Increasing reading comprehension and motivation through teacher led read aloud lesson plans

Patrick E. Collins

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Increasing Reading Comprehension and Motivation through Teacher Led

Read Aloud Lesson Plans

By

Patrick Collins

A Graduate Field Experience

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Abstract

Reading aloud to students is viewed as a beneficial tool for them to learn reading. The purpose of this study was to see if using read alouds to teach reading comprehension strategies affect comprehension and motivation in students. Third and fourth grade students were given four weeks of reading strategy instruction though teacher led read alouds. Two reading strategies were the focus of the study; text features and questioning the text. Students were given a survey as a pre and posttest measure of their attitude toward reading. Students also completed a pre and post reading comprehension test. My findings indicate that teacher led read aloud lessons resulted in students’ mean reading comprehension scores increase. These results emphasize the importance of using read alouds to teach reading strategies in the classroom.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills a person can learn in ones’ lifetime. It is a skill we use every day and without it simple tasks become infinitely more difficult. In working with my elementary school students it became apparent to me that whether it was for learning or for pleasure, students tend to not enjoy reading. As a student, one of my favorite pastimes was reading a good Goosebumps (Stein, 1995) book or finding out about the newest video games in the latest Game Informer. I thought back about what made me enjoy reading so much as a student. I remembered my teachers in elementary school reading aloud to us every day before we went home. I believe that this fostered a love for reading that I still have today. What was it about those read alouds that made them so memorable for me? Hearing my teacher read fluently and with expression gave me a desire to get better. The way they read made the books seem more like movies. I could focus solely on the story and not be worried about reading the next word right. I found myself practicing how to read with more expression and slowing down to make the story make more sense. I found my motivation for reading from hearing my teachers read aloud and I wondered if my students felt the same way.

Recent research suggests that reading aloud is important in many ways for students (Albright & Arial, 2005). Teachers can use read aloud time to teach strategies to students, expose them to new books and genres, and strengthen the students’ love for reading. Albright and Arial (2005) also suggest that teachers should use read aloud time to make connections and
build background knowledge with new material. While it is important for the teachers to correctly use read alouds, it is also just as important for the students to find them effective. Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) found that students view read alouds as one of the most motivating factors in reading in the classroom. Students in the Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) study viewed reading as boring but found enjoyment in their teachers reading to them.

Read alouds transcend reading from a task to an experience. Students are able to focus more on the story and less about reading words correctly. It is still essential to teach students how to read independently and to do so we have to continually motivate them. Using read alouds as a tool to motivate and teach strategies that can be used independently is a use of classroom time from which all students can benefit.

My research project, focusing on read alouds and reading comprehension, was conducted in May 2011 working with the students in my classroom. The focus was one student, Peter, a third grade student in an inner city urban elementary charter school. He had attended the same school since kindergarten. His parents noted that David’s speech was not developing the same as his peers, and he was prone to acting out and throwing tantrums in class and struggled with reading. His parents note that they didn’t spend much time reading at home and haven’t had the chance to work with him the way they wanted to. He had difficulty expressing himself due to his speech difficulties and seemed to struggle applying new learning.

At age 5 Peter was diagnosed with a speech and language impairment. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, defines the term “speech or language impairment” as follows: “Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a
child’s educational performance” (US Department of Education, n.d). Peter was evaluated by School district personnel and it was determined that he qualified for special services under the other health impairments section of the IDEA. An Individualized Education Plan or IEP was created for Peter and he began receiving speech and language services twice a week. Peter was retained in kindergarten due to his slow development in reading and behavior concerns. Peter continued to struggle in the areas of reading and speech. At the time of the study he had been receiving Title 1 services for reading twice a week since first grade and had shown a slight improvement in his reading ability.

Peter benefits from the federal law known as IDEA. One of the principles of IDEA states that Peter is entitled to a free, appropriate public education that includes special education services that meet the standards of the Wisconsin Department of Education. His IEP team has taken care to assess his strengths and weaknesses and create a learning environment best suited to his learning. Peter was afforded the opportunity of support with his speech and language impairment while still learning at a pace with the rest of his class. The IEP team, along with his parents, designed a plan for him to succeed yet Peter still struggled with reading and speech.

Despite the additional help Peter continued to struggle in reading, scoring well below his grade level on statewide standardized tests. In third grade, Peter was reevaluated by his IEP team. At this meeting the IEP team and his parents discussed other possible reasons for his struggles with reading. His parents attended the meeting by way of telephone and voiced their concern over the school’s attempt to “label” their child. They insisted that Peter’s struggles were based solely on his speech and language impairment. The IEP team continued Peter’s work with
a speech and language pathologist twice a week and continued to monitor his progress through the year to determine if indeed he only had a speech and language impairment.

Another principle of IDEA states that the IEP team must take into account the student’s current academic performance and create goals and modifications for the student to be successful. The IEP team created an opportunity for Peter to receive additional assistance and put goals in place to monitor his progress.

At the time of the study Peter had been making progress but still continued to struggle and his reading was well below grade level based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. For example, Reading Standard for Literature discusses the ability of constructing one’s purpose for reading through the use of reading strategies. Peter had difficulty decoding words and reading longer sentences which led to the difficulty he had with reading comprehension. Pervious teachers expressed their concern over his ability to comprehend what he read. During his time in Title 1 services comprehension was a focal point of instruction. He made strides but the problems he had in retaining information seemed to limit his ability to recall and make sense of events in a story. When Peter was read to however, he could comprehend and was even able to recall main events in the story. According to the CCSS for Literature on Foundational skills students need to read fluently to support comprehension. Peter’s difficulty in reading comprehension negatively affected his reading fluency. He read individual words at a reasonable rate but had difficulty reading through a passage fluently. He stumbled through sentences, and paused periodically while reading, waiting for help instead of using reading strategies. If he practiced beforehand Peter fluently read a selection with minimal errors.
At the time of the study, Peter was able to write short opinion pieces, which is a strategy mentioned in the CCSS for Writing, but lacked knowledge of writing conventions and produced various spelling and grammatical errors. His written work was very brief and tended to lack details. He created stories but they lacked common story structure and techniques, another CCSS for writing. He could use ideas from stories we read in class to aid in his story creation. He enjoyed being able to create his own stories but used inventive spelling for words he did not know. Peter did not use dictionaries or a thesaurus’ to aid in his writing which is also a part of the CCSS for writing.

Peter was a positive 10 year old third grade student who seemed to enjoy school and the learning process. He enjoyed being active and participating in sports. He showed a desire to become a stronger reader but his parents felt he was being limited by his speech and language impairment. He continued to struggle with his speech despite receiving speech and language services since the first grade. He needed additional assistance with reading comprehension and learning different reading strategies. This research study aimed to assist Peter and the other students in my class with using reading strategies to become stronger readers.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Hearing proficient readers reading aloud is an important and integral activity for students to become more familiar with the standards of good reading. When listening to a proficient reader, students are able to hear fluent reading with expression and can focus more on their comprehension of the story than decoding words. In addition, research supports a connection between reading aloud and promoting a positive attitude towards reading (Lippe & Weber, 1996). The more students are read to, the more they will come to enjoy reading themselves. A number of other studies have also shown that read alouds can be used to teach reading strategies to struggling readers (Albright & Arial, 2005; Cho & Choi, 2008). The purpose of this study is to examine if using read alouds to teach reading strategies has an affect on students’ comprehension and motivation. In this chapter the research is focused on two sections. The chapter begins with a review of research on motivation and self efficacy. Second, I examine the use and benefits of read alouds in the classroom.

Motivation and Self Efficacy

In many classrooms there seems to be a detachment between the students and the teachers when it comes to reading. Some students exhibit negative attitudes toward learning and teachers are frustrated with what they perceive as a lack of motivation. In order to better serve students it is necessary to understand what motivates them to become successful. Research has also shown the importance self efficacy plays in student motivation. In this section the research reviewed focuses on student motivation and self efficacy in reading.
Nelson and Debacker’s (2008) study examined the relationship between students’ perceived peer relationships and achievement motivation in science class. Research has suggested that as students become older and enter into higher grades, motivation declines and peers play a greater role in the students’ lives. The independent variables were mastery goals, performance-approach goals, performance-avoidance goals, social intimacy goals, social approval goals, social responsibility goals, and self efficacy. The dependent variable was the self report questionnaire.

This study included 253 sixth, seventh, and ninth grade science students. Students in this study tended to score above average on state standardized tests and attended college with more regularity than the rest of the general population. Fifty one percent of the sample were girls and the other 49% were boys. Students came from 13 different science classes taught by 4 different teachers. Nineteen percent of the students were sixth graders, 38% were seventh graders, and 43% were ninth graders.

Researchers conducted this study during a regularly scheduled science class. Students were given self-report questionnaires, and the sessions lasted 40 minutes. The first questionnaire asked students about their best friend, the second questionnaire was concerned with their own motivation during class, and the final questionnaire centered on their science classmates.

Based on the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) the use of the three factor model was supported. Middle school students’ means were higher for mastery goals, performance approach goals, self efficacy, class belongingness, and classmates’ involvement. Mastery goals can be described as goals that lead to the mastering of certain subjects where students weigh their progress against themselves. For example, a runner’s mastery goal may be to beat his personal
best by a few seconds. Performance goals, on the other hand, are goals for which progress is measured against someone else. High school students had higher means for best friend’s resistance to school norms. This means that students typically agree with their peers when it comes to following, or not following, school rules and expectations. The regression analysis indicated statistically significant correlations between predictor variables. Mastery goals were significantly correlated with peer class climate and best friend variable. Mastery goals were significantly correlated with the predictors; grade level, class belongingness, and friends’ academic valuing. Performance-approach goals showed a positive correlation with peer class climate. Positive predictors for performance-approach goals were classmates’ resistance to school norms and belonging. Performance avoidance goals were significantly correlated with peer class climate and had only one positive predictor, classmates’ resistance to school norms. Social intimacy goals were correlated with peer class climate and best friend variables. Positive predictors were class belongingness and friendship quality. Social approval goals were positively correlated with peer class climate and best friend variables. Classmates’ resistances to school norms as well as friendship quality were positive predictors for social approval goals. Peer class climate and best friend variables also were correlated with social responsibility goals. Class belongingness, best friends academic valuing, and friendship quality were all positive predictors for social responsibility goals. Self efficacy was significantly correlated with peer class climate. There was one negative predictor, grade level, and one significant positive predictor, class belongingness.

The overall conclusion of this study was that motivation to learn is influenced by social environment and perceptions of peers. Nelson and Debacker stated that during transition from
middle school to high school, students’ achievement motivation and perceptions of a less positive peer classroom climate declines. This suggests that students become less motivated the longer they are in school thus, making it more of a challenge to make lessons more interesting and engaging. They also found that having a team-centered approach leads to a higher feeling of class belongingness and involvement. Creating team based activities and appealing lesson plans increases student motivation. Based on the results, it is evident that students tend to follow along with what their peers are doing or even just what they perceive their peers are doing. If the teacher can create an atmosphere where learning is valued by students, then motivation will increase because of the effect peers have on each other.

