffing and puffing sounds*]

Teacher [*Smiles at the students and continues to read from the text*] “‘Not by the hair on our chinney, chin, chin!’”

Choral Reading/Spontaneous. Another code related to both *On Topic/Out of Turn* and *Spontaneous Utterance* is *Choral Reading/Spontaneous*. This response is defined in the CIRA Glossary as follows: “Students start to read along with the teacher without being asked to do so.” This code accounted for only 3% of the total Student Activity codes (thus I did not include this Student Activity code on Table 11); however, it occurred during at least one observation of all the teachers, so I think it is interesting to take note of it. The following excerpt from an observation illustrates *Choral Reading/Spontaneous*:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “‘Oh very well!’ cried the Troll. ‘You may pass!’ And he climbed under the bridge. The first Billy Goat Gruff continued across the bridge . . .”

Teacher and Students [*Choral Reading/Spontaneous, students read spontaneously with teacher*] “‘Trip-trop, trip trop!’”

Teacher [*Continues to Read with Inflection where she left off*] “. . . to the other side of the valley where he began to graze on the green grass that grew there.”

[*Pauses to turn page*]

And finally, this excerpt from an observation illustrates how the code *Choral Reading/Spontaneous* can define an entire recurring passage read by the teacher:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “Not in a box! Not with a fox [*With expression*]!
[*Some students begin to try to read along*] Not in a house. Not with a mouse. I
would not eat them here or there I would not eat them anywhere”

Teacher and Students [*Choral Reading/Spontaneous*] “I would not eat green eggs
and ham. I do not like them Sam I am!”

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] “Would you, could you, in a car? Eat them, eat
them, here they are! I would not could not in a car. You may like them you will
see, you may like them in a tree! I would not could not in a tree. Not in a car, you
let me be! I do not like them in a box, I do not like them with a fox. I do not like
them in a house. I do not like them with a mouse. I do not like them here or there,
I do not like them anywhere.”

Teacher and Students [*Choral Reading/Spontaneous*] “I do not like green eggs
and ham. I do not like them Sam I am!”

It is interesting to note that the three categories *On Topic/Out of Turn* (17%),
Spontaneous Oral Utterance (13%) and *Choral Reading/Spontaneous* (3%) accounted for
a total of 33% of the total Student Activity codes. These three categories are
characterized by the students feeling free to spontaneously react to the text being read.
Although these teachers were in firm control of their classes, students were encouraged to
become a part of the flow of the story. These categories along with *Simple Answer* (32%)
accounted for a total of 66% of the total Student Activity codes.

Texts Read During CIRA Sessions

I now focus on the third circle in the center of my CIRA model: Text. In order to answer sub-question 3—How can the text be characterized during a CIRA session?—I gathered and analyzed data from the CIRA protocol (Appendix G) and the CIRA Text Log (Appendix F). In this section I first describe general characteristics of the texts read across the practice of all four teachers. I then report on the text structures, on the number of texts read, and on the differing genres of texts used.

The data showed that all four teachers read from a variety of texts. Appendix J lists the title and author of all the texts used during the sessions I observed. It also lists the date on which the text was read and gives the text structure (narrative or expository). Without exception, the texts could all be characterized as picture books (Hallberg, 1982; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000). In all but two sessions the teacher read from a narrative text. In all cases the teachers read the entire text. In only one case did a teacher read more than one text. In the case of all of the teachers the texts chosen for CIRA sessions did not appear to be overtly based on the cultures of the children.

Text Structure of Texts Read During CIRA Sessions

Table 12 lists the text structure of the texts read during the CIRA sessions by the four participating teachers over the course of the study as well as the total number of books read. None of the teachers used plays during the sessions. The most prevalent structure by far was narrative at 78%.

The month with the fewest number of texts read was April. All four teachers reported, during the informal chats, that mandated state and district testing occurred

during April as did spring break; so, they did not have the opportunity to conduct as many read aloud (CIRA) sessions during the month of April.

Table 12

Structure of Texts Read During CIRA Sessions

	Narrative	Expository	Poetry	Total
January	25	16	2	43
February	47	11	3	61
March	59	6	8	73
April	32	3	2	37
Total Texts	163	36	16	215
Percentage of total texts	75%	16%	7%	

Narrative genres read during CIRA sessions. Table 13 provides the types and numbers of narrative genres that were read during the course of my study. The most common genre read by all teachers was Fantasy/Science Fiction (34%) followed by Folk/Fairy Tales (20%) for a total of 54% of all texts read. Fantasy is defined in my Text Characteristics Guide (Appendix C) as follows: “A highly fanciful story about characters, places and events that while sometimes believable, do not exist.” An example of fantasy would be *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss. Science Fiction is defined as follows: “An imaginary story based upon current or projected scientific and technological developments as exemplified by the currently popular *Magic School Bus* series.” Fairy Tales are defined thus: “A folk story about real life problems, but usually involving

imaginary characters and magical events. They are optimistic in tone with a happy ending and *The Three Little Pigs* is an example.” This category would also include post-modern versions of well known fairy tales.

Table 13

Narrative Genres Read During CIRA Sessions

Biography (non-fiction)	Realistic Fiction	Historical Fiction	Fantasy/ Science Fiction	Folk/Fairy Tale	Other	Total
4	36	0	73	44	6	163
2%	22%	0%	44%	27%	3%	

Virtually none of the teachers used historical fiction which is defined in the Text Characteristics Guide as follows: “A narrative of past events and characters partly historical but largely inspired by the imagination of the author.”

Expository text types. All of the expository texts read accounted for only 36 out of 215 texts read or 16% of total texts. In almost every case the teachers characterized these expository texts as trade books. A trade book is defined in the Text Characteristics Guide (Appendix D) as follows: “A book published for sale to the general public.” In no cases did the teachers use other forms of exposition such as magazines, newspapers or text books. The trade books selected for CIRA were never random in nature since they always focused specifically on a theme that the teacher was teaching, such as community helpers

or art. The teachers reported that these themes were often reinforced throughout the day in other settings such as literacy centers (independent small group activities) and independent work times.

Characteristics of poetry read during CIRA sessions. Table 14 displays the type of poetry read during the CIRA sessions. Only 15 of the 215 texts (7%) read during the course of my study were characterized as poetry. The most common type of poetry was characterized as *traditional*. All four teachers reported in the formal interview that they

Table 14

Characteristics of Poetry Read During CIRA Sessions

Traditional	Limerick	Haiku	Free Verse	Nursery Rhymes	Total
12	0	0	3	0	15
(80%)	(0%)	(0%)	(20%)	(0%)	(100%)

tended to read pure poetry (versus a narrative text with rhyming words) at other instructional periods during the day, such as shared reading. They had characterized a narrative text that featured rhyming (e.g., *Green Eggs and Ham*) as a narrative and not as poetry.

Selecting Texts for CIRA Sessions

In our formal interviews, teachers reported that in all cases they purposively selected the texts they read aloud. In all cases, teachers reported they had to provide the texts themselves; in no cases were teachers legislated by the district to read certain texts. The district curriculum guides used by all four teachers provided suggestions; however, the district did not provide these texts for the teachers. All four teachers expressed the

opinion that procuring effective texts for their CIRA sessions was difficult. They said procurement improved with each subsequent year of teaching as they built their own personal CIRA collections. The teachers reported that they were frustrated when, because they worked as a team, there was often only one copy of a text. In this case teachers often had to wait for texts because their colleagues were using them. All teachers reported that the media specialists at each school were helpful in securing texts; however, these specialists were often very busy and could not be expected to secure texts for them regularly. The teachers reported that they did not always get to read the optimal text for the concept that they wished to teach because of lack of availability.

It was not surprising 75% of the texts read during this study were narrative because traditionally narratives are the text of choice when reading to young children. It is interesting to note that 71% of those narratives were either Fantasy/Science Fiction or Folk Tales. This choice reflects the school system mandated curriculum taught during the course of the study. My data reported here does not tell the entire story of the types of texts the students were exposed to during my study. All four teachers reported reading aloud to their students several times during the instructional day and not just during CIRA sessions. All four teachers reported reading poetry and exposition nearly every day in order to support specific units of study and portions of the curriculum.

Conclusion

Here in chapter 4 I have brought understanding to my research questions in the form of a collective case study. I systematically described the context of CIRA, teacher practice, student activity and texts used during the CIRA sessions across the practice of the four participating teachers. Next, in chapter 5, I will bring my research questions to

light through the lens of individual case studies. The thick and rich descriptions acquired through with-in case analysis provide individual portraits that not only describe the separate elements of CIRA (teacher activity, student activity and text) but also bring understanding to the relationships among these three elements in order to bring forth an even deeper understanding of CIRA than the multi-case study illuminated here in chapter 4.

Chapter 5

Characteristics of Kindergarten CIRA Within the Practice of Four Experienced Teachers

In chapter 4 I reported trends that occurred during CIRA sessions across the practice of the participating teachers. Here in chapter 5 I illustrate the individual differences among the four experienced kindergarten teachers across the observed CIRA sessions via in-case analyses in the form of descriptive individual case studies. These case studies examine the characteristics of Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text as well as the relationships among these three elements during CIRA sessions. The individual case study for each of the four teachers describes only the characteristics of CIRA that are unique to each teacher. I compare and contrast the teachers when appropriate. The collective case study in chapter 4 brought a surface-level understanding to the practice of CIRA; as Cresswell (1998) stated, “the more cases studied, the greater the lack of depth in any single case” (p. 64). Thus, it is here in chapter 5, with thick description, that I apply my CIRA model as a lens to the practice of each of the four teachers in order to illuminate the individual differences and to gain an understanding of the three central elements of CIRA as well as the relationships among them in each of the four classes.

Because the characteristics of the teacher and the context had an influence on CIRA sessions in all cases, I first describe the characteristics of the teachers and the context of the study for each teacher even though these characteristics were not included in the original sub questions. Next, I answer sub-question 4, How can literacy and other kindergarten content be characterized during CIRA? I then answer three other sub-questions: 1) What are the characteristics of Teacher Practice during CIRA and how does

Teacher Practice relate to Student Activity?; 2) What are the characteristics of Student Activity during CIRA and how does Student Activity relate to Teacher Practice?; and 3) How can Text be characterized during CIRA sessions? For each teacher, I describe the characteristics of the three central elements of CIRA to answer these questions. Finally, I describe the findings for my Central Question: What patterns characterize Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across teachers? Patterns within teachers are described here in chapter 5 and patterns across teachers were described in chapter 4. It is the answer to this question that is the center of my model. This confluence of Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text differed between the CIRA sessions of the four participating teachers.

My analysis of the data revealed a continuum across the portraits of the four participating teachers (*Figure 7*). I did not select teachers around this continuum; instead, the continuum developed with the analysis of the data. In this chapter, I present the portraits of each of the four participating teachers on a continuum from the teacher with most unstructured and open-ended sessions to the teacher with the most structured and highly scripted sessions.

As I explained in detail at the beginning of chapter 4, I use excerpts of the transcripts of the CIRA sessions of each of the four teachers in order to illuminate and give a thick description. I use the same punctuation here in chapter 5 that I used in chapter 4. Double quotation marks indicate text that the teacher is reading. Single quotation marks inside of double quotations are used to denote the speech of characters in

the text being read. In order to provide the full context of the excerpts, I provide stage directions and/or my coding in italics inside brackets.

Figure 6

Teacher Portraits Across a Continuum

	Less Structured			More Structured
	More characteristic of a parent/child read aloud			More characteristic of a formal lesson
	Ms. Torben→	Ms. Dubbury→	Ms. Emery→	Ms. Ragner
FARMS	33%			77%
EL	17%			53%
Avg. length	13 minutes			16 minutes
Principal	Most hands off			Most hands on
Main goal	Enjoy good literature			To meet district reading benchmarks
Purpose	Not always stated			Always stated
Teacher Practice	Fewest number of codes			Most diverse codes
Student Activity	Highest number of <i>On Topic/Out of Turn</i> and <i>Spontaneous Oral Utterance</i>			All codes are answer codes
Content	Least variety			Highest percent of Comprehension codes
Text	Most spontaneous selected and complex			Most deliberate and simple

Renee Torben: Purposeful Improvisation

On one end of the spectrum of the CIRA sessions I observed were the sessions of Ms. Renee Torben. Her sessions were the least structured and prescribed. This assessment is not meant to indicate poor classroom management, disorganization, a lack

of planning or ineffective instruction. On the surface Ms. Torben's CIRA sessions appeared to be free form, flowing, and unfettered by legislated goals and objectives. Ms. Torben was more reactive than the other teachers in the study to the responses of her students, so much so that a casual observer might think that Ms. Torben deferred to the whims of her students. However, upon close examination I discovered her CIRA sessions to be well orchestrated and quite purposeful.

Teacher Characteristics

If I had to use only one word to describe Ms. Torben it would be "elfin." When I entered her classroom it was difficult, because of her diminutive stature, to visually pick her out unless she was engaged in a period of whole-class, direct instruction. It would not have surprised me if Ms. Torben told me she had been a gymnast. When she was not in front of her class, or sitting in her rocking chair for whole group time, Ms. Torben could be found seated on the floor helping an individual child or seated at a table with a small group of children. I never heard her once raise her voice to get the attention of her class. Nor did she use any classroom management techniques such as ringing a bell or turning out the lights to get the attention of her class. She would simply say, wherever she was, (on the floor, seated at a table or in front of the entire class) often in a soft, not loud voice, "Class, I need your attention," and immediately the students would stop and give her their full attention.

During the course of this study Ms. Torben was in her 9th year of teaching. She appeared to be in her early thirties, teaching was her only career after earning a BA in Elementary Education (with an additional kindergarten endorsement), and a Masters degree in Educational Leadership. She had taught kindergarten for the past three years at

Thomas Elementary School and prior to that she was a Head Start teacher at a different school in the same county school system for six years.

Training for CIRA

Ms. Torben had discovered the work of Mem Fox (2001), an Australian children's author whose self-proclaimed mission is to educate parents and teachers on the benefits of reading aloud to children. The quotation at the beginning of this dissertation is by Mem Fox. Ms. Torben reported she uses Mem Fox's website to inform her practice of read alouds (e.g., book selection and read aloud techniques). Ms. Torben also completed a series of "Comprehensive Strategies of Reading" workshops at the county level. She reported that only a small portion of one of the four sessions discussed reading aloud to children and that she acquired little information to inform her practice from these sessions. During the past year Ms. Torben participated in a book club at her school. The group read *Reading Essentials* (Routman, 2002), a commercial book written by a reading specialist, that had been provided by her site staff development teacher. Ms. Torben reported that this book had informed her practice of reading aloud (CIRA) to a small degree. Ms. Torben was the only participating teacher who had any training in what I define as CIRA sessions.

Context Characteristics

In the following sections I describe the salient characteristics of the context of Ms. Torben's CIRA sessions.

The School Site

Ms. Torben reported that her principal had been at her school for four years. The principal had made major changes during her first year, including encouraging some staff members whom she considered sub-standard to transfer to other schools. The school climate has since settled down and is now a harmonious and supportive work environment for teachers. The principal had built trust with the remaining staff and had instituted a much more hands-off approach to instructional decisions. This hands-off approach was made possible in good part because the school is not a Title 1 school, but is instead a Gifted and Talented (GT) Science Magnet School. Of the four schools in my study, Thomas Elementary has the lowest number of special education students, lowest mobility rate, and the second lowest rate of FARMS and EL students (see Table 1). Thomas Elementary school consistently achieves AYP for all students across and within all demographics by race and SES; thus, the school is not under extreme pressure from the county to raise test scores.

The Community and Students

Approximately half of the students who attend Thomas Elementary School are from the local area, and the rest applied from around the county to be a part of the GT science magnet program. According to Ms. Torben, the area surrounding Thomas Elementary School has gentrified over the past several years, and many parents have moved to the Thomas Elementary attendance area because of the good reputation of the school. There are many highly-involved parents as evidenced by a high rate of PTA participation. According to Ms. Torben most of her students come to her kindergarten with a solid emergent literacy background, since most of her children had support with

literacy activities at home. Ms. Torben was the only teacher in the study to report that she had a few parents who were, in her opinion, *overly* concerned that their children were not learning to read rapidly enough. Several parents in particular often asked her for extra homework to improve their student's literacy skills. Ms. Torben said that in her opinion she did not think these children needed extra homework, since they were already above grade level based on county literacy assessments.

Length of Sessions

Table 15 illustrates the dates, time, and length of each observed session. The average length of a CIRA session across the practice of all teachers was 15 minutes. The average for Ms. Torben was below the average for all teachers at 12.25 minutes per session. Ms. Torben executed the most straight forward reading of text with fewer interjections than the other three teachers. The texts she selected for her CIRA sessions were just as long and complex as the other teachers' texts; in fact, as will be discussed in the section on text selection below, she often selected more complex texts than the other teachers. Thus, the length of the actual texts read did not influence the length of the sessions; however, the number of interruptions did. The number of interruptions is evidenced by the transcripts of her CIRA sessions. She had much longer chunks of reading uninterrupted text and fewer Teacher Practice and Student Activity codes than the other three teachers.

Setting the Stage

Ms. Torben reported that her CIRA sessions would look different if I had observed her sessions earlier in the school year. She stated that she spent much of the first month of the school year developing a routine for her CIRA sessions. Even though the

majority of her students came to school at the beginning of the school year with at least some emergent literacy skills, many of them did not know how to sit for extended periods of time to attend to a story. “At the beginning of the year,” Ms. Torben reported, “I do a lot of modeling of what a good reader and listener should be doing. That took me a long time to get to that point.”

Table 15

Length of Ms. Torben’s CIRA Sessions

CIRA Session	Date	Time Start	Time End	Elapsed Time
#1	Tues 1/30	1:28	1:40	12
#2	Wed 2/21	1:35	1:45	10
#3	Thurs 3/22	1:32	1:49	17
#4	Wed 4/18	1:35	1:45	10
				M= 12.25

Session Content

In the formal interview Ms. Torben reported her own personal purpose for her CIRA sessions: “My main goal is for them to just enjoy stories and want to read stories. I want them to go home and want their parents to read to them at night.” When I asked Ms. Torben what she taught during her CIRA sessions, her initial answer was that she never intended to teach anything during her sessions. She simply wanted her students to “read for pleasure.” However, I had observed her lessons, and I was aware of quite a different

picture. In addition to modeling the love of reading, she also taught literacy and other kindergarten content areas during her CIRA sessions.

Therefore, I probed during the formal interview and she and I had an extended conversation about her overall reading program. We focused on the curriculum she taught, on her reactions to expectations from the county, and on her various instructional interventions. Ms. Torben had the self realization that she actually did have specific goals and objectives for her CIRA sessions. She then elaborated on these goals and objectives:

I guess, now that I think about it, my goals may not be something that I write down in my plan book; [they] may be something that occurred to me that morning. For example, in Math we are doing coins, and I notice some children are having difficulty understanding the objective of counting coins and buying things with coins. So I will go in my book collection and pick a concept book that discusses coins in order for them to gain a deeper understanding of counting coins and to make a real world connection.

In a follow-up question I asked Ms. Torben how the goals and objectives of her formal read aloud session matched the county curriculum. Her answer was very detailed:

My goals and objectives are right from the county curriculum. In the beginning of the year my read alouds [CIRA] are of very predictable texts, and as I progress through the school year one of the objectives is reading comprehension. I will add it [extra information] in like a hidden message and keep reading. I try not to stop and focus on it. I just highlight it a little. I hit the key concept and keep reading because I do not want to disrupt the rhythm of the story. [Those interruptions]

may deter some children from wanting to read. I can see this sometimes in this class, so I just want to read straight through the book.

Ms. Torben also reported that she read books throughout the day, not just during CIRA. She read books during Math, Science or Social Studies time in order to support her instruction. Finally, I asked Ms. Torben when she felt a session was particularly successful. She described a couple of significant signs of an excited reader:

When the kids are still talking about it [the book] at the end of the day. Or the next day, and they come in and say, “You know, Ms. Torben, yesterday you read a story about such and such and last night at home we read a story by Rosemary Wells.” Or, they read a different author, [and] they make a connection to what we have read before, and then they want to do more with the story after the read aloud was done.

Most frequently occurring characteristics of content during CIRA. Table 16 shows the most frequent content codes for Ms. Torben. She reported she usually conducts follow-up lessons to her CIRA sessions for practice during her Guided Reading groups or literacy centers. I never observed her leading a picture walk before reading. She would, however, always make sure to explicitly read the author’s and the illustrator’s names and read the biography of the author and/or illustrator if there was one included in the text (*Concepts of Print*). Although Ms. Torben did not have any codes for *Text Structure*, she did always mention, either in passing or in detail, the genre of the text she was reading (*Genre*). For example, when reading *The Three Little Pigs*, Ms. Torben did not tell the students the book had a narrative text structure. She explicitly stated to the students, before she read the text, that it was a fairy tale, and while reading the text she explicitly

pointed out characteristics of fairy tales. “I was waiting to see what repeats,” she reported “and ‘Little pig! Little pig! Let me in!’ repeats. Repeating is a characteristic of a fairy tale.”

Vocabulary Development had the same number of codes as *Genre*. In most cases Ms. Torben quickly discontinued reading and stated what the word in question meant, made a connection to the students’ prior knowledge, and then continued to read. For example, when she was reading *The Three Little Pigs* and came on the word *brick* she stopped reading the text and said, “Brick. A brick is something very sturdy to build a house out of. Bricks are hard and connected with hard stuff called mortar. Bricks are rectangular prisms like we have been talking about in math.” She did not check for student understanding by asking questions but simply continued to read.

Of the four participating teachers, Ms Torben exhibited the fewest number of codes in the area of *Content Characteristics*. She never once explicitly linked a text she was reading to Math, Social Studies, or Science as the other teachers did. However, Ms. Torben reported reading more books on a daily basis than the other teachers. She reported reading entire texts at least two other times a day to support the curriculum. As Ms. Torben stated, the main goal of her CIRA sessions was to nurture the student’s enjoyment of reading. Ms. Torben did not have any codes for *Processing Text*, *Decoding Text*, *Letter Identification*, *Letter/Sound Relationships*, *Rhyming Words/Families*, *Spelling* and *Conventions: Punctuation* and/or *Grammar*. Ms. Torben reported she explicitly taught these literacy skills during her Shared Reading time. Shared Reading is a planned period of instruction when the teacher scaffolds the entire class in reading simple text—either narrative, expository or poetry—at the reading level of the class as a whole. Typically,

Big Books [books that have print that is large enough for the children to see] are used during this instructional period. The primary goal of Shared Reading is to develop *Concepts of Print* and decoding strategies.

Table 16

Most Frequently Occurring Codes During Ms. Torben's CIRA Sessions

	1	2	3
Teacher Practice	Explains Rules/Procedures (17%)	Evaluation Feedback (15%)	Low Order (9%) Scaffolds (7%)
Content	Concept of Print (37%)	Vocabulary Development (20%) Genre (20%)	
Student Activity	On Topic/Out of Turn (42%)	Simple Answer (14%)	Spontaneous Oral Utterance (10%)

Central Elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text

In this section I describe the salient characteristics of the central elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text as related to Ms. Torben's CIRA sessions. Finally, I describe the unique way that these three elements relate during Ms. Torben's CIRA sessions.

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Teacher Practice During CIRA

Table 16 shows the most frequently occurring codes of Teacher Practice during Ms. Torben's CIRA sessions. It is interesting to note that Ms. Torben had the fewest number of total codes [all areas combined] compared with the other three teachers. She

had a total of 386 codes, nearly 150 fewer than the teacher with the next fewest and 450 fewer than the teacher with the most codes. As I stated in the previous section, the lower number of codes is due to the fact that Ms. Torben interrupted her sessions less frequently than the other teachers. Her most common code, *Explains Rules and Procedures* is illustrated by the following short excerpts:

- I am ready for some good readers, Magic 5, eyes up here.
- [After students spontaneously started saying rain, a reoccurring word in the text, but did not stop when the page was turned] Stop, I have got to turn the page!
When I say “stop” you stop. [Turns page and continues to read] “Rain on the green grass, rain on the black road.”

Evaluation Feedback was a close second in the number of codes. Mrs. Torben was always in control of her read aloud sessions; however, she had a very easy-going manner that encouraged the students to spontaneously respond to the text while listening. The *Evaluation Feedback* utterances were in direct response to either spontaneous or elicited responses to the text by the students. For example:

Ms. Torben “He and his wife Anne are artists and designers.” [Reads the back cover biographic sketch of the illustrator after reading the entire text]

Student [On Topic/Out of Turn] My mom’s name is Anne!

Ms. Torben [Evaluation Feedback] Ah, fabulous connection, your Moms’ name is Anne just like one of the artists! [Continues to read]

Low Order (9%) was the third most frequent code in the area of Teacher Practice. These were surface-level questions asked about the text as it was being read, as in this excerpt from a reading of *The Three Little Pigs*:

Ms. Torben [*Low Order*] I always forget this part. Student [*says name of student*].

Which house was the strongest?

The fourth most frequently used code in the area of teacher practice was *Scaffolds*. Even though *Scaffolds* was the fourth most frequent code for Ms. Torben, she scaffolded less frequently than two of the other teachers. Only Ms. Dubbury had fewer *Scaffolds* codes.

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Student Activity During CIRA

Table 16 illustrates the most common Student Activity codes for Ms. Torben's CIRA sessions. *On Topic/Out of Turn* was the most frequent. This code is characterized by a statement made by a student about the text being read. For example, Ms. Torben read in a contemporary version of *The Three Little Pigs* that one of the pigs was thinking about using flowers to build a house. One of the students, without being called on, spontaneously said, "That won't work!" The third most common student activity code in Ms. Torben's read aloud sessions is *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* (which is not a statement or question about what is being read but simply a spontaneous sound inspired by the text, such as a laugh or boo). For example, when Ms. Torben read the part of *The Three Little Pigs* where the wolf could not blow down the house of brick, many students spontaneously cheered. When *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* is added to *On Topic/Out of Turn* these two categories account for a little over half (52%) of Ms. Torben's total Student Activity codes.

The second most common code, *Simple Answer* was made by the students in reply to a *Low Order* request from Ms. Torben. Sometimes multiple students would state a *Simple Answer* to a single *Low Order* request. For example, after reading *The Three Little*

Pigs, Ms. Torben asked the *Low Order* question, “What were the houses made of?” Three students gave a Simple Answer. Student 1 said “Straw,” Student 2 said “Sticks” and Student 3 said “Bricks.”

There were no Student Activity codes in the following areas: *Asks a Question of Another Student, Responds With or States Hypothesis or Prediction, Responds With or States Alternate Answer/Statement, Responds With or States Elaborate Answer or Statement* and *Echo Reading*.

Text and CIRA

In the following section I describe how Ms. Torben selected the texts for her CIRA sessions. I then describe the characteristics of the texts she read.

Text selection. The texts I observed Ms. Torben read were for the most part large, brightly-colored picture books that appeared to be new or in very good condition. Because she often read more than one book per session, she recorded the greatest number of texts on her CIRA reading log (75). Ms. Torben reported that she always purposefully selected her books to support both the kindergarten curriculum and the literacy skills she was currently teaching. She procured her books from the school media center or from her own personal collection, a collection, which had become quite large over the course of her career. She elaborated:

I try not to pick, and I will not read, books that I have not seen up in the media center because they are not on the county’s approved reading list. Back in the olden days [the beginning of her teaching career] I went to the public library. Sometimes students bring books in, and if I feel it is appropriate I will read it in class; if it is not appropriate, if I do not think it is quality children’s

literature or the content is objectionable, then I will either reread it to that child or say, This is a great book you can read during reading buddy time [a daily partner/independent reading time].

Ms. Torben was the only teacher who reported she allowed students to occasionally select the texts for her CIRA sessions. She stated that she would not read just anything that they brought in; the only books she would read were ones she considered to be good literature. She elaborated: “It is good that they are reading, and that is the point, but those books [books based on cartoon characters] are for other times and not for school. If I am going to take time to read in class, they have to be quality books.” Ms. Torben reported that she believed it was her job to ensure that students received a “balanced diet” of quality literature.

Text structure. Table 17 illustrates the number and type of text Ms. Torben read each month of my study. Like the other teachers, she read the fewest texts in April due to Spring Break and testing.

When asked how she selected the various text structures for her CIRA sessions Ms. Torben mentioned several factors:

I select the books for their structure but also for the illustrations and photographs, and I just think it is good to have different views and different ways to see how authors and illustrators work together. I tend to read more expository texts during my Shared Reading time. Shared Reading is a time where I try to do a lot of print concepts and one-on-one correspondence between the spoken word and print and stopping and drawing attention to Concepts of Print and really focus on the print and on pointing and reading. I do not do that during read alouds.

Table 17

Types of Text Read Each Month of Study in Ms. Torben's Class

Month	Narrative	Expository	Poetry	Play	Total
Jan	10	7	2	0	19
Feb	18	5	1	0	24
March	23	0	0	0	23
April	8	1	0	0	9
Total	59	13	3	0	75
% of					
Total	79%	17%	4%	0%	

Table 18 displays the genres of narrative texts that Ms. Torben read during the course of the study. She did not read any biographies or historical fiction. The most common genre was realistic fiction. The next most common genre was fairy tales, like *The Three Little Pigs*, that was read during one of the sessions I observed. This focus on fairy tales is not surprising, as Ms. Torben reported she was doing a fairy-tale unit during the course of the study. The next most common genre was fantasy. For example, Ms. Torben characterized *Miss Nelson Is Missing* as fantasy. *Miss Nelson Is Missing* (a book I read to my own kindergarten class) is the tale of a class that takes advantage of their very nice teacher, Miss Nelson. One day Miss Nelson is not at school, and the substitute is Miss Viola Swamp. Miss Swamp is quite the opposite of sweet Miss Nelson, and the class is extremely relieved and well behaved when Miss Nelson finally returns. The

reader is let in on the secret that the evil Miss Swamp was actually Miss Nelson in disguise.