Motivation is influenced not only by peer perceptions and environment (Nelson & Debacker, 2008), but in many classrooms, through the use of rewards. Marinak and Gambrell (2008) believed that rewards in and of themselves weren’t important. They believed that it was more important when students received their reward than what their reward was.

In this next study, Marinak and Gambrell (2008) examined the effects of reward proximity and the choice of reward on students’ reading motivation. This study examined two questions: 1) How does the proximity of a reward affect students’ motivation to read, and 2) How does choice of reward affect the intrinsic motivation to read? The first of two independent variables was reward type, and the second was choice of reward. The dependent variable was the students’ intrinsic motivation to read measured through observation during a student free choice period.

This study consisted of 75 third grade students from a large suburban school district attended by over 12,000 students. In the school district, 40% of the students were Caucasian,
305 were African American, 205 were Asian, and 10% were Eastern European. The participants were chosen from a group of 288 students, representing a diverse population of learners.

This study was completed in two phases; Phase 1) library book selection activity, and Phase 2) the observation of free choice activity. For both phases the researcher met with child individually to make data collection easier.

Phase one consisted of the students being placed into groups based on the treatment conditions; “book/choice”, “book/no choice”, “token/choice”, “token/no choice” and “no reward”. The “book/choice” treatment group was offered a book as reward for the free choice period as well as a choice for which book they read. The second treatment group, “book/no choice”, was offered a book as a reward but were not given a choice as to the topic of the book. The “token/choice” treatment group was offered a token and a choice of reward. The “token/no choice” treatment group was given an award with no choice about which reward. Finally, the “no reward” treatment group didn't receive a reward.

Participating students were asked to read books as part of a screening panel for the school library. The students’ recommended books were chosen for the library. For their participation the students received a reward based on their treatment groups.

Phase two consisted of observation of the students during their free choice periods. The students were able to choose between reading, playing a math game, or completing a jigsaw puzzle. Students who chose books were timed on how long they read and how many total words they were able to read.

The data measured intrinsic motivation using three different measures: first activity selected, number of words read, and number of seconds spent reading. The results for the first
activity selected revealed that students in the book/choice, book/no choice, and no reward/no choice treatment groups chose reading as an activity more often than students in token/choice, token/no choice group. The researchers conducted a chi-square analysis to determine whether proximity of reward was the only significant variable for first activity selected. Based on the results it was determined that proximity of rewards was the only variable that had a significant statistical effect on students’ first activity selected.

Number of seconds spent reading; the second measure of intrinsic reading motivation was collected during the free choice period. Any student who chose to read during the free choice period had his/her seconds spent reading recorded. Based on a Fisher’s LSD a significant difference in time spent reading was found between the students in the book/choice, book/no choice, and control conditions when compared to students in the token/choice, and token/no choice groups.

The final measure of intrinsic reading motivation, number of words read, was also observed during the free choice period. If a student chose to read during this period, the amount of words read were collected and analyzed according to which treatment group each student was in. Number of words read measure all words read and not just time spent browsing books. Again, the authors found that students in the book/choice, book/no choice, and no reward/no choice treatment groups had a higher number of words read than those in the token/choice, token/no choice treatment groups.

Overall, the authors found that the more proximal a reward is to the desired behavior the more likely the desired behavior will occur. Students who received books as a reward or received no reward spent more seconds reading books and read more total words than students
from other treatment groups. The researchers concluded that rewards which are proximal to the desired behavior, do not undermine the intrinsic motivation of a student to perform that behavior. At the same time, researchers concluded that rewards less proximal to the desired behavior do undermine the intrinsic motivation to perform the desired behavior. Lastly, Marinak and Gambrell found that choice of reward played no significant role in intrinsic motivation to perform the selected task, reading.

In the previous study, Marinak and Gambrell (2008) found that the effectiveness of the use of rewards varies dependent on the learner. What may be a reward for one student might be a deterrent for another. Marinak and Gambrell (2008) stated that the more proximal the reward is to the desired behavior the more likely the desired behavior will be repeated. In the next study Kristie Jolley (2008) examined one reward which seems to have universal appeal, technology, more specifically, video games. Students are able to recite lines and recall scenes from their favorite games with great accuracy. Students make connections with the characters and feel as though they are a part of the world in they are playing. With this feeling of inclusion, students take the journey and become those characters.

Kristie Jolley (2008) examined the effects of reading video game-based literature on students’ motivation to read in and out of school. The researcher conducted a survey to assess students’ reading habits outside of school as well as their tendency to play video games. The independent variable was the survey administered to students. The dependent variables were the student responses to the survey.
The participants of this study were 250 eighth grade students. Of the participants 11% were English language learners and 12% described themselves as reluctant and struggling readers.

The procedure for this study consisted of the researcher administering the survey to all grade eight students in her school. Students responded to the questionnaire and the results were investigated for possible trends. Results were separated into male and female categories.

Results indicated that when asked if they read in their free time, about 50% of the students responded that they do. The survey also revealed that 80% of the students played video games during their free time. However, about 70% of the males and about 90% of the females indicated that they do not read any books based on video games. The researcher also indicated that when she asked the students about video game-based texts the majority stated that they were unaware that this type of genre existed. Initially students were opposed to the idea of reading books based on video games because they felt that they had little control over the outcome of the books, as opposed to a video game in which they control the action.

The researcher hypothesized that students shy away from video game-based texts because the books themselves are big and picture less, which are both negatives for struggling readers. She suggested bringing in graphic novels into the classroom to engage those struggling readers. The pictures and linear story line match up well with video games and seem to be a bridge for struggling readers to cross into more difficult text. The researcher proposed that once students become familiar with graphic novels they can be introduced to the more difficult texts easier because of the increased background knowledge and interest in the subject area, video games. As students become more comfortable reading they begin to make connections and find the
purpose in reading not only for academics but also for enjoyment. When students discover their purpose learning can happen amongst students through discussions and comparisons. Based on their experience with video games, students have the background knowledge necessary to read and share their reading effectively. Overall, this study showed that by giving reluctant readers video game-based texts, their reading motivation increased and the students’ purpose for reading was more easily discovered.

The previous study showed that when students were given engaging materials they were more motivated to read (Jolley, 2008). Encouraging students to read and increasing motivation are integral in the development of emerging readers. While the previous study focused on students’ motivation the following study by McGrudden, Perkins, and Putney (2005) examined the effects reading strategy instruction on students’ interest and self efficacy.

McGrudden, Perkins, and Putney (2005) examined the effects of reading strategy instruction on students’ interest, comprehension, and self efficacy in the fourth grade. The purpose of this study was proposed in two questions: 1) Does explicit instruction in reading strategies and modeling of reading strategies affect self efficacy and interest? 2) Can explicit strategy instruction be integrated into the existing curriculum in a practical way? The goal of this research study was to serve as a foundation for future research in the same field and possibly describe connections between reading instruction and self efficacy and reading. The independent variables were the different types of instructional strategies used by the teachers. The dependent variables were self efficacy, interest and reading comprehension measured using a survey and pre and post test reading comprehension tests.
The sample in this study consisted of 23 fourth grade students, 11 male and 12 female. All the students participating in this study were African American and attended a charter school in an economically challenged city in the southwestern region of the United States. The majority of the students this sample was chosen from were below reading level.

Three phases (pre instruction, instruction and practice, and post instruction) made up this study. There were five total lessons spanning two weeks. Reading instruction was provided by the researcher during the instruction and practice phase in 3 total lessons. The pre instruction phase consisted of students taking the self efficacy and intrinsic interest surveys. This was followed by a silent reading and comprehension question assessment, on which the students independently read a story and answered questions following the reading. Students who finished early were allowed to assist other students who were still reading, but all comprehension questions were answered individually. During the second phase students were given reading strategy instruction by one of the researchers. The researcher presented lesson plans for students in which they read different passages and created graphic organizers. Explicit strategy instruction was provided by the researcher and strategies were reviewed at the end of each session. Students also created a bookmark with the reading strategies written on them to serve as a visual reminder of the skills they had just learned. During the final phase students again completed the self efficacy and intrinsic interest surveys. Next, students read a story and answered multiple choice questions assessing comprehension. These scores were compared with those from the first session.

The results indicated that students’ self efficacy in reading significantly increased from pre test to post test. This means that students were more confident in their ability to read and
understand text following the strategy instruction. Students also showed a statistically significant increase in the intrinsic interest survey. There was, however, no statistically significant change in comprehension from pre to post test. Researchers predicted this result because of the short length of the study.

As the researchers examined their data the answers to their initial questions became clearer. The researchers found that as students observe a model strategy their self-efficacy rises and their interest in using the strategy rises as well. They summarized that as students’ self efficacy rises their use of reading strategies will increase thus increasing their comprehension over a longer period of time. To address their second question, the researchers stated that the integration of their reading strategies into the regular curriculum was practical for numerous reasons. These reasons were that the reading instruction lasted no longer than one and half hours, the teachers themselves felt as if the lessons were practical, and the fact that students’ self efficacy increased through the reading instruction itself. Overall, students indicated that they enjoyed the reading strategy instruction and that it would be received positively by them if incorporated into their daily routine.

Both the previous study by McGradden, Perkins, and Putney (2005) and the following study by Lippe and Weber (1996) questioned what motivates students to read. The previous study examined the use of teaching reading strategies to increase motivation and self efficacy in students. However, in the following study Lippe and Weber (1996) examined the effects read alouds had on students motivation to read as a free time activity.

Lippe and Weber (1996) examined the intrinsic reading motivation of primary school students and what increased their motivation. The researchers wanted to find what motivated
students to read and what things were road blocks in creating motivation to read. The dependent variables were teacher observations, and the student/parent survey. The independent variables were the reading interventions.

The sample of this study included 30 targeted students from both a rural and urban setting. These students voluntarily participated in the study which took place during the first semester of their school year. Parents of the students as well as a fourth grade group of students also took part in the research.

The students in this study completed a reading interest survey in September which was then re-administered following the intervention. Parents were also given a survey to complete at home during the first week of school that examined their reading habits and tendencies at home. The teachers completed an observation checklist to gather baseline data, tracking the activities students preferred during a twenty-minute free-choice period. The students’ choices during their free choice period included paper and crayons, books, Legos, or puzzles. Teachers used this time to observe the amount of time students used the books during their free choice period.

There were 5 intervention strategies implemented into the regular school schedule. The five changes that were implemented were; establishing a daily read aloud time, establishing a sustained silent reading time, creating a classroom library, establishing a cross-age reading program, and creating a book bag full of materials for at home practice.