Table 18

Narrative Genres Read During CIRA Sessions in Ms. Torben's Class

Biography (non-fiction)	Realistic Fiction	Historical Fiction	Fantasy/ Science Fiction	Folk/ Fairy Tales	other	Total Narratives
0 (0%)	25 (33%)	0 (0%)	12 (16%)	16 (21%)	6 (8%)	59

Fewer than 20% of the texts read were characterized as *Expository* by Ms. Torben. She reported that she did not confine reading books to once a day CIRA sessions. She reported she read books during Shared Reading time, as well as at several other times of the day, to support the content areas of Math, Science and Social Studies. This broad use of expository texts could explain why she read fewer expository texts in her CIRA sessions. Expository texts often lend themselves to the support of content, and since Ms. Torben was reading to support content at other times of the day, she may have used narratively structured texts more often during CIRA. Her main goal [in CIRA] was to foster her students' enjoyment in being read to, and Ms. Torben stated that she believed narrative texts lend themselves more readily to being read for enjoyment. Ms. Torben reported why she read expository texts during a CIRA session in February:

I read *Red, White and Blue* [an expository text describing various symbols of the United States such as the flag, eagle, and so on] in February. Sometimes for my

read aloud [CIRA sessions] I try to pick books that kind of go along with the theme of the month. So, *Red, White and Blue* went along with Presidents' Day.

I believe that the number of expository texts read by Ms. Torben was actually fewer than the number she listed. She coded seven texts as the expository subcategory of "other." None of the remaining teachers coded any expository text as "other." When I questioned Ms. Torben about this at the formal interview, she said that these texts were actually journal entries that the parents of her students had written. The students took turns taking the class stuffed animal home along with a journal. The parents were told to write in the journal about the adventures that the stuffed animal had. On the days when the stuffed animal and journal were returned to school, Ms. Torben read these journal entries at the beginning of her CIRA session. At one of her CIRA sessions I observed her reading from one of these journals. I would have characterized the journal entry as a narrative because the entry was written in the form of a story. I did not revise the coding.

Patterns of Relationship Among Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text During

CIRA

At the heart of CIRA is the relationship among Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text. The following excerpt exemplifies the patterns of relationship among Ms. Torben, her students and the text during CIRA. As has already been stated, Ms. Torben was very much in control of her class. However, she conducted her CIRA sessions in a manner that was open to the ebb and flow of student reactions to the text. Her CIRA sessions reminded me of watching a pan of popcorn popping. Ms. Torben did not hold the lid down tight on the pan. She lifted the lid and allowed the students to pop out with their responses as they thought of them. However, Ms. Torben did not take off

the lid entirely; she kept it hovering over the top of the pan in order to control where the kernels (students' responses) were heading.

Below is an excerpt from a CIRA session. Ms. Torben is reading a popular children's book that has become a classic, *Miss Nelson is Missing* (described in the previous *Text Structure* section). In the following excerpt from the CIRA session there is a continual pattern of Ms. Torben reading and students spontaneously responding out loud to the text. Ms. Torben gave *Evaluation Feedback* to the *On Topic/Out of Turn* responses and for the most part continued to read. She inserted a bit of direct instruction around the vocabulary word "unpleasant." Each of my study's participating teachers read with a great deal of expression. However, Ms. Torben had the most dramatic and expressive presence. This excerpt also captures the very animated way that Ms. Torben read. Finally, this excerpt shows how Ms. Torben refers to the illustrations in the text that she purposively selected in order to maximize her students' understanding of the text.

Ms. Torben [*Reads Aloud with Inflection*] "Maybe something terrible happened! Maybe she got gobbled up by a shark!" said one of the kids." [*Scaffolds*] But that does not seem likely. If you look down here [*points to illustration*] it says "Sharks are very unpleasant!"

Student 1 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] Unpleasant means they are dangerous.

Ms. Torben [*Smiles and nods affirmatively giving Evaluation Feedback*]

Unpleasant means not so nice. Very . . . [*Vocabulary Development*]

Student 2 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] Mean!

Ms. Torben [*Smiles and nods affirmatively giving Evaluation Feedback*] . . . not a good feeling, unpleasant. [*Continues to read*] "Maybe Miss Nelson went to

Mars!’ said another kid. But that did not seem very likely either.” [*Scaffolding*] If

Miss Nelson went to Mars she would always have to be in an astronaut suit.

Student 3 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] Or else she would die.

Ms. Torben [*Smiles and nods affirmatively giving Evaluation Feedback*] You are right, she would die without an astronaut suit to protect her, and provide her with oxygen. “‘I know!’ explained one Know It All. ‘Maybe Miss Nelson got carried away by a swarm of angry butterflies. [*With emphasis on angry butterflies*]. But that was the least likely of all.’” [*Scaffolding*] And that is why it is the least likely of all. Butterflies, I do not think, are very angry creatures.

Students [*Discussion, On Topic/Out of Turn*] [*Inaudible because they are talking all at once*]

Student 4 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] It would break their wings.

Ms. Torben [*Smiles and nods affirmatively giving Evaluation Feedback*]

Student 4 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] And they would die! [*die said dramatically*]

Ms. Torben [*Smiles and nods affirmatively giving Evaluation Feedback*]

[*Continues to read in very low voice that is nearly inaudible, all the students quickly settle down, and attend to Ms. Torben reading.*]

Renee Torben in Summary

Ms. Torben’s sessions appeared effortless and seemingly required little orchestration. Under close scrutiny it is clear that these CIRA sessions are the exact opposite. Ms. Torben is an expert at what she does, and her high level of expertise is transparent (by the comments she made even to herself) in the execution of her CIRA sessions.

Emily Dubbury: The “Natural”

The spotlight now shifts to the next teacher on the continuum: Emily Dubbury. It was clear from my observations that her CIRA sessions were well planned and explicitly orchestrated. What is more, Ms. Dubbury easily articulated her practice. Like the sessions of Ms. Torben, there was an easy ebb and flow between the teacher and students. Ms. Dubbury continually informed her sessions based on the actions and reactions of her students. Like Ms. Torben, Ms. Dubbury reported enjoying teaching in a school that easily made AYP, and had been headed for the past several years by a principal who respected teachers. This principal had a hands-off style of management and gave her teachers free reign in covering the curriculum.

Teacher Characteristics

Ms. Dubbury was in her fourth year of teaching during the course of my study (two years in another state and the second year in the county). Based on my observations I would have guessed she had taught much longer. She possessed a level of intuitive skill some teachers never obtain. What is more, she ably articulated her practice of CIRA.

If Ms. Dubbury were ever to want to make a career change she could easily do voice-over work as a wise cartoon princess or bring a princess to life for children at a theme park. She has a gentle, ever-cheery manner, and a sincere smile that does not leave her face. I never heard her raise her voice or appear to be ruffled. She was unique among the four participating teachers in that she often referred to herself in the third person, for example, “Ms. Dubbury brought this book in to share with you.” She always referred to

her students as “friends” instead of the more common “boys and girls,” for example saying, “Friends, it is time for you to put away your center activities and sit on the rug.”

Ms. Dubbury’s room was a bright, joyful place with a wall of windows facing a tree-lined playground. A busy, well-ordered but not sterile place, her classroom displayed many manipulatives, a well-stocked block area, and a dramatic play center, all exhibiting evidence of being inhabited by real five- and six-year olds. Children’s work, prominently displayed around the room, caught my eye during each observation; it changed with the thematic units and the seasons. A cozy library area, complete with a rug, many pillows, and stuffed animals, and a large, eclectic collection of books, took up one corner of the room. A Science Center stocked with a rotating, hands-on display of realia took up another corner of the room. In my experience the Science Center, once a mainstay of kindergarten classrooms, had become scarce since the implementation of NCLB. Actually, I felt like I had stepped back in time five to ten years when I entered Ms. Dubbury’s door, as her classroom hosted all the features of a traditional kindergarten room pre-NCLB. It has been my experience that many kindergarten rooms in the past several years look like first-grade rooms (e.g., students assigned to sit at desks, no block area or dramatic play area, fewer manipulatives, etc).

Training for CIRA

Ms. Dubbury reported no specific training in the area of reading aloud to children. She attended two reading conferences in another state, where she started her teaching career. However, reading aloud was not discussed in detail. “I learned traditional activities for before, during, and after reading a story,” Ms. Dubbury elaborated. “The presenter also discussed how to motivate children and not just let them be blobs sitting

there listening to the story. I also learned to always set a purpose for reading.” My observations confirmed that Ms. Dubbury put what she learned and articulated into practice.

Context Characteristics

In the following sections I describe the salient characteristics of the context of Ms. Dubbury’s CIRA sessions.

The School Site

Dorchester Elementary School, nestled in a neighborhood of older (sixty- to seventy-year old) homes, is an attractive school. It was apparent that additions had been added over the course of many years. Dorchester Elementary was, relatively speaking, the most affluent school in my study. Dorchester had the lowest FARMS rate, lowest number of EL students, and lowest mobility rate of the schools in my study. However, the FARMS and Mobility rates are higher at Dorchester than the county-wide average, so relative to the county as a whole Dorchester would be considered a low-income school (see Table 1).

I asked Ms. Dubbury if her school had been impacted by the policies of NCLB. She reported no obvious impact, but she felt this absence of impact would change soon. A veteran principal who had been at Dorchester for the past seven years was forced to retire early, at the end of November, due to health issues. An interim principal had been in place until the new principal was hired in April. The new principal entered the field of education after earning her BA as a traditional age college student. She spent four years as a speech therapist before becoming an assistant principal for two and a half years.

After a total of six and a half years as an educator, the principal began her tenure at Dorchester.

At the time of my formal interview in May, Ms. Dubbury reported the new principal had implemented some very controversial classroom interventions since her arrival in April. These interventions already had a direct impact in the classroom. The kindergarten teachers, who did not think the new principal's decisions were developmentally appropriate for their students, were wondering why these changes needed to be made, since their children—of all demographics—were easily passing the county benchmarks in reading and math. Ms. Dubbury speculated the new principal was no doubt doing the bidding of her superiors. Ms. Dubbury's main issues with the changes were that the kindergarten teachers had not been consulted, and the principal did not have a background as a classroom teacher; thus, the principal did not have a sufficient knowledge base to make kindergarten-based decisions. Ms. Dubbury considered her kindergarten colleagues to be excellent teachers. Most of the team had been at Dorchester for at least two years and knew the students and community quite well.

The Community and Students

During the formal interview Ms. Dubbury reported that due to ongoing gentrification within the attendance area of Dorchester Elementary School, more and more children from higher SES families now attended the school. She stated she had met most of her parents, as many parents walk their children to and from school; she made a point, she told me, to be outside most days as her students came to and left from school in order to chat with the parents of her students. Most students, she learned from this interaction with parents, had support at home with homework and were read to on a

“somewhat regular” basis. Additionally, most of the parents attended the yearly parent/teacher conference held in November.

Length of Sessions

Table 19 illustrates the dates, time and length of each observed session. The average length of a CIRA session across the practice of all teachers was 15 minutes. Ms. Dubbury had the longest sessions, at an average at 20 minutes. She also had the greatest number of codes in the areas of Teacher Practice and Student Activity, a fact that will be discussed in a section below.

Table 19

Length of Ms. Dubbury’s CIRA Sessions

CIRA Session	Date	Time Start	Time End	Elapsed Time
#1	Mon 1/29	9:25	9:41	16
#2	Fri 2/23	9:50	10:10	20
#3	Wed 3/21	9:16	9:40	24
#4	Mon 4/23	9:20	9:40	20
				M=20

Session Content

Ms. Dubbury began her teaching career in another state. I asked her to comment on the difference between teaching in her current and former counties. Ms. Dubbury replied, “Quite a switch. I think the curriculum in this county is completely different than where I came from. The expectations are a lot higher, and I am under pressure to teach literacy and math skills exclusively. Social Studies and Science go out the window.” In a

follow-up question I asked Ms. Dubbury if she had goals and objectives for her CIRA sessions, and if so where did she get her goals and objectives:

Yes, the goals and objectives come straight from the county curriculum and how you teach it is up to you. You just need to make sure the assessments are passed.

Due to our lack of time for Science and Social Studies, I try to include those areas in my read alouds. For example, I did a whole unit on art museums and seeds. I elected books to go with those units.

Finally, I asked Ms. Dubbury what her personal goal for her read aloud sessions was. She replied “I have many!” and then outlined these goals succinctly:

Number one is having the students to be able to sit in one spot and be engaged for a time. Especially at this age level a lot of times they have not had formal schooling and they need to learn to focus and build their attention span for a 15-minute read aloud. Another purpose, obviously, is to relay information, to teach them something through the story in an engaging way. I want to teach the curriculum, gain information and teach different literacy skills that we may be working on through the stories. And other things, such as life skills. I want to teach them that reading is fun, and that you gain information through reading. I am teaching a love for reading.

Ms. Dubbury reported she determined the goals and objectives for her CIRA sessions in advance. However, she changed those goals and objectives during the lesson if necessary. For example, I observed one CIRA session where the text being read was *Franklin Plants a Tree*. As soon as Ms. Dubbury started to read the text many students spontaneously told her that they knew the story. It was clear that Ms. Dubbury was

confused as she had not read the text to them before. After allowing for an extended discussion, Ms. Dubbury discovered the students had seen the video of this text, shown by a substitute when Ms. Dubbury was out attending Professional Development Training. Ms. Dubbury reported she abandoned her original goals for the book and instead had the students compare and contrast (part of the kindergarten curriculum) the book with the video. She made a mental note of the goals and objectives she was originally going to cover and did so at another time. Ms. Dubbury stated in summary:

So, when that opportunity came up, they got to compare and contrast the book versus the movie. But I had the whole purpose set for what I wanted them to get from the story, and it completely changed. And they were very involved and very excited to share that information that they knew [about the video] so that was a very successful [class]. And you see the county goals being met even if it was not the goals that you intended.

A final goal for CIRA sessions that Ms. Dubbury stated was for her students to make connections between texts read in class over the course of the year. I saw these connections occur during the observations of the other teachers; however, Ms. Dubbury was the only teacher of the four to explicitly state this as a major goal for her CIRA sessions. She saw her sessions as one large body of work over the course of the year. She modeled connections, and encouraged the students to make connections themselves. The literacy and content she aimed to teach “flowed through each day, week, and year.”

Most frequently occurring characteristics of content during CIRA. Table 20 shows Ms. Dubbury’s most frequent codes for content. The most frequent code was for

Concepts of Print. These codes most often were for a discussion of the title, author, and illustrator, a discussion that was done as a preface to reading the text.

The second most frequently occurring code for content was *Vocabulary Development*, more than any of the other teachers. Most of the time Ms. Dubbury would define a word right in the middle of reading the text, as is illustrated by this excerpt:

Ms. Dubbury [*Reads with Inflection*] “Franklin slumped down in his chair.”

[*Re-reads text*] Raise your hand if you think you know what that word slumped means. [*Many students have hands raised*] That is a big third grade word. What do you think slumped [*Emphasis on slumped*] means? Student 1?

Student 1 Um, kind of being sad.

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback, Vocabulary Development*] Yes! It is something you do with your body when you are kind of sad.

Student 2 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] It is like this. [*Demonstrates what slump looks like*]

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback*] Exactly! Does everybody see what Student 2 just did? Do it again.

Student 2 Well, you are up tall like this and then you are here. [*Slumps to the floor*]

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback, Scaffolds*] Yes, you just kind of slump down in your chair. [*In slow slumpy voice, demonstrates a slump*]

The third most frequent content code (yet lagging far behind the second most frequent code) was for *Comprehension*. This next excerpt is from an observation of an expository text about a style of art called pointillism. This text was selected to support a

unit on art museums. Once again, Ms. Dubbury helps the student comprehend the text as well as the pictures. The text in itself is not that complex; however, the illustrations are highly stylized and not readily understood. This excerpt also includes another example of *Vocabulary Development* with the explanation of the word *piñata*.

Ms. Dubbury [*Reads with Inflection*] “I see something pop. Pop, pop, pop! It has lots of dots. What do you see?” What is popping there? [*Points and pauses*] I think this is a new word. Student 5, do you know what it is called? [*Low Order*]
 Student 5 [*Simple Answer, shakes head no*]

Ms. Dubbury [*Low Order*] Student 6?

Student 6 [*Simple Answer*] A piñata?

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback*] You are exactly right. It is called a piñata. It is hollow and filled with candy. Sometimes they look like this or like cartoon characters. You put on a blindfold and hit it with a stick. When it breaks, candy falls out and children pick the candy up. Anyone seen this before? [*Check for Understanding*]

Students [*Most raise hands and say yes, Simple Answer*]

Content characteristics never coded. Ms. Dubbury did not have codes in the following content areas: *Genre, Story Elements/Poem Elements/Text Design, Decoding Text* and *Spelling*. It is surprising that Ms. Dubbury did not have any codes in *Genre* and *Story Elements/Poem Elements/Text Design* as she read from a wide variety of texts, the greatest variety of all the teachers. Although Ms. Dubbury read the greatest variety of texts, she never explicitly mentioned or taught about text structures to her students.

Central Elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text

In this section I describe the salient characteristics of the central elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text as related to Ms. Dubbury's CIRA sessions. Finally, I describe the unique way in which these three elements relate during Ms. Dubbury's CIRA sessions.

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Teacher Practice During CIRA

Table 20 shows the most frequently occurring codes of Teacher Practice during Ms. Dubbury's CIRA sessions. Ms. Dubbury always had the students complete a formal

Table 20

Most Frequently Occurring Codes During Ms. Dubbury's CIRA Sessions

	1	2	3
Teacher Practice	Evaluation Feedback (30%)	Self Reflection on Learning (20%)	Explains Rules Procedures (15%) Redirects or Continues to Read (12%)
Content	Concepts of Print (35%)	Vocabulary Development (30%)	Comprehension (8%)
Student Activity	Simple Answer (30%)	On Topic/Out of Turn (20%)	Alternative Answer (12)%

independent follow up activity after her CIRA session, so a part of the session was devoted to giving directions, reflected in the *Explains Rules/Procedures* codes. Ms. Torben did not have her students do any formal follow-up activities after CIRA sessions. Ms. Emery and Ms. Ragner did have the students do follow-up activities; however, they were more routine (often a work sheet) and required fewer directions than Ms. Dubbury's. Ms. Dubbury's follow-ups exhibited a more open-ended, constructivist approach. The following excerpt illustrates *Explains Rules/Procedures* as well as the Student Activity code *On Topic/Out of Turn*. Both codes will be discussed in the Student Activity section that follows.

Ms. Dubbury [*Explains Rules/Procedures*] Now today you [*emphasis on you*] are going to get a chance to be an artist. You are going to do pointillism. We are going to start working making a picture using dots.

Student 1 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] How will we do it?

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation/ No Feedback*] Good question Student 1. Student 1 said how do we do it? [*Redirects Student 1*] You all are going to get a white [*emphasis on 'white'*] piece of paper. [*Holds up paper with drawing on it*] I drew a picture with my pencil. I drew a great big butterfly and a great big flower [*emphasis on great big butterfly and great big flower*].

Student 2 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] You forgot to write your name.

Ms. Dubbury [*Nods approvingly at Student 2, Evaluation Feedback*] What a silly I am. When you get your white piece of paper please do not forget like I do. I want you to start by writing your name. [*Demonstrates how to write her name*] Good artists think through what they are going to do before they draw. [*Models*]

Who has something terrific to share? What are you going to have on your picture

Student 3? [*Reflection on Learning*]

Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] I will have some flowers. [*Said slowly and thoughtfully*]

The excerpt below is an example of three of the most frequently occurring codes: *Evaluation Feedback*, *Self Reflection on Learning* and *Redirects/Continues to Read*. After analyzing the transcripts I noticed these three codes occurred in conjunction with one another. This is just one of many excerpts I could have selected to illustrate this pattern. This excerpt also illustrates the Student Activity code of *Simple Answer* and *Alternative Answer* that will be discussed in the Student Activity section below. For the other teachers it was easy to find excerpts that illustrated single codes since that is how they occurred. This was not the case for Ms. Dubbury: her examples of codes are impossible to tease apart as they are firmly intertwined with Student Activity.

Ms. Dubbury [*Scaffolds*] We have been learning about different types of art [*Emphasis on art*] this week. And we had a little break, so we are going to think back to Monday. Who remembers what kind of art we learned about and practiced [*emphasis on practiced*] on Monday? Student 1? [*Self Reflection on Learning*]
Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] Fabric art.

Ms Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback*] You are exactly right. And what did we learn about fabric art? [*Self Reflection on Learning*]

Student 2 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] It is not like paper.

Ms Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback*] Good. It is not with [*emphasis on with*] paper. What else did we learn about fabric art? [*Nods to Student 3*]

Student 3 [*Alternate Answer*] It feels different.

Ms Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback, Scaffolds*] It has different feelings: soft and hard. Who else has an idea?

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Student Activity During CIRA

Table 20 illustrates the most common Student Activity codes for Ms. Dubbury's CIRA sessions. They are *Simple Answer*, *On Topic/Out of Turn* and *Alternate Answer*. As was stated in the section above, the practice of Ms. Dubbury is unique in the fact that it is difficult to tease apart her Teacher Practice codes from her Student Activity codes. The excerpt above illustrates the three most frequently coded Student Activity codes. Ms. Dubbury had the widest range of Student Activity codes and had codes in all areas of Student Activity except for two, *Responds With Predetermined Movement* and *Discuss With One Another*.

Of the four teachers, Ms. Dubbury shared, during the formal interview, the most detailed descriptions about individual students in her class and how she helped them stay engaged during CIRA. She spoke at length about how she modifies her practice for her EL students. In the following excerpt from the formal interview Ms. Dubbury describes her work with one of her most challenging, yet rewarding, students:

He came from Brazil, and he spoke nothing but Portuguese. I started the year going on-line and got the translation of just a few key words so he could survive in the classroom: pencil, chair, sit, walk, and safety words. I pull him aside either before or after [CIRA] and go through the story. I try to break it down into more simple words instead of focusing more on what the actual text is. We do many different activities. I point to different things in the picture; or, we might hunt for

the Word Wall word ‘the’ as many times as we can just to keep him connected to that text in any way that he can. (A typical feature of a primary grade classroom, a word wall is a section of wall displaying, in alphabetical groupings, high-frequency words.) He is now speaking amazingly well. We do weekend news every Monday, and he can tell me that he went to see “*Spiderman* at the movies with my dad.”

Text and CIRA

In the following section I describe how Ms. Dubbury selected the texts for her CIRA sessions. I then describe the characteristics of the texts.

Text selection. The texts I observed Ms. Dubbury read were for the most part large, brightly-colored picture books that appeared to be in very good condition. Ms. Dubbury reported she always previewed the text before reading. There is not a specific list of texts that the county tells her she has to use; instead, the county provides a guideline of what to read. Although the curriculum is highly prescribed, the manner of teaching the curriculum is left up to the individual teacher. Ms. Dubbury reported she plans on a weekly basis with her fellow kindergarten teachers. She was the only teacher in the study to report team planning that included discussing what books to use during read aloud time (CIRA):

This year we do team planning, which is the first time I have ever had that to this extent. We share great ideas. This year the team will tell me the books that they have read before, and I will go through them to see what I want to use. I try to go through and preview the books and see which ones I need to teach whatever skill; so, I choose text [depending] on how or what I am teaching, and the focus of

that lesson is if it is just informational, and I want them to learn about baby ducks, then I am going to find a text that is appropriate for them and also hooks them in.

I pay attention to this specific group of children, [realizing that] what is age appropriate for this group may not be age appropriate for another group.

Ms. Dubbury has much freedom when it comes to the books she reads to her students. She reported that the down side of this freedom is that the books are not provided:

I get my books mostly from my teammates or from the personal library I have started to build. It was very hard this year, changing curriculum so much; I had never taught dinosaurs before, and all of a sudden I did not have any dinosaur books. The PTA allows you \$75, to purchase books. Not a lot of books for \$75! Our school library does have some books when you need them, but most of the time they are checked out by students.

Text structure. Table 21 shows the types of text structure read by Ms. Dubbury over the course of the study. Of the four teachers, she read the lowest percentage of narrative texts and the greatest percentage of expository texts. Narratives accounted for a minimum of 76%, and exposition only 15%-17%, for the other three teachers. Like the other teachers Ms. Dubbury read at other times during the day. The other teachers reported reading more informational (expository) texts at other times during the day, usually to support the teaching of content areas. Ms. Dubbury did this as well. However, of the four teachers, she was the only one to report that a specific goal during her CIRA sessions was to support content as well as literacy. The other teachers may have supported the content, but this support was more a serendipitous by-product versus

a specific, purposeful goal. Ms. Dubbury also read the highest percentage of poetry during the CIRA. The other three teachers ranged from 9% down to 0%. All of the teachers, including Ms. Dubbury, reported reading poetry at other times during the day.

Table 21

Types of Text Read Each Month of Study in Ms. Dubbury's Class

Month	Narrative	Expository	Poetry	Play	Total
Jan	2	2	0	0	4
Feb	10	2	0	0	12
March	7	4	7	0	18
April	6	1	2	0	9
Total	25	9	9	0	43
% of					
Total	58%	21%	21%	0%	

Ms. Dubbury read the widest variety of text structures of the four participating teachers. Table 22 illustrates the types of narrative texts read during the course of the study. The most common narrative genre for Ms. Dubbury was Fantasy/Science Fiction, followed by Folk/Fairy Tales, which accounts for the majority of the narrative texts read (84%).

Table 22

Narrative Genres Read During CIRA Sessions in Ms. Dubbury's Class

Biography (non-fiction)	Realistic fiction	Historical fiction	Fantasy/ Science fiction	Folk/ Fairy Tales	other	Total Narratives
0 (0%)	4 (16%)	0 (0%)	14 (56%)	7 (28%)	0 (0%)	25

*Patterns of Relationship Among Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text During
CIRA*

The following excerpts exemplify the patterns of relationship between Ms. Dubbury and her students during CIRA. It was quite hard for me to select an excerpt for this section as Ms. Dubbury's CIRA sessions were very rich with teacher-student exchanges. Ms. Dubbury was the only teacher of the four who explicitly described these patterns during her CIRA sessions. The other teachers certainly had interactive relationship patterns; however, they never discussed them with me. Ms. Dubbury reported the following example during CIRA sessions as well as other instructional periods during the course of the day. Ms. Dubbury stated she had one EL student in particular who had a hard time staying engaged in the story. Ms. Dubbury first asked questions of all students and received answers to these questions from students with their hands up. After the third or fourth question she always asked the certain EL student a question that he could answer [*Simple Answer*] so he would stay engaged. If she did not engage him with a question at this point, he would act up and interrupt the other students. Ms Dubbury recounted the scene in more detail:

He is an interesting child. [*Soft, loving laugh*] He is very needy. He has very little self control, and he came late in the school year, maybe November or December.

This whole semester I have been focusing on him taking turns, raising his hand, and not calling out. One of the strategies that I have found with him is that if I do call on him as an earlier student, versus making him wait, it helps him; he is one of those kids who gets in his mind that he has something that he has got to tell you. So I find that if I do call on him with an earlier question, then he is usually better about sitting and waiting his turn because it relieves part of that outburst.

Ms. Dubbury also explicitly described another pattern involving Student Activity that I had coded as *Alternate Answer*. She reported she tried to call on all students equally in order to get everyone's feedback. However, if she really wanted to make sure that an answer was going to be correct, and she wanted a student to model the correct answer, then she would always call on one of two students. I had actually picked up on the names of these students during the observations. Ms Dubbury gave a simple reason for this part of her practice:

Those two are very responsive to text. They want to share what they know. They raise their hands and can pull out things that maybe other students did not think of, and I want them to share those higher level ideas and model for everyone. My pattern is question to anyone, question to anyone, question to anyone, question to the student who will nail it and take it to the next level. It is much more effective when those thoughts come out of other students' mouths and not mine.

The following is an excerpt that illuminates a very common pattern for Ms. Dubbury: *Evaluation Feedback, Self Reflection on Learning and Alternate Answer*.

Ms. Dubbury [*Explains Rules/Procedures*] Boys and girls Magic 5. [*In calm firm loving voice*] Think back to the jobs you had at the beginning of the story while I was reading. Ms. Dubbury wanted you to think about how is the book the same as the video, and how is the book different than the video. Think back. [*Self Reflection on Learning*] Student 1, what is your answer?

Student 1 [*Thinks, Simple Answer*] Um, the video um they had to walk to the tree but in the story they stand right under.

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback*] Neat! So in the video it showed them walking to the tree but the book just showed them standing under it. Neat, neat difference. Student 2? [*Self Reflection on Learning*]

Student 2 [*Alternate Answer*] The bear didn't put a red stick on his. He put a Christmas decoration on his. He put stuff on it. And he didn't put a red fence up.

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback*] Neat difference! In the video he put up a Christmas decoration, and in the book he put up a fence. Very good difference!

[*Evaluation Feedback*] What else did you find the same or different [*emphasis on different*] Student 3? [*Self Reflection on Learning*]

Student 3 [*Alternate Answer*] In the story Franklin goes to Mr. Herring's house but in the story, I mean the video, um, they walk to Mr. Herring's house.

Ms. Dubbury [*Evaluation Feedback*] Good difference!

Emily Dubbury in Summary

Ms. Dubbury, in my opinion, was a "Natural" at reading aloud to kindergarteners. Her CIRA sessions were well-planned and well-orchestrated in order to meet the goals and objectives the county had set before her. However, she was very much in tune to the

abilities and needs of her students. She set her course, but did not hesitate to veer off course in order to accommodate her students learning styles and needs. Ms. Dubbury has come to this level of expertise early in her career, a level of competence that many teachers with more experience and training never achieve. She expertly crafted the science of teaching into an art.

Diana Emery: The Sage Professional During Her Final Engagement

Our next teacher in the continuum to be illuminated is Diana Emery. Her CIRA sessions were highly scripted and very much had the feel of a lesson versus the simple reading of a book. Ms. Emery's students appeared quite engaged during the sessions. Ms. Emery had tight control of the sessions and the actions of the students. Her students had more characteristics of being "at-risk" students than the students of either Ms. Torben or Ms. Dubbury. Ms. Emery enjoyed working in a collaborative work environment with her kindergarten team as well as the administration at Evanston Elementary School.

Teacher Characteristics

At the conclusion of my formal interview with Diana Emery she told me she was retiring at the end of the school year. I was in complete shock. I had not seen this coming at all. During the course of my study I had the privilege of observing the practice of an energetic, veteran teacher with 25 years of varied experience. Never once did I suspect that Ms. Emery would be retiring. She always acted as a professional, giving 100% to her students. When I asked why and when she had decided to retire, she told me that she had decided in October, when she felt she was exhausted by a certain student in her class who took up all of her time. She reported that one child in particular "had done her in."

Once again I was in shock. I knew which child she was talking about; however, I recalled him because he had an unusual name, one I had never heard before, and not because he was continually in trouble. I told Ms. Emery that I would have never guessed that this student had been such trouble for her. She stated that by the time I started my study in January, this particular student had settled down a great deal. However, he still took up vast amounts of her energy, and she felt that his actions were compromising the learning of her other students.

As an outside observer I never guessed any of this. From the start of our association, Diana Emery appeared upbeat and full of energy. Her CIRA sessions were well-planned and smoothly executed. After the interview, I carefully reviewed my transcripts, and they revealed the same picture. She never lost her temper, raised her voice or repeatedly reprimanded this student. I already had a high opinion of Ms. Emery and her teaching; with this newly found knowledge Ms. Emery earned nothing but my deepest respect.

Ms. Emery taught Head Start for two years in another state before beginning her career in the county school system where I eventually met her. Ms. Emery took some time off from teaching to raise her children, but went back to teaching when she became a single parent. Before spending the last ten years in kindergarten at her current school, she taught first, second, and kindergarten in other schools in the county. She celebrated a total of 25 years as a classroom teacher with her retirement.

Training for CIRA

When I asked Ms. Emery what level of education she had achieved she stated that she had earned “a Master’s Equivalency,” and went on to explain what that meant:

A teacher has to have 30 hours of training within the county school system over the course of several years; that is what I did. At that time I was single parenting and paying private school tuition, and there was no way that I could go back for my Master's, nor could I afford to get my salary frozen by not furthering my education. The county does not do this any more.

When I asked Ms. Emery what prior training she had that prepared her for CIRA sessions she simply, yet humorously, reported "Motherhood!" She paused for a second and then continued. "Seriously, I have probably taken hundreds of workshops; however, I believe the most valuable training I have had was being a mother to my children." Ms. Emery reported that only a small portion of the trainings she had attended over the course of the years had anything to do with reading aloud to children, and she could not recall any specific training that had helped to inform her practice.

Context Characteristics

In the following sections I describe the salient characteristics of the context of Ms. Emery's CIRA sessions.

The School Site

Evanston Elementary School is nestled in an older neighborhood of small homes and apartment buildings. In spite of the fact that parts of Evanston Elementary School date back to the 1940s, it is an attractive school. It is composed of many additions, yet is a very clean and bright school with a flowing floor plan. The cafeteria boasts a hardwood floor original to the oldest part of the building; the wood of the floor is lustrous and was always polished to a bright sheen. Any private home would be happy to have a floor half as beautiful. Evanston Elementary is located only a half mile from the business district of

a large suburb, yet it seems a world away, set in an abundance of trees. A small primary school that houses Pre-Kindergarten through second grade, Evanston Elementary has a principal in the third year of her first principalship. Although Evanston had the second highest FARMS, EL and mobility rates of all the schools in my study (see Table 1), Evanston has constantly made AYP for all demographic groups in the areas of Reading and Math.

Ms Emery reported she really likes her principal as a person and feels supported by her. This collegial relationship was made more evident by the fact that Ms. Emery was on a first name basis with the principal. She was the only teacher of the four in the study where this was the case. However, during the past school year, the principal had made some instructional decisions that the kindergarten teachers did not think were very sound or developmentally appropriate. When I asked Ms. Emery if there had been any policies at the county level that had impacted her CIRA sessions, she thought carefully before replying:

The principal asked us to try to get them to a level 5 instead of the required level 3 by the end of the [kindergarten] year. [Laughs] So that is something that is school-based that has had an impact on my read aloud sessions.

When I asked if getting kindergartners to level 5 by the end of kindergarten was at all feasible, Ms. Emery replied, hesitantly:

For some it certainly is, and for others it totally is not. Also we [kindergarten teachers] are worried that if we push them [students] too fast they will not have a solid foundation and will slip back even more over the summer. If I send a solid 3 to first grade, isn't that so much better than a 5 hanging on by his finger nails?

The Community and Students

Ms. Emery reported that most of the students in her class had attended some sort of day care in the years prior to kindergarten. However, very few had attended any form of preschool or Head Start and most had limited experience in speaking and reading English:

Three of my fourteen kids came in with absolutely no English in September. So, I have a wide variety of ability levels. That is why I like my school. There are little pockets of middle-class students. So that [mix of children with different backgrounds] is what I love. I have been in Title 1 situations before where you did not have that little pocket of middle class. If you asked, “What animals are at the zoo?” you got no response. But here you have got this little core that can get things started when you are introducing a new topic. I love that. It is a nice mix.

At the time of our final interview, in May, Ms. Emery spoke of two students she considered to be non-readers. They exhibited problems with one to one correspondence, and they often became mixed-up as to what page to read first. Both students were very young, and Ms. Emery believed they could benefit from being retained; however, the practice of retention had been disallowed in her county school system:

I agree that most children should not be retained. However, it is really hard to make a blanket policy for all students. One of the students speaks English as a first language, knows a lot more than a lot of kids coming in here for kindergarten. He knows all of his letters, he can recognize all his letters, he can recognize all of his numbers to ten, he can count 1 by 1 to ten; but he can not follow directions. He will not be able to make it through the rigor of first grade

without being able to follow directions. He is very young, very young, and he will turn six September 4th. He will be in school with kids who were six in January and that [makes him] nine months younger. It makes a big difference.

Neither of these students is the student who Ms. Emery reported “did her in.” It would seem Ms. Emery had more than a few challenging students.

Ms. Emery also reported in her final interview that she had one student who was already identified as a Special Education student and had an aide with him during most of the day. I had noticed this extra adult and had asked who she was. Ms. Emery reported the Special Education teacher mostly worked on the student’s IEP. However, she would usually sit in on the CIRA session so she could re-teach and re-enforce the literacy skills that had been taught during the session, as well as make sure the student had a good understanding (comprehension) of the text. Ms. Emery reported that before this student began medication earlier in the year, he had been at the center of much disruption:

We have just had terrible problems with this child. So much so that children were pretending to be him. I found children in the dramatic play area acting out a scenario that actually happened. I put a stop to the play acting. It has been awhile since we have had any problems. He is much better now.

Finally, Ms. Emery reported she differentiates for her EL students, mostly during the actual reading of the text:

Well, I have my EL students in my mind when I am asking questions to see if they are following at all. Occasionally, I re-enforce what we have read when I meet with the EL students during Guided Reading. I ask, “What do you remember about that story?” in order to make sure they know what happened.

Length of Sessions

Table 23 illustrates the dates, time, and length of each observed session. The average length of a CIRA session across the practice of all teachers was 15 minutes. Ms. Emery's sessions were a bit shorter than the average. This may have been due to (as she reported) her students' shorter attention spans.

Table 23

Length of Ms. Emery's CIRA Sessions

CIRA Session	Date	Time Start	Time End	Elapsed Time
#1	Fri 1/26	9:26	9:36	10
#2	Wed 3/1	9:29	9:40	11
#3	Mon 3/12	9:30	9:42	12
#4	Wed 4/25	9:30	9:46	16
				M = 12.25

Setting the Stage

Ms. Emery always started her session with explicit reminders of how to listen and what to listen for during a CIRA session. The other three teachers would also do this from time to time. However, Ms. Emery was the only one to do this at the beginning of each of the four observed CIRA sessions. Considering the number of challenging students in her class this comes as no surprise. The following excerpt is a good example of Ms. Emery's consistent reminders about classroom behavior:

Ms. Emery [*Explains Rules/Procedures*] Ok, so who can tell me some things we do before we read this book? What are good things for readers to do? Student 1? [*Low Order*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] We look at the outside.

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes, look at the outside or cover of the book. Why, Student 2? [*Low Order*]

Student 2 [*Simple Answer*] To see what the book is about and sing our song. [*Ms. Emery has the students sing a song about the title, author and illustrator before reading the book*]

Ms. Emery [*Nods affirmatively, Evaluation Feedback*] And what was one thing we said we could do after we said the title and sang the song? Student 3? [*Low Order*]

Student 4 [*Simple Answer*] We get comfortable so that we can listen.

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] We get comfortable. We do a little Teddy Bear Stretch. [*An interactive movement song Ms. Emery uses at times at the beginning of a whole group lesson in order to get “the wiggles out”*] [*Summarizes*

Discussion] Did we look at the pictures? Yes! Did we think about the pictures?

Yes! Ok, let's read.

Session Content

Ms. Emery reads books throughout the school day to support various areas of the curriculum. She also reads aloud simply for student enjoyment. She does not think many of her students are read to very often at home. She wants to instill a love of reading and to

develop student listening skills. The main purpose of the text she reads during CIRA is to reinforce the literacy skills she is teaching during Shared Reading and Guided Reading:

I try to make a center to go along with the objectives I teach in Guided Reading groups. However, if we did a whole group Shared Reading lesson or read aloud [CIRA] about beginning letter sounds or decoding, then I try to make a center on the same thing and explicitly tell the students the connection.

During the formal interview I asked Ms. Emery about her personal purpose behind conducting a read aloud [CIRA] session. Without hesitation she answered, “Oh, gosh, there are so many. I guess my purpose is to just give them lots of experience and build their vocabulary and background knowledge and work on Concepts of Print.” I then asked Ms. Emery how she knew a read aloud [CIRA] session had gone particularly well and she answered:

Sometimes they clap [laughs]. Also when they say “Great story!” or they ask you to read it again. Or when they remember the book during guided reading without me saying anything, and they say this [Guided Reading book] is like the read aloud book [CIRA]. I would say that only happens with the top group. They can make those connections.

Most frequently occurring characteristics of content during CIRA. Table 24 illustrates the most frequent codes in the area of content. Of the four participating teachers Ms Emery had the fewest number of codes in the area of *Content Characteristics*. As Ms. Emery stated, her main purpose for her CIRA sessions was to support literacy instruction, and she usually limited each session to only two or three goals and/or objectives so this limited the variety and number of codes. *Decoding Text*

was the most frequent code in the area of content. Ms. Emery is unique because *Decoding Text* was coded only one other time by all of the other participating teachers. *Decoding Text* is defined in the CIRA glossary as “instruction and activities that focus on helping students identify letter/sound relationships.” Decoding strategies include strategy instruction and phonics as this excerpt from the beginning of a CIRA session using *The Three Little Pigs* illustrates:

Ms. Emery [*Holds up book and points to title*] Today we are going to read a folk tale. I bet you have heard of it. I also bet you can read the title. Here is a hint, it is a word wall word. What is this word Student 1? [*Decoding, Low Order, points to ‘the’*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] The!

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] Excellent! And what is this word Student 2? [*Points to ‘Three’, Decoding, Low Order*] We can sound this one out. [*Scaffolds*]

Student 2 [*Simple Answer, said slowing drawing out each sound*] Three!

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] Wonderful! And this word Student 3? [*points to ‘Little’, Decoding, Low Order*] We can also sound it out.

Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] Little!

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] Excellent, you remembered that this e does not say its name. One more word. A word that belongs to a word family. Student 4? [*Decoding, Low Order*]

Student 4 [*Simple Answer*] Pig?

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes! And what family does it belong to?

Student 5? [*Decoding, Low Order*]

Student 5 [*Simple Answer*] The ‘ig’ family.

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes! The ‘ig’ family that most of us met in Guided Reading Groups this week. [*Connect to Prior Literacy Instruction*] Good job!

The second most frequent code in the area of content was *Concepts of Print*. In the case of Ms. Emery this usually involved discussing the title, author, and illustrator before starting to read the text. Ms Emery even had a song she devised in order to teach her students about the title and the author:

Ms. Emery [*Scaffolds*] This story is by George Howley and it is illustrated by Joseph Gardner. Do you know what song we have not sung in awhile?

Ms. Emery and Students [*All students spontaneously sing along with Ms. Emery to the tune of 100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall*] This is the front of the book, the author writes the words, the illustrator draws the pictures. That is what I’ve heard.

Table 24

Most Frequently Occurring Codes During Ms. Emery’s CIRA Sessions

	1	2	3
Teacher Practice	Evaluation Feedback (23%)	Scaffolds (13%) Low Order (12%)	Explains Rules/ Procedures (9%)
Content	Decoding Text (36%)	Concept of Print (24%)	Comprehension (11%)
Student Activity	Simple Answer (40%)	Choral Reading/ Spontaneous (9%)	On Topic/Out of Turn (8%)

The third most frequent code in the area of content was *Comprehension*. The following is an example of the *Comprehension* content code. This excerpt is also an example of *Teacher Practice*, *Evaluation Feedback*, *Scaffolds*, and *Low Order* codes. These teacher codes will be discussed in the following Teacher Practice section. As Ms. Emery read she referred to the illustrations in order to increase the comprehensibility of the text. After Ms. Emery finished reading *Yoko's Cranes* (a fantasy about a kitten who lives in America and has grandparents in Japan) she asked a series of follow-up questions to make sure the students had understood what was read. She also made sure they understood the Japanese words used in the story:

Ms. Emery [*Reads with Inflection*] “Yoko had no money to buy a birthday present for Obasan. Yoko knew that thousands of miles away in Japan Obasans’ garden was cold [*emphasis, cooold*] and snowy. Obasan was waiting for the cranes to come back to her garden.” She is looking at the window, the grandma [*Scaffolds, pointing to the illustration and elaborates on text*]. She is wishing it is spring and the cranes would come back. “Yoko asked her mother for beautiful paper. She folded the paper into a crane just as Obasan had showed her. She made three cranes of different colors, and she put them in a package and put stamps on the package. The mailman took it and sent it in an airplane across the sea. All that night the airplane flew from warm California to wintry Japan.” So inside that airplane is Yokos’ package with the cranes on its way to Obasan. [*Scaffolds, pointing to the illustration and elaborates on text*] [*Continues in this manner until she has read entire text*] Nice book! Ok, remember I asked you to think about the

characters in this book. So, who can tell me a character in this book?" [Low Order] [Student 1 has hand up, Ms. Emery nods to Student 1]

Student 1 [Simple Answer] Obasan.

Ms. Emery [Nods affirmatively, Evaluation Feedback] Obasan, who was Obasan? Was that the Grandma or the Grandpa? [Low Order] [Student 2 has hand up Ms. Emery nods to Student 2]

Student 2 [Simple Answer] Grandma.

Ms. Emery [Evaluation Feedback, nods affirmatively] Grandma. That was the Grandma. Who else, Student 3?" [Low Order] [Student 3 has hand raised]

Student 3 [Simple Answer] The Daddy.

Ms. Emery [Nods head negatively, Evaluation Feedback] The Daddy? Was Yokos' Daddy in this book? [Low Order] [pause]

Student 3 [Simple Answer] I mean Obasan!

Ms. Emery [Nods affirmatively, Evaluation Feedback] Good, the Daddy was not in the story but the Obasan was. [Continues to discuss the characters until all main characters have been named]

Content characteristics never coded. Ms. Emery never took a *Picture Walk* of the text before she read it. She never explicitly stated to the students what the text structure of the book was. She also did not teach *Rhyming*, or *Word Families*, or *Conventions*, or *Parts of Grammar*.

Central Elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text

In this section I describe the salient characteristics of the central elements of CIRA—Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text—as related to Ms. Emery’s CIRA sessions. Finally, I describe the unique way that these three elements relate during Ms. Emery’s CIRA sessions.

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Teacher Practice During CIRA

Table 24 shows the most frequently occurring codes of Teacher Practice during Ms. Emery’s CIRA sessions. The excerpt above in the Content section under *Comprehension* illustrates three of these codes: *Evaluation Feedback*, *Scaffolds* and *Low Order*. The most common code in the area of *Teacher Practice* was *Evaluation Feedback*. As was illustrated above in the excerpt in the Content section, Ms. Emery would give feedback when a student answered a question or made a comment about the text. She would not give elaborate feedback. A brief “Great!” or “You are right,” or a simple affirmative or negative nod of the head, acted as the extent of Ms. Emery’s frequent feedback. If a student gave the wrong answer, Ms. Emery usually would not give the correct answer but would simply restate the question and give the student time to think about the answer, as is illustrated in the example above.

The excerpt above in the Content section also illustrates *Scaffolds* and *Low Order*. Ms. Emery would *Scaffold* her students’ understanding of what had been read by asking a series of *Low Order* questions. She also would use *Scaffolding* before reading a text in order to preview it to make sure the student had an overall understanding of what the text was going to be about.

Explains Rules/Procedures accounted for less than 10% of the *Teacher Practice* codes. These codes most frequently occurred before or after reading a text and rarely during the reading of a text. They were simple instructions on how to get ready to listen or how to follow a procedure after reading a text. For example, “Alright, let’s all get settled on our bottoms.”

Ms. Emery was the only teacher to have codes for *No Obvious Instruction*. These codes occurred exclusively during one session when another teacher entered the classroom and interrupted the CIRA session. Ms. Emery had to break away from her CIRA session in order to assist this teacher. None of the other teachers were interrupted by other adults or announcements during their CIRA sessions.

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Student Activity During CIRA

Table 24 illustrates the most common Student Activity codes for Ms. Emery’s CIRA sessions: *Simple Answer*, *Choral Reading/Spontaneous* and *On Topic/Out of Turn*. An example of *Simple Answer* codes can be found in the excerpt directly above. These *Simple Answers* were almost always in response to the *Low Order* questions Ms. Emery posed in order to *Scaffold* the understanding of the students. This practice will be described in the following Relationships section.

Choral Reading/Spontaneous accounted for less than 10% of the Student Activity codes, with the vast majority of those codes occurring during a CIRA session reading of *The Three Little Pigs*. The story lends itself to spontaneous choral reading because it is a familiar tale that most children have heard by the time they are in kindergarten it has many reoccurring passages, such as “Not by the hair on my chinny, chin, chin.” The students in Ms. Emery’s class commenced spontaneous choral reading, with much

accompanying laughter, the first time a passage was read. Ms. Emery made no comment; she simply nodded affirmatively and smiled to signal to the students that their behavior was acceptable behavior during a CIRA session.

On Topic/Out of Turn came in a close third. The following excerpt from the same text that was referred to earlier illustrates that code. Ms Emery's students were very engaged with the story, as it is a story about a real boy about kindergarten age who experiences simple domestic situations the students could readily relate to.

Ms. Emery [*Reads with Inflection*] "Sam walked into the kitchen where his mother was peeling apples for pie. He picked up a knife from the table. 'Sam! Don't touch that knife!' said his mother. 'That knife is very [*emphasis on very*] sharp. Too sharp for a little boy. I don't ever want to see you touch that knife again.'"

Student 1 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] A knife!

Student 2 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] Oh, that cut!

Ms. Emery [*Ignores students, explains text, Scaffolds*] She is using the knife to cut the apples but she does not want Sam to get cut.

Student 3 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] One time I used a knife to cut bread and I didn't get cut myself.

Ms. Emery [*Ignores Student 3, Reads with Inflection*] "Sam's mother went back to cutting apples."

Sometimes Ms. Emery engaged a child when he or she made an *On Task/Off Topic* utterance as the excerpt above illustrates, but most often she kindly ignored the

student and move on in order to keep up the pace and flow of the story and not get bogged down in conversation about the story.

Ms. Emery had the greatest number of *Student Activity* categories never coded. *On Task/Off Topic, Asks Question of Another Student, Responds or States Hypothesis or Prediction, Act Out Text/Spontaneous, Act Out Text/Told To Do So, and Discuss with One Another* were never used. This is evidence that Ms. Emery had the most routine patterns with her students.

Text and CIRA

In the following section I describe how Ms. Emery selected the texts for her CIRA sessions. I then describe the characteristics of the texts she read.

Text selection. Ms. Emery recorded the fewest number of texts read. She had another adult read on occasion, and she did not record the texts used on those days. When I asked Ms. Emery how she obtained her books she replied:

We have a big book collection in the media center [and] we have a big book collection in the kindergarten, so that when we plan together, we can go over these lessons and that is when we do a lot of brainstorming. We are all familiar with these books, so it is not that hard to pick one out. I also have a collection of my own that I draw from.

Ms. Emery also reported she selects the texts to go along with the county curriculum:

Well, usually the book I choose is connected to some lesson in the guides. The guide, to our dismay, does not say exactly which book to use, just the characteristics the book should have, like certain high-frequency words or

problem and solution. Sometimes the county curriculum does suggest a certain book but we do not have it in our library. So, I often end up choosing a book to go along with the guide.

As I stated earlier, the books of the other three teachers were big, bright and appeared to be new. Ms. Emery's choices were the exception. As befits a veteran teacher with 25 years of classroom experience, the texts I saw Ms. Emery read from appeared older and more worn. Looking over her CIRA log revealed the names of many traditional children's books popular when I was a child. One text in particular, *Sam*, seemed out of date. *Sam*, the story of a real little boy, does not have a timeless quality and appears to have taken place (and to have been written) in the 1970s. The parents in the story play gender stereotyped roles (mother cooking in the kitchen and father reading in the study). At one point in the story Sam types on a typewriter. Ms. Emery did pause to explain what a typewriter was and to say that the typewriter was not an important element in the story. A more contemporary text may have been more accessible to the students.

Text structure. Table 25 illustrates the number and type of texts read by Ms. Emery each month of my study. The percentages of each different text structure were very close to the average across the practice of all of the teachers, with narrative text read the most frequently. Table 26 shows the types of narrative read during the course of the study. Ms. Emery selected from only a total of three genres, with the most often read category of narrative being Fantasy/Science Fiction.

Few of the texts read during the course of the study were characterized as expository. These books were all trade books that were used to build prior knowledge for units of study. Ms. Emery reported during the formal interview her goal for these trade

books; however, she never explicitly stated the reason for reading these books to her students during her CIRA sessions as evidenced by the fact there are no *States Class Agenda/Objective* codes in the transcripts.

Table 25

Types of Text Read Each Month of Study in Ms. Emery's Class

Month	Narrative	Expository	Poetry	Play	Total
Jan	6	0	0	0	6
Feb	6	2	2	0	10
March	9	2	1	0	12
April	5	1	0	0	6
Total	26	5	3	0	34
% of					
Total	76%	15%	9%	0%	

Table 26

Narrative Genres Read During CIRA Sessions in Ms. Emery's Class

Biography (non-fiction)	Realistic Fiction	Historical Fiction	Fantasy/ Science Fiction	Folk/ Fairy Tales	other	Total Narratives
0 (0%)	4 (15%)	0 (0%)	18 (69%)	4 (15%)	0 (0%)	26

*Patterns of Relationship Among Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text During
CIRA*

As was already discussed in the *Content* section above, a very common pattern occurring during Ms. Emery's CIRA sessions was that in order to *Scaffold* her students through the text, she asked a *Low Order* question, and the students would give a *Simple Answer*. This practice was illustrated by the excerpt in the *Content* section. As she did this she would *Scaffold* the illustrations and the text. But she would not belabor these exchanges during the session, so they did not disrupt the flow of the story.

Ms. Emery always completed some type of graphic organizer after a CIRA session. The following excerpt exemplifies the relationship between Ms. Emery and her students during this portion of a CIRA session. Her practice consisted of first posing a series of *Low Order* questions. Then, she elicited *Simple Answers*—either from individual students or from the whole class—in order to fill out the graphic organizer. A successful completion of this organizer after the reading of the CIRA text would assure her that her students had comprehended the story. The following excerpt occurred after the reading of *The Three Little Pigs* (the same session from that an excerpt was used to illustrate the content code *Decoding*):

Ms. Emery [*Reads with Inflection*] “The three little pigs never saw the big bad wolf again. And the three little pigs lived happily ever after.” Ok touch your nose if you love this book. [*said in very warm way*] Let's see if it is a folk tale. Let me get my pen. So, I am going to write the title of the book in this box. We talked about the title before I started to read the story today. What is the title of the book, Student 1? [*Low Order*]

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] The Three Little Pigs.

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback*] The Three Little Pigs. We know this word, right? [*writes 'The' on chart*] And lots of us are learning this word [*writes 'little' on chart*]

Student 2 [*Simple Answer*] Little!

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback, nods and smiles, writes 'and' on chart*] And.

Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] Pig.

Ms. Emery [*Evaluation Feedback, writes 'pig' on chart*] Pig is a word in what family?

Student 3 [*On Topic/Out of Turn, Simple Answer*] 'ig.'

Diana Emery in Summary

The media often characterize veteran teachers, especially those with more than 20 years experience and close to retirement, as less than effective teachers who are only in the classroom to collect a paycheck. The students of these teachers, so the story goes, suffer due to the teacher's lack of effort and caring. Ms. Emery emphatically dispels this generalization. I feel honored to have had the privilege to observe her in the final year of her career. I knew (because she told me at the formal interview at the conclusion of my study) that she was feeling tired and burnt out at times; however, a visitor to the class—and most importantly the students under her charge—never would have seen evidence of her tired state. Ms. Emery displayed nothing but a high level of skill and expertise. It was clear in any contact I had with Ms. Emery that she cared a great deal about her students, believed they all could learn, and was striving to give them the best possible education in order for them to succeed.

Lynn Ragner: The Star on a Less Than Desirable Stage

At the other end of our continuum from free-form to highly-scripted CIRA sessions are the sessions of Lynn Ragner. Her sessions were the most prescribed of the four teachers, and she controlled the activity of her students to the highest degree (as evidenced by the lowest percentage of *On Topic/Out of Turn* code). It is interesting to note that Ms. Ragner worked in the school that exhibited the most top-down control. Her school was also the school with the highest number of students living in poverty, as well as the school with the highest EL rate.

Teacher Characteristics

If forced to describe Ms. Ragner in only one word I would have to pick “dejected.” She often wore a tired smile and a pensive look. She seemed preoccupied. This being said, I never heard Ms. Ragner speak to her students with anything but kindness. I never heard Ms. Ragner raise her voice or say anything demeaning to her students. She seemed to truly enjoy them and to take pride in their accomplishments. It was clear she cared about her students and took an interest in their lives in and out of the classroom. She often shared an amusing anecdote about one of her students with me, either before or after my observations. In fact, of the four teachers in the study she was able to take the most time chatting with me both before and after the observed CIRA sessions. Ms. Ragner had always taught kindergarten in the county, ten years all together, and for the past seven years she had taught at Rasmussen Elementary School.

Training for CIRA

During the course of the study Ms. Ragner was working on a Masters Degree in the area of reading at a local state university. Over the past five years Ms. Ragner reported she attended a county-level training program called Skillful Teacher. According to Ms. Ragner she “attained skills on improving student achievement by learning how to create a collaborative work environment with my colleagues. I also examined my beliefs about teaching and learning, by expanding instructional strategies, and reflecting on the importance of instructional decision making.”

Ms. Ragner also was selected for training to become an instructor for the Junior Great Books Program that had been implemented at Rasmussen Elementary School for the identified gifted and talented students. Ms. Ragner reported she enjoyed teaching this program. Its purpose was to help the gifted and talented students “through a student-centered, inquiry-based language arts program that enhances kids’ skills in reading, thinking, and communication while working with texts that have complex ideas in them.” Ms. Ragner invited me to observe one of these sessions. The Junior Great Books session was conducted much like a CIRA session. One major exception was the text used for the session: it did not have any illustrations and the text could not be seen by the students.

When I asked Ms. Ragner if she had any training specifically to support CIRA, she replied she did not. However, she continued to say that her training in the Skillful Teacher and Junior Great Books programs had contributed greatly to her practice as a teacher; she was sure the training had positively influenced her CIRA sessions.

Context Characteristics

In the following sections I describe the salient characteristics of the context of Ms. Ragner's CIRA sessions.