The first intervention strategy, the daily read aloud, consisted of twenty minutes of reading done aloud to the class by the teacher. Next, a silent reading time of 10 to 15 minutes of class once a week was created, during which students were reading leveled books chosen from the school library. Following the silent reading time, sharing of the students’ thinking was done
for about 5 minutes. The classroom library consisted of an area large enough to accommodate 5 to 6 students, and enough books for at least 4 per student. There were pillows, carpet, stuffed animals and posters in the library, and all the books were colored coded by subject and level.

The next intervention, the cross-age reading program, allowed the participants to be models for younger students. The older students were randomly assigned with younger readers and modeled reading strategies and asked story comprehension questions. The fifth intervention of the research was the use of a bag sent home with the students to involve the parents. The bag contained directions for the parents, a reading selection, and questions and an activity relating to the reading. Parents were also asked to complete an evaluation form accompanying the book bag. Finally, students received an incentive on their birthdays in the form of a book of their choice from the birthday book container signed by their teacher. They were also allowed to be the “reader” of the read aloud book that day by holding the book and following along with the tape of the book.

The results of the initial teacher observation checklist indicated that the majority of the students, almost 50%, preferred Legos during free-time. About 30% of the students chose puzzles, >5% chose a book, and about 25% chose to work with crayons and paper. When the observation was administered the second time again, almost 50% of the students chose Legos, and the number was actually higher than the initial observation. About 25% this time chose puzzles, almost 30% of the children this time chose books, and >5% chose crayons and paper. Students answered 2 questions in their survey which was the same pre and post intervention. There were two statements that students responded to; I like to look at books and Reading is easy. Forty-six percent of the students initially responded by saying they agreed with the
statement “I Like to look at books”, while 35% were neutral and 22% disagreed. Following the intervention 46% said they agreed with the statement 34% were neutral and 20% disagreed. The second statement “Reading is easy” saw only 14% agree with it, 45% were neutral and 41% disagreed pre test. Following the intervention 46% agreed with the second statement 31% were neutral and 23% disagreed. A simple survey was given to the students to assess if they enjoyed the birthday book they got to keep and 100% of the students said they liked keeping their signed book. Ninety percent of the students said they would like to participate again and 86% said they enjoyed being the reader for read aloud. Of the 30 targeted students, 28 of their parents returned the parent survey. Ninety-six percent of the parents expressed that their child seemed to enjoy the take home book bags. Seventy-five percent of the parents said the children developed a higher interest in books and more than 50% said that their children wanted to order more things from their class’ book orders. The targeted students and their fourth grade reading buddies also completed a survey assessing their interest in the reading program. Eighty-eight percent of both groups enjoyed their reading time together and 83% enjoyed the drawing activity that followed the reading. Ninety-two percent of the whole group wanted to continue the program.

Overall, the researchers found that student interest in reading increased following the intervention. Reading aloud and the other in-class activities increased the students’ reading motivation and their willingness to read as a free activity (Lippe & Weber, 1996). The cross age program helped both groups of students, targeted students and their fourth grade reading buddies, benefit through the intervention and find more motivation in reading. Students’ confidence grew and their self worth was validated through their reading aloud with the younger group (Lippe & Weber, 1996). Lippe and Weber (1996) feel that students should take some role in creating the
library at the beginning of the school year. This would not only afford them the chance to have an earlier access to books but would also motivate them to choose more books from a library they created. The researchers concluded that in order to increase student intrinsic reading motivation, students need to be exposed to books to become more comfortable reading them for enjoyment. Students are often overwhelmed with the idea of reading a whole book, but when shown it can be done painlessly students are more motivated to read.

Finding what motivates students can be beneficial for not only the student but also for the teacher. Nelson and Debacker (2008) found that students are motivated by their peers and their social environment. Another source of motivation comes from using rewards which are proximal to a desired behavior (Marinak and Gambrell, 2008). Jolley (2008) found that reading motivation and interest increases when student are given material that connects to them and with which they are familiar with. Student motivation also increased when they had the opportunity to observe a model performing the desired task for them and then allowing them time to practice on their own (McCrudden, Perkins, and Putney, 2005). Lippe and Weber (1996) found that when students were read aloud to in class they chose reading as free time activity more often. The above studies show that reading aloud to students, modeling reading, and giving them familiar content motivates them to want to read more.

**Read Alouds in The Classroom**

In the second section, read alouds in the classroom, I review research in which the authors investigated the use and benefits of teacher led read alouds in the classroom. The authors examined student and teacher perspectives of read alouds and they all yielded the same findings: Teacher led read alouds are enjoyed by students and lead to increased interest in reading.
Ivey and Broaddus’s (2001) study examined the specific features of middle school reading instruction that fostered students’ engagement and achievement in reading. Specifically, this study focused on the perspectives of sixth grade students toward reading in their language arts and reading classrooms. They hypothesized that non-responsive school curricula and institutionalized structures create negative attitudes and failure in school. The independent variable was the survey. The dependent variables were the student responses.

This study consisted of 1,765 sixth grade students from both an urban and rural/small city setting. Twenty-three schools and 74 teachers participated; totaling 109 classrooms completing the survey. Of those participating in the survey 71% represented European American, 12% Africa American, 7% Hispanic American, 7% Asian American, and 3% other ethnicity.

The researchers administered a survey to 1,765 sixth grade students. The survey consisted of short answer questions and open ended response items. The researchers used the surveys to find trends in classrooms and found three; independent reading, teacher reading aloud and materials. To better understand these trends the researchers examined each individual classroom. Next, the researchers interviewed 31 students from three different classrooms to attain even more specific information about the types of literacy activities and materials in the classroom.

The results indicated that students prefer teacher read alouds and independent reading time to more structured reading activities such as classroom novel reading or discussion groups. When asked about their preferred in class reading activities, students chose independent reading (63%) and teacher read alouds (62%) as their two favorites. Student read alouds (26%) and reading with the whole class (23%) were less favorable which seems to go along with the stigma
of reading. In their individual interviews students responded that they enjoyed silent reading time and teacher read alouds because it gave them a chance to engage in text on a more personal level. Students also discussed the importance of choice, in what was read to them and what they read themselves. The classroom environment survey yielded the following results. Forty-one percent of the students said that personal reading was what they enjoyed most in class. Twenty-one percent of the students made comments about reading in a social context. This meant a comment related reading to being with friends or spending time with their teacher. Another 21% of the students’ comments were unrelated to reading, while 16% made comments about the activities done while in reading. Only 10% of the total comments were regarding the materials used in reading class. This suggests that students tend to be more engaged in the social and personal reading related aspect of reading rather than the material itself. However, for the survey concerning motivation, 42% of the students responded that the materials and having a choice in reading materials was what motivated them the most. Twenty three percent of the students responded that personal readings motivated them most, while the 23% listed classroom contexts for reading such as the setting, rewards, or activities. Other people, such as the teacher or peers accounted for 19% of the students’ comments. For the individual surveys conducted following the motivation surveys, 29% of the students responded that the teacher was their motivating factor for reading. Thirty nine percent of the students listed materials or topic as their main motivating factor.

Students were also asked about positive and negative experiences in reading and what made them so. The responses for positive experiences were centered on the materials and the connections they made to the book. The negative experiences, on the other hand, were related to
teacher assigned readings in which students are not engaged in the choice of material. When asked about the availability of interesting reading material in their own classrooms only 28% of the students said their classroom contained such material. This trend continued with the individual interviews of the students in the high engagement classrooms as well, with only 16% saying they find books in class. Students also responded that they tend to read more varied text at home than at school. For the types of texts that were available in school, students tended to have the same responses more frequently, because of the lack of materials in class.

Students had a desire to read when that reading didn’t come accompanied with instructional time and assignments. The students responded that they need a choice in reading in order to enjoy it. Students also enjoyed hearing the teacher read aloud because it allows them to enjoy a story with the pressure of reading it themselves. Students showed interest in many different topics that were not covered by the regular curriculum for their classrooms. To address this, the researchers suggested that students need to be given a choice in their reading material and activities done in class. They feel that if a change in instruction toward more motivated reading is to take place, then students’ voices need to be heard and lead the reform. Also, the researchers concluded that students simply need time to just read and be able to enjoy reading. Having time to read independently or listening to the teacher read aloud increases the students’ motivation to read and connect with the reading material. Overall the students want a choice in their reading material and more teacher read alouds during the school day.

Similar to the previous study, Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) conducted a survey of student attitudes on reading. Corcoran and Mamalakis assessed students’ attitudes toward reading and motivational teaching strategies used by their teachers to encourage reading. The
researchers wanted to find out how students felt about the motivational strategies of their teachers and their own perceptions of reading. The dependent variables were perceptions of reading and motivation to read. The independent variable was a 12-question forced-choice survey.

The sample in this study consisted of 26 fifth grade students in single gender classrooms. The students of the single gender classroom chose to be in such a class. Of the 26 students, 17 were male and 9 were female. The teachers of the classes had an excellent reputation throughout the school and had been teaching for at least 8 years, but it was their first year in the single gender classroom.

The procedure for this study consisted of the researchers distributing the surveys to the selected participants of each class. Students completed the surveys on their own and were assured that their answers on the survey would be kept confidential and would not affect them academically.

Corcoran and Mamalakis collected the surveys and examined the answers to make connections. They found that the 50% of the students don’t share good books they’ve read with friends. They also found that the majority of participants, 96%, wished that their teacher would discuss books more frequently with the class. Eighty-eight percent of the students responded that their teachers do read alouds in the classroom at least a few times a week. Students also expressed a strong, 88%, desire to have their teachers do daily read alouds in their class. All of the students surveyed responded that they have a choice in the type of material they read independently and all of them indicated they always want a choice in their reading material. The
researchers also noticed that all but three of the participants responded that they found readers interesting.

The researchers found that students identified with the idea that being a good reader is important but also noted that reading is something they don’t enjoy doing. In order to increase motivation in the classroom they suggested that teachers should invest time everyday in reading aloud, having book discussions, and allowing for choice in the reading materials. By creating the belief that reading is important, students will more readily share and become more involved in their reading. Students themselves expressed the desire to have their teacher read aloud more frequently, which is an example of the motivational power that reading aloud can have in the classroom. Students have the chance to hear fluent reading and can connect with books they may have trouble reading alone. Having such a small sample size was a limitation of this study and should be addressed for further research.

In addition to the previous study by Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009), Albright and Arial (2005) also examined the use of read alouds in the classroom. In the previous study Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) examined the students’ views of read alouds and their benefits. In this study Albright and Arial (2005) focused on the teachers’ views of read alouds rather than the students’.