The School Site

Rasmussen Elementary school was undergoing the addition of a new wing of classrooms during the course of my study. The room Ms. Ragner occupied had a large bank of windows over-looking the construction. Ms. Ragner's room was a very tired-looking room desperately in need of paint. Very few items of student work were on display. The room was a large, traditional kindergarten classroom with a sink and piles of learning materials everywhere.

Ms. Ragner reported the school's principal had been at Rasmussen for five years. This was to be the last year for the principal, because she was retiring due to health issues. The principal, who was involved at all levels of decision making, had no background in elementary education. Prior to her tenure at Rasmussen Elementary she had been a middle-school principal and teacher. The principal had very specific programs that she wanted to see in place, but as reported by Ms. Ragner the kindergarten team often did not think that these learning methods and expectations were realistic (or developmentally appropriate) for kindergarteners. Rasmussen Elementary had been making AYP; however, students' scores were marginal, and the principal had been under pressure from the county to raise scores. As a result, the overall school climate, as reported by Ms. Ragner, was poor. At the time of our formal interview in May many staff members, including Ms. Ragner, were looking for teaching positions elsewhere in the county. A new principal had been hired to take the retiring principal's place, and rumor

had it (according to Ms. Ragner) that the new principal also had a middle-school background and had been hired “to get rid of bad teachers and improve the school.”

The Community and Students

Rasmussen Elementary had the highest rate for FARMS, EL students and mobility of all the schools in my study (see Table 1). Thus, Rasmussen is the poorest school, with the greatest number of high-risk students. Rasmussen was well above the county FARMS and EL rates.

At the time of the formal interview in May, Ms. Ragner reported she still had still not met about half of the students’ parents. Parents of 5 out of 15 students showed up for conferences in the fall. Ms. Ragner believed the poor attendance rate for conferences was due to the fact that many of the students were bused from other neighborhoods and that many of the students’ parents did not have cars to get to the school. Although she had no proof other than her limited interactions with the parents, she believed many of the parents were not literate in their home language, so they could not assist their children with literacy activities in any language. Ms. Ragner believed many of the parents were working several jobs and probably did not have time to attend school functions. Ms. Ragner said she wanted the parents to be more involved, but she was very sympathetic as to why they might not be able to be more involved. She spoke of the parents with nothing but respect for the challenges they faced.

Ms. Ragner reported in the formal interview that she differentiates her CIRA sessions for the EL students, who make up nearly 60% of her class (the highest percentage of all the teachers in the study). Ms. Dubbury and Ms. Emery did this as well. Most of the EL students in her class did not know any English when they entered her

class in September. Most of her accommodations occurred during the actual reading of the book because so many of her students were EL. Her main goals, in addition to those goals set by the county, were to build background knowledge and to strengthen vocabulary. Ms. Ragner was the only teacher to report that she had her Spanish speaking aide pull aside her EL students (all of her EL students' first language is Spanish) to translate the most difficult concepts and vocabulary. Ms. Ragner reported that at the beginning of the year she spent a lot of time teaching all of her children, but especially her EL students, how to be good listeners and how to attend to *Concepts of Print*.

Length of Sessions

Table 27 illustrates the dates, time, and length of each observed session. The average length of a CIRA session across the practice of all teachers was 15 minutes. Ms. Ragner was only slightly above that average.

Table 27

Length of Ms. Ragner's CIRA Sessions

CIRA Session	Date	Time Start	Time End	Elapsed Time
#1	Tues 1/30	1:20	1:36	16
#2	Tues 2/23	2:30	2:45	10
#3	Mon 3/26	1:29	1:49	20
#4	Wed 5/9	1:20	1:31	11
				M=15.5

Session Content

When I asked Ms. Ragner to talk about the purpose of her CIRA sessions, she had much to say about the level of comprehension in her class:

My purpose is just to give them background knowledge. A lot of them don't always get read to every day, and I think they need to be read to every day so they can learn about different things. We read non-fiction books and learn about the different story elements in any kind of book. I want to help them, to help them understand and comprehend better. A lot of times I think, "Oh, they will understand this," and you get to it, and it is new, and they don't understand. A lot of them do not have background knowledge, so it is important to build on that.

Earlier, Ms. Ragner told me the class was taking a field trip to the zoo. I asked Ms. Ragner, in a follow-up question, if many of her students had been to the zoo and if she had read any texts to prepare her students for the field trip. Ms. Ragner explained:

I asked my students if they had been to the zoo, and most of them had not. This will be a brand new experience for most of them. Yes, right now we have been reading different books about the zoo. We have a *National Geographic* magazine that is all about the zoo so that when we go, they will have an understanding of some aspects of a zoo. The theme carries over to the other literacy activities such as Shared Reading, literacy centers and, most definitely, our writing instruction. However, at this school, because we are under such pressure to do well on testing, we do not do many thematic units.

I then asked Ms. Ragner when she felt a CIRA session was particularly successful, and she gave this as a reply:

I think when we end, and we start talking about the book, and all the children are talking about what happened in the story, and they are able to verbalize the important elements of the story. I know they understood it. Also, when they are excited about what I read, and they want me to read it again.

In further discussion I asked Ms. Ragner if she always has a specific goal and objective in mind and, if so, where did she get her goals and objectives. She elaborated:

I always have a goal and objective in mind because the county has certain reading literacy experience indicators, and at this school our principal wants us to focus on all elements of our reading program, even read alouds [CIRA]. We have an assessment we fill out, not for every read aloud session, but each quarter. We have to record data for each student for a read aloud session. Title I schools are suppose to have a plan in place just to make sure that we are monitoring all areas of reading instruction more closely. So, if we went to a non-Title I school, they probably would not have anything like this. So usually, whatever the [state test] skill is that we are working on, I try to find a book that works for that. There are guides that we have that tell us during the week, say right now we are around week 36 or 37 we should be covering. So, county-wide everyone is probably doing similar instruction. It is a way to be systematic [and] to make sure all teachers cover all things throughout the year. It is not like if you walk in on May 8th every kindergarten class will be reading the *Cat in the Hat*, but our goals and objectives for our read aloud sessions would be the same.

Ms. Ragner was the only one of the four teachers who reported she had a rigid weekly routine for her CIRA sessions. On Monday she assessed prior knowledge of

literacy skills and introduced a text and concentrated on the characters; on Tuesday she focused on the setting; on Wednesday she dealt with vocabulary; and on Thursday she explored comprehension. Friday, then, became a day to concentrate on whatever she determined the students needed more help with. The text would change over the course of the week but her goals pretty much did not. She reported she used a lot of “think alouds,” especially at the beginning of the week, “when I was introducing a new concept.” Ms. Ragner reported she always had the students do a follow-up paper right after the CIRA session. That was not always the case for the other three teachers in the study.

Ms. Ragner clearly stated the purpose of her CIRA session at the beginning of the session. She also would end the session with closure that would give the students an indication of what was going to happen the next day, as illustrated by the following excerpt. This excerpt also illustrates Ms. Ragner’s respect for each student’s attention span. At the close of her CIRA sessions she would end with some sort of activity that got the students up and moving.

Ms. Ragner [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes, you all did a great job. Tomorrow we are going to read another book and look for the problems and solutions in that story.

[*Students nod affirmatively*] Ok everybody stand up, let’s stretch out and get ready for our afternoon meeting. Everyone reach for the sky. Reach down and touch your toes. Shake out all your wiggles, all your sillies.

Most frequently occurring characteristics of content during CIRA. Table 28 shows the most frequent content codes for *Content*. Ms. Ranger had the least number of total *Content* codes of the four participating teachers, actually less than half the average of all the teachers. I found this interesting because in the formal interview Ms. Ragner

reported the strongest connection between the county curriculum and what she teaches during her CIRA session. However, Ms. Ragner's sessions were the most highly influenced by her school site; thus, perhaps, she did not feel that she had the flexibility to include other content during her sessions. Also, although her school was making AYP, as reported by Ms. Ragner her school had the most at-risk students and most pressure to improve test scores of the four schools in the study.

Table 28

Most Frequently Occurring Codes During Ms. Ragner's CIRA Sessions

	1	2	3
Teacher Practice	Evaluation	High Order (19%)	Scaffolds (12%)
	Feedback (25%)		Low Order (11%)
Content	Comprehension (50%)	Genre (4%)	Concepts of Print
		Story Elements (4%)	(0.7%)
		Vocabulary	
		Development (4%)	
Student Activity	Simple Answer (40.0%)	Alternate Answer (11%)	Elaborate Answer (11%)

The most frequent Content code was *Comprehension*. Ms. Ragner accomplished this through asking a series of questions. Her practice in this regard will be illustrated through an excerpt in the following section on *Teacher Practice*. *Genre*, *Story Elements*, and *Vocabulary Development* only accounted for 4% each. These codes did not require or

request a response from the students. For example, Ms. Ragner simply stated “This book is an expository text,” or “The name of the main character is Princess, a dog.” *Concepts of Print* only accounted for 0.7% of the codes. In each case of *Concepts of Print* Ms. Ragner briefly referred to the author of one of the stories.

Content characteristics never coded. Ms. Ragner had the fewest number and least variety of content codes of the four teachers. She did not have codes in the following areas: *Text Structure, Picture Walk, Processing Text, Decoding Text, Letter Identification, Letter Sound Relationships, Rhyming Words/Word Families, Spelling, Conventions: Parts of Grammar, and Conventions: Punctuation.* Ms. Ragner was also the only teacher who did not explicitly connect her texts to content areas other than literacy.

Central Elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text

In this section I describe the salient characteristics of the central elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text as related to Ms. Ragner’s CIRA sessions. Finally, I describe the unique way in which these three elements relate during Ms. Ragner’s CIRA sessions.

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Teacher Practice During CIRA

Table 28 shows the most frequently occurring codes of Teacher Practice during Ms. Ragner’s CIRA sessions: *Evaluation Feedback, High Order, Scaffold, and Low Order.* The following excerpt illustrates these codes. This is an excerpt from a narrative text with a very simple plot line and few characters. A family adds a dog named Princess to their household, and the book chronicles all the trouble the dog causes. Ms. Ragner made sure her students comprehended the text as she read it by asking them *High Order* and *Low Order* questions. It is interesting to note Ms. Ragner had the highest percentage

of *High Order* codes. The other three teachers had an average of only 4%. Ms. Ragner selected simpler texts, on average, than the other three teachers in the study, and her students were at the highest risk of all the students in the study, yet according to the codes Ms. Ragner did more *Scaffolding* toward higher level thinking than the other teachers.

Like the other three teachers, Ms. Ragner used a great deal of inflection as she read. She was the only teacher to comment on this in the formal interview: “You do have to change your tone of voice when you read something that an adult maybe thinks is boring in order to keep it exciting for the children.” The following excerpt is full of inflection. The story is quite simple, with extremely simple problems. Ms. Ragner makes it sound very exciting.

The excerpt also illustrates how Ms. Ragner lets the students know if their responses are correct by providing *Evaluation Feedback*, the most frequently occurring code in the area of *Teacher Practice*. Her most common response to a student who was *On Task/Out of Turn* was to ignore the student and continue either reading or relating to the student she had called on. Ms. Ragner always filled in some sort of a graphic organizer with her class after reading a book for CIRA. In this excerpt she filled out a cause and effect chart with the help of the students after she had read the text.

Ms. Ragner [*Reads with Inflection*] “Do something! Or that dog must go!’ warned Mom. So Rob trained her. [*Emphasis on entire sentence*] What does that mean? ‘Rob trained her?’ [*High Order, calls on Student 1 by smiling and nodding at Student 1*]

Student 1 [*Elaborate Answer*] Ahhh! [*hand up*] To make the dog be good!

Ms. Ragner [*Nods affirmatively, Evaluation Feedback*] To be good! Yes!

Student 2 [*On Topic/Out of Turn, Alternate Answer*] To do what he says.

Ms. Ragner [*Nods affirmatively at Student 2, Evaluation Feedback*] He trained Princess to be good and to do what he said. That's right. [*Reads with Inflection*]
 "Then everyone was happy, even Princess! Until we got Prince!"

Student 3 [*Points to illustration, On Topic/Out of Turn, Simple Answer*] A big dog!

Ms. Ragner [*Smiles, nods head affirmatively at Student 3, Evaluation Feedback*]
 Ok, so let's look back and see some of the causes and effects. [*Holds up book and slowly flips through pictures, then turns to first page*] Now if you look at this first picture, there's lots [*emphasis on lots*] of people coming to the house and everyone [*emphasis on everyone*] is having a good time. They want to come to the house. [*Scaffolds*]

Student 4 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] A big house. [*Simple Answer*]

Student 5 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] It is green. [*Alternate Answer*]

Ms. Ragner [*Ignores Student 4 and Student 5, Redirects*] Now Princess knocked over things. [*Scaffolds*]

Student 6 [*On Topic/Out of Turn*] The people are eating. [*Alternate Answer*]

Ms. Ragner [*Ignores Student 6, Redirects*] The people who came over, [*points to picture*] Princess knocked over the children while they were playing. So the cause is, the cause up here . . . [*writes on chart, reads the following*] "Princess knocked over the children." [*Re-reads while pointing to each word*] "Princess knocked over the children." And the effect is people did not want to come to the house any

more. [Scaffolds] “People [says as writes] did not want to come to the house.” Ok.

Tell us what is another one?” [High Order, need to infer from text]

Student 7 [Thinking] “Ahhh . . .”

Ms. Ragner [Pauses so Student 7 can think, points to part of picture that would help answer question, restates question] How does the house look in this picture?

[Pauses, Scaffolds] Neat? Clean?

Student 8 [Out of Turn /On Topic] Princess made it dirty. [Alternate Answer]

Ms. Ragner [Ignores Student 8, Redirects] It is ok Student 7, take your time.

Student 7 [Parrots Student 8, Alternate Answer] Princess made it dirty.

Ms. Ragner [Nods affirmatively, Evaluation Feedback] How? [High Order]

Student 7 [Elaborated Answer] By knocking all the stuff over and grabbing.

Ms. Ragner [Nods affirmatively, Evaluation Feedback] Princess knocked everything over. [Writes on chart]. That was the cause. Now, I want you to think what was the effect after Princess knocked everything over? If you can tell me I want you to raise your hand. Princess knocked everything over in the house so then what does the house look like after that? [High Order] [Continues until chart is complete with all examples of cause and effect from story]

Most Frequently Occurring Characteristics of Student Activity During CIRA

The top codes for *Student Activity* as shown in Table 28 were all types of answers: *Simple Answer*, *Alternate Answer*, and *Elaborate Answer*. There are examples of all three of these codes in the excerpt above. These answers were in response to the *High Order* and *Low Order* questions Ms. Ragner posed in order to scaffold the students to a greater

level of comprehension of the text, specifically through the use of the concept of cause and effect.

Only Ms. Ragner had codes for *Elaborate Answer*. *Simple Answer* was a common code for the other three teachers. *Elaborate Answer* is defined as follows (in the “Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol Glossary, Appendix I”): “A student gives a more extended answer than a simple answer. However, the answer/statement does not explain or justify thinking.” The excerpt in the Teacher Practice section illustrates these Student Activity codes.

Ms. Ragner did not have any of the following Student Activity codes: *On Task/Off Topic*, *Asks a Question of Another Student*, *Responds With or States Hypothesis or Prediction*, *Act Out Text/Spontaneous*, *Act Out Text/Told To Do So*, and *Discuss With One Another*. Although Ms. Ragner had more total Student Activity codes these particular types of codes are nearly identical to those of Ms. Emery, whose school is also Title 1.

Text and CIRA

In the following section I describe how Ms. Ragner selected the texts for her CIRA session. I then describe the characteristics of the texts she read.

Text selection. Ms. Ragner selected several books starring current cartoon characters. She also read current texts based on an older original book starring the original Curious George character. Unlike the original Curious George books, these new versions are formulaic, highly predictable, and have overly simplistic plots. Perhaps Ms. Ragner selected more simplified texts due to the fact she had nearly 60% EL students and wanted to make sure the plots were simple and comprehensible.

Ms. Ragner reported she read books at times other than CIRA. She would, for instance, read books to support Math. “Usually, if I have an extra 5 or 10 minutes before the students go home, I will pick up a book. A lot of my students are bringing in books from home lately, so I just spend a few minutes at that time reading their books.” All of the teachers except for Ms. Ragner read poetry during CIRA. I asked her if she ever read poetry, and she replied that she read poetry daily as part of the opening routine during the calendar time. Another time, Ms. Ragner read books in preparation for Writers’ Workshop. Writers’ Workshop, an instructional period typical in kindergarten and first grades, is characterized by direct instruction of writing strategies followed by a period of time when the students use their writing skills. She explained:

I might read the class a book that is a good example of the voice I want them to use in their writing. We will read books and see how they use large print or exclamation points, and I will do that with a little mini-lesson for Writer’s Workshop. Sometimes I will read the whole text, and sometimes I will read just a few pages to show them how that author is writing.

Ms. Ragner was the only participating teacher to explicitly state that she selected texts based on her students’ interests. She elaborated:

I match their interests. I want to make it exciting. I try to pick out stories that are a little bit fun or where the illustrations are exciting. Well, I try to pick out stories that will meet the objectives and that I know they’re interested in. And they really like Franklin, Curious George, Clifford, and they ask me to read those types of stories; so, I try to find stories that they will be interested in.

Ms. Ragner also stressed the importance of selecting a text that is the best fit for what she wants to teach:

When I select a book, I am careful to pick one that is easy to “think aloud.” I have been taught that “think alouds” are important. Sometimes I look at what we are required to teach, and I cannot necessarily read what they suggest to five-year olds. I have to pick a book that works with them. I cannot just go and grab a book, especially to teach problem and solution. I have to read the book first and make sure it is clear and the best example to teach the concept.

Text structure. Table 29 illustrates the number and type of texts read each month of my study. Ms. Ragner read more narratives than the average of the participating teachers.

Table 29

Types of Text Read Each Month of Study in Ms. Ragner’s Class

Month	Narrative	Expository	Poetry	Play	Total
Jan	7	7	0	0	14
Feb	13	2	0	0	15
March	20	0	0	0	20
April	13	0	0	0	13
Total	53	9	0	0	62
% of					
Total	85%	15%	0%	0%	

Table 30 illustrates the different narrative genres read during the course of the study. It is interesting to note Ms. Ragner was the only teacher to read any biographies (1.8% of all texts read over all by teachers). Ms. Ragner attributed this to the fact the class had a Social Studies unit on Black History in order to recognize Black History Month: “So, I read several biographies about Martin Luther King. We also studied Women’s History, so I read several books about famous women.” This is not the biography she read during CIRA sessions however, as she did not record any books about Martin Luther King, Jr., in her CIRA log.

Table 30

Narrative Genres Read During CIRA Sessions in Ms. Ragner’s Class

Biography (non-fiction)	Realistic Fiction	Historical Fiction	Fantasy/ Science Fiction	Folk/ Fairy Tales	other	Total Narratives
4 (4%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	29 (40%)	17 (20%)	0 (0%)	53

The few expository texts she read were selected to support units on transportation and on the previously mentioned topic of zoos. She went on to explain:

I try to find a science book if we are working on science and an appropriate book to support Social Studies if we are working on Social Studies. I tried to find at least one expository text to read as well. Chinese New Year took place during your study, and I read a book about that. I try to read informational [expository] text when I can at other times of the day to support Science and Social Studies.

Patterns of Relationship Among Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text During

CIRA

Ms. Ragner had a distinctive style of scaffolding her students during CIRA sessions. As she stated, her main goals for her sessions were to make sure the students comprehended what was read to them as well as to build background knowledge. The following excerpt is an example of how Ms. Ragner sets her students up for successful listening before starting to read aloud. The prior excerpts were of how Ms. Ragner related to her students during and after reading a text. Here, she started by explicitly telling the students exactly what they should look for: cause and effect. She also reminded the students how to be good listeners. In order to assure their understanding of the text, she paused at certain points during the text to ask *Low Order* and *High Order* questions. She selected texts with simple plots that had clear examples of what she wanted to teach. In response, the students gave *Simple*, *Alternate* and *Elaborate* answers. The following is an excerpt from a CIRA session of a book about a goat who is not a good eater. He eats human food while his parents prefer to eat junk.

Ms. Ragner [*Scaffolds*] We want to start to talk about cause and effect so that we can better understand our story. So before I start I want everyone to touch your ear for good listening. As we are going through this story, I am going to be asking you some questions, and I hope you remember what we do when we want to answer questions. And this book is called *Gregory the Terrible Eater*. [*Emphasis on eater*] What is something that if our cause was that you were eating terribly what would some of the effects be? What would happen to you if you ate terribly?

[*High Order*] Student 1?

Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] You could choke.

Ms. Ragner [*Evaluation Feedback, nods affirmatively*] You could choke. That wouldn't be good. Student 2? [*High Order*]

Student 2 [*Alternate Answer*] You could go to the doctor.

Ms. Ragner [*Evaluation Feedback, nods affirmatively*] You could go to the doctor. What else? [*Nods at Student 3 to answer*]

Student 3 [*Alternate Answer*] You could get skinny.

Ms. Ragner [*Evaluation Feedback, nods affirmatively*] What could happen to your teeth if you eat terribly? [*High Order, nods at Student 4 to answer*]

Student 4 [*Simple Answer*] Rotten?

Ms. Ragner [*Evaluation Feedback, nods affirmatively*] Student 5? [*High Order, nods at Student 5 to answer*]

Student 5 [*Alternate Answer*] Cavities.

Ms. Ragner [*Evaluation Feedback, nods affirmatively*] Cavities.

Student 5 [*Elaborate Answer*] They would get rotten and fall out.

Ms. Ragner [*Low Order*] Everyone, do you think if you had teeth that were getting rotten that would feel good?

Students [*Simple Answer as Group*] No!

Ms. Ragner [*Evaluation Feedback*] No! Ok, let's read and find out what happens to Gregory.

Lynn Ragner in Summary

Ms. Ragner's CIRA sessions were well planned and executed, using very specific county goals and objectives in order to maximize the possibility of student success on

county assessments. Of all the schools in my study she taught in the school whose principal had the most influence on day to day instruction. Overall, according to Ms. Ragner, the school had a very low morale. Ms. Ragner went about her teaching duties as an absolute professional. She showed great respect and affection for her students, and she always expressed the belief that they could learn.

Epilogue

During the school year immediately following my study, about seven months into the school year, I had the opportunity to happen upon Ms. Ragner at another school. She was now teaching at a brand new school, with a staff hand-picked by the principal. She was a woman transformed. A genuine smile was on her face, and she even dressed more professionally. The demographics of her current students were the same as those at her previous school, but, according to Ms. Ragner, her new principal was a veteran principal and former elementary teacher with a participatory style of leadership. The building Ms. Ragner now taught in was brand new; however, not once did Ms. Ragner refer to how wonderful her new physical environment was. She focused exclusively on the affective human relationships that were a part of her new environment. That surprised me, to some extent, because she had come from a very run-down room the previous school year. I wish the scope of my study could have allowed an observation of a CIRA session in her new school. Such an opportunity may have added a bit of insight into the ways that the relationship between teachers and administrators can influence the manner and effectiveness of classroom learning.

Conclusion

Here in Chapter 5 I illuminated the practice of each of the participating teachers via a series of single case portraits of their CIRA sessions. The classroom practice of these four teachers fell along a noticeable continuum, from the free-flowing and seemingly un-scripted sessions of Ms. Torben to the highly structured and controlled sessions of Ms. Ragner. These differences among the teachers' CIRA sessions may be attributed to the diverse and multifaceted personalities and backgrounds of the four participating teachers as well as the many contextual variations that framed my study. The themes discussed here in chapter 5 are common to each of the single case studies and bring a richer and deeper level of understanding in answer to my research questions.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research and Instruction

Whole class read aloud sessions are a common if not a daily part of a literacy program in kindergarten. These sessions can be a tool for teaching literacy skills as well as content (Bobys, 2000; Henk, Moore & Marinak, 2000; Lesiak, 1997; Walker, 1995). Using the CIRA model I created (Figure 1) as a lens, this study illuminated the practice of four experienced kindergarten teachers who read text aloud to a whole class during planned periods of instruction. I conducted four non-participant observations of each of the teachers over the course of four months. At the conclusion of the observations I interviewed each teacher. In the form of the collective case study in chapter 4 I began to build a basic understanding of my research questions. Finally, in chapter 5, via individual case studies created with thick, rich description (Creswell, 1998; Nolen, 2001), I brought a deeper level of understanding to my Central Question: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across teachers?

To answer this question, I searched for patterns of discernable characteristics and relationships across (chapter 4) and within (chapter 5) the teachers in the study. More specifically, I answered the following sub-questions across and within the practice of each teacher:

- What are the characteristics of teacher practice during CIRA and how does teacher practice relate to student activity?

- What are the characteristics of student activity during CIRA and how does this student activity relate to the practice of the teacher?
- How can text be characterized during a CIRA session?
- How can literacy or other kindergarten content areas be characterized during CIRA?

Although not originally a research question, I also described the salient characteristics of the context of my study (the outer box of my CIRA model, Figure 1) as they appeared to influence the practice of CIRA. Here in chapter 6 I discuss my analysis of the rich data I collected, and I reveal how my findings help to bring additional understanding to the practice of kindergarten teachers reading aloud to a whole class during planned periods of instruction. I conclude the chapter by examining the limitations of my study and by discussing the implications for future research and instructional practice suggested by my research.

Major Findings

The following section outlines and discusses the major findings of my research. As I have throughout this dissertation I will follow my CIRA model (Figure 1) as a guide. I initially describe the outermost box, the context of my study: first, governance at the federal, state and district level, and then, a description of the community in which my study was conducted. Next, I discuss findings in the area of the three central elements of CIRA: Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text. I then discuss my findings at the intersection of the following pairs of elements: Teacher Practice and Student Activity, Student Activity and Text, and Teacher Practice and Text. Finally, I give illumination to

my Central Question and to the center of my CIRA model, where Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text meet and relate to one another.

Context of CIRA Sessions

An examination of the context of this study was not originally one of the goals of my research. However, over the course of my study it became clear that context influenced the CIRA sessions. In this section I discuss not only the federal, state, and district policies affecting read-aloud practice, but I also discuss the nature of the school community. All four teachers were influenced by the individual characteristics of their school community.

Federal, State and District Policy

The original intent of the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) adopted in 2002 was to ensure that all children regardless of their background meet with success in school. NCLB requires student testing to benchmark that students are making Adequate Yearly Progress (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). NCLB does not require Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data until the students are in third grade. However, the state and district in which I conducted my research require all teachers, starting in kindergarten, to collect assessment data in the areas of math and reading at least quarterly. The students in the classes of the teachers whom I selected for participation in this study all achieved AYP. Indeed, all the schools in the study achieved AYP to some degree.

Since its inception, states and school districts around the United States have varied in their efforts and abilities to comply with the requirements of NCLB. The state, the district, and the schools in which my study was conducted were expending considerable effort to fully comply with the mandates of NCLB. All four teachers in my

study reported during the formal interview that many fiscal resources had been allocated at the school level in order to fulfill NCLB mandates. The principals and school districts found ways to pay for smaller class size, for extra support staff (such as reading teachers) and for additional instructional materials. Thus, the schools in my study, under pressure of varying degrees to comply with the NCLB mandates, were making policy and defining practice in ways that aided them in achieving the required AYP. Valli and Chambliss (2007) found similar issues with a teacher in their study.

As I stated earlier, my study did not set out to examine the influences of NCLB; however, all four teachers referred without prompting to NCLB during their exit interviews. Each of the teachers initially stated they felt the pressure of NCLB, but explained that they did not feel its influence on CIRA sessions. However, it was apparent to me after follow-up questions that in each of the four cases NCLB had affected their overall teaching and CIRA sessions to some degree. The teachers reported that the amount of testing and the pressure to do well on tests had increased since the implementation of NCLB. All four teachers had been teaching long enough to know what teaching was like before and after NCLB. They reported that all instruction must be directly linked to the curriculum and to specific indicators that were, in turn, tested. I believe NCLB has had an influence in spite of the teachers' initial comments that NCLB had no influence on their classroom practice in general or, specifically, on their CIRA sessions.

It appears that NCLB, in perhaps an indirect way, influenced the number of CIRA sessions conducted within a certain month. All four teachers had fewer CIRA sessions in April than in any other month. One reason for this is that Spring Break took place in

April. However, even accounting for Spring Break, there were far fewer CIRA sessions in April than in other months. The teachers reported this was due to extra test preparation and to actual testing that was conducted in April. Each of the teachers reported being frustrated at not being able to teach anything new in April, as they were preoccupied with test preparation activities and testing itself. This emphasis on testing, at least partially, is due to the accountability requirements of NCLB.

Finally, as reported in chapter 4 all four teachers described a push at each of their schools to increase the end of year benchmark reading level for kindergarteners. Under the current district guidelines, kindergarteners were required to achieve a level of 3 by the end of the year in order to be considered at grade level. Level 3 is characterized by a simple 5-7 page text of three word sentences made up of highly decodable words supported by a picture illustrating the sentence on each page. By the end of the first quarter of first grade students were required to be at a level 8. Level 8 is characterized by a little more complex texts of 7-9 pages with two sentences on a page consisting of words that are mostly decodable. The kindergarten teachers in my study as I reported in chapter 4 stated that the first grade teachers at their schools were frustrated because it was almost impossible to get a first grade student from a level 3 to a level 8 by the end of the first quarter. As a result the majority of first graders were reported as below grade level at the first marking period. The solution on the part of the individual principals was to require that kindergarteners be at a level 6 by the end of kindergarten. A level 6 is characterized by 7-9 page text of four and five word sentences made up of mostly decodable words and supported by a picture illustrating the sentence on each page. In the principals' logic, pushing students through an accelerated reading program increased the possibility that

the students would be on grade level when they were in first grade. As I reported in chapter 4, the four kindergarten teachers were very frustrated by this sort of decision making. They argued that most of their students would not be able to achieve a level 6 at the end of the year because so many of their children came to them with so few emergent literacy skills. In the opinion of the teachers in this study, their students made tremendous progress over the course of the year; however, a level 6 was just out of reach. The teachers were also concerned that even if they could get their students to a level 6, such an achievement would not, in fact, be solid evidence that such students would maintain this level of skill. Instead, students would be at risk for regressing even more than is normal over the summer. The teachers stated they would much rather send a child to first grade with a lower but more mastered reading level. As one teacher stated, she wanted to teach 'more depth than breadth'. This situation may well have been influenced by NCLB and by that act's demand that all students achieve certain scores on benchmark assessments.

It appears to me anecdotally that the schools in my study just barely making AYP on a consistent basis experienced more top down control from their principals than the schools that were not under the same type of pressure. The face of NCLB enforcement at the school level was, as far as the participating teachers were concerned, the principal. This increase in control of instruction by principals is likely due to the fact that the district in question applies the most pressure to the principals of underperforming schools. Ms. Ragner was in the school with the lowest (although passing) test scores of all the schools in my study, and she reported high levels of control from her principal in the area of instruction as well as in all other areas related to student performance. Ms.

Ragner is now at a new school with no past test data. She reported the principal is not involved in instructional decisions. It would be interesting to follow trends at this school to see if this “hands off” position on the part of the principal continues or if he becomes more involved with the curriculum and its delivery over time.

Ms. Torben, who taught in a school with the highest test scores of the schools in my study, a school easily achieving AYP, did refer to the control exerted by principals in response to the mandates of NCLB in our exit interview. She was sympathetic to principals in schools not making AYP: “It is easy for teachers to be upset with the principals about the amount of attention to testing. However, the principals in underperforming schools are under a lot of pressure from the district to do well. My principal is more hands off than other principals in part due to the fact our school consistently makes AYP.” Ms. Torben reported having the most “hands off” principal compared to the other three teachers in my study. In summary, the amount of control wielded on the part of the principal, according to the teachers, influenced how often teachers attended to district specified instruction objectives throughout the day, including CIRA sessions. The teachers at the schools where principals exerted the highest degree of control (Evanston Elementary and Rasmussen Elementary) also reported the tightest alignment to the district curriculum.

The Community and Students

Not all students sail effortlessly on the sea of literacy to become competent readers (Snow, et al, 1998). A large body of studies has researched the various characteristics that may cause a child to be at risk for developing reading difficulties (e.g., poverty, level of home literacy, primary language other than English, and so on).

The United States Department of Education studied the kindergarten class of 1998-99 (West, 2001) and came up with a list of risk factors nearly identical to the ones discussed by Snow and colleagues in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (1998). Snow and fellow researchers (1998) concluded from their comprehensive review of the literature children with none or one of the associated risk factors did comparably better on simple literacy skills (such as naming letter names) than did students with more than one of the risk factors. Children with more than one risk factor lagged significantly behind their classmates in the areas of reading knowledge and comprehension.

One factor that may put a child at risk is if he or she is an English Learner (EL). Currently, a growing number of children entering kindergarten are EL, also referred to as English as a Second Language Learners or English Language Learners (ELL) (West, 2001). My study was conducted in communities with high numbers of EL students. The EL designation means that the child's first language is a language other than English and the child is in the process of acquiring English language skills. All areas of the United States have EL populations; however, some areas, like southern California, have over 50% of their school populations identified as EL (Yaden & Brassell, 2002). According to the statistics provided by the teachers in my study the schools in my study had a mean EL population of 26%. All the schools (except Dorchester) had higher EL means than the district; some had two, three and even four times the district mean. Most EL students spoke Spanish as their first language and were from Central American countries.

All four teachers in my study spoke about the families of their students with a great deal of respect. In several of the schools the teachers had not met about half of the parents by May. This was attributed, in part, to the fact many of the students were bused

from neighborhoods not within walking distance. Teachers conjectured the families may not have had transportation to get to after-school events and conferences. The teachers also speculated that the parents of their students perhaps were illiterate in English if not their native language, so it was difficult for the families to assist their children with homework. Many of the children did not come to school with many emergent literacy skills. The teachers did not complain or wonder why their students came to school with limited emergent literacy skills; instead, the teachers routinely accepted the children where they were academically and moved on, buoyed with the positive attitude that these children could learn.

The teachers in my study did not teach in a vacuum. The observed CIRA sessions were influenced by the federal policy of NCLB and the local efforts to comply with this policy. The characteristics of the school community and the students' families influenced the literacy level of the students in the participating teachers' classes and therefore influenced CIRA.

The Central Elements of CIRA

As I have explained repeatedly, CIRA had three central elements: Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text. In this section I describe the most prevalent characteristics, patterns, and observations of each of these elements.

Pervasive Characteristics of Teacher Practice During CIRA

In my study I found that teachers decided when, how often, and for how long CIRA sessions would occur. I found in all cases CIRA sessions occurred almost daily, the exceptions being when they were not held due to a field trip, test preparation activities, or testing. The mean length of CIRA sessions for all teachers was 15 minutes. Put in the

proper perspective, this amount of time represents approximately 5% of the entire instructional day, 12.5% of the required literacy time and 45 hours of instructional time over the course of the year.

The most pervasive characteristic across the practice of the four participating teachers, and to me the most important characteristic, was the excellent classroom management and the warm and nurturing manner with which the teachers dealt with their students. I believe this was the most important characteristic of all of the teachers because if teachers do not have excellent classroom management skills and a good rapport with their students, learning is impossible or difficult at best.

Thus, classroom management and a positive rapport with students is foundational to effective teaching. The children were seated on a rug in a cozy manner, at the feet of their teacher, who was sitting in a rocking chair. There was no doubt the teacher was in control; however, this control was accomplished in a supportive manner. Each teacher spoke about her students (and the students' parents) with a high level of respect and belief that every student could succeed, and this respect showed itself in the teacher's management style. In each of the classrooms there was evidence of school-wide classroom management systems; however, in no case did I ever see a teacher use these systems during CIRA. I also never observed a teacher giving any sort of extrinsic reward, such as a sticker, at any time during the CIRA sessions. This is not to say that the children were sitting at attention in straight rows with their hands folded. They were seated on the floor in a relaxed, yet engaged, manner. The CIRA sessions across the practice of all four teachers had much more the feel of a parent/child reading session than a formal school lesson. My findings in the area of Teacher Practice echo the findings of

parent/child storybook reading in Martin and Reutzel (1999). Martin and Reutzel uncovered three codes of parent deviation from the text: *simplification deviation*, *elaborate deviation*, and *engagement deviation*. These codes echo my codes of *Low Order*, *Scaffolds*, and *Explains Rules/Procedures* respectively.

Classroom disruptions were a non issue in all of the classrooms. Classroom and behavior management were in all cases transparent. Every single class was well-behaved and *On Task*. Originally, I set out to code *On Task* behavior. It turned out all portions of the transcripts revealed on-task behavior, with an exception of only 32 (.3%) out of 1,049 codes across the practice of the four teachers. The majority of these *Off Task* codes occurred during one CIRA session when an adult entered the room, and the teacher needed to interrupt the session to assist the adult. The students were *Off Task* in the form of quietly chatting while their teacher talked to the adult. Once the teacher had finished speaking with the adult, she continued to read from the text without saying anything to refocus the children. They immediately gave their attention back to their teacher.

Pressley, Mohan, Raphael and Figeret (2007) revealed in their study that, in all areas of teaching, effective classroom management and a positive rapport with students are the hallmarks of effective instruction. The teachers in my study echoed these characteristics as well. All of the teachers used proactive strategies to set their students up for success, reminding them explicitly of how to behave during a CIRA session. The teachers reported that this positive rapport, and the resulting positive aspects of student behavior, did not unfold by happenstance; indeed, such control on the part of the teacher, purposively cultivated since the beginning of the year, resulted in increasing levels of on-task behavior and response. In her final interview Ms. Torben explicitly stated that her

sessions were much different in the beginning of the year before the point when I started to observe. Ms Torben elaborated on her effective classroom management style: “That [well run CIRA sessions] took a long time to get to that point. In September I do a lot of explicit modeling of what a good reader and listener should be doing while I am reading.”

The high level of competence in the area of classroom management that I observed was no doubt due in good part to the fact that I sought to study experienced teachers. If I had sought to study less experienced teachers, I suspect that my findings in *Teacher Practice*, especially in the area of positive classroom management relationships, would have been quite different. I suspect that just as young children who exhibit a more securely attached relationship with their mothers will generally acquire more fully-developed literacy skills than their less securely attached peers as Bus and van Ijzendoorn’s found in their 1995 study, students in classes where the highest degree of positive classroom management relationships exist develop literacy skills quicker and more thoroughly than do their student peers in classes with poor and negative classroom management relationships.

A finding related to classroom management and the overall engagement of the students was the way in which all four teachers read the text aloud. All four of the teachers read from the text in an engaging and animated style that modeled the fluency of a masterful reader. They used different voices for the various characters in the stories they read and often read louder or softer, or faster or slower, to communicate the mood of the text. All of the teachers paused to engage the students in the story by asking either questions requiring a direct, factual answer and or questions requiring a student’s personal response. Teachers also spent time drawing student attention to the text’s

illustrations. This often took the form of the teacher explaining, modeling, and scaffolding student thinking about the CIRA experience. The teachers appeared genuinely interested and excited about the text they read, and did what they could to bring it alive.

The next most pervasive (and in my opinion second most important) characteristic of Teacher Practice was that in all cases the teachers introduced or reinforced literacy and/or content knowledge during CIRA sessions. In some cases the teacher selected texts in order to teach specific literacy and content skills. All of the teachers made connections to literacy, and three of the four teachers connected their CIRA sessions to other curricular areas. Ms. Ragner was the exception. Because she had the children with the highest numbers of risk factors for not becoming proficient readers, she reported the most concern of the four teachers about not making AYP on her literacy assessments. Perhaps she felt she could not afford to spend time during her CIRA sessions working on anything other than literacy skills.

The two teachers in the relatively higher SES schools; Ms. Dubbury and Ms. Torben, never did a picture walk before reading a text. In a picture walk, the teacher walks the students through the entire text by talking about the pictures and making predictions before reading the text. On the other hand, Ms. Ragner and Ms. Emery always conducted a complete and comprehensive picture walk to highlight the literacy skills they were going to teach during their CIRA sessions. As Ms. Ragner and Ms. Emery had the highest numbers of EL students, students who may have needed more explicit instruction, using the picture walk to engage student interest made great sense. This sort of

differentiation for EL students will be discussed fully in the Three Way Relationship section that follows.

As has been established, all of the teachers taught literacy or other content during their CIRA sessions. This characteristic is supported by studies of parent/child read alouds showing that children learn literacy skills while they are being read to (Neuman, 1996; Leslie and Allen, 1999; Hammett, Van Kleeck and Huberty, (2003). Perhaps not surprisingly, since this study was conducted in kindergarten, the most common Content area code for all teachers was *Concept of Print* (29%). In almost all cases these codes had to do with calling students' attention to the author and the illustrator and the title of the book. The teachers did not mention any characteristics of book handling (directionality, the cover of the book, how to turn pages, and so on). Teachers reported that all of the children in their classes were beyond this level of emergent literacy.

The second most common code, but to me the most interesting in the area of Content, was *Vocabulary*. I was not surprised to find this the second most prevalent code; however, I was a bit surprised how vocabulary instruction was handled during CIRA sessions. Because of the high level of accountability in the schools of the participating teachers, and the strong adherence to the curriculum, I thought vocabulary would have been taught in a more decontextulized and prescribed manner, either before or after the text was read. However, at no time did any of the teachers present a list of words and their meanings to review before or after the reading of the text. Vocabulary instruction during CIRA was always embedded during the reading of the text.

Typically, the teachers would pause and give special emphasis to the word, or would read the word very elaborately or in a drawn out manner. Most of the time teachers

simply supplied a simple definition of the word and then continued reading. Some of the time teachers paused to call on specific students to ask them what a certain word meant. The student would answer with a definition. If the definition were correct the teacher would seamlessly continue to read; if not correct, the teacher would continue asking scaffolding questions until the correct meaning was given.

This scenario supports research which says that the best way to develop vocabulary is to embed word instruction into meaningful contexts with authentic purposes. Ewer and Brownson (1999) reported that children who participated in active participation methods and scored higher on vocabulary post tests than children of the same ability level who participated in passive participation method. Justice and Lankford (2002) found shared storybook reading interactions provide children with frequent incidental encounters with novel words in a contextual format leading to significant growth in vocabulary development. Finally, McGhee and Schickedanz (2007) have concluded that interactive and performative read aloud style is more effective for vocabulary acquisition than just reading aloud with no discussion. The CIRA sessions I observed neatly dovetailed all of these aspects of vocabulary instruction.

Pervasive Characteristics of Student Activity During CIRA

The next element of CIRA is Student Activity. I did not collect data on specific students in my study; thus, this area of my model yielded the smallest amount of data. However, some strong patterns in the area of Student Activity emerged across the CIRA sessions of the four teachers. As has been discussed at length in the preceding Teacher Practice section the students in all four classes were engaged and on task throughout the CIRA sessions. Virtually all parts of the transcripts were coded *Listens* and *On Task* with

the exception of 8 out of 1049 codes for *Play/socialize*. The students appeared to be fully engaged with the reading and had tuned out the rest of the world, as Baker and Wigfield (1999), Boyd (2002), and Guthrie and Wigfield (1999) have characterized. In fact, an adult walked into the room during two of the sessions, and the students did not even notice that someone else was in the room until the teacher interrupted the CIRA session to deal with the adult. Currently, this level of engagement is often associated with TV watching or video game playing. In the classrooms of the four participating teachers the low technology practice of reading from a text became a highly engaging activity that appeared to mesmerize the students.

As was discussed at length in chapters 4 and 5, the student activity code *On Topic/Out of Turn* was prevalent for the students of the participating teachers. This code was a student's out of turn response to either the text or what the teacher was saying about the text. The students appeared to be so engaged with the story they just could not help themselves from calling out. This is due to the fact that the teachers all had an interactive style of reading aloud. They were, certainly, in control of their classes; however, they were so confident about their teaching abilities that they allowed their students a certain degree of control. This discovery complements Oyler's (1996) findings. Oyler concluded that the teacher sharing authority with children does in fact encourage children to be producers, rather than simple consumers, of knowledge. This interactivity and sharing of authority as Oyler termed it certainly was the case in the sessions of all four teachers.

It is interesting to note that the highest counts of *On Topic/Out of Turn* occurred in Ms. Dubbury's and Ms. Torben's classes. They teach in the highest SES schools of the

schools in the study, and not in Title 1 schools and they were under less pressure for students to do well on assessments in order to make AYP. Perhaps these teachers felt the freedom to run more open-ended CIRA sessions. The less structured CIRA sessions also could be a product of the teachers' different personalities.

Finally, the third most common code in the area of Student Activity was *Spontaneous Oral Utterance*, accounting for an additional 13% of the codes. These utterances were often initiated by the text itself and not necessarily the reading style of the teacher. This code is characterized by a spontaneous laugh or comment directed to a character in the text. A funny illustration of a character doing something outlandish, as in the case of the Dr. Seuss text read by Ms. Dubbury, produced outbursts of laughter. A postmodern version of a classic story of little pigs inspired some of the students listening in Ms. Emery's class to yell out to the wolf to warn him of impending harm.

Spontaneous Oral Utterance and *On Topic/Out of Turn* accounted for a total of one third of the Student Activity codes. Like *On Topic/Out of Turn*, the prevalence of *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* indicates the teachers welcome a collaborative style of reading. The participating teachers demanded that the students listen and be engaged with the story. However, the students were encouraged to demonstrate a participatory style of engagement. This style of engagement has much support in the research literature (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall & Tower, 2006; Henk, Moore, Marinak & Tomasetti, 2000; Purcell-Gates, Duke & Martineau, 2007; Lane & Wright, 2007; Lesiak, 1997).

Specifically, Beck, McKeown & Kucan (2003) in a study of 20 low SES preschoolers, labeled a teacher-student interactive questioning strategy during read aloud sessions as *Text Talk*. The researchers found that this style of teacher interaction during a

read aloud session yielded greater vocabulary gains for children than read aloud sessions without *Text Talk*. Similarly, Knapp and Windsor (1998) conducted a study with second graders who were still at an emergent reading level. They were interested in increasing reading comprehension, so they developed an apprentice-tutoring model in line with Vygotsky's concept of ZPD (1978). The students selected high-interest but low-level vocabulary trade books at their instructional reading levels and read them a simple interactive style with their tutor. The posttest revealed that reading comprehension increased significantly in the treatment group over the non-treatment group (the group that did not participate in activities with a tutor), and that the tutoring program was highly motivating for the students due to student success, a success which came about primarily through the tutors' interactions via scaffolding and modeling. I did not collect data on student learning over the course of my study. However, based on the research literature it is reasonable to suspect the students in the study gained literacy skills during the CIRA sessions based on the interactive reading style of the participating teachers.

Texts Read During CIRA Sessions

In this section I discuss findings in relation to the Text section of my model (Figure 1). I describe trends across the practice of the four teachers in the area of text selection, content, multicultural literature and, finally, text structure.

Text selection. Text selection for CIRA was left up to the teacher in the case of all four teachers. This demonstrates a high level of autonomy in a landscape full of ways to control the practice of teachers. This free choice on the part of the teacher can be a good practice, and in the case of these four experienced teachers I believe it was a good practice, because they all had the expertise necessary to make appropriate choices for

their students. However, there is a paradox here. There could conceivably be two teachers in the same building, getting the same level of guidance, who would use completely different books. Thus, the knowledge gained by the students could be completely different. Additionally, the collection of books that teachers have access to can vary greatly by the school they are working in due to limited financial resources spent on library collections or the expertise of the person in charge of procuring the collection. I am surprised the district did not do more hands-on selection of texts in this era of high accountability and NCLB. The teachers reported that the district school system was very much in control of many things going on in the classroom. As it stands in the cases of the four participating teachers, the “diet of books” is entirely dependent on the teachers.

Even if the books were supplied by a school system, there could be a vast difference in what students actually learn. Teachers may have varying degrees of expertise about the wide range of types, text structures, and genres of children’s texts that are appropriate to use during CIRA sessions. There could be a school, filled with wonderful books, where the teachers would not have the training needed to maximize the use of such books. The “knowledgeable other” (Vygotsky, 1978), the high quality picture book in this case, may be a better learning tool than the out-of-date, simplistic text. However, without training, novice teachers may tend to read straight through a text and not interact with students. As I have previously stated in this chapter and in chapters 1 and 2, research supports an interactive reading style between student and teacher that maximize learning (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2003; Hammett, Van Kleeck & Huberty, 2003; Knapp and Windsor, 1998; Martin & Reutzler, 1999).

Content and multicultural texts. I was surprised, based on the time of the year of my study, that historical fiction and biographies were not used during CIRA in any classes. February is Black History Month as well as the month during which Presidents Day is observed. None of the teachers used texts during CIRA to support the teaching of these two areas of study. Both of these topics lend themselves to the use of biographies and historical fiction; in my experience appropriate texts for kindergarteners are readily available. All four teachers did report reading texts at other times of the day, so perhaps texts examining those two historical topics were read during those times. Ms. Torben in particular reported reading texts about women (for Women's History Month) and Martin Luther King, Jr., in honor of his birthday. However, these texts did not appear on her CIRA log, so she must have read them at another time of day. I also saw no evidence on the walls of the classrooms, or in student work, reflecting work on these topics.

It is here in the area of text that the participating teachers did not fulfill the expectations of the CIRA model. I was also surprised that the texts for the most part did not reflect the background of the children being taught. For example, the books selected for the fairy tale units were the traditional western/European versions. It is, undoubtedly, important to build the cultural capital of children who are new to this country. However, it is equally important to make sure these students can relate to what is being taught. A mixture of traditional fairy tales along with fairy tales from the students' countries of origin would have been effective *and* complementary. Adding multicultural literature to the curriculum has the potential to make the curriculum more accessible to all students (Hall, 2008). If I were to have selected teachers who met all expectations of my model, I would not have selected my participating teachers because they did not choose the types

of texts for reading aloud that are suggested by the research literature (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman & Johnson, 2007; Hall, 2008; Hinton-Johnson & Dickinson, 2005; Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman, 2007).

Text structure of texts read during CIRA sessions. Based on my review of the CIRA logs, all four teachers primarily read narrative texts. This is not surprising as traditionally narrative is the type of text structure used during story time, and the text structure most commonly found in primary classrooms (Duke, 2000). A close inspection of the reading lists revealed names common to the canon of traditional American children's literature. Ms. Torben and Ms. Dubbury used the most sophisticated texts and were teaching at the two non-Title 1 schools in the study. I was surprised, however, that more poetry and rhyming texts were not used during CIRA. Teachers, asked about this absence, all stated they used poetry at other times during the instructional day, such as during Shared Reading or during opening activities.

Traditionally, the use of expository text has been rare in the primary grade classroom (Duke 2000). Expository texts, though, can motivate children, especially those children not motivated to read, in ways that narrative texts do not (Dreher, 2003). Recently there has been an explosion in the availability of expository texts for beginning readers. These trade books have both visual and content appeal. These texts can be more closely related to the children's real world than are many narrative texts. Children who interact with such texts may become more connected to the reading experience as a result. Furthermore, since expository texts help build prior knowledge, children who read such texts will have more background to call on when they study strictly narrative content (Smolkin & Donovan, 2002; Pappas, 1993).

Some children are more comfortable with, and respond better to, exposition than to narrative; these students may well end up reading more on their own if they are offered expository texts in addition to the more traditional narrative offerings (Chambliss & McKillop, 2000; Moss, 1995). Smolkin and Donovan recommended, based on their 2002 study, that teachers read aloud a variety of text structures and model expert meaning making, reasoning, and comprehension process strategies. In this way, young readers can use these skills in developing their independent reading abilities. Duke and Kays (1998) suggested that the inclusion of exposition in the early years of schooling may be well-advised and concluded that children can benefit from the chance to explore expository texts. Additionally, Duke and Kays noted that children were not only capable of interacting with expository texts but, as readers and as students actually enjoyed such interactions.

Patterns of Relationships Between Two Elements of CIRA

I now turn my discussion to the patterns of relationships between two elements of the CIRA model (Figure 1) that define the dynamics of CIRA sessions. These relationships are located at the two way intersections of my model. Teacher Practice and Student Activity are labeled TP x SA, Student Activity and Text are labeled SA x T, and Teacher Practice and Text are labeled TP x T (Figure 5).

TP and SA: Teacher Practice and Student Activity

The relationship of Teacher Practice and Student Activity is exemplified by the overall positive relationship between the teachers and the students and the transparent, seamless, and proactive classroom management style of the teachers. At the core of this two-way relationship is the nature of the teacher's ability to model both affective and

effective classroom relationships. The high level of expertise on the part of the teachers led to a high level of *Listens* and *On Task* behavior on the part of the students. There were virtually no behavior problems. All of the teachers displayed a genuine liking and appreciation for all of their students, and this attention paid rich dividends.

There did not appear to be any favoritism displayed toward any of the students, nor did teachers appear to outwardly disfavor any of the students. The best example of this is Ms. Emery. As I reported in detail in chapter 5, Ms. Emery had decided to retire due in part to one particular child “doing her in.” I was totally surprised at two things. First, that she was retiring, since she had given absolutely no indication of retiring up until this point; and, secondly, that she had also given no indication that this particular student was hard to deal with. I poured back over the transcripts of her CIRA sessions, which revealed absolutely no lack of compassion directed toward this particular student. My analysis also revealed a hard-working, dedicated teacher giving nothing but her best to her students. Ms. Emery had maintained a positive and respectful relationship with this trying student, as well as the rest of the class, in spite of her impending retirement.

In the case of all four teachers each student was treated as a special and unique individual who was of value to the rest of the class. The teachers spoke of the students (and their families) with the deepest level of respect. The four teachers appeared to have a much different background compared to the background of their students. The teachers acknowledged and embraced this difference. All of the teachers, during their CIRA sessions and in my conversations with them, continually stated their belief that all of their students could learn and could become good readers. No excuse was ever offered as the answer to why a child was at a certain level of achievement. The message, from each of

the teachers in the study, was that all students would be on grade level by the end of the year.

It was also clear that caring went both ways: the students cared a great deal about their teachers as well. I often observed a student giving a teacher a hug before or after a CIRA session, or engaging a teacher in a conversation to share a personal story about the student's life. Each of the teachers' desks displayed little notes and pictures drawn by students for the teacher. On one occasion one of the teachers was not feeling well and sneezed during a CIRA session. Without saying a word a student stood up, got her teacher a Kleenex and patted the teacher on the shoulder before sitting back down. The teachers, neither a peer nor a parent of the students, had become a trusted and respected adult presence in the students' lives. This positive, two-way relationship of the Teacher Practice and Student Activity relationship is foundational to a well-orchestrated, three-way relationship of Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text, the core of success in CIRA. This positive relationship frees up the teacher and students to become fully engaged and motivated with interactive learning and literacy development (Turner, 1995; Turner and Paris, 1995; and Wigfield, 2000.)

SA and T: Student Activity and Text

The relationship of Student Activity and Text is one that, overall, is not strictly facilitated by the teacher. The teacher selected the books, of course, and, as has already been discussed, teachers often picked texts with the students' interests and reading/listening abilities in mind. It is possible that texts themselves can engage students even when being read by an inexperienced or dull reader. This could be the case because the characteristics of the books themselves (e.g. colorful and humorous illustrations,

wittily written text, etc.) engage the children listening. The relationship between Student Activity and Text, setting aside Teacher Practice for the moment, is characterized in my study by the code of *Spontaneous Oral Utterance*. *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* occurs when the teacher reads the text and, without being prompted by previous directions, the students laugh, or even talk back to the text. For example, in one CIRA session the teacher was reading *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. When the story got to the part where the first goat was going to cross the bridge, which the troll lived under, students spontaneously exclaimed things like, “Watch out goat!” and “The bad troll will eat the goat all up!”. *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* could also be sparked by a particularly funny or engaging illustration. During another CIRA session, when a Dr. Seuss book was read, the students had many episodes of spontaneous laughter as the teacher turned the pages, and they *saw* the next silly situation involving the main character before they *heard* the text of the story read. Situations out of the ordinary, way beyond the reasonableness of real life, appeared to be the types of situations that most often elicited these spontaneous responses. I do not recall realistic fiction or exposition bringing on this type of reaction.

TP and T: Teacher Practice and Text

It is very interesting to note that I collected no data in this section. If any one of the teachers at any time selected a text and did not, in any way, consider any aspect of the students’ background, or literacy needs, or listening level, then I would have data in this section. In my career in education I have happened on a few teachers who would have generated data for this section. These are teachers who have a set routine for teaching; no matter what, where, or who they teach, they teach the same thing in the same way, sometimes even on the same day from one school year to the next. All of my teachers

explicitly stated that they considered their students' present instructional needs and interests whenever they selected a text for a CIRA session. The fact that I do not have any data for this area of the CIRA model also shows that I did not set out to prove my model by selecting teachers that fit each area of the CIRA model.

Patterns of Relationships: Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text

At the center of my CIRA model is the three way confluence of Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text. This three-way pattern was similar for all four of the teachers. This pattern is best exemplified by how the four participating teachers differentiated for their EL students. All four of the teachers stated they selected texts around concepts that were understandable and accessible to the EL students. Based on the coding of the transcripts, the differentiation of all four teachers included strategies that ranged from the micro level (addressing the meaning making of text at the word level, *Vocabulary*), to the macro level (constructing meaning for sentences, paragraphs, and entire passages, *Comprehension*). At the center of this quite appropriate nod to differentiation was the magic of the relationship between teacher and student. I had not set out, in my original research questions, to examine how teachers in the study differentiated for their EL students. However, all teachers in some way accommodated their EL students. I was aware of the differentiation from the coding, and it was confirmed at the final interview when the teachers explicitly stated they differentiated for their EL students in the ways I had found in my coding.

Effective emergent literacy instruction has great potential to positively impact future reading comprehension (Tracey & Morrow, 2002; Vellutino, 2003; Vellutino and Scanlon, 2001). Early intervention through effective emergent literacy practices helps to

mitigate students' differing abilities (Snow et al., 1998; Stanovich, 1986; Stanovich, Cunningham and Feeman, 1984). Differentiated instructional strategies that meet the unique capabilities of each student are powerful tools, especially in conjunction with building and maintaining motivation around literacy activities. Teachers who skillfully use differentiated emergent literacy instructional strategies, who specifically use reading aloud in a print-rich environment and follow such readings with quality assessment, effectively intervene to influence whether their students develop mature reading comprehension skills during later schooling (Tracey & Morrow, 2002). While participating teachers may not have known of this research, their practice of differentiation and relationship to their students during CIRA would support research findings.