Albright and Arial (2005) examined the use of read alouds in middle school classrooms through the use of a survey of middle school teachers. In this study, the researchers examined the use of read alouds in the middle school classroom and the purpose for using them. The independent variable was the survey. The dependent variable was the teacher responses.
The sample in this study consisted of 141 middle school teachers from a large Texas city located near a university. The teachers were chosen from three different schools. The researchers attended faculty meetings and discussed their survey with teachers, asking for volunteers to complete them.

The surveys were distributed to all the middle school teachers in the district. Teachers were asked to complete the surveys and return them to the researchers. The survey had two sections, the first asking about the teachers’ demographics, such as subjects and grades taught. The second section asked the question: “Do you read aloud to your students?” (Albright & Arial, 2005, p. 583). If teachers answered yes to this question, they were asked 3 more questions about their classroom read alouds. Teachers who responded “no” were given 5 choices to answer why they didn’t.

The researchers found that the majority, 85.8%, of teachers use read alouds in their classroom. Reasons for read alouds included modeling proper reading mechanics to students, making the texts more accessible to all students, reinforcing content or understanding, and simple enjoyment. Researchers found that teachers of reading, special education, and language arts were more likely to conduct read alouds in their classroom. Teacher did not use a variety of texts for their read alouds. The majority of the teachers responded that they use chapter books for read alouds while “other” was a close second. Items teachers listed under the “other” category included poems, short stories, overheads and handouts. Picture books, magazines, and newspapers were the less frequently (>20%) chosen. Of those teachers (14%) who responded they don’t read aloud, 75% taught subjects outside the main content areas such as band, physical education, art, and technology. Fourteen of those teachers responded that reading aloud was
inappropriate for the class they teach. One of the more interesting responses came from an English teacher who said she didn’t do read alouds because she wasn’t sure her voice would hold up throughout the day. In summary, the researchers discovered that while teachers understand the importance of reading aloud, they may not understand the full potential and benefits of reading aloud in all subject areas.

Researchers concluded that teachers need a variety of reading materials for read aloud. Based on teacher responses read alouds incorporate many other reading strategies that will benefit students’ reading levels and reading motivation. Materials need to be engaging and age or grade level appropriate. They recommended that teachers read aloud not only for content knowledge but for enjoyment. The researchers suggested that teachers pre-read the material to become familiar with them and practice effective read aloud strategies to engage readers. The teachers also need to encourage students to make personal connections with the reading material in order for reading motivation to increase.

In the last study Albright and Arial (2005) focused on the teachers’ view and uses of read alouds in the classroom. This next study also supports the use of read alouds in the classroom but focused on the students’ use and benefits of read alouds. Cho and Choi (2008) observed that read alouds encourage students to become more aware of language development and engaged in reading. The students in this survey were English Language Learners in Korea but showed interest in read alouds and advancement in reading through the intervention.

Cho and Coi (2008) investigated the effects of reading interventions at the middle school level. They examined whether a combination of read alouds and self-selected reading experiences would benefit sixth grade Korean middle school students in the area of language and
literacy development. The independent variable was the type of instruction: instruction through a combination of read aloud and self-selected reading experiences-versus a traditional English curriculum. The dependent variable was student progress in language and interest in reading.

The sample of this study consisted of 56 Korean middle school students. These students had been studying English as a foreign language since the third grade. All participants were taught by the same teacher.

The participants of this study were assigned to experimental and comparison groups with 28 students in each. The experimental group received 10 to 15 minutes of read alouds from their teacher each day during regular classroom instruction. The experimental group also received time for self-selected reading during an additional “extracurricular” class which lasted forty minutes once a week. Students completed reading related activities during their regular and extracurricular class. Students also created questions, which were used for contests, about the books they read during free reading time. The comparison group participated in the regular English curriculum and received no read alouds from their teacher. The comparison group also had an extracurricular class but was provided no English instruction during that time. Both groups were given the opportunity to use an English library consisting of 300 books and 100 audio books. Students were given a 20-item language pre and post test, as well as a pre and post attitude questionnaire and a seven-item anxiety questionnaire. Students from the experimental group also completed a final questionnaire following the study. Finally, students’ voluntary use of the English library was observed and documented.

Results indicated a significant increase for the experimental group in every section of the language tests, while the comparison group’s scores declined. Experimental groups also showed
a significant increase in confidence and interest in reading pre and post test, comparison group’s scores stayed about the same. Based on the anxiety test, students in the experimental group had less anxiety following the intervention while, students in the comparison group showed slightly more anxiety. Eighty-nine percent of the students in the experimental group found read alouds and silent reading helpful and 86% of them said they would definitely like to continue silent reading in middle school. It was also observed that students from the experimental group checked out a total of 350 books from the English library. The comparison group which had the same access to the English library as the experimental group checked out no books during the 21-week experiment.

Based on the results of the study, students’ English language development and interest in reading is increased through read alouds and free reading. The authors propose that reading progress can happen by simply hearing stories and not only through the traditional English curriculum. This exemplifies the benefits of reading aloud in the classroom. The increase in reading interest and confidence were important measures because as their interest increases so does the desire to improve in reading. The researchers concluded that in order for students to continually progress in reading, they need to be aware of how improvement in reading occurs in the first place and that can be accomplished through read alouds in the classroom.

The previous study by Cho and Choi (2008) showed that students’ interest in reading increased through teacher led read alouds. In the following study by Meloy, Deville, and Frisbie (2000) examined the use of read alouds to benefit students on standardized tests. Standardized tests are an important part of determining a student’s progress. If students struggle with reading from the curriculum they will find standardized tests just as difficult. The wording in the
questions can be difficult for students to comprehend and they will spend more time trying to figure out meaning from the question than they do in answering the question. The benefits of read alouds as an accommodation during standardized testing were the focus of this next study by Meloy, Deville, and Frisbie (2000).

Meloy, Deville, and Frisbie (2000) examined the effects of using read alouds as an accommodation during standardized testing. They examined whether the use of read alouds would affect the standardized test scores of students with and without learning disabilities. The independent variable was the format for taking standardized test: read aloud versus read silently, and the students’ ability level: students with a learning disability versus those without a learning disability. The dependent variable was the students’ score for the students on the standardized test.

The sample consisted of 260 Midwestern students from two different schools. There were 98 sixth grade participants, 84 seventh grade, and 78 eighth graders. Of the 260 total participants, 129 were girls and 131 were boys. Twenty-four percent, 62, of the students had learning disabilities in reading (LD-R) and 76%, 198, of the students had no disability (Non-LD).

The researchers administered a standardized test to the student participants under two conditions. One hundred twenty-seven students received standard administration of the test with no accommodations. One hundred thirty-three of the student participants received the accommodation of having the test read aloud to them. Each student completed all areas of the test under the same condition. The areas being tested were; Science, Usage and Expression, Math and Problem Solving, and Reading Comprehension. Testing occurred during 6 consecutive school days in the school’s classrooms. All students received grade appropriate tests,
administered by experienced proctors. The researcher leading the read aloud groups followed a script created by the authors and fellow teachers. Administration of all tests took essentially the same amount of time, with three of the read aloud tests lasting longer than the standard corresponding time.

The results of the study showed that read alouds increased student scores in all areas. There was a significant difference in the scores of students with a learning disability and those without, the latter scoring higher in all areas. The normal curve equivalent increased for students with a learning disability from 30.28 to 50.09, and for students without learning disability 55.35 to 68.40. Additionally, the score variability was smaller for the Non-LD group in the read aloud condition than the LD-R groups.

The authors concluded from this study a number of findings consistent and inconsistent with previous research. They found that overall the read aloud accommodation was a benefit to all students participating and not just to those with a learning disability in reading. Using the read aloud accommodation for all testing areas increased scores because students were able to focus on the content rather than reading and comprehending each individual question (Meloy et al., 2000). Test makers attempt to assess students’ understanding of information from the content areas but, since the questions are multiple choice and involve much reading, the tests mostly assess the ability to read and comprehend questions. They saw the greatest increase in score on the Reading Comprehension section. They consider the accommodation of reading aloud for the reading comprehension test inappropriate because it threatens the validity of the scores. They tested it anyway to show the effects of the misuse of reading aloud by educators when administering those tests. They concluded that read aloud should not be used when reading is
the focus of the test (Meloy et al., 2000). They agree that further research needs be done to assess the benefits and pitfalls of reading aloud as an accommodation. They felt that a larger LD-R population could give them more stable results. They also felt that using students as their own control groups and allowing them to test under both conditions would increase the accuracy of their scores.

The previous study by Meloy, Deville, and Frisbie (2000) examined the benefits of read alouds for students during standardized testing. While some educators may say that reading aloud disrupts the validity of standardized testing it is important to note the benefits reading aloud has on students’ reading comprehension for academic subjects outside of reading. The benefits of reading aloud versus silently on reading comprehension tests was the focus of Dizer, Hale, Hawkins, Neddenreip, Skinner, and Williams’ (2007) study.

Dizer, Hale, Hawkins, Neddenreip, Skinner, and Williams (2007) focused their research on reading comprehension and the effects of the reading mode on student comprehension. The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between silent reading comprehension and aloud reading comprehension. The independent variables were silent reading and reading aloud. The dependent variables were the students’ comprehension scores.

The sample of this study consisted of 51 elementary students and 42 high school students. There were 24 males and 27 females, of which 5 were African-American and 46 Caucasian, in the elementary group. There were 22 4th graders and 29 5th graders. Seventeen males and 25 females made up the high school participants of which 15 were African-American, 2 were Asian, 4 Hispanic, and 21 were Caucasian. There were 37 10th graders, 3 11th graders, and 2 12th graders.
Elementary students went through the intervention from October to November and high school students from October to February. Each step of the research was performed in a quiet area of the school away from other classes and students. Students were initially given 3 reading passages to assess their words correct per minute (WCPM). Their median score from all three tests were used to place them in three groups: Mastery, Instructional, and Frustrational. Twenty-five elementary students were at the Mastery level, 17 at the Instructional level and 9 at the frustrational level. Thirty-six secondary students were at the Mastery level, 6 at the Instructional level, and 0 at the Frustrational level. Students were tested on 3 different occasions, apart from special circumstances, and read 3 passages on day one and two. Each passage contained 400 words and was on level with each student’s reading level. On day 3 students took 3 subtests from a standardized reading test consisting of; letter word identification, reading fluency, and passage comprehension.

During one session of the intervention students were given an on level reading passage and told to read the passage silently at their normal pace. Students’ WCPM were calculated following reading and they were then given comprehension questions about the passage they read. This procedure was followed for the second and third passages as well.

During the second session, students were asked to read the passages aloud at their normal pace. Students WCPM were calculated for the read aloud and they were also given comprehension questions covering their passage. This same procedure was followed for the other two passages during the read aloud sessions.
The final sessions consisted of the students completing the three subtests for the standardized reading test. Each of the three subtests were given on the same day with students completing them in the same room as the other sessions.