My favorite example of differentiation occurred in Ms. Dubbury's class and was referred to in chapter 5. She had a student in her class who came to the first day of class within days of arriving in the United States from a country in Africa. He spoke no English at all. This student was a very adventurous and outgoing child. He would sit during CIRA sessions closely paying attention to the book. Within several months he had started to speak a bit of English, and it was all he could do to contain himself during the CIRA session. Ms. Dubbury discovered, when questioning the students during CIRA sessions, that if she would call on him either second or third he would answer and then quiet down and listen to the other students. If she did not call on him, he would continue to shout out his answer. Ms. Dubbury insisted he not speak out until called on, yet she always made sure to call on him. She was proud of the progress he had made in his English skills during the year, and she attributed this growth in part to his attention during

CIRA sessions and his willingness to become a part of the discussions. The rest of the class did not seem to mind, or even catch on, that this child was always called on second or third. Or, perhaps, they did know and were as relieved as the teacher that this child would attend to the text and ensuing discussion instead of disrupting it.

Finally, although there were many corresponding patterns across the practice of the four teachers, it is in the relationship of the three central elements of CIRA that each teacher revealed her unique style. The four teachers fell on a continuum from CIRA sessions that at first glance appeared to be totally unplanned, and the purpose of which was simply to share a good book with a child, to a more highly prescribed and prescribed session which had much more the feel of a formal lesson.

The elfin Ms. Torben fell on one end of the continuum. Her CIRA sessions were airy and light with the fewest interruptions of the four teachers. She herself stated that her main goal for CIRA sessions was for children to enjoy good literature and nothing more. However, as was discussed at length in chapter 5, after closer inspection of the transcripts and follow-up questions during the final interview, I realized that Ms. Torben actually did select texts to highlight specific literacy skills. Ms. Torben, the Purposeful Improviser, routinely developed vocabulary and taught concepts of print while hiding these creatively in the contexts of her CIRA sessions. Ms. Torben's open-ended interactive style was exemplified by the number of Student Activity codes of *On Topic/Out of Turn* (41%) and *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* (10%), by far the highest numbers in both categories for any of the four teachers.

The texts Ms. Torben chose for her CIRA sessions, at first glance, looked as open and free as the sessions themselves. The CIRA text log of Ms. Torben revealed a list of

texts seemingly with few connections to either the curriculum or the students. Once again, after closer inspection, and after the formal interview with Ms. Torben, I realized that she very purposively selected texts in order to highlight specific themes and specific literacy skills. The difference is Ms. Torben has a large personal collection of books at her disposal. She was not worried about the absolute correct text to use. She was more worried about finding the text that would fit the unique needs of her students on any given day than any of the other teachers. Although more spontaneous in nature, the relationship between Teacher Practice, Student Activity and the texts selected for her read aloud sessions were quite purposeful and expertly crafted and executed.

At the other end of the continuum were the highly scripted sessions of Ms. Ragner. Her CIRA sessions were more characteristic of a formal school lesson instead of a parent/child story time of any of the four teachers. Ms. Ragner's CIRA sessions illustrated a unique pattern of the relationship of Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text, one much different from the sessions of the other three teachers. A close examination of her CIRA log and the Teacher Practice and Student Activity codes associated with her sessions revealed a paradox.

At first glance I noticed that Ms. Ragner, who was teaching in the lowest SES school with the highest number of EL students in the study, had read many highly simplistic texts often featuring cartoon characters. She read many more of this type of text than the other three teachers. My initial reaction was that I was a bit concerned at the "light diet" she was offering her students in contrast to her colleagues who were reading more sophisticated texts. Something quite interesting emerged when I compared her Teacher Practice and Student Activity codes to those same codes in the sessions of her

colleagues. Ms. Ragner had the highest number of *High Order* question codes. She also had the longest and most frequent episodes of *Scaffolding* in her transcripts. Ms. Ragner used the simplest texts of all the teachers to bring her students to a sophisticated and complex level of understanding. The use of simple text does not necessarily translate into simple thoughts; conversely, sophisticated texts do not automatically yield more complex levels of understanding. It is interesting to note Ms. Torben, who at first glance had the more complex texts, had the fewest number of *High Order* question codes and fewest episodes of *Scaffolding*.

I pose that Ms. Ragner purposively selected these simple texts for her classroom of EL students because the language and plots were simple and highly related to the simple illustrations. These types of texts allowed her EL students to make connections to the text; along with the scaffolding provided by Ms. Ragner, this led to a higher level of student thinking about the text than if the texts themselves had been more complex.

Summary

My descriptive study of kindergarten teachers reading aloud to an entire class during planned period of instruction as viewed through the lens of my CIRA model yielded collective and individual case studies of the four participating teachers. Patterns existed within and across the practice of the four teachers in the areas of Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Text as well as across the relationship of these three areas (figure 1). Additionally, I discovered CIRA sessions were influenced by the federal, state and local context in which they occurred. My findings complement the previous research I described at length in chapters 1 and 2 in the areas of Teacher Practice (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2003; Bus & Ijzendor, 1995; Ewers & Brownson, 1999; Hammett,

Van Kleeck & Huberty, 2003; Knapp & Windsor, 1998; Martin & Reutzel, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978), Student Activity (Oyler, 1996; Sipe, 2000a, 2000b; Sipe & Baur, 2001) and Text (Donovan, Smolkin & Lomax, 2000; Duke and Kays, 1998; Hall, 2008; Hinton-Johnson & Dickinson, 2005; Pappas, 1993). In the next three sections I address how my findings have the potential to add to the literature through the implications for research, directions for future research, and implications for instruction.

Research Implications

My study was a qualitative view of CIRA. The coding of the transcripts derived from the non-participant observations shed light on the practice of the teachers.

Part of my methodology was to adapt the protocol used in the High Quality Teaching Study (Valli, Croninger, Alexander, Chambliss, Graeber & Price, 2006). The High Quality Teaching Study (HQT) protocol was a wonderful springboard for me. I could easily adapt the protocol to fit the needs of Kindergarten CIRA. I believe that the protocol could readily be adapted to other studies as well, no matter what the grade level. The protocol has the potential to assist a researcher in obtaining reliability, since it is relatively simple to train a fellow researcher to administer the protocol in direct relation to a transcribed lesson. The protocol glossary standardizes the coding process. I found this to be the case when I had a fellow doctoral student assist me with coding: she established reliability. I hope to use the protocol I developed based on the HQT work in future studies.

Directions for Future Research

Because my dissertation has many facets, future research could take many directions. My dissertation studied experienced kindergarten teachers. My next step would be to use the CIRA model again as my lens to study inexperienced kindergarten teachers and those brand new to the field. The results of this subsequent study would be compared to my results in this study to identify differences in Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Text as they relate in the CIRA practice of teachers with varying levels of expertise. These differences could be used to inform professional development for pre-service as well as new kindergarten teachers. The goal would be, then, to maximize the quality of the instructional time of less-experienced teachers.

Next, I would like to explore CIRA sessions in a wider variety of schools. My study was conducted in lower SES schools. It would be very interesting to replicate my study in a cross section of schools representing high and middle SES. These results could be compared to my results here to explore and illuminate the differences, if any, in Teacher Practice, Student Activity, and Texts read.

Finally, it would be informative to create a CIRA training module and instruct new teachers on effective CIRA strategies. Via experimental design, a researcher could evaluate the practice of the teachers trained in CIRA and those not trained in CIRA to see if the teachers transferred their learning to their own CIRA sessions. Eventually it would be valuable to conduct an experimental design study of teachers with and without CIRA training in order to measure the literacy growth of their students. Pre- and post test measures would play an important role in such research. My hypothesis is that the students in the classes of the teachers with CIRA training would display more literacy growth over time than their peers in a control group.

Implications for Instruction

Ultimately, the results of this dissertation may be used to inform the creation of professional development activities to be used with novice kindergarten teachers. This training would have the potential to accelerate the learning process for participating teachers and enable them to make effective use of their CIRA sessions more quickly than if they were left on their own to discover the nuances of the CIRA experience. This professional development has great potential for a wide audience, as many kindergarten teachers are being hired for all-day kindergarten programs in states like the one my study was conducted in. The kindergarten reading/language arts program has many components, but the CIRA session, in the hands of an experienced teacher, has the potential of being a very important element of the program.

I found that kindergarten teachers in my study spent a mean of 15 minutes (per day) reading aloud to their students during CIRA sessions. These results are consistent with what I have found as a teacher, administrator, and supervisor of student teachers. This is a large portion of the instructional day, especially when added up over the course of a year (45 hours a year, as stated earlier). I believe interactive reading aloud needs to be examined more fully so that potential learning opportunities can be maximized, particularly for students who are at risk of becoming below-grade readers. These children especially cannot afford to spend their valuable instructional time in ineffective and counterproductive learning situations. My research also looked at teacher reactions during well-planned CIRA sessions and showed how these relationships have the potential to build emergent literacy skills and content knowledge.

Teachers often do not maximize instruction given the allocated time and techniques that are already in place (Rowell, 1998). Rowell found in her study of primary grade teachers that substantial valuable learning time is wasted daily and that teachers need to find ways to use time more effectively and efficiently, both in the area of classroom management and in the actual execution of lessons. In my study, the technique to be maximized for effective learning is interactive reading aloud. CIRA reading aloud sessions should be an integral part of a kindergarten emergent literacy program because such sessions are a prime example of how the value of instructional time can be maximized in a variety of ways. My study of interactive reading in kindergarten using CIRA as the model hopefully will lead to further refinement of this positive characteristic of efficient literacy instruction.

If my study using CIRA as a model contributes to a better understanding and a more widespread implementation of interactive reading aloud to a whole class, then instead of spending on average 15 minutes every day simply reading a book, teachers who are more in alignment with the CIRA model may be able to make the most of this time and teach emergent literacy skill, as well as content, in appropriate and effective ways. Additionally, students who participate in CIRA sessions will find themselves introduced to a wide variety of texts appropriate for kindergarten literacy enhancement.

Limitations

Due to my extensive background working in schools, I am biased towards supporting teachers, and I am sympathetic to the hard work they do. I may be swayed to believe a teacher is good if the teacher has a friendly demeanor toward the children and possesses excellent classroom management skills. My use of codes and my method of

data analysis allowed me to be objective, uninfluenced by surface-level experiences, and allowed me to be able to drill down to a deep level of understanding. This was especially true of the content codes. Without this fine-tuned level of analysis I could have missed what actually is done during the CIRA sessions.

Additionally, a major limitation of my study is that there is no way of knowing to what extent if any CIRA sessions enhance children's literacy skills. I did not collect student data nor did I conduct an experimental study that could answer questions of causation. The types of relationships I discovered in my study between Teacher Activity, Student Activity and Text are in some ways similar to previous research (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2003; Hammett, Van Kleeck & Huberty, 2003; Knapp and Windsor, 1998; Martin & Reutzel, 1999) that suggests children's literacy is enhanced by certain interactions between the reader and listener. However, since my study is a descriptive study and I did not collect student data or is of an experiential design I can not claim that the students in my study gained literacy skills by being a part of CIRA sessions.

Conclusion

All four of the classrooms I observed were places I would want my own children to be if they were still of kindergarten age. At the close of each CIRA session observation, I packed up my tape recorder and note book and took my leave reluctantly. I would linger a few minutes to see what exciting activity came next. I often wished I could stay and live the life of these kindergarteners instead of heading out the door, back to my adult world of work and responsibility. It appeared that a well-planned and timely-orchestrated CIRA session was just one part of a very happy and meaningful day filled with learning.

Although reading aloud has been studied in the past, as I discussed in chapters 1 and 2, my study illuminates the practice of CIRA in a new way. My findings shed light on whole-class kindergarten interactive reading aloud sessions in a novel way because I specifically looked at how the teacher's thoughtful practice, the students' engaged activities, and the text's rich possibilities artfully and productively interact during these sessions in a naturalistic setting. Hopefully, my findings can be used to inform the practice of inexperienced teachers in order to help them make their CIRA sessions the orderly and learning-filled, yet magical, sessions of the four experienced teachers in my study.

Appendix A

University of Maryland Department of Human Development Early Childhood Education Program

Roles and Responsibilities Professional Development School (PDS) Coordinator 2007-2008

The PDS Coordinator organizes and coordinates all aspects of the PDS internship and provides a link between the school system and the University. As such the coordinator has administrative, professional development, pre-service teacher education, and collaborative responsibilities in the program, department, college and professional development schools.

Administrative Responsibilities

- Provide leadership and guidance toward adherence to MSDE Standards for Professional Development Schools.
- Yearlong internship
 - Point person of contact for all PDS internship policies, procedures and issues.
 - Complete placement processes, to include all associated administrative responsibilities.
 - Supervise Phase I and II interns at one site.
 - Provide on-going support to mentor teachers.
 - Oversee all aspects of the Performance Assessment process.
 - Collect and disseminate evaluation data (PBAI, internship, portfolio evaluations, etc.).
 - Serve as a third party consultant whenever placement/intern issues arise.
 - Administer payments for mentor teachers and University supervisors
 - Publish a semi-annual PDS Network Directory.
 - Participate in the hiring, orientation and supervision of University Supervisors.
 - Deliver Teach-Coach-Reflect course.
 - Serve as a member of the Arcola Elementary School improvement team and attend CYC meetings as appropriate.
- Meetings
 - Schedule and Chair Site Coordinator and University Supervisor meetings.
 - Administer and deliver of semi-annual supervisor and mentor orientations, to include PBAI training.
 - Schedule and Chair PDS Coordinating Council meetings, in conjunction with Professional Development and Practicum (PDP) Coordinator.
 - Plan a Strategic Planning Institute for spring/summer 2008, in conjunction with PDP Coordinator (funding permitted).
 - Organize and facilitate annual end of year celebration.

- Manage logistics associated with Network trainings/meetings (e.g., establishing meeting dates, times and locations, ordering food, ensuring availability of equipment/ materials, such as overheads and newsprint. etc.).
- Disseminate PDS successes, initiatives and data through conference presentations and/or other mediums.

Pre-Service Teacher Education

- Teach EDHD 314 in fall 2007 and EDHD 315 in spring 2008.
- Oversee Action Research Projects during the Phase II internship
- Solicit feedback from interns, mentor teachers, site coordinators, University Supervisors and principals on intern performance and requirements in an effort to inform the ECE program.
- Edit Student Teaching Handbook to reflect current policies and assignments, to include portfolios and proficiency with technology standards.

Collaboration

- Develop collaborative relationships with PDS partners by having a regular presence in each PDS:
 - Dialogue with principals. and
 - Interact with and informally observe mentor teachers and interns.
- Team with PDP Coordinator on the identification and implementation of internship requirements, professional development activities and other events/activities as appropriate.
- Network with PDS Coordinators throughout the College of Education to gain a greater sense of PDS internship requirements in other departments and identify possible areas of collaboration.
- Liaison with PDS Network stakeholders.
- Liaison with county MCPS PDS Representatives/Coordinators.
- Integrate other College of Education interns into the PDS Network, where feasible.
- UM Early Childhood Teacher Education Program:
 - Collaborate with the: Program Director, ECE Program Faculty and EDHD faculty regarding the implementation and enhancement of the undergraduate teacher education program.
 - Participate in regular meetings with the Program Director, and others as appropriate, regarding PDS Network goals, objectives, activities and internships. and
 - Attend ECE undergraduate and blocks methods faculty meetings.

Appendix B*Teacher Information Sheet*

Teacher Code _____

Educational Background _____

Years teaching _____

Years teaching Kindergarten _____

Years teaching at present school _____

Prior experience outside teaching:

Experience/training in teaching reading/emergent literacy:

Experience/training related to CIRA:

Appendix C

Text Characteristics Guide

(Refer to glossary for a full definition of text structures and genres)

Text Structure: Narrative
 Expository
 Poetry
 Plays

Text Genres: Narrative, Poetry, Plays

Non-fiction: Biography
 Autobiography
 Other_(describe) _____

Fiction: realistic
 historical
 fantasy/science fiction
 mystery,
 fables
 myths
 legend
 Other (describe)

Text Genres: Expository

Newspaper
 Magazine
 Reference Book (Dictionary, Encyclopedia, etc.)
 Procedural text
 Informational text (trade book)
 Text book content area _____
 Other _____

Appendix D

Text Characteristics Guide Glossary

Text: Text is a segment of written language available for description or analysis. For this study, text is usually in the form of books: picture books, narrative chapter books, or expository books, newspapers, etc.

Text Structure:

Narrative: Narrative text structure is one that tells a story and contains story grammar such as a plot, characters, conflict, and resolution and often a theme. Narratives can be fiction e.g. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1920), non-fiction e.g. *Going Lobstering* (Pallotta, 1990) or realistic fiction e.g. *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Cole, 1995) and fantasy/science fiction, historical fiction, mysteries, fables, tales/myths/legends, autobiography, biography, and plays. Even though autobiography and biography are not fiction, they are characterized as narrative because of the presence of characters, a setting, and a plot.

Story elements: The characteristics of a narrative: characters, setting, plot.

Exposition: Exposition is non-fiction text that is structured to inform, argue/persuade, or explain in contrast to text with a narrative structure.

Text design: The characteristics of an expository text such as headings, bolding, table of contents, glossary, index, captions, etc.

Poetry: A rhythmical literary composition that often rhymes. The structure of the poetry can be traditional poetry, limericks, haiku, free verse, and nursery rhymes.

Poetic elements: The characteristics of a poem—rhythm and often rhyme used to express ideas in an imaginative way.

Play Text that is written to be performed aloud by one or more characters. Usually follows the characteristics of a narrative (characters, plot, conflict and resolution),

Text Genres: Genres are general patterns that children can learn to use to understand what they are reading and to compose their writing. Narratives, poetry, and expositions all follow general structures and within narrative, poetry, and exposition are subtypes or **genres** that also follow patterns.

Narrative Genres

Non-fiction:

Biography: the life story of a person which is written by another

Autobiography: a person's life story written by that person

Other: A story of anything or anyone who really exists that follows a narrative text structure.

Fiction:

Realistic: a story that attempts to portray characters and events as they are in real life

Historical: a narrative of past events and characters partly historical but largely inspired by the imagination of the author. It is sometime a problem for the reader to know what is historical fact versus what is the authors imagination. For example conversation between famous people: it is historical fact that the conversations took place but the exact conversation was not recorded so what is written is entirely of the author's imagination.

Fantasy: a highly fanciful story about characters, places and events that while sometimes believable, do not exist.

Science Fiction: an imaginary story based upon current or projected scientific and technological developments

Mystery: a narrative in which the chief element is usually a crime around which the plot is built. (detective or spy stories)

Fables: a short tale in prose or verse to teach a moral: especially a tale using animals and inanimate objects as characters

Myths: a primitive story designed to explain the mysteries of life and nature with bigger than life characters. They are tragic in ending and pessimistic in tone. Every culture and country has its own myths (i.e. Greek, Norse and Roman, etc).

Fairy Tales: A folk story about real life problems but usually involving imaginary characters and magical events. They are optimistic in tone with a happy ending

Legend: A traditional historical tale of a people handed down first by word of mouth and later in written form.

Other (describe)

Expository Genres

Newspaper: a periodical issued at regular frequent intervals, daily, weekly or monthly which reports on and discusses events and topics of current interest and may contain advertising. (i.e. *Kids Post*, *Time for Kids*)

Magazine: a serial publication: specifically, a periodical for general reading or around a certain topic that often contains poetry as well as fiction and non fiction articles by various authors, photographs and other illustrations. (*Ranger Rick*, *Highlights*)

Reference Book: Dictionary, Encyclopedia, etc.

Procedural text: directions to build something, recipes, etc.

Informational text: a nonfiction book of facts about a specific subject with an expository text structure. A **trade book:** a book published for sale to the general public.

Text book: A book on a specific **content area** (an organized body of knowledge or discipline that is reflected in its technical vocabulary as mathematics, social studies, literature and science) used as a teaching learning guide. A book that is officially adopted by a school system.

Other Expository: Any text that has an expository test structure that does not fit into the above categories.

*This glossary was adapted with permission from the High-Quality Teaching (HQT) study at the University of Maryland, College Park. Valli, L., Croninger, R., Alexander, P., Chambliss, M., Graeber, A., & Price, J.(2001-2008).

The HQT study was supported by a grant from the Interagency Education Research Initiative; #IERI Award # REC:0115389.

Harris, T and Hodges, R. (Eds.) (1989) *A Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms*. International Reading Association: Newark Delaware, was also consulted in the development of this glossary.

Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

- Project Title:* **Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud in Kindergarten**
- Participant Consent:* I state that I am now eighteen years of age or older and would like to participate in a program of research being conducted by Dr. Marilyn Chambliss and doctoral student, Lea Ann Christenson in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742. I understand that by returning this form, I am granting permission to participate.
- Purpose:* The purpose of the research is to observe how experienced Kindergarten teachers use whole class interactive reading aloud in their classrooms.
- Procedure:* The procedure involves the observation of four whole class interactive reading aloud sessions during which Ms. Christenson will be a non-participant observer and will take notes. Ms. Christenson will audio tape the sessions but WILL NOT video tape them. I will be observed at times that Ms. Christenson and I mutually agree to. If I have time before or after each observation, Ms. Christenson may chat with me and take field notes of our interactions. Ms. Christenson will conduct one follow up interview after the four observations have been completed. This interview will be at a mutually agreed to time and will last no more than two hours. Ms. Christenson will take notes during the interview but it will NOT be audio or video taped. Teachers will keep a daily log of texts read during daily whole class interactive reading aloud sessions.
- Confidentiality:* Ms. Christenson will collect information for this study in a confidential manner. My name will not be identified in any written or verbal reports. Data collected from my classroom will not be reported individually but will be grouped with data others provide. Ms. Christenson will store the data in a secure location on the University of Maryland campus.
- Risks:* There is a small possibility that the students in the class could be distracted while Ms. Christenson is observing the whole class interactive reading aloud session. Ms. Christenson will take every measure possible to assure that her presence in the classroom is as unobtrusive as possible. I understand that I will need to spend time outside the instructional day completing the daily log of texts used and participating in the interview at the end of the observations.
- Benefits:* I understand that the study is not designed to help me personally, but that Ms. Christenson hopes to learn more about the use of whole class interactive reading aloud sessions in the Kindergarten classroom. I understand that I will receive a \$25. gift certificate from Barnes and Noble as compensation for participating in the study. I also understand that my teaching practice may benefit positively by

having the opportunity to reflect on my practice during the course of this study. I understand that I am free to ask questions or withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____ date _____

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College Park, MD 20742*

*Marilyn Chambliss, Advisor
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Appendix F**Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log**

Please record text used during planned whole class interactive reading aloud sessions during the course of the study.

Refer to the Text Characteristics Guide and Glossary when filling in this record sheet.

Teacher code _____

Date	Title of text	Author	Text structure	Text Genre

Appendix G

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol*

Teacher Code _____	Location of students _____
Date _____	Location of teachers _____
Time of start of Observation _____	Number of students in session _____
Time of end of Observation _____	Did this number change over the course of the session? _____

Teacher Practice Data Collection Protocol:

Q 1: What are the characteristics of teacher practice during CIRA and how does teacher activity reflect student activity?

CQ: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced Kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers?

Teacher Practice	Non-existent					Pervasive				
Reads Aloud										
• With inflection/ emphasis	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Re-reads portion of text	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Builds Background Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Requests										
• Student reflection on learning	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Alternate answer	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Elaboration of student response	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Attention to student's response/ idea	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Poses										
• High order task/ question/ problem	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Low order task/ question/ problem	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Responds with/ states										
• A question back to student(s)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Evaluation/ feedback	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• A statement/ answer	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Extrinsic reward	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
• Doesn't/ redirects conversation or continues reading	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Manages student behavior	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
No obvious instruction or management in Reading or Kindergarten content	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

	Non-existent			Pervasive	
Hooks/ Motivates Students into topic					
Considers student choice	1	2	3	4	5
Personal	1	2	3	4	5
Situational	1	2	3	4	5
Future need	1	2	3	4	5
Behavior of students during session					
On task	1	2	3	4	5
Play or socialize	1	2	3	4	5

Was the attention of the teacher to the whole class for 95% of the session?

Yes _____

No _____

Student Activity Data Collection Protocol:

Q 2: What are the characteristics of student activity during CIRA and how does student activity relate to teacher practice?

CQ: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced Kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers?

Student Activity	Non-existent			Pervasive	
Asks question of					
• Another student	1	2	3	4	5
• The teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Responds with or states					
• Hypothesis or prediction	1	2	3	4	5
• Explanation/justification	1	2	3	4	5
• Alternate answer/statement	1	2	3	4	5
• Elaborated answer/statement	1	2	3	4	5
• Simple answer statement	1	2	3	4	5
• Choral reading	1	2	3	4	5
• Echo reading	1	2	3	4	5
• Act out text	1	2	3	4	5
Responds with predetermined movement	1	2	3	4	5
Discuss with one another	1	2	3	4	5
Listen	1	2	3	4	5
Material Management	1	2	3	4	5
Behavior Management	1	2	3	4	5

Text Data Collection Protocol:

Q 3: How can the text be characterized during a CIRA session?

Title of book:
Author:
Genre:
Salient Characteristics of the book:
Why was this book selected?

Emergent literacy skill and/or Kindergarten Content Data Collection Protocol:

Q 4: How can literacy or other kindergarten content areas be characterized during CIRA?

Session Content	Non-existent			Pervasive	
Literacy					
Comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
• Genre	1	2	3	4	5
• Theme/main idea	1	2	3	4	5
• Story elements/ poem elements/ text design	1	2	3	4	5
• Personal response	1	2	3	4	5
• Literal response	1	2	3	4	5
Strategy					
• Concepts of Print	1	2	3	4	5
• Processing Text	1	2	3	4	5
• Vocabulary Development	1	2	3	4	5
• Decoding Text	1	2	3	4	5
*letter identification	1	2	3	4	5
	Non-existent			Pervasive	
*letter sound relationships	1	2	3	4	5

*phonics application	1	2	3	4	5
*sight words	1	2	3	4	5
*rhyming words/word families	1	2	3	4	5
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Conventions					
• Parts of speech	1	2	3	4	5
• Parts of grammar	1	2	3	4	5
• Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5
• Capitalization	1	2	3	4	5
Kindergarten Content					
• Social studies	1	2	3	4	5
• Science	1	2	3	4	5
• Math	1	2	3	4	5
• Art	1	2	3	4	5
• Music	1	2	3	4	5

Theme _____

Session Context

Non-existent

Pervasive

Connects to					
• Prior Literacy instruction	1	2	3	4	5
• Other Content areas	1	2	3	4	5
• Real world/scaffold	1	2	3	4	5
States Class Agenda/objective	1	2	3	4	5
No specific Context	1	2	3	4	5

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Appendix H

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol Transcript Counts

Teacher Codes

Q 1: What are the characteristics of teacher practice during CIRA and how does teacher activity relate to student activity?

CQ: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced Kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers?

Teacher Practice	#1	#2	#3	#4	Total
Reads Aloud					
1 With inflection/ emphasis					
2 Re-reads portion of text					
3 Builds Background Knowledge					
3a Models					
3b Scaffolds					
Requests					
4 Student reflection on learning					
5 Alternate answer					
6 Elaboration of student response					
7 Attention to student's response/ idea					
Poses					
8 High order task/ question/ problem					
9 Low order task/ question/ problem					
Responds with/ states					
10 question back to student(s)					
10a rhetorical question					
11 Evaluation/ feedback					
11a Evaluation/no feedback					
11b Restates what student says without evaluation					
12 statement/ answer					
13 Extrinsic reward					
14 Doesn't/ redirects conversation or continues reading					
Manages student behavior					
15a Explains rules/procedures					
15b complements behavior					
15c reprimand/redirects explicitly					
15d goes with student off topic utterance					
16 No obvious instruction or management					

in Reading or Kindergarten content	
16a manages materials	

Hooks/ Motivates Students into topic	
17 Considers student choice	
18 Personal	
19 Situational	
20 Future need	

23 Was the attention of the teacher to the whole class for 95% of the session?

Yes _____

No _____

Student Activity Data Collection Protocol:

Q 2: What are the characteristics of student activity during CIRA and how does student activity relate to teacher practice?

CQ: What patterns characterize teacher practice, student activity and text during Kindergarten CIRA sessions taught by experienced Kindergarten teachers? How do these patterns relate to one another within or across the teachers?

Student Activity

Behavior of student(s) during session	
21 On task	
22 Play or socialize/ off task	
22a on topic/ out of turn	
22b on task / response of topic	
Asks question of	
24 another student	
25 he teacher	
Responds with or states	
26 hypothesis or prediction	
27 Explanation/justification	
28 Alternate answer/statement	
29 Elaborated answer/statement	
30 Simple answer statement	
30a Simple answer as group	
31a Choral reading/spontaneous	
31b Choral reading/ told to do so	
32 Echo reading	
33a Act out text/spontaneous	
33b Act out text/told to do so	
33c Spontaneous oral utterance	
33d Raises hand	
34 Responds with predetermined movement	

35 Discuss with one another	
36 Listen	
36a Student appears to be thinking	
37 Material Management	
38 Behavior management	

Emergent literacy skill and/or Kindergarten Content Data Collection Protocol:

Q 4 How can literacy or other kindergarten content areas be characterized during CIRA?

Session Content

Literacy	
39 Comprehension	
39a Text structure	
39b Picture Walk	
40 Genre	
41 Theme/main idea	
42 Story elements/ poem elements/ text design	
43 Personal response	
44 Literal response	
Strategy	
45 Concepts of Print	
46 Processing Text	
47 Vocabulary Development	
Decoding Text	
49 letter identification	
50 letter sound relationships	
51 phonics application	
52 sight words	
53 rhyming words/word families	
54 Spelling	
Conventions	
55 Parts of speech	
56 arts of grammar	
57 Punctuation	
58 Capitalization	
Kindergarten Content	Theme
59 Social studies	
60 Science	
61 Math	
62 Art	
63 Music	

Session Context

Connects to	
64 Prior Literacy instruction by teacher	
64a Prior Literacy instruction by student	
65 Other Content areas	
66 Real world/scaffold by teacher	
66a Real world/scaffold by student	
66b Connect to students first language	
67 States Class Agenda/objective	
68 No specific Context	

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Appendix I

Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Observation Protocol*

GLOSSARY DEFINITIONS

Teacher Activity Research Questions: Q1, CQ

Reads Aloud: The teacher reads aloud from a picture book, big book, chapter book, textbook, or other text.

- 1 With inflection/emphasis:** The teacher pauses to emphasize a word or passage, uses a different voice for characters
- 2 Re-reads portion of text:** the teacher re-reads all or part of the text either during the reading of the text or after the entire text has been read.
- 3 Builds Background Knowledge:** The teacher elaborates, explains or provides additional information about the text in order for the students to have a greater understanding of the text. This additional support can be of literacy skills or content (i.e. Math, Social Studies, Science, etc.)

3a Models: demonstrates specific literacy behaviors or strategies for students. For example, the teacher may verbalize his/her thinking while reading or writing.

3b Scaffolds: adds background knowledge and/or models in an interactive manner to move students thinking forward (usually a number of exchanges between T and S/SSS)

Requests: These items are metacognitive. The teacher asks the students to think about what they have learned, the contributions of other students, and the adequacy of their responses.

4 Student reflection on learning: The teacher asks a question that requires the students to think about what they learned. (e.g., *What kind of a book talks about things that really happened? This is something we've talked about. Think back on the books we've read? What do we call those?*)

5 Alternative answer: The teacher asks students for another response or another way of doing something. (e.g., *We have a list of good ideas. How else do you think that story might have ended? What would be another way of pronouncing "read"?*)

6 Elaboration of student response: The teacher asks for a student who has given a response to elaborate on it or explain further (e.g., *I'd like you to tell us more about why you think that Charlotte was willing to help Wilbur*). Or the teacher asks another student to elaborate on a student's response (e.g., *Who can add to*

the

point that Brian just made?)

7 Attention to a student's response, method, idea: The teacher asks the class or some other student(s) to attend to what a student has just said or written. This is a call for cognitive attention, (e.g., *Carol just made a very important point about English spelling patterns. I hope that all of you were listening to her*), not just a behavioral management move, (e.g., *Everyone pay attention to how the girls and boys at Table 1 have their books out, ready to read*).

Poses: The teacher assigns a question, or problem. The question initiates a conversation that was not previously put forward. Note that questions in response to a student's question, or questions that ask a student to elaborate on a previous answer are coded elsewhere (*Responds* and *Requests* categories respectively). The question/problem may be high or low order. If it is really arguable whether the question/problem is high order or low order, classify it as high order.

8 High order task/question/problem: The teacher asks a question, or presents a problem that requires synthesizing, analyzing, inferring. (e.g., *Compare and contrast Huck and Jim. Listen carefully as I read this poem aloud so that you can tell me what pattern you hear. What are the characteristics of a good summary?)*

9 Low order task/question/problem: The teacher asks a question or presents a problem that can be answered directly from the text or from a student's memory. (e.g., *Think of a time when you went on a trip and list three things that you had to take with you. What happens next? How old is the grandmother? How is "light" spelled? What are the 3 characteristics of a good summary that we have been using all year?)*

Responds with/states – the teacher responds to a student or a group of students in one of the following ways:

10a Question back to student(s): The teacher's question may be directed toward the same or other students.

10b Rhetorical question: a question posed to the student(s) that is meant to provoke thought and not be answered. After asking the question the teachers moves on to continue reading.

11 Evaluation/feedback: The teacher tells or suggests that an answer or student performance is correct, valued, incorrect, or not valued and tells or suggests why it is correct, valued, incorrect, or not valued. (e.g., *Your chart compares Wilbur and Charlotte as a pig and a spider. The assignment was to compare them as friends. How were they alike and different as friends?)*

11a Evaluation/no feedback: The teacher tells or suggests that an answer or student performance is correct or incorrect but does not give a rationale for why this is the case. Empty praise is coded here. (e.g., *You did a really good job.*)

12 A statement/answer: The teacher may, for example, repeat what a student just said or give a brief response or answer.

13 Extrinsic reward: The teacher gives an extrinsic, tangible reward (e.g., a star, candy, or privilege). The reward is generic, unrelated substantively to the answer or behavior that the teacher is rewarding and provides no information to the student about the basis for the reward.

14 Doesn't; redirects the conversation: The teacher does not answer the question posed or build on the on-going conversation. Instead the teacher moves the conversation in a new direction.

Manages Student behavior: —The teacher's activity addresses nonacademic or non-substantive aspects of student activity. The teacher praises, describes, or reprimands a student's actions. (e.g., *I like the way Sherise is getting ready to go to lunch. Dave, you should be in your seat with a pencil out.*) The teacher is attending to one or more students' behavior, perhaps commenting on inappropriate behavior, or just telling students what is expected of them in terms of behavior. (*Your tapping of your pencil is very distracting. Please stop it.*)

15a Explains rules/procedures: The teacher explains the rules or procedures for listening to the text or for the follow up activity after the text has been read. No instruction of literacy skills or content (i.e. Math, Social Studies, Science, etc.) is involved.

15b Complements behavior: The teacher complements appropriate behavior either explicitly, "Jane I like the way you are raising your hand." Or generally to a specific behavior, "Very good!" in response to a student raising their hand.

15c Corrects/redirects explicitly: The teacher explicitly corrects. Redirects a student by name in order to correct behavior, "Put that away Danielle." Or "Aidian I need you to turn around and show me you are ready to learn."

15d Goes with student off topic utterance: The teacher comments or asks a question of a student who makes an off topic utterance.

16 No obvious instruction or management in literacy or kindergarten content—The teacher's actions are not related to the lesson or to classroom management. The teacher is engaged in social conversation with another adult or student.

16a Materials management: The teacher is managing materials and no instruction is occurring.

Hooks, motivates students into topic: The actions of the teacher (or student), be they questions, analogy, etc. are intended to draw students into the subject. Students are intended to be drawn into some **engagement** with the discipline or an idea or context involved in the lesson. These may also be connections but **the primary intent is motivation.** (e.g., *I have brought 3 pictures of butterflies that come to our backyards each spring. Over the next few days, we will be reading a story about children who actually raise a butterfly in a jar.*) External rewards such as tickets and points are not coded as hooks or motivates.

17 Considers student choice: The teacher allows the students to choose the texts read or how they will respond to them.

18 Personal: The teacher motivates the students by stimulating them to remember personal feelings or experiences that are relevant to the instruction (e.g., *How do you feel about spiders?*), or a student spontaneously relates personal feelings or experiences that are relevant to instruction (e.g., *I used to be very frightened by spiders, but I read that earth would be overrun by flies if we didn't have spiders!*). If the response could be either *Connects* or *Hooks*, select *Connects*.

19 Situational: The teacher (or a student) motivates the students by stimulating their interest in a superficial way (e.g., The teacher comes in dressed as a farmer or pig to introduce the book, *Charlotte's Web*), or a student brings in something to class that is related superficially to the lesson (e.g., a jigsaw puzzle of a farm scene).

20 Future need: Alternatively the only justification may be -- "you need to learn this because it is on the test" or "it will be on the test" or "you need to know this for next year, or for future years."

Student Activity Research Questions: Q2, CQ

Classroom Behavior

21 On task – Students are academically engaged in the topic at hand. This category includes listening to directions.

22 “Play” with work, socialize, or unengaged/of task- Students who are discussing non-lesson related topics are socializing. Students who are not attending to or participating in it are unengaged.

22a On topic/ out of turn: The student(s) answer is about the text or the topic that the teacher is discussing but the student was not called on.

22b On task/ response off topic: The student is speaking in turn (i.e. the teacher called on the student) however, the response is not obviously related to the text or what the teacher had been discussing.

Asks a question of:

24 Another student or class: A student asks a question, substantively related to the content of instruction, that is directed to (an)other student(s)

25 Teacher: A student asks a question, substantively related to the content of instruction, that is directed to the teacher

Responds with or states—A student answers a teacher or other student’s query or initiates a thought or explanation.

26 Hypothesis or prediction: A student proposes an hypothesis or makes a prediction. The hypothesis or prediction may either be spontaneous or in response to the teacher or another student. (e.g., *If Charlotte hadn’t been a smart spider, I think that Wilbur would have figured out how to save his own life himself. Or I predict that Charlotte will figure out how to get to the fair.*)

27 Explanation/justification: A student gives examples with a definition, explains or justifies his/her thinking.

28 Alternative answer/statement: A student gives/offers a distinctly different interpretation or answer from previous interpretations or answers.

29 Elaborated answer/statement: A student gives a more extended answer than a simple answer. However the answer/statement does not explain or justify thinking (e.g., *My family had the same thing happen last summer. We went to the fair, too, and saw all of the pigs in their pens. Suddenly, one of the pigs pushed up the latch with his snout and escaped. Everyone was chasing him. He could run really fast for such a large pig!*) If it is possible to choose either Explanation/justification or Elaborated answer/statement, choose Explanation/justification.

30 Simple answer/statement: The student gives a short straightforward answer or statement, gives a definition of a term, says I don’t know, says yes or no.

30a Simple answer/statement as a group: The students as a group give a short straightforward answer or statement, give a definition of a term, say ‘I don’t know’, say ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

31a Choral reading/spontaneous: The students start to read along with the teacher without being asked to do so.

31b Choral reading/told to do so: The students read along with the teacher after being explicitly asked to do so.

32 Echo Reading: The teacher reads a portion of the text and then requests that the students read the text as the teacher re-reads the portion of the text.

33a Act out Text/spontaneous: The students act out a part of the story or like one of the characters with out being told to do so.

33b Act our Text/told to do so: The students act out a part of the story or like one of the characters after the teacher requests them to do so.

33c Spontaneous oral utterance: The student(s) spontaneously react as the text is being read with an oral utterance (i.e. Wow, aaahhh, etc.).

34 Responds with predetermined movement: Before reading the text the teacher requests that the students respond with a predetermined movement when a certain part of the text is read (i.e. makes a scooping action when the word backhoe is read or barks like a dog when the word dog is read, put thumbs up when the ‘t’ sound is heard, etc.).

35 Discuss with one another: Students are working in pairs or small groups and are holding on-task conversations about the lesson. The teacher is not leading the discussion.

36 Listen: The majority of the students are listening to or watching the teacher, student, or other sources of literacy-related information.

37 Material Management: The students are handling materials such as copies of the text, white boards, papers, etc. for management and not instruction.

38 Behavior Management: Student behavior is off task or unengaged. Students may, for example, be listening to the teacher manage another student’s behavior. Or the student asks a question of the teacher that is unrelated to the day’s lesson (e.g., “What did you say our science homework was?”)

Session Content Research question: CQ, Q4

Reading: Reading coherent printed material; involves reading stories, trade books, novels, plays, textbooks, anthologies, poetry, etc. This category includes following the text when the teacher or another student reads aloud. It also includes “reading” the illustrations that accompany a text in order to understand the text better.

39 Comprehension: Instruction, activities, discussion, and so on, designed to improve understanding and help students construct meaning from text. Text may focus on genre characteristics; a narrative or poetic theme or expository main idea; story elements, poem elements, and expository text design; personal response; or literal response.

39a Text Structure: Instruction, activities, discussion, and so on, designed to improve understanding and help students construct meaning from text by explicating teaching the characteristics of text structure (i.e. narrative and expository).

39b Picture Walk: The teacher shows and discusses the pictures of the text with the students before reading the text.

40 Genre: The characteristics of a genre. Genres are general patterns that children can learn to use to understand what they are reading and to compose their writing. Narratives, poetry, and expositions all follow general patterns, which differ for these three types of genre. Within narrative, poetry, and exposition are subtypes that also follow patterns. Any questions, tasks, statements etc. that focus on the pattern in a text fit this category (e.g., *Today we're going to be talking about 'What makes a poem a poem?' I want you to think carefully about the different ways you can recognize something as a poem—that distinguish it from other forms of writing. Or, Tall tales always have a mixture of fantasy and facts. Think about the tall tales that we have read and give me examples of fantasy and facts from each one. Or, When you are reading persuasive writing, you will read both opinions and facts. How can you tell the difference?*)

41 Theme: The central idea or ideas of a literary work—story, play, or poetry. For example, one of the themes for *Charlotte's Web* is that friendship can be so strong that one of the friends is willing to go to great lengths to save the life of the other friend. This choice includes any activities that help students consider and understand the theme of a literary work including activities that require them to consider the implications of the theme in their own lives or to study the illustrations that accompany the text.

41 Main idea: The central idea or ideas of an expository work (e.g., argument, explanation, report). The main idea can be a topic (e.g., *How to construct an electric circuit*), a summary (*To build an electric circuit, you must connect a power source, a wire to carry the electricity to a light bulb, a light bulb, and a wire to return the electricity to the power source.*), or a thesis statement (*An electric circuit controls electricity so that it can do work.*) This category includes any activities, including studying illustrations, that help students consider and understand the main idea of the text including activities that require them to evaluate the main idea or relate it to their own experiences. If students are asked to express an opinion about the ideas in the text, however, code the Episode Content as *Personal response* (see below).

42 Story elements: The characteristics of a narrative—characters, setting, plot. Story elements instruction includes activities that help students understand the characteristics of the characters and setting and what happens in the story (the plot). This instruction includes any activities that help students understand the story, such as previewing and predicting, discussing similar student experiences, summarizing, and studying illustrations. However, instruction that focuses on details that are not central to the story should be coded as Literal response (e.g., *What was the color of Fern’s dress when she first went to Wilber’s pen?*)

42 Poem elements: The characteristics of a poem—rhythm and often rhyme used to express ideas in an imaginative way. Poem elements instruction includes activities that help students understand the meaning of the poem as well as the poem’s structure, such as previewing and predicting, considering what students already know about the poem’s content, paraphrasing, and studying illustrations. However, instruction that focuses on details that are not central to the meaning of the poem should be coded as Literal response (e.g., *What word does Robert Frost use to describe the snowflakes in “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening?”*)

42 Text design: The characteristics of an expository text. Text design instruction includes outlining, representing a text graphically, or discussing a text’s introduction, transitions, and conclusion. It also includes any instruction that helps students understand the text as a whole, such as previewing and predicting, considering what students already know about the text’s content, summarizing, and studying illustrations. However, instruction that focuses on details that are not central to the meaning of the text should be coded as Literal response.

43 Personal response: An **emotional** response to a narrative, play, or poem or an **opinion** about the ideas in an expository text. Responses that relate the text to the reader’s life or to other content can also be coded as a personal response (e.g., *When I went to the fair last year, I realized how very large a pig can be.*) If a response could also be coded using one of the categories above, (e.g., *Story elements*) use the category highest in the hierarchy.

44 Literal response: A response that refers directly to details in a text. A response is literal if a student can point a finger at the word or words in the text that answer the question. Use only for isolated details. If a response could also be coded using one of the categories above, use the category highest in the hierarchy.

Strategy—Behavior employed to facilitate the reading of coherent text. Strategy instruction explicitly teaches students a strategy or strategies. Strategies can include previewing, predicting, rereading, reviewing, summarizing, and drawing connections to knowledge or experience. This category also includes metacognitive strategies, or those strategies designed to help students monitor their own understanding and repair weak comprehension when necessary. However, to be coded as a strategy, the teacher must specifically mention that students are learning a strategy (e.g., *We are*

looking at the pictures before we read because getting an idea about a story before we read it helps our comprehension).

45 Concepts of Print-Instruction of the elements of concepts of print such as we read from left to right, top to bottom, how to turn the pages of a book or the parts of a book (cover, title page, table of contents, author, illustrator, etc.)

46 Processing Text – Students are reading coherent printed material, including stories, trade books, novels, plays, textbooks, anthologies, poetry, etc. (oral reading, silent reading, DEAR, etc.) If either the teacher or a student is reading aloud and the rest of the students are listening, code the Episode Content as *Viewing/Listening*.

47 Vocabulary– Instruction and activities designed to help students learn the **meaning** of new or important words and concepts. *Vocabulary* includes strategy instruction (e.g., *how do we figure out the meaning of words with three or more syllables?*) This category also includes learning the meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and Latin roots. (e.g., pre-, precede, preview, prefix, etc.). *Vocabulary* also includes learning the meaning of special constructions, such as contractions, e.g., the difference in meaning between “it’s” (it is) and “its” (the possessive of “it”; e.g., *the mouse licked its whiskers*), number/letter combinations (e.g., 2nd, 3rd), and abbreviations (e.g., USA, UPS). *Vocabulary* can occur during reading or writing instruction if the task focuses on meanings of individual words rather than the meaning of the text that children are reading or writing (e.g., children look up the meanings of “stupendous” and “terrific” as they appear in *Charlotte’s Web*.)

Decoding – Instruction and activities that focus on helping students identify letter/sound relationships. *Decoding* includes strategy instruction, phonics, etc. *Decoding* includes sight words, which are common words that do not follow letter/sound patterns in English (e.g., cough, through, though), phonics (common letter/sound patterns; e.g., bright, light, night, fright, slight, sight) and word analysis (e.g., syllable patterns, prefixes, suffixes). *Decoding* also includes the pronunciation of special constructions, such as contractions (e.g., don’t, can’t), number/letter combinations (e.g., 2nd, 3rd), and abbreviations (e.g., USA, UPS). *Decoding* can occur during reading instruction if it focuses on the pronunciation of words in a text that children are reading rather than the meaning of the text.

49 Letter identification: Instruction and activities that focus on helping students identify letter names.

50 Letter Sound relationships: Instruction and activities that focus on helping students identify letter/sound relationships

51 Phonics application: Instruction and activities that focus on helping students learn and develop phonetic skills (common letter/sound patterns; e.g., bright, light, night, fright, slight, sight, etc.).

52 Sight Words: Instruction and activities that focus on helping students decode by learning sight words, which are common words that do not follow letter/sound patterns in English (e.g., cough, through, though),

53 Rhyming Words: Instruction and activities that focus on helping students learn and develop their understanding of rhyming words and applying this knowledge to decoding novel text.

54 Spelling --Instruction and activities that focus on helping students learn how to spell unknown words, including strategy instruction. *Spelling* includes sight words, which are words that do not follow English spelling patterns (cough, through, though) and words that do follow common English spelling patterns (bright, light, night, fright, slight, sight). *Spelling* also includes the writing of special constructions, such as contractions (e.g., don't, can't), number/letter combinations (e.g., 2nd, 3rd), and abbreviations (e.g., USA, UPS).

Conventions – Instruction and activities that focus on sentence structure, parts of speech, punctuation, capitalization, or other established rules of grammar. Also relates to the development of handwriting and keyboarding skills. This instruction can occur during reading instruction if it focuses on conventions that occur in the texts that children are reading or writing.

55 Parts of Speech: Focuses on word classes according to the different roles that words play in a sentence, such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, etc.

56 Rules of Grammar: Focuses on the rules that specify the conventional form that words take within a sentence. These rules cover the word variations that signal possession, (e.g., her dog; Nancy's dog), plurality (e.g., The boys are tall; the boy is short), tense (e.g., I think I will go; I went yesterday; I have gone many times), reference (e.g., He will give some of his toys away; he has had them for a long time.)

57 Punctuation: Focuses on the use of commas, quotation marks, question marks, explanation marks, semi-colons, colons, dashes, parentheses, and periods.

58 Capitalization: Focuses on the use of capital letters (upper case) at the beginning of sentences and as the first letter of all proper nouns (e.g., Mary, October, Canada).

Kindergarten content- The various subjects taught in kindergarten such as reading, **61** math, **59** social studies, **60** science, **62** Art, and **63** Music

Session Context

Connects to—Either the teacher or the student(s) asks questions, provides an analogy, gives a brief lecture, gives a demonstration, etc. intended to tie the lesson to previous literacy instruction, to another content area, or to students’ real world experiences and knowledge. The purpose is to enhance students’ understanding by building on what students already know and/or showing that reading and writing are useful outside of the classroom. (e.g., *Tell us about a day for you where everything went wrong just like what is happening to the character in our story*). Note that the context will typically be set by the teacher, but a student may spontaneously provide a context. For example, a student might say, “*That reminds me of....*,” or, “*Could I make a self-text connection?*”

64 Prior literacy instruction, teacher: The teacher connects the current lesson to other literacy instruction (e.g., the teacher asks the students to remember back to when they were discussing the character traits of Wilber in *Charlotte’s Web* to prepare for reading the next chapter in the story. The teacher explains, *Today we’re going to learn the spelling patterns, “tion” and “sion.” These patterns don’t follow typical pronunciation rules. What other spelling patterns have we learned that don’t follow typical pronunciation rules?*)

64a Prior Literacy Instruction, student(s): The student(s) connects the current lesson to other literacy instruction

65 Other content area: The teacher (or a student) connects the current lesson to another content area such as math, social science, social studies, etc. (e.g., To prepare for reading *Johnny Tremain*, the teacher asks the children to complete a chart on the American Revolution based on their reading in social studies).

66 Real world ideas for scaffolding, teacher: The teacher connects the lesson to the context of the world of the children that he or she is teaching. (e.g., While reading *Charlotte’s Web*, the teacher asks the children to tell about a time when they made a new friend who was very different from all of their other friends).

66a Real world ideas for scaffolding, student(s): The student(s) connect the lesson to the context of their own life experiences.

66b Student’s first language: Students whose first language is not English might have difficulty understanding the lesson content or directions. The teacher repeats or clarifies instruction in the student’s first language.

67 States objective—The teacher gives an overview, or a big picture, of what the class/unit will be about. The goals/objectives or the flow of activities are given. The teacher tells the students the order of events or objectives for the day’s lesson. This can occur anywhere in the lesson, although it is most typically seen at the beginning of a lesson. Giving an overview of a homework assignment or a long term project would come under this category (e.g., *For homework tonight, you are going to. . .*). Merely telling students what page an assignment is on or what questions to answer does not provide context; it is simply managing an activity.

68 No specific context: The teacher does not give a context for the CIRA session.

Text based—Instruction relates to a text that children are currently listening to.

Narrative: A narrative is a coherent text that has characters, a setting, a plot, and often a theme. Can be realistic fiction, fantasy/science fiction, historical fiction, mysteries, fables, tales/myths/legends, autobiography, biography, and plays. Even though autobiography and biography are not fiction, they are characterized as narrative because of the presence of characters, a setting, and a plot.

Exposition: Text organized to inform, argue/persuade, or explain. Can be essays, textbook passages, trade books, magazine/newspaper articles, letters, charts and graphs, journals, and research reports. It may be most difficult to distinguish between narrative and exposition in children’s writing, particularly if they are writing what the teacher describes as personal essays. If children’s compositions are an interpretation of something that happened, for example “*What I remember most about my field trip,*” or “*My most memorable experience at school is....*”, then their writing probably is exposition. If it is exposition, the children will probably be searching for supporting details or elaboration. If, on the other hand, they present a story about the field trip or the experience at school with characters, a plot, and a setting, then their writing is narrative. If so, they probably will be focusing on presenting a complete sequence of events. If it is impossible to tell whether the writing is narrative or exposition, code the materials as Narrative.

Poetry: A rhythmical literary composition that often rhymes. The structure of the poetry can be traditional poetry, limericks, haiku, free verse, and nursery rhymes.

*This glossary was adapted with permission from the High-Quality Teaching (HQT) study at the University of Maryland, College Park. Valli, L., Croninger, R., Alexander, P., Chambliss, M., Graeber, A., & Price, J.(2001-2008).

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Appendix J

List of Text Read During Observed CIRA Sessions

E #1	Fri., 1/26	<i>The Three Pigs</i>	Retold by Brenda Parkes and Judith Smith	Narrative
E #2	Wed., 3/1	<i>Yoko's Paper Cranes</i>	Rosemary Wells	Narrative
E #3	Mon., 3/12	<i>Hairy Bear</i>	Joy Cowley	Narrative
E #4	Wed. 4/25	<i>Sam</i>	Ann Herbert Scott	Narrative
T #1	Tues., 1/30	<i>Miss Nelson is Missing</i>	H. Allard	Narrative
T #2	Wed., 2/21	<i>Rain</i> <i>Love Bugs</i>	R. Kalen Robert A. Carter	Narrative
T #3	Thurs., 3/22	<i>The Three Wolves and the Big Bad Pig</i>	E. Trivizas	Narrative
T #4	Wed., 4/18	<i>Max's Dragon Shirt</i>	Rosemary Wells	Narrative
D #1	Mon., 1/30	<i>Construction Site</i>	Susan Canizares	Expository
D #2	Fri., 2/23	<i>Green Eggs and Ham</i>	Dr. Seuss	Narrative
D #3	Wed., 3/21	<i>Dots, Dots, Dots!</i>	Francine Alexander	Expository
D #4	Mon., 4/23	<i>Franklin Plants a Tree</i>	S. Jennings and P. Bougeois	Narrative
R #1	Tues., 1/30	<i>The Three Billy Goat Gruff</i>	T. Parker	Narrative
R #2	Tues., 2/27	<i>Until We Got Princess</i>	Rob Thomas	Narrative
R #3	Mon. 3/26	<i>Gregory the Terrible Eater</i>	Mitchell Sharmat	Narrative
R #4	Wed., 5/9	<i>Bear Shadow</i>	Frank Asch	Narrative

Appendix K

Pilot Study and References

**The Read Aloud Experience of
Four Kindergarten Teachers:**

A Collective Case Study

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November 24, 2003

(This pilot study was conducted to fulfill six hours of the written comprehensive exam required toward a Ph.D. in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.)

The purpose of this pilot study was to illuminate what experienced and effective kindergarten teachers do while they read books aloud to their students. This pilot study was a bounded collective multicase study of four effective kindergarten teachers during their Read Aloud sessions. The aim of this study was not to identify what individual teachers do by disaggregation of the data but to compile the data to create a picture of practices used by all four of the effective teachers. The results of this pilot study will be used to inform a subsequent doctoral dissertation.

The technique of reading aloud to children in school is no doubt as old as schools themselves, and the kindergarten classroom has been no exception. Indeed, reading aloud is probably more prevalent in kindergarten than any other grade level because most children are not yet reading independently. Read Alouds are one part of a comprehensive and balanced literacy program that, when executed effectively, may be used to teach many of the emergent literacy skills that children need to become competent readers (Clay, 1972; Adams, 1990; Walker, 1995; Fox, 2001).

This pilot study looked at what experienced and effective kindergarten teachers do during Read Alouds to foster the development of literacy skills of their students. Instead of simply reading straight through a text, the skilled kindergarten teacher attends to various literacy skills such as concepts of print, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, story grammar, and comprehension, as well as the teaching of content such as social studies and science throughout the reading of the text. The Read Aloud experience is a perfect example of many of Vygotsky's (1978) principles. Vygotsky perceived learning as a social activity where the learner is assisted by a knowledgeable other. The knowledgeable other teaches the child at the zone proximal development. The zone of proximal

development (ZPD) is the zone where it is too hard to learn alone and just hard enough to be learned with the help of the knowledgeable other. The knowledgeable other, in this case the kindergarten teacher, scaffolds the children from their base of knowledge to the next level until this new level is mastered and the ZPD shifts forward (Vygotsky, 1978; Moll, 2001).

Over the past few years, literacy has been a major focus of school reform at the federal, state and local level. Kindergarten is the grade in which most children are first exposed to these reform efforts. In kindergarten, most of this reform has taken the meant moving literacy activities that were once the domain of first grade down to the kindergarten classroom resulting sometimes in practices that are not age appropriate. Teachers who use Read Aloud sessions effectively are able to teach the necessary and required literacy skills to all children in an age appropriate way. We need to understand more clearly how effective kindergarten teachers use the Read Aloud experience so that these practices can be used to inform training for less experienced and/or less effective kindergarten teachers, thus resulting in increased literacy competencies for their students in age appropriate ways.

In this study the term 'Read Aloud' means the act of a kindergarten teacher reading aloud to an entire kindergarten class (Walker, 1995).

This pilot research focused on the central question of how effective kindergarten teachers use the Read Aloud experience. Related to this core question are a series of other questions that I was interested in investigating. Those questions included,

- How does the Read Aloud experience fit into the curriculum?
- What are the logistics of the Read Aloud session?

- What types of texts are used during the Read Alouds?
- How and why are these texts selected?
- What is taught during the Read Aloud session?
- How can teacher dialogue during the Read Aloud session be characterized?

Method

Participants

I began by contacting the district person in charge of elementary language arts, and we set up a series of meetings during which we discussed the nature of the study and identified potential participants. This person became my gatekeeper (Creswell, 1998). In addition to being very knowledgeable about reading instruction, current reading research, and the abilities of the kindergarten teachers in the district, she had a warm and respectful rapport with the teachers in the district. She spent a sizeable portion of her time at the school sites, so she was familiar with the quality and abilities of the kindergarten teachers in the district. Her role was to provide resources and support for teachers; it was not supervisory in nature. In part, because of the respect the teachers had for this director, they were willing to take part in this study. We purposefully selected (Creswell, 1998) four teachers for observations based on their years of teaching experience and high level of expertise in the area of reading instruction, specifically in the area of Read Alouds. One important criterion for selection was that the teachers represented schools with a wide range of socioeconomic statuses (SES). The district language arts specialist suggested a list of teachers based on my criteria and contacted the principals for their permission. I was pleased with the quality and competency level of the teachers that the district language art specialist selected. Based on my experience as an elementary school

assistant principal who was responsible for teacher evaluations, as a former kindergarten teacher, and as the parent of three former kindergarten students, I felt that the teachers we identified were highly effective in the classroom.