The results of the study indicated that student reading comprehension was higher for reading aloud than it was for reading silently. Reading comprehension for the elementary students was significantly higher for the read aloud, 8.33, than silent reading, 7.77. The secondary students’ reading comprehension was significantly higher at 7.17 during the read aloud than 6.62 during the silent reading session. The total for both groups showed a significantly higher score, 7.75, for reading aloud than for reading silently, 7.19. Further, elementary students read an average of 99.31 WCPM, while the secondary students read 140.57 WCPM for an average of 117.95. There was no significant interaction found between grade level or reading mode, aloud or silently. There was, however, a significant difference between grade level comprehension among students. Additionally, the elementary students scored significantly higher than the secondary students, 8.05 and 6.89 respectively.

Dizer et al. (2007) concluded that students perform better on comprehension questions when they read the passage aloud as opposed to silently. This actually is contrary to previous research stating that reading aloud is a hinderance to comprehension (Dizer et al., 2007). The researchers found that no matter what the students’ reading level or grade level was, they still benefited and answered more comprehension questions correctly when they read aloud. Researchers feel that their results could be slightly skewed; however, since when students read aloud and didn’t understand a word they were redirected by the researcher. When students read silently there was no way to know if they read every word correctly or if they even read every
word. Dizer et al. (2007) feel that for further research silent reading and reading aloud should be considered two separate skills. The researchers felt that to achieve more realistic results, the study should be replicated to include more at-risk readers. They felt as though the at-risk readers were less likely to participate in reading research which left them with a higher level of level and above level readers for their intervention. Overall, though the researchers found that reading aloud was a benefit to student comprehension when compared to reading silently. There were many threats to the validity of the data but minor tweaks to future research could address those issues to receive more reliable results.

The previous research found that reading aloud was a benefit to student reading comprehension. Bahous, Nabhani and Oveni (2008), however, examined the use of read alouds on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of kindergarten students. The authors also discuss different methods to use during the use of teacher led read alouds.

Bahous, Nabhani, and Oveini (2008) examined the effects of using the read aloud strategy in a kindergarten classes. This case study focused on the use of read alouds and the development of vocabulary and comprehension in kindergarten students whose first language was Arabic and learned French as a second language. The researchers’ focus of the study was two main questions: 1) What is the impact of a read-aloud strategy on young children’s vocabulary development? and 2) What is the impact of a read aloud strategy on young children’s comprehension skills? The dependent variable was teacher observation, interviews and student writings. The independent variable was the use of read alouds as a means of instruction.

The sample in this case study consisted of 53, five to six year old kindergarten students. There were 27 girls and 26 boys from economically disadvantaged homes (Bahous et al. 2008).
The students’ native language was Arabic and they were learning French as a second language. The majority of the students had insufficient at home literacy experience prior to attending school.

Students were separated into two groups in each of the two classes. The read aloud intervention lasted 10 weeks. Nine weeks were dedicated to the children listening to five fiction stories with the tenth week being set aside for conferences with select students from the two classrooms. The teachers covered each read aloud session twice per class. Each reading session consisted of the same core learning strategies. Students were first introduced to text features of the books they read such as title, cover page, author, and illustrator. Next, students were asked to make predictions about the books they read based on the title and pictures. Throughout the lesson there was a lot of interaction between the students and the teachers. Students made comments about the story, made predictions, defined vocabulary words, and answered questions linked to critical thinking skills. All sessions were recorded and transcribed for data collection purposes. At the end of every week students were asked to draw a picture and write about the story they had read during the week. The last week of data collection consisted of conferences with 7 targeted students from each class.

Bahous et al. (2008) used three methods to collect data; student writing, observations, and conferences. Student writing was analyzed following each story to examine the use of the new vocabulary words. Observations were done by the researcher after the 1st week to allow the students to get used to the sessions and routine. The focus of the observations was the responses of the students and their interactions with their teachers. Finally, conferences were used with 7
targeted students from both classes. Students were placed in 3 different categories; High Achieving, Average, and Learning Difficulty.

Observations revealed that children were able to explain target words correctly when asked to. Through the interactions with teachers it was also observed that students were able to recall vocabulary words from previous sessions and apply them to new characters and new stories. Students’ vocabulary development was promoted through the use of visual cues as well, as evidence by their ability to figure out the meaning of new words through pictures. During observations it was also noticed that students helped other students find meanings to new words through interactions. Students were also able to learn new strategies through the use scaffolding done by the teacher. Further, students were able to form opinions, make their own predictions, and build on their background knowledge through discussion and student teacher interaction. Students were able to make connections to their own lives and share those experiences with their classmates.

Student writing samples revealed that for each story that was read, an average of 34 of 53 students or 64% of the students were able to use the new vocabulary words in their responses. The rest of the students were all able to construct meaningful sentences but did not use the new vocabulary words. Student writings also revealed that 42 of 53 students, 79%, were able to recall at least one major story event.

The conferences during the tenth week showed that the high achieving students were able to identify 37 out of 38 new vocabulary words correctly. The average students were able to identify words 33 of 38 times with one student identifying 34 out of 38. The struggling learners were able to identify 28 and 25 out of 38 respectively.
Overall, the researchers found that students benefited from having been read aloud to and were able to acquire new vocabulary. Students were able to enhance their learning through the use of questions during the reading which helped to supplement their learning. They feel this is an important skill that could be utilized with all students and not just kindergarten classes (Bahous et al. 2008). They concluded that it is important for the teacher leading the read aloud to plan ahead for the reading and to have vocabulary to introduce. Teachers should be prepared to engage the students during the read aloud in way that encourages participation. Students need engaging texts and strategies taught through the use of teacher scaffolding (Bahous et al. 2008). The use of challenging questions is also important and requires students to think critically and access background knowledge to answer. While this study was focused on students learning a second language, the skills being developed and taught would also benefit a reader in their first language as well.

Overall, this research shows that read alouds are a desired activity by students in the classroom (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) found that students preferred read alouds in class to other reading related activities. Albright and Arial (2005) stated that the use of read alouds are beneficial in teaching students to use reading strategies. Cho and Choi (2008) showed that read alouds increased student motivation and interest in reading since it was a low pressure activity that involved critical thinking. Meloy et al. (2000) found that when students are read aloud to during standardized testing their reading comprehension scores increased. This is beneficial because preparing students for testing by using read alouds, would increase their awareness of the structures of standardized tests (Meloy et al., 2000). Research by Dizer et al. (2007) revealed that students perform better when they read aloud versus silently.
Students can better comprehend the material and make sense of it because they can hear themselves. Bahous et al. (2008) showed that read alouds build vocabulary in students and that read alouds allow a good opportunity to scaffold new learning.

**Conclusion**

The summaries in this chapter introduced pertinent information concerning motivation and read alouds. Nelson and Debacker (2008) found that student motivation is tied to their connection to their peers and to their learning environment. Based on the findings of Marinak and Gambrell (2008), using rewards to motivate students works best when those rewards are proximal to the desired behavior, which in this case is reading. When students are reading materials as a reward they are more likely to read as an independent activity. Jolley (2008) found that giving students video game based graphic novels increased motivation and interest in reading. McCrudden, Perkins, and Putney (2005) found that students’ reading motivation increased when teachers read aloud to them in class and gave them time to practice reading individually. When students have time to practice reading with no structure and no pressure they become more motivated to read. Lippe and Weber (1996) found that student motivation and confidence grew when reading aloud was used as an in-class reading activity. The authors also found that when students were exposed to different types of books, students become more comfortable reading for enjoyment (Lippe and Weber, 1996).

Read alouds play an important role in reading instruction. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that students enjoy reading instruction more when the teacher reads aloud and shares new books with the class. Read alouds increase motivation and interest in reading and students show a strong desire to have their teacher read aloud during class (Corcoran and Mamalakis, 2009).
Albright and Arial (2005) found that read alouds function as an opportunity to teach additional reading strategies but should also be done for enjoyment. Next, Cho and Choi (2008) found that confidence and interest in reading increase when English language Learners are read aloud to by their teachers. Research has shown that when read alouds were used on standardized tests students’ reading comprehension scores increased (Meloy et al., 2000). While the authors don't recommend using read alouds for standardized testing, the results indicate the positive effect reading aloud has on student reading comprehension (Meloy et al., 2000). Dizer et al. (2007) found that when students read aloud they perform better than when they read silently. Students are able to better comprehend what they read and answer more comprehension questions correctly when read out loud (Dizer et al., 2007). Finally, reading aloud increased student vocabulary gains in students and the use of asking questions during class read aloud increased student comprehension of the material being covered (Bahous et al., 2008).

The studies above exhibit the basic components of my research and support the use of read alouds in the classroom as a motivational tool.
Chapter 3

Procedures for the Study

The purpose of this study was to see how using read alouds to teach reading comprehension strategies affects students’ comprehension and motivation. I hypothesized that students would learn and use the strategies effectively when the strategies were taught to the students through the use of read alouds. In the following sections, the population sample, the procedures used, and how the data were collected are described.

Description of Sample Population

Participants were eleven third and fifth grade students who attended an inner city K-8 school in a large urban Midwestern City. Of the eleven 5 were girls and 6 were boys. There were 5 third graders and 6 fourth graders. All 12 students within the classroom were given permission slips; 11 were returned. All 11 participants were of African American descent. The mean age of the participating students was 10.55 with a range of 9.9 to 11.3.

At the time of the study, I was the primary teacher for all the participating students and was with them throughout the school day. Students received 1.5 hours of reading instruction per day in the split grade-level classroom. Five of the 11 students also received an additional reading support outside of the classroom 3 times a week for an hour each session.

The school adhered to the *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt* (Cooper and Pikulski, 2006) curriculum for reading instruction. Teachers were encouraged to follow the daily lesson plans included in the curriculum. Typically one reading strategy would be the focus for the week and was integrated through the daily lesson plans. Students typically rushed through their reading and paid little to no attention to the comprehension aspect of the lesson. When reading out loud
students would skip over words they didn't know and would pass over sections that didn't make sense to them. They were missing out on vital skills and knowledge that were essential for good reading comprehension. Students could describe different reading strategies such as re-reading and questioning, but were unable to use them effectively. Peter, the target student, struggled with the reading lesson plans. During lessons, Peter was not engaged and tended to work slower than the other students. He could use the reading strategies we discussed with teacher assistance but struggled to apply the knowledge on his own. His work was generally well below grade level and indicated he needed to make better use of the reading strategies learned in class. In the next section, the procedures for the study are described.

**Description of Procedure**

Throughout the research, all participants received the same instruction. The study began with a reading attitude and motivational survey administered to all students. A copy of the administered survey can be seen in Appendix A. Students were then asked to complete a reading comprehension pretest which consisted of a reading passage followed by comprehension questions taken from the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-4* (Caldwell and Leslie, 2006). The test was administered to the whole group but was completed silently. Students did not receive any assistance during the tests and were told to use reading strategies they had learned. The pretest can be found in Appendix B.

The following four weeks consisted of daily lessons lasting about 45 minutes each. Lesson plans were chosen from *The Comprehension Toolkit*, but were modified to suit the needs of the study (Harvey & Goudvis, 2005).
On days one, two and four of every week I explicitly taught lessons to the students. Each lesson followed the same pattern; connect and engage, model and read aloud, guide, practice independently, and finally, share the learning. During the connect and engage portion of lesson plans students were engaged a number of ways to make the lesson more exciting. Engaging and connecting included asking questions to activate background knowledge and allowing for the students to share with each other. This is also when the reading strategy being taught that day is introduced. The model and read aloud section of the lesson plans consisted of me reading aloud to the students, modeling my use of the reading strategy. I stop to think out loud and fill in an anchor chart that will be used during the lesson. During the guided portion of the lesson plan, students were encouraged to start taking their own notes using the reading strategy. Following the guided practice, students were encouraged to practice the strategies independently. We then shared our post it notes and new learning with the class. Days three and five of all weeks were independent practice days for the students. Weeks 1 and 2 were identical to each other in terms of instruction, as were weeks 3 and 4.

**Weeks 1 and 2**

During weeks 1 and 2 the students and I focused on the skill of Activate and Connect. Activate and Connect is a strategy in which readers use what they know to figure out what they don’t know. Students were asked to think about all the things they knew already to make sense of things they did not yet understand. In reading that means when the reader is reading about birds, the reader uses all the information he already knows about birds to help guide his learning. Students shouldn’t be blank slates when learning new information and should instead learn to merge their background knowledge with the new learning.
Day 1 during weeks one and two consisted of the lesson plan titled “Follow the Text Signposts.” I introduced the students to various texts and asked them to notice any of their text features. Students were asked to think about how those features would help them with their comprehension. I then read aloud an article from *Scholastic Super Science Magazine*, titled “Animal Keeper” to them noting the various features of the text and how the features helped me better comprehend what I was reading. I then modeled to them how to create a Feature/Purpose chart (see Figure 3.1) by listing the different features I noticed and their purposes.

![Feature/Purpose Anchor Chart](image)

*Figure 3.1. Feature/Purpose Anchor Chart*

I then guided the students to find features in the same article that we didn’t have listed yet and list them on the chart themselves. As a group we then continued to work on our charts. I continued to work on the anchor chart on the chalkboard while the students worked on their self created charts at their seats. The students were then given the opportunity to practice independently by using post it notes to highlight different features and their purposes. Finally, the students shared their new learning with the group.

Day 2 during weeks one and two the lesson plan was “Merge Your Thinking With New Learning.” During this lesson I encouraged students to think about the idea of merged thinking
and how new learning happens. I read aloud from *Elephant: An Eyewitness Book* (Redmond, 2000) and modeled my new thinking and some of the language that is associated with it. For example, when I’m reading and I hear the word “Wow” in my head that signals to me I’ve learned something new. As I continued to read I created an anchor chart (see Figure 3.2) showing that language.

![New Language Anchor Chart](image)

*I discussed how certain words signal to me that I have learned something new and how to be aware of them. Students were then guided through the process while I continued to read aloud by using post it notes to track their language of learning. Following the read aloud, students practiced independently with various nonfiction texts and used post it notes to track their thinking. We came together as a group at the end and filled in our anchor chart with more new words.*
Day 3 consisted of independent practice when students worked in self-selected text while practicing the strategies we learned on days one and two. Students kept track of their learning on post-it notes and were able to share their learning with their classmates at the end of the session.

On Day 4, of both week 1 and 2, we completed the lesson plan titled “Connect the New to the Known.” Students were engaged by allowing them to discuss the topic amongst themselves to try to figure out what we may be learning that day. I modeled how I use my background knowledge in understanding new information. I read aloud the Elephant: An Eyewitness Book (Redmond, 2000) again and showed them how I used what I know to understand what I don’t know by creating an anchor chart (see Figure 3.3) outlining what I know and how I connect that with what I just learned.

We discussed misconceptions and how to clear them up through reading. Students were then guided through the use of the strategy “connecting the new to the known” and worked to complete their own anchor charts. Students were then paired up and worked together on the strategy. They continued to work on their charts and kept track of their learning with post-it notes.
notes. We then conferred as a group and shared our new learning and its connection to the knowledge we already possessed. Segregation

Days 5 was the same as Day 3 in that students practiced the recently taught reading strategies independently, keeping track of their learning on post it notes. Students were encouraged to use all of the strategies that were taught during the week when practicing in their self-selected texts.

**Weeks 3 and 4**

For weeks 3 and 4 our focus was the skill Asking Questions. Asking questions helps students clarify and strengthen their understanding while reading. Questioning allows students to notice when they have come to something that is confusing and how to correct it. Students learn that answers to their questions can be found not only in the text but numerous other sources. It encourages them to find a purpose in their reading since it focuses on making sense of what they are reading. When students read using the questioning strategy they read with an awareness that what they read needs to make sense.

Day 1 during weeks 3 and 4 consisted of the lesson “Question the Text.” To connect and engage the students, I explained the strategy of questioning and began an anchor chart. I modeled the questioning strategy by reading *The Stupids Have a Ball* (Allard and Marshall, 1984) out loud and posted my questions on our anchor chart (see Figure 3.4).
I put my question on the chart and when or if I found an answer I placed a post it note at that spot in the text. I guided the students by continuing the read aloud but invited them to write down questions they had and put them on the anchor chart. If their question was answered they wrote that answer down next to the question on the chart followed by where they found the answer. Students then worked independently in a book of their choice. They kept track of their questions and answers on post it notes and created their own charts. At the end of the lesson we came together and shared our questions and answers with the group.

On Day 2 we focused on the lesson “Read to Discover Answers.” Students and I engaged in a brainstorming session in which we talked about different ways of finding answers to questions we came across when we read. I then created an anchor chart (see Figure 3.5) listing some of those strategies we generated.
Then I read aloud to them from *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters* (Long and Obama, 2010) and focused on demonstrating the strategy of finding answers. I modeled how to use text clues and how to use other sources to find answers. Students practiced independently and conferred with classmates about their questions and some of the strategies used in finding answers. We reconvened at the end of the lesson and students shared more of the strategies they used and how they either found answers or needed to do more research to find answers.

During day 3, students practiced the strategies we learned independently. They chose their own book and kept track of their thinking through the use of post it notes and self-created anchor charts. Students were also given the opportunity to work with a partner and discuss their questions with their classmates.

Day 4 of weeks 3 and 4 the focus of our lesson was to “Ask Questions to Expand Thinking.” The lesson began with an introduction of the strategy and the connecting of the
students’ background knowledge to it. Students were introduced to the idea of learning and
wondering through a question and answer anchor chart (see Figure 3.6) similar to that of day 1.

Figure 3.6. Question/Answer Anchor Chart

I modeled by reading aloud and demonstrating how I confront confusing information in
reading and what I did to make sure I fully understood what I was reading. As I continued to
read aloud students were encouraged to write their own responses on post it notes and self-
created anchor charts. Students then worked with each other and filled in their own anchor
charts and post it notes. Following the lesson we shared our learning and discussed some of the
big ideas of the lesson.

Day 5 was another day of independent practice. Students were given post it notes and
were encouraged to use all the strategies during the 4 weeks while reading their self-selected
text. This was the final day of instruction and lessons and concluded with a sharing of the
knowledge gained over the last 4 weeks.
Post Testing

Following the 4 weeks of instruction, students were again tested and they completed the survey on motivation and a post test consisting of a reading selection and comprehension questions. Students were tested under the same conditions as the pre test during the post test. The same survey as the pre test was administered during the post test. The major difference was the reading comprehension post test. A different reading passage with different questions was used during the reading comprehension post test. The reading comprehension posttest can be seen in Appendix C.

Description of Data Collection

The Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (Caldwell and Leslie, 2006) was used as a pre test and post test measure to determine the increase of comprehension. The comprehension pre test and post test were identical in design, but contained different reading selections and questions. The students were given a reading motivation survey before instruction began and then received the same survey following the 4 weeks of instruction. The target student’s post it note and anchor chart submissions were analyzed for the number completed per day as well as his understanding of the strategy used.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to see if using read alouds to teach reading comprehension strategies affect comprehension and motivation in students. Participants were given instruction of two new comprehension strategies, activate and connect and ask questions. Each strategy was explicitly taught through the use of read alouds lead by the teacher. Students were given time to practice the strategy independently and were also able to share their learning with the class.
Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects read aloud had on student reading comprehension and motivation. First, students were asked to answer a reading motivation survey. Students then completed a reading pre test, which consisted of a reading passage and followed by comprehension questions. Next, students received the read aloud intervention for 4 weeks. Finally, students completed the reading motivation survey and the reading comprehension post test. I hypothesized that students would be more motivated to learn reading strategies with read alouds and would perform higher on their post test with their new knowledge of reading strategies. The data analysis in this chapter includes pre and post test measures for the survey and reading tests for the targeted student as well as the entire class. I also present the analysis of the targeted student’s daily work during the intervention.

Results

Students completed a reading motivation survey before and following the intervention. The survey was designed using a 5-point scale where 1 meant very happy and 5 meant very upset. This means that, in theory, the higher the score the less motivated a student was to read, and the lower the score the more motivated a student was to read. The mean score for the entire class on the pretest was 56.3. The target student, Peter, scored a 49 on his pretest. This suggests that Peter’s attitude toward reading was indifferent. Following the 4 week read aloud intervention students were again administered the survey. The mean score for the class on the posttest was 52.8, a decrease of 3.5, while Peter scored a 56 an increase of 7. The change in
Peter’s score suggests that his attitude toward reading became slightly more negative following the intervention (see Figure 4.1).

*Figure 4.1. Pre and Post Test Student Survey Scores.*

![Pre and Post Student Survey Scores](image)

The target student’s score, along with 3 other students, went up after the intervention, however, all other scores decreased. An increase in score suggests that the student’s attitude toward reading became more negative and a decrease in score suggest a more positive attitude.

**Reading Comprehension Tests**

The students completed a reading comprehension pre and post test adapted from the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-4* (Caldwell and Leslie, 2006). All students read a grade level passage followed by comprehension questions. Third and fourth grade students read level 3 and level 4 passages respectively. Everyone completed the tests in the same classroom at the same
time. Students worked independently to complete the test, reading silently at their seats. The students answered implicit and explicit questions following the passages. Scores could range from 0-8. A score of 0-5 suggested that the passage was at the student’s frustration level, 6-7 suggested that the student was at an instructional level, and an 8 suggested that the passage was at the student’s independent level. The mean score for the class on the pretest was 5.4 ranging from 3 to 7. Peter scored a 4 on his pretest which was slightly below the class mean.