The four expert Kindergarten teachers we selected for the study had different levels of experience. The most experienced teacher had 15 years experience in kindergarten while the least experienced had only two years of experience in kindergarten, yet she had a total of eight years teaching experience. The teacher with the least teaching experience had only three years in the classroom; however, she was a second career teacher whose maturity and experiences with her own children added depth to her expertise (see Table 1).

Table 1

Teacher Profile

Teacher	Years teaching	Years in school	Years in kindergarten
A	9 elementary 2 preschool 14 adults	9	8
B	15 kindergarten 6 first grade 4 nursery school	14	15
C	3 kindergarten prior career: accountant	3	3
D	8 primary grades	2	2

Table 2

School Profile

School	Title I (%)	Free/reduced lunch	LEP (%)	Student mobility (%)	PTA membership	Enrollment class size
A	0	< 5	4.0	4.0 e 2.9 w	1,287	978 16.75%
B	0	9.3%	1.4	6.4 e 6.2 w	298	708 17.75%
C	19.8	28.2%	6.3	16.3 e 18.9 w	168	415 8.25% ^a
D	26.6	29.1%	3.4	7.3 e 7.7 w	223	361 16.75%

Note: e = enter, w = withdraw.

^aThis class was an extended-day class for at-risk students funded by Title I. Class size was limited to 10 students.

The schools represented a range of socioeconomic levels. School A was heavily middle to upper middle class, with fewer than five students on free and reduced lunch and no Title 1 funding. School B was middle class with only 9.3% of the population on free and reduced lunch and no Title 1 funding. Both schools A and B had low Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations, 4.0% and 1.4 % respectively. In the case of School A, the LEP population was predominately the children of professionals who were working in white color jobs. Schools C and D represent schools of a low socioeconomic status having a free and reduced lunch rate of 28.2% and 29.1% respectively. The LEP

populations were still relatively low at these schools: 6.3% and 3.4%; however, these were children of non-skilled laborers (see Table 2).

In all four schools, the kindergarten day was two and one half hours long. Teachers A and B taught morning and afternoon sessions. Teacher D was a part-time teacher, who taught the morning session only. Teacher C taught an extended day session that was two and one half hours long in the morning, and then met again in the afternoon. This extended day class was for two groups of at-risk children who attended the regular kindergarten session for the balance of the day. Title I funds paid for the program run by Teacher C, and one of the stipulations was that the class size was limited to ten children in each session.

After I selected the subjects, I then contacted the teachers to explain the study fully, answer their questions, and obtain their consent. On two separate occasions I clarified that they were in no way obligated to participate in the study, and they could discontinue participation at any time. During this explanation of the study, I did not take any field notes were not taken. The purpose of this initial contact was to explain the study and gain consent.

Materials

During each observation, I used an observation sheet (see Table 3) to collect general information which included the teacher code, date, book read, number of students present, where the students were seated, characteristic of the books selected, context of the observation, and any extenuating circumstances. I then took field notes using a pad of paper and pencil. Before and after the Read Aloud session I chatted informally with the teachers. These chats built rapport and trust, but because they were informal chats I

did not take any field notes. The only interview that I captured by taking field notes was the one interview per teacher that was conducted after the observations of four Read Aloud sessions occurred.

Table 3

Read Aloud Observation Information

Teacher Code	Number of students present_____
Date	Whole class or small group
Time of start of observation	Location of students_____
Time of end of observation	Location of teacher_____
Title of book	
Author	
Genre	
Unique characteristics of the book	
Why was this book selected?	
Context of observation:	
Extenuating circumstances:	

After I had completed the set of four observations for each teacher, I interviewed each teacher formally. During this formal interview that lasted about two hours, I asked each teacher a variety of questions that helped me to further understand what I had observed during the four observation sessions. My questions included validating what I had observed, finding out what the teacher's personal definition of a Read Aloud was, how they selected the books for a Read Aloud session, how the Read Aloud influenced their instructional day in addition to an open ended question to assure that I had captured all that the teachers had done with Read Alouds (see Table 4).

Table 4

Sample Read Aloud Interview Questions

1. To what extent did what I see over the past four observations reflect what usually happens during your Read Aloud sessions?
2. What is your personal definition of “Read Aloud”?
3. How do you select the books for Read Alouds?
4. What do you intend to teach during a Read Aloud?
5. How much does what happens during the Read Aloud session infiltrate the rest of the day?
6. What has to happen during the Read Aloud session that makes you feel that it was particularly successful?
7. Is there something that I haven’t asked about Read Alouds that you would like me to know?

Procedure

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland, College Park granted permission for the study. In addition, the district administrator in charge of research of the local school district gave the researcher permission to observe kindergarten teachers during Read Alouds. Because of the noninvasive nature of the research, the school district’s board did not need to approve the research. After I obtained consent from each teacher, I observed four Read Aloud sessions for each teacher. I was interested in using the bounded system (Creswell, 1998) for this pilot, which meant I made four observations of each of the four teachers (16 total

observations,) and at the end of the set of four observations for each teacher I conducted one formal interview (four total interviews). I conducted the observations and interviews between December 9, 2002, and February 11, 2003. Originally, I wanted to conduct all of the observations and interviews within one calendar month to ensure a continuity of curriculum and content across the four classes. This proved to be impossible, however, because of vacation days, conferences days, and the unforeseen abundance of snow days during this period. However, the observation time period was not overly extended, so it does not seem to have impacted on the observations.

I had planned one interview for each observation and this proved to be adequate to cover the interview questions (see Table 4). For most of the observations, the teachers were available and willing to talk briefly before or after the Read Aloud session, so I was able to collect information during those times. I realize that I need to develop a more formalized way of recording information gathered at these times for my dissertation. However, at the same time, these informal chats were important because we established an easy rapport, so by the time I conducted the formal interviews, the teachers were comfortable and relaxed with me.

To control for the observer/Heisenberg effect, in which the presence of the researcher influences and effects the subjects' actions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), I was a non-participant observer and conducted the observations as discretely and unobtrusively as possible. The Read Aloud sessions were very conducive to this. The children were seated in the front of the room facing the teacher. I positioned myself behind the children and far enough back so they were not aware of my presence for the most part or tempted to engage me in conversation. Because this was not an independent activity in which the

children were circulating around the room, there was less of a chance for reactivity, a situation in which the researcher influences and changes the participants' actions (Maxwell, 1996).

Due to my extensive background working in schools, I am biased towards supporting teachers and sympathetic to the hard work they do. I can be swayed to believe a teacher is good if the teacher has a friendly demeanor toward the children and possesses excellent classroom management skills, which means that I do not always look any deeper into other aspects of a lesson or classroom atmosphere. My use of codes and method of data analysis allowed me to be objective and uninfluenced by surface-level experiences.

The data gained from this research took the form of field notes and notes taken during interviews. These notes were written and bound by teacher dialogue and behavior during the session, meaning that the only notes taken were during the observations and interviews. I did not record the actions and dialogue of the children. I also did not audio tape or videotape observations or interviews. The interviews were very relaxed. We had established rapport and trust during my initial contact with the teachers and during the four Read Observations that I had already conducted in each teacher's classroom. I then transcribed my handwritten field notes. Once I had all the data collected, I coded and analyzed my typed field notes to find prevalent themes and trends across the practices of the four effective teachers

After each observation and interview, I typed my notes. After completing all 16 of the observations, I read and reread my notes to establish coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I then coded the data into categories. This process was reciprocal as some

new codes developed and others fell away. Some codes collapsed into each other. I coded all of the notes, so I left no portion of the transcripts uncoded. I established the codes over a period of analysis that consisted of grouping and regrouping, testing and re-testing against criteria until the codes emerged into salient fifteen categories. The final codes of teacher dialogue that I relied on are positive affirmation, positive affirmation with repeat, negative response, lecture, student interaction, probing questions, predictions, reference to text or illustrations, questions that waited for no response, directions, behavior adjustment, connections with teacher or student prior knowledge, connections to prior school learning, reference to the author or illustrator, explicit vocabulary instruction and the purpose of reading or genre.

In order to establish reliability, I coded some portions of the transcripts more than once. After I coded some of the data, I set it aside for approximately a week. Then I recoded the data I had set aside using clean copies. When I checked the recoded portions with the original coding, the coding matched approximately 95% of the time, thus, establishing reliability. I verified the data and did a cross-case analysis (Creswell, 1998) by triangulation across and between observations.

Results

Based on the observations and interview notes that I typed and coded, the following answers to the research questions became apparent:

How do effective kindergarten teachers use the Read Aloud experience?

All four teachers reported during their formal interview that the Read Aloud session was an important, if not central, part of the instructional day where literacy skills and content were taught. All four teachers also reported that the Read Aloud session affected the rest of their instructional day. This was evident to me during classroom observations.

How did the teachers define 'Read Aloud'?

All of the kindergarten teachers defined the Read Aloud session similarly; they each stated during their interview that the Read Aloud text was a book that was selected purposefully to teach specific content, skills, or objectives. All of the teachers also stated that the Read Aloud session was an important part of the kindergarten Language Arts program. One teacher summed it up for all of the teachers during the interview by stating, "It is the main teaching time in kindergarten." Another teacher elaborated on this during her interview by saying that it is a time for a teacher to model for the students how to read aloud, how to think about what is read, and how reading can be enjoyable.

When is the Read Aloud experience successful?

The teachers believed that the majority of the Read Aloud sessions were successful. The sessions were most successful when the children were engaged and connected to the text, as exhibited by their attention, questions, and comments made during the readings. The teachers felt that these sessions were especially rewarding when the children made connections to other Read Alouds and their real world experiences. Two teachers summed it up during their interviews by explaining, "the light goes on for

the students who are struggling” and “it is wonderful when children can relate to the books themselves and explain ‘tricky’ books.”

How does the Read Aloud experience fit into the curriculum?

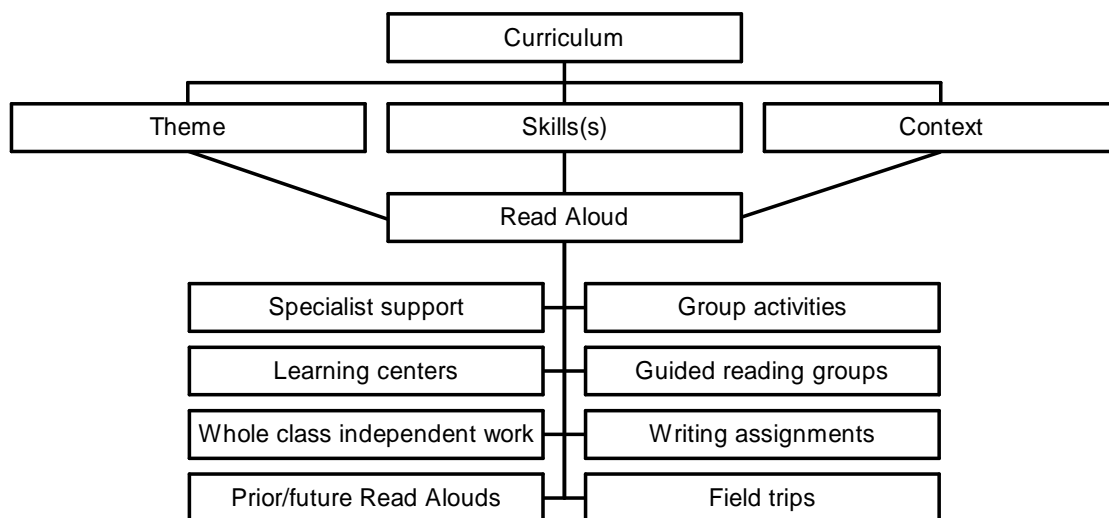
All of the teachers agreed at the time of their interviews that the Read Aloud experience affects their entire day. One teacher said, “It even carries out into the playground when they are doing creative play.” During the interviews all four teachers reported that there was a strong relationship and connection between the curriculum, the Read Aloud, and the other activities carried out in kindergarten classrooms that all four teachers exhibited. The teachers first selected which area of the curriculum they wished to teach. Based on that curriculum, they decided which specific themes, skills and content they wanted to teach. The teachers then selected a Read Aloud that would support the curriculum, theme, skills, and content. During the Read Aloud session, the teachers explicitly taught the predetermined themes, skills, and content. The follow up activities varied but were always based on the text used for the Read Aloud and specific themes, skills, and content they were teaching. Follow up activities included specialist support, whole class independent work, field trips, guided reading groups, writing assignments, learning centers, and prior and future Read Alouds (see Table 5).

The teachers taught many different skills and content areas during the Read Aloud session. They were able to embed genres of text, geography and map skills, math, sequencing, models of reading behavior such as decoding and comprehension skills, phonics, predictions, inferencing vocabulary and inter and intra text connections, as well as connections to writing in the Read Aloud sessions. The teachers reported during the interviews that before reading to the students, they thoughtfully planned which skills and

content areas they wanted to touch on during a Read Aloud. During the classroom observations, I observed the teachers teach several different units, including bears, winter, Martin Luther King, Jr., mice, reindeer, and money.

Table 5

How Does the Read Aloud Fit into the Curriculum?

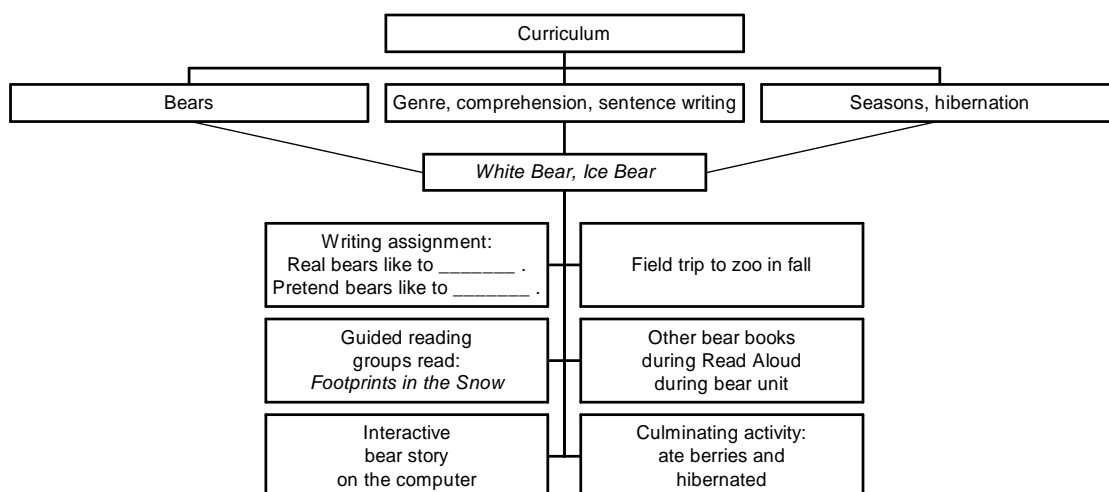


During the formal interview, one of the teachers shared a specific example of how this strong relationship between the curriculum and Read Alouds occurred and guided her instructional activities. Based on the County curriculum for kindergarten, she decided to teach the subject of bears, specifically how the seasons effect their hibernation. Along with that, she included genres, text comprehension, and sentence writing. She selected the book *White Bear, Ice Bear*, by Ryder and Cohn, to read to her class. During the Read Aloud, she embedded instructions based on her pre-established goals. After reading the text, she conducted a follow up activity during which the children completed a writing assignment “Real bears like to_____. Pretend bears like to_____.” The

teacher conducted other follow up activities during the unit, which included a field trip to the zoo, guided reading groups, an interactive bear story on the computer, and a play acting session that included pretending to be a bear that ate berries and hibernated (see Table 6).

Table 6

Specific Example: How the Read Aloud Fits into the Curriculum



What are the logistics of the Read Aloud session?

Based on my classroom observations, none of the teachers ever read a story straight through. All of the teachers seated themselves in a rocking chair during the Read Aloud sessions in front of the children, who were seated on an area rug. All of the Read Aloud sessions were whole class activities. All of the teachers read the story with a great deal of expression, characterization, and prosody.

What was the length of the Read Aloud sessions?

The Read Aloud sessions varied in length. Teachers A, B and C read for a range of 25-35 minutes for a mean of 28.75, 31.25, 32.50 minutes respectively. Teacher D had a range of 17-25 minutes with a mean of 21.50. The overall range was 17-35 minutes with a mean of 28.56 (see Table 7).

Table 7

Length of Read Aloud Session (in Minutes)

Teacher	Range	Mean	<i>SD</i>
A	25–35	28.75	4.78
B	25–35	31.25	4.78
C	25–35	32.50	5.00
D	17–25	21.50	3.94
Total	17–35	28.56	5.97

What types of texts are used during the Read Alouds?

The teachers used several types of texts during the Read Alouds. A total of 18 texts were used during the 16 Read Aloud sessions. All 18 were picture books. Thirteen books were narratives and two were exposition. Three books were concept books, which did not have narrative or expository text features; they were written to teach concepts such as letter sounds and different money types. Two of the books were nonfiction—one nonfiction narrative and one realistic fiction. One teacher read the students' own writing

assignments that they had written themselves. She read each student's assignment, and as she did so, she shared the student illustrations and gave the student-generated texts the same level of respect as those written by professionals (see Table 8)

Table 8

Types of Texts

Text type	Narrative	Expository	Concept
Picture books	14	2	3
Fiction	13		3
Nonfiction		2	
Student writing (personal experience)	1		

The teachers reported in the interviews that they selected the texts around themes, specific skills, and different genres. The teachers selected the texts to build on students' prior knowledge and to expose them to ideas that they would not ordinarily be exposed to. Because neither the District nor the State mandated reading materials, the teachers had a great deal of autonomy and flexibility regarding text selection. All of the teachers had to acquire their own texts from the school, from the public library, or from their own privately purchased collections.

The teachers reported in their interviews that they never selected a story at random. Even on party days, they selected books for specific purposes. For example, one teacher used *Arthur's Valentine* by Marc Brown, for a Read Aloud on the day of the class Valentine's Day party. She selected this book for its obvious connection to the holiday.

However, she selected this specific Valentine's Day book, and not another Valentine's Day book, because it addressed children's interpersonal relationships, how they dealt with hurt feelings and name-calling. This was something she was working on with her students and wanted to reinforce by using this book. According to the teachers, even party days are an opportunity for instruction. The teacher who read *Arthur's Valentine* said, "While reading this book, the kids can see how that (sic) teasing affects other kids. We work on manners a lot, especially at the beginning of the year." In all cases, the teacher selected the books, and at no time did the District or State mandate any of the texts.

What Is Taught During the Read Aloud Session?

One teacher summed up what all the teachers said about what they taught during a Read Aloud session by up stating, "The Read Aloud session is my tool for teaching language arts." Another said, "There is so much to teach during a Read Aloud, I cannot teach it all." All four teachers agreed that the Read Aloud was the main comprehension block of kindergarten. By and large, kindergarten children are emergent readers and cannot decode text at a very high level on their own, which means that teachers can read books aloud that are at a much higher level than the students can, so a more sophisticated level of comprehension is addressed.

How can the teacher dialogue during the Read Aloud be categorized?

The teachers relied on many different techniques for responding to student responses during the Read Alouds. The most common category of teacher dialogue was positive affirmation of what a student said (23.62%), followed by teacher's positive affirmation, and then repeating what a student had said (18.74%) for a total of 43.77% of

the coded units. In contrast, teachers explicitly told the students that their responses were wrong only 1.43% of the time. They used other means such as probing questions (6.07%) or questioning without waiting for a response (4.43%) to redirect students to correct responses without explicitly telling them that they were wrong. Teachers never repeated wrong answers and only supplied the correct response 0.31% of the time. (see Tables 9 and 10).

Teachers spent most of their dialogue on instructional categories and very little on logistical ones such as giving directions (3.60%) or correcting inappropriate behavior (3.29%). The Read Aloud sessions were systematized to the extent that the students knew exactly what was expected of them during a session. The teachers kept behavior interruptions to a minimum by conducting well planned and orchestrated Read Alouds that required the students to outwardly interact (8.43%), i.e. making a hand signal, coral reading, etc. The teachers lectured or embellished the Read Aloud text 12.66% of the time and connected the readings to prior school or personal knowledge 2.53% of the time and 2.78% of the time, respectively, for a total of 17.97%. (See Table 9). This form of scaffolding helped the students to connect to their prior knowledge and schemata as well as expand their knowledge of language arts and content.

Table 9*Analysis of Teacher Dialogue Categories*

Item	Category	Abbreviation	<i>n</i>	%
1	Positive affirmation	PA	373	23.62
2	Positive affirmation with repeat	PAR	296	18.75
	—Total 1 and 2		669	43.37
	Negative response	NR	23	1.46
	Repeat wrong answer		0	.00
	Negative affirmation, give answer	NRG	5	.32
3	“Lecture”	L	200	12.67
4	Student interaction	SI	127	8.04
5	Probing questions	PQ	96	6.08
6	Predictions	P	74	4.69
7	Reference to text/illustrations	RTI	70	4.43
8	Question, no wait for response	QNW	70	4.43
9	Directions	D	57	3.61
10	Behavior 47- + 5+ = 52	B	52	3.29
11	Connect to teacher or student prior knowledge or interests	PKP	44	2.79
12	Connect to prior school learning	PKS	40	2.53
13	Reference to author/illustrator	AI	22	1.39
14	Explicit vocabulary instruction	V	17	1.08
15	Purpose of reading/genre	PRG	13	.82
Total coded segments			1,579	100.00

Sample teacher dialogue categories

The following is a sampling of the dialogue categories taken directly from the observations. For each of the 15 coding categories, I have included a few examples taken from the classroom observations.

1. Positive affirmation

The teacher responds to a correct student response with affirmation.

Examples: “Great!”
 “Yes!”
 “Right!”

2. Positive affirmation with repeat

The teacher affirms that the student is correct and then repeats the student’s response either literally or paraphrased.

Examples: “Right, his name is Martin Luther King, Jr.”
 “Right, *A Cloak for Charlie*.”
 “Yes, he was yelling and got tangled.”
 “Bears!”

3. “Lecture”

The teacher embellishes the story or gives additional information about the story being read.

Examples: “It is a Caldecott Honor Book. Some books win awards for pictures or the stories.”

“Pennsylvania is close to Maryland. Look at the map over there. Maryland is that little tiny state.”

“Everything costs 10 cents. They bought things three ways. They used two nickels to equal 10 cents.”

4. Student interaction

The teacher requests the students to do something actively to engage them in the text being read.

Examples: The teacher reads very slowly from text “Hedge Hog woke _____” and allows the students to say the missing word out loud.

“Whisper to a friend what you see.”

“Look at our class. We all look different. Put your hand next to someone’s. Is it the same color?”

“Show your hands (using sign language) if you know what color this is.”

“Show me a mean monster (with your face).”

5. Probing questions

The teacher asks questions as a follow-up to get a correct or alternate response.

Examples: “What tells you they might be hungry?”

“Think about it some more.”

“Do you hear the pattern yet?”

6. Predictions

Dialogue where the teacher is getting the students to make predictions.

Examples: “Can you tell me what is going to happen?”

“How can you get a little bit of winter?”

“I wonder where he is going?”

“You think the bear will jump on a trampoline in the sky? Well, let’s see.”

7. Reference to text/illustrations

Any dialogue where the teacher makes a direct reference to the text or illustrations in the book.

Examples: “What did he find?”

“Now, look; she has been to the store.”

“Let’s look closely and see the mouse. There he is.”

“Let’s read the title together. *A Little Bit of Winter*.” The teacher points to each word as it is read.

8. Question, no wait for response/modeling

The teacher asks one or a string of questions without waiting for an answer. These questions are more global and not as specific as the probing questions. The probing questions all eventually got answers this category of questions did not.

Examples: “What does that mean?”

“It is cold, isn’t it?”

“Where did the city mouse get cheese?”

“Where do ice bears live?”

“Does it make sense if it is about dogs?”

9. Directions

Statements that have to do with giving directions for the purpose of managing an activity. They have no explicit or embedded instruction incorporated into them.

Examples: “Slide over to the chart.”
 “The green group may go.”
 “First I am going to get your papers.”
 “Close the door. The fifth graders are coming through the hall. They are very noisy.”

10. Behavior

Statements or commands that are only for the purpose of correcting behavior.

Examples (negative): “Stop, stop!”
 “Crisscross applesauce”
 “_____” (child’s name)
 “No screaming, it hurts our ears.”
 “Sit down and I will hold it up so you can see.”
 “Excuse me!”

Examples (positive): Sometimes a teacher would praise the behavior of a well-behaved child with the intent of correcting another child who was misbehaving.

“_____ raised his/her hand. I am going to call on _____.”
 “_____ is sitting so nicely.”

11. Connect to teacher or student prior knowledge or interests

Dialogue where the teacher talks about the interest or knowledge that either the teacher or student has of what is being read.

Examples: “This is terrible, terrible. It makes me cry even now.”
 “This weekend you might go out and get a Christmas tree and see the word ‘live.’”
 “Yes, I see your teeth coming in.”
 “He is one of my favorites! So I chose this at the media center.”

12. Connect to prior learning at school

Dialogue where the teacher connects the read aloud to something the children have done or learned about in class.

Examples: “Don’t forget the strategies that we know so that we can read the words ourselves.”
 “We read this yesterday; what was it called?”
 “We have read different books by Jan Brett. Think back to December. What did we read?”
 “The other book we read about him was when he was a kid.”

13. Reference to author/illustrator

Statements that refer to the author/illustrator and what they do.

- Examples: “The author probably heard this story when she was little and wanted to tell it.”
 “*Tops and Bottoms* was written by Janet Stevens. She didn’t actually make up this story. It is an old story she is retelling.”
 “This book is called *White Bear, Ice Bear* by Jo Ann Rider. She is the author. What did she do?”
 “E. B. Lowes is the illustrator. What does that mean?”

14. Explicit vocabulary instruction

The teacher explicitly tells the students what a word means from the text that is being read.

- Examples: “When you don’t expect something you could get startled.”
 “‘Hare’ is another word for ‘rabbit.’”
 “‘Big Kickers’—what is that? Right, feet.”
 “What is a cart? Now, don’t laugh at my drawing but I will draw one on the board.

Here is a cart and wheels and a box to pull and put stuff in.”

15. Purpose of reading/genre

Dialogue in which the purpose for reading the text for the Read Aloud is discussed.

- Examples: “So in this book we learned something even though it was a story and we read it for pleasure.”
 “Today we are going to read *Clifford*. We are going to read for what?”
 “Think in your head what kind of reading this is. Is it reading for enjoyment, reading to follow directions, or reading to find information?”
 “When we have characters in the story, it is not to perform a task.”

*Negative response

Teacher states that student response is incorrect.

- Examples: “No.”
 “No, at least not for this story.”
 “No, that isn’t it. It has two O’s.”

*Repeat wrong answer

Teacher repeats the incorrect student response.

Examples: None

*Negative response, teacher gives correct response

The teacher states that the response is incorrect and then states the correct one.

Examples: “No, in the *Gingerbaby* it was different.”
“No, _____, you don’t; your name is _____. You do have the same last name.”

Discussion

On the surface, reading aloud to kindergarteners may seem simple and may seem to require little thought or planning, but after careful observation of effective kindergarten teachers conducting Read Alouds, it is evident that teachers plan carefully and put a great deal of thought into creating an effective Read Aloud session and to maximize its instructional effect on students. This pilot study gave a very thin overview of the Read Aloud experience as conducted by expert teachers; this topic needs to be expanded and researched further in order to understand this experience more fully so that the results can be used to inform and potentially improve the practice of teachers. I will use the results of this pilot study as the basis for my dissertation research. I want to enlarge this study to encompass a wider range of kindergarten teachers at a wider range of schools. I will then be able to have a much richer and deeper understanding of what the Read Aloud experience is like for teachers with varying years of teaching experience and in schools of varying SES. This pilot study did not have enough participants across different types of SES and analysis could not be done. Through more complete research, I hope to determine whether there are significant differences in the use of the Read Alouds, as well as teacher dialogue, between teachers of different levels of teaching experience and schools of varying SES.

Based on the results of this pilot, for my dissertation, I plan to

- Expand this pilot study to explore the use of the Read Aloud experience in a cross section of kindergarten classrooms.
- Expand this pilot study to explore the differences in teacher dialogue during the Read Aloud experience in a cross section of kindergarten classrooms.
- Create and evaluate the use of a Read Aloud training module for inexperienced kindergarten teachers.
- Explore the possibility that there may be some differences across different socioeconomic statuses of schools.

Ultimately, the results of the dissertation that is informed by this pilot study may be used to inform the development of a training module to be used with less experienced kindergarten teachers. This training module would accelerate the learning process for teachers and enable them to make effective use of their Read Aloud sessions more quickly than if they were left on their own to discover the subtleties of the Read Aloud experience. This training module has great potential, as many new kindergarten teachers will be hired in the coming years to fill new positions that are created when all-day kindergarten programs are instituted throughout Maryland by 2007. The kindergarten reading/language arts program has many components, but the Read Aloud is the cornerstone of the entire program.

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