Following the 4 week read aloud intervention the class’ mean score rose to 6.0, ranging from 3 to 8, and Peter’s score increased to 5. The class showed a mean score growth of .6, while Peter showed a full point increase. During the pretest 6 students scored at the frustrational level, 5 students scored at the instructional level and no students scored at the independent level. On the posttest 3 students scored at the frustrational level, 7 at the instructional level and 2 at the independent level. Each student, except one, increased his/her score from the pretest to the posttest. Three students moved from the frustrational level to the instructional level and 2 students moved from the instructional level to the independent level. Peter increased his score from 4 to 5 but remained at the frustrational level (see Figure 4.2).

![Pre and Posttest Reading Comprehension Scores](image)

*Figure 4.2. Overall Pretest and Posttest Reading Comprehension Scores.*
Peter’s Daily Participation and Progress

During the 4 week intervention, students completed daily assignments guided by my lesson plans. Students created anchor charts and filled out post it notes using the strategies they learned that day. During the first two weeks of the intervention, students were able to choose from different books for each lesson plan to work from independently. During weeks 3 and 4 students tended to work out of the same book for multiple days since these two weeks focused on questioning the text and finding answers to your questions within the text.

Peter’s daily contributions were totaled and examined for the purpose of data analysis. During the first two weeks I noticed that Peter was participating more during days when whole instruction took place. On days when independent practice took place Peter seemed to spend more time looking through the book than completing the assignment. On day 1, of weeks 1 and 2, Peter contributed 4 post it notes each week. During day 2, Peter turned in six post it notes during week one and 4 post it notes during week 2. During day 4 of weeks 1 and 2, Peter turned in 6 and 4 post it notes, respectively. On days 3 and 5 of weeks 1 and 2, which were independent practice days, Peter turned in only 3 post it notes each day (see Figure 4.3).

![Daily Post It Notes Submitted by Peter](image)

*Figure 4.3. Amount of Post It notes submitted by Peter.*
In Figure 4.4 from the first day of the first week of lesson plans, Peter, showed the ability to recognize a text feature as well as the purpose of that feature. While reading the *Scholastic Super Science Magazine* independently he was able to recognize the “table of contents” and gave a short description of its purpose to the reader on a post it note.

![Figure 4.4. Peter’s Post It note 1 from Week 1 Lesson 1](image)

During the same lesson Peter was able to identify a text feature but was unable to determine the correct purpose. In Figure 4.5, Peter lists “numbers” as the text feature but wrote that the purpose was “to take my time.” The “numbers” that he was referring to were actually step by step directions for a science experiment. He knew that the numbers were text features but did not know how to use them.

![Figure 4.5. Peter’s Post It note 2 from Week 1 Lesson 1](image)
During a week two lesson Peter used one of the signal words from our lesson plans in his post it note while reading in his book independently (see Figure 4.6). Signal words were created by the class on an anchor chart during that day’s lesson plan (see Figure 3.2). He showed that he had new learning occur by using the signal word, “Dang”. He then wrote the new information he learned following his signal word. In this post it note entry Peter was able to use a reading strategy effectively to show comprehension of his reading.

Figure 4.6. Peter’s Post It note 1 from Week 2

During days three and five, when the students had independent reading time, Peter’s responses showed he understood the reading strategies; however, the quality declined. In this post it note response from an independent work day in week 2, Peter’s responses showed understanding of the strategy but a lack of comprehension of the text. While this could be attributed to a number of factors it was a common occurrence on days when independent work was the focus. In figures 4.7 and 4.8 Peter shows that he has new learning by using the word “Wow.” He showed that he learned different parts of the world have different time zones but, his responses suggest that he misunderstood the function of time zones.

Figure 4.7. Peters Post It note 2 from Week 2
During weeks 3 and 4 the strategy being taught was switched from “Activating and Connecting” to “Questioning the Text”. Students were encouraged to write down any questions they thought of while reading on Post It notes. If they were able to find an answer to their question they wrote it down on the note. The notes were collected and counted at the end of each lesson. Figure 4.9 shows the number of question and answer Post It notes turned in by Peter after each lesson.

![Figure 4.9. Amount of Question/Answer Post It Notes Submitted by Peter.](image)
Peter submitted more Post It notes during week four, 21, than in week three, 12, suggesting he became more confident in using the reading strategy. During independent work days 3 and 5 he submitted less post it notes than on days with teacher led instruction preceding the independent learning time.

Figure 4.10 is an anchor chart submitted by Peter during day 1 of weeks 3 and 4. Students were asked to create the same anchor chart completed during the whole class lesson. During independent reading time Peter created an anchor chart with five questions. He was able to find answers to two of those questions but showed the ability to read for understanding by the types of questions he asked. The question “What is kin?” shows that Peter realized to better comprehend the reading he had to find dig deeper to find meaning. He was able to access a dictionary, a good reading strategy, to find the definition of the word and put his answer on the anchor chart.

Figure 4.10. Peter’s Question and Answer Anchor Chart.
Conclusion

To determine if the research was effective at improving reading comprehension and motivation, data was kept for the 4 week intervention. The intervention included a survey, reading strategy lesson plans and a reading comprehension pre and posttest. Students’ scores for the reading survey following the intervention moderately decreased suggesting a more positive attitude toward reading. The data presented indicate that student scores increased slightly on the reading comprehension test following the intervention. The results show that the mean score for the reading comprehension posttest was higher than that of the pretest. The majority of the students in class increased their scores on the posttest with only one student scoring lower. The target student, Peter, increased his score but did not move from one level to the next. Peter was able to show that he was able to learn the new strategies and apply them to his work, evidence by the post it notes and anchor charts he submitted. These data indicates that using read alouds as a means to teach reading strategies could benefit students and their reading comprehension. In chapter five, I will discuss more implications for this study.
Chapter 5
Conclusions

Based on previous research it has been found that reading aloud to children is beneficial to their development as readers (Albright & Arial, 2005). Something that is not as well known is the effect reading aloud has on students’ ability to learn reading strategies and increase reading comprehension. The purpose and aim of my research was to determine the effects of using read alouds to teach reading comprehension strategies to students. Wisconsin Common Core State Standards require students to use effective reading strategies to achieve their purpose in reading including reading with expression and fluency, recognizing text features and questioning the text for better comprehension. Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) found that motivation seemed to be a barrier for students when it came to learning and becoming better readers. Research shows that some students find reading important but also view it as a boring way to spend time and often do not share their reading choices with their friends (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009). This type of belief system can lead students down a path in which they are likely to struggle in reading. Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) recognized an increase in students’ motivation to read when their teachers used read alouds in class. Further, Nelson and Debacker’s (2008) research suggests that students’ class belongingness has an impact on reading motivation. Reading aloud is a communal exercise in which the entire class can participate no matter their skill level. When students are able to learn together they feel more acceptance from their peers and are more likely to participate (Nelson & Debacker, 2008). Therefore, my research focused on teaching two reading strategies using read alouds: Text Features and Questioning the Text. The research was four weeks long and consisted of teacher led lesson plans focusing on the use of read alouds
as a means to teach the students new reading strategies. The following analysis of my research will explain my results in light of past research. I will also discuss the strengths and limitations of this study as well as provide suggestions for future research.

**Explanation of Results**

Past research has shown that some children lack motivation in reading (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009). In my study as a measure to determine students’ attitudes toward reading, students were administered a 20-item reading attitude survey before and after the intervention. The lower the score for the survey the better attitude the individual would be considered to possess for reading. The mean for the class for the first survey was 56.3 while Peter, the target student scored a 49. Peter’s score increased following the intervention to a 56 while the mean for the class decreased to 52.8. Each students’ answer was scored on a scale from 1-5. Their answers were totaled which indicated their reading attitude based on the survey. An answer with a lower score was considered to mean the student had a more positive attitude about reading. A student with a higher score was considered to have a less favorable attitude toward reading.

Research by Albright and Arial (2005) shows that read alouds can be used to increase motivation and interest in students’ reading. Peter’s survey score increased following the intervention suggesting a decrease in motivation following the assessment. I question the accuracy of the survey when I compared the results to the work samples submitted by Peter and observations done during the intervention. The first time we took the survey Peter was very focused and seemed to thoughtfully answer each question. Seeing the survey for the second time, coupled with the fact that a few students complained about completing the survey again, may have lead to Peter’s increased score indicating lower motivation on the second survey. He
seemed to gaze around the room and look to others after questions were read aloud. Considering these observations I don’t feel his score is an accurate representation of his motivational reading level. The survey gives us an idea about how students tend to feel about reading but I don’t think it can be used to generalize Peter’s overall motivational reading level.

Throughout the intervention I observed Peter become more engaged in the reading activities. He began to use more post it notes to keep track of his thinking and became more critical of the information he was learning. During independent reading work days Peter was eager to share his new knowledge with myself and his classmates. During the creation of the classroom anchor charts, Peter participated and helped fill in the main classroom anchor chart with his thinking. Kristie Jolley (2008) found that when students are given books that they can connect with, their reading motivation increases. Peter appeared to show more motivation for reading books that he was able to choose. During the intervention he was allowed to choose books during the individual reading work period which seemed to help keep his interest. David participated in all activities and showed improvement throughout the intervention. He submitted more post it notes as the intervention progressed and showed an improved ability to read for comprehension based on the types of post it notes he turned in.

Ivey and Broaddus’ (2001) study suggests that reading aloud is a desirable learning strategy for students. I found this to be true in my research. Students participated eagerly in the scaffolded lessons and showed some gains in their reading comprehension test scores. Students showed an increase in score from the pre to posttest mean scores, 5.4 to 6.0. Scores on the comprehension tests ranged from 0-8. A score of 0-5 suggested that the passage was at the student’s frustration level, while a score of 6-7 suggested that the student was at an instructional
level. A score of 8 suggested that the passage was at the student’s independent level. This score change indicates a change from the frustration level during the pretest to an instructional level for the post test. Peter’s score increased from 4 to 5 meaning his level did not change during the post test, remaining at a frustration level. While the change in scores wasn’t significant nor did he change levels, Peter seemed to show better use of the reading strategies following the read aloud intervention.

Research shows that students exhibited less anxiety and more confidence in reading following teacher led instruction using read alouds (Cho & Choi, 2008). Peter showed an increase in post it notes turned in on days when teacher read aloud was the focal point of instruction. On days when Peter was left to work independently he turned in fewer post it notes. Independent work days were the days on which there was no lesson plan given prior to work time and students chose and read books independently. Students could, however, discuss their questions and post it notes with each other. Peter’s results could be based on numerous factors including his confidence level, motivation, or level of comfort with the material. Blair, Nichols and Rupley’s (2009) study found that explicit and direct teaching was essential for students to become stronger readers. Peter possibly could have benefited from more explicit instruction during independent work days.

Students become more comfortable using reading strategies that have been scaffolded and modeled by a teacher or another student (Blair et al., 2009). I found this to be true during my testing. During week 4 of testing Peter showed an increase in the number of post it notes turned in. During week 3 Peter turned in 12 post it notes, compared to 21 in week 4. Peter was exposed to more explicit and direct teaching during weeks 3 and 4 and the amount of post it notes
increased as the amount of times he was exposed to teaching increased. Bahous et al., (2008) stated that reading aloud can increase reading comprehension and motivation in students when accompanied by lesson plans and a daily routine. Peter showed an ability to increase his daily post it note contribution during the intervention, which consisted of lesson plans and a daily schedule.

My hypothesis was supported in that students were able to increase their reading comprehension scores through lessons led by teacher read alouds. Although there was only a slight increase in reading comprehension scores, the target student exhibited gains in the use of the reading strategies learned during the weekly lesson plans. This supports past research that says reading aloud is beneficial for students reading development.

**Strengths and Limitations**

The research presented here has extended upon existing studies on the effect of read alouds on student motivation and reading comprehension. The strengths of this study included various opportunities for the students to engage with one another on the use of the reading strategies presented to them. Participants were shown how to use the strategies and were then allowed to work alone or with a partner using self-selected texts. We created anchor charts as a group which were visible in the classroom the entire intervention. Students were shown multiple methods to attain success with the reading strategies and were able to use them effectively throughout the intervention.

Research suggests that students should be able to see connections in their learning and be able to integrate it into all subjects (Arial and Albright, 2005). Students were given a chance to work in nonfiction as well as fictional texts. This showed them that the strategies being taught
can be used for any type of reading that they choose to do. Whether they are reading for enjoyment or to learn new information the same strategies apply. Peter was able to use those strategies effectively during the Questioning and Answering activities. He was able to create his own questions about the text he was reading and, in turn, find answers to those in either in the same text or from another source.

Being able to teach the lessons in a smaller group setting allowed the students, particularly the target student, more individual attention. It also was beneficial that the students were familiar with me and each other. They didn’t feel any added pressure because the setting and instructor was the usual classroom and teacher.

The study was not without its limitations. One limitation of the study was the survey. Twenty items were too many for the students to stay focused on for the entire time. I would eliminate half of the questions and shorten the wording on a few of the longer questions. Due to the amount of time it took to administer the entire survey many students lost interest and began to make choices without thoroughly thinking about them.

Another drawback of this research was the lack of measure for the content of the post it notes submitted. The students completed post it notes during each lesson. During this research the number of post it notes were counted but there was no measure of the content. This left many unanswered questions: Did the student grasp the idea or fill out post it notes because they knew it was part of the lesson? Were the answers they found to the questions the correct ones? While we discussed our findings in class it would be beneficial to see the true content of the post it notes measured.
Another limitation of the study was the size of participant group. Students were able to more easily discuss the content with one another because of the small group size, but it also limited the findings. Students were representative of the surrounding population it cannot be generalized to other groups of students not fitting our sample.

The largest drawback to the study was the pre and post tests. Each student received the grade level equivalent test regardless of reading skill. The target student was below level in reading and struggled on the tests, scoring in the frustrational level. He struggled reading through the passage and understanding some of the key vocabulary. It would have benefit him more having a test that was more manageable. Having students pretest and then giving them tests based on their reading level would benefit them more. They would have a better chance of success with a test that is given on their level. It would have given us a better indication of their progress through the intervention.

**Recommendations for Student**

During the 4 week intervention Peter showed growth in his reading comprehension and ability to properly use reading strategies. With encouragement and dedication from his parents, teachers, and most importantly himself, Peter can continue to develop as a reader.

At home Peter’s parents should spend time reading aloud to him. Peter would benefit from hearing fluent reading in places other than school. If Peter becomes aware that his parents take reading seriously it is possible he will become more motivated to be a strong reader. This would help Peter create meaning for reading beyond simply receiving a grade or passing a class. According to the CCSS for Reading on Foundational skills students should read fluently and
with purpose to support reading comprehension. By hearing more fluent reading Peter will become more familiar with it and in turn become a better reader.

Peter would also benefit from weekly trips to the local public library. His parents should allow him to choose his own book to read for the week while also choosing one book they want him to read. This will expose him to topics he is interested in as well topics he might not know a lot about. By reading material he enjoys as well as things he normally wouldn’t choose he will develop the ability to establish his own point of view different from that of the author which is part of the CCSS for Reading Informational Text.

His parents could encourage Peter to read independently daily and ask him questions following his reading. His parents could create comprehension questions from the reading and discuss them with Peter. This would require his parents to read the same book and could turn into a family book club. Discussing one’s reading with other readers helps build comprehension according to the CCSS for Reading. Being able to discuss will help Peter internalize the reading and sharing his experiences with his parents will help broaden his horizons. Peter would begin making connections between different texts and begin to realize the importance reading plays in all facets of his life.

Peter’s parents could also support his progress by encouraging him to read during family activities. He could order his own meal from restaurants after reading the menu, read the directions for making dinner, or be the reader of a book to his family during a family read aloud session. All of these activities encourage Peter to comprehend what he is reading and continue his development as a reader. The CCSS for Informational texts states that students should be
able to use information from illustrations and text to demonstrate understanding of the reading. Peter would develop this skill through hands on activities reinforced by his parents.

During reading at home and in the classroom Peter should continue using post it notes to help him track his reading. When Peter has questions about the text, using post it notes will help him organize his thinking to find an answer. This will aide his parents and teachers in tracking his progress.

In the classroom Peter would benefit from more explicit and direct reading instruction including the use of read alouds. Classroom lessons should include teacher led scaffolding and modeling to reinforce proper use of reading strategies. The CCSS for Speaking and Listening requires that students are able to ask questions and answer questions from a speaker. By participating in the classroom lesson plans Peter will expand his ability to ask and answer questions to support his comprehension. Through explicit and direct classroom instruction Peter will develop his ability to think critically which will lead to better reading comprehension.

Along with explicit classroom lesson plans, Peter would benefit from continued speech and language services at school under the other health impairments section of IDEA. This would help improve his ability to speak which could improve his confidence in reading. It is important for Peter to feel comfortable when speaking and reading in front of his peers and those language services would help him achieve that.

Peter should continue to receive all his instruction in the least restrictive environment as required by IDEA. He has shown the ability to learn in the regular classroom setting and should continue to develop with his peers. Being able to interact with his peers socially may benefit Peter academically as well as behaviorally. Peter should also continue attending Title 1 services
for reading twice a week. He would receive small teacher led group instruction at his reading level which would support his reading comprehension and fluency (Blair et al., 2009). These activities would meet several of the CCSS for reading including, reading with accuracy and fluency, reading on level text for understanding, and asking and answering questions to support comprehension.

**Conclusion**

There are many recognized benefits of reading aloud to students. Research shows that students find reading aloud to be the most enjoyable reading activity in school (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001). It is known that teacher read alouds allow students to focus solely on the story and not the decoding of words. When students can “make a movie” in their mind while reading their comprehension increases because they can immerse themselves in the text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2005). My research supports previous research showing that reading aloud to students is beneficial. My study showed that students were able to learn reading strategies and make gains in their reading comprehension scores, albeit small gains. Research suggests that students see the greatest gains in reading when they are engaged in lesson plans that motivate them (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Reading aloud has been shown to motivate students and the action research findings indicate that students are able to learn from them. It is to be hoped that more educators will begin to use reading aloud in their own classrooms to teach reading strategies and motivate their students.
Appendix A
Survey

NAME__________________________  Grade___________

Circle the number that best describes how you feel about each statement.

1-Very Happy
2-Happy
3-Neither happy nor upset
4-Upset
5-Very Upset

1) How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?
   1  2  3  4  5

2) How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?
   1  2  3  4  5

3) How do you feel about reading for fun at home?
   1  2  3  4  5

4) How do you feel about getting a book for a present?
   1  2  3  4  5

5) How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?
   1  2  3  4  5

6) How do you feel about starting a new book?
   1  2  3  4  5

7) How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?
   1  2  3  4  5
8) How do you feel about reading instead of playing?
   1   2   3   4   5

9) How do you feel about going to a bookstore?
   1   2   3   4   5

10) How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?
    1   2   3   4   5

11) How do you feel when a teacher asks you to read?
    1   2   3   4   5

12) How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?
    1   2   3   4   5

13) How do you feel about reading in school?
    1   2   3   4   5

14) How do you feel about reading your school books?
    1   2   3   4   5

15) How do you feel about learning from a book?
    1   2   3   4   5

16) How do you feel when its time for reading in class?
    1   2   3   4   5

17) How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?
    1   2   3   4   5

18) How do you feel when you read out loud in class?
    1   2   3   4   5
19) How do you feel about using a dictionary?

1  2  3  4  5

20) How do you feel about taking a reading test?

1  2  3  4  5
Appendix B

3rd Grade Reading Pre-Test
Please answer the questions about the story you just read

Name_________________________________________________________

1) Why was it a special day for Carlos and Maria?
   _____________________________________________________________

2) What grades were Carlos and Maria in?
   _____________________________________________________________

3) What animal did Carlos want to see?
   _____________________________________________________________

4) Why was Maria watching the chimps so carefully?
   _____________________________________________________________

5) How did Carlos get separated from his group?
   _____________________________________________________________

6) What made Carlos realize that his classmates had left the lion house?
   _____________________________________________________________

7) Where did Carlos find the map?
   _____________________________________________________________

8) Why did Carlos go get a map from the zoo entrance?
   _____________________________________________________________
The Trip to the Zoo

The day was bright and sunny. Carlos and Maria jumped out of bed and dressed in a hurry. They didn't want to be late for school today. It was a special day because their classes were going to the zoo. When they got to school, all of the children were waiting outside to get on the bus. When everyone was there, the second and third graders got on the bus and rode to the zoo. On the bus, the children talked about the zoo animals that they liked the best. Joe and Carlos wanted to see the lion, king of the beasts. Maria and Angela wanted to see the chimps. Maria thought they acted a lot like people.

When they got to the zoo, their teachers divided the children into four groups. One teacher, Mr. Lopez, told them if anyone got lost to go to the ice cream stand. Everyone would meet there at noon. Maria went with the group to the monkey house, where she spent a long time watching the chimps groom each other. She wrote down all the ways that the chimps acted like people. Her notes would help her write a good report of what she liked best at the zoo.

Carlos went with the group to the lion house. He watched the cats pace in front of the glass. Carlos was watching a lion so carefully that he didn't see his group leave. Finally, he noticed that it was very quiet in the lion house. He turned around and didn't see anyone. At first he was worried. Then he remembered what Mr. Lopez had said. He traced his way back to the entrance and found a map. He followed the map to the ice cream stand, just as everyone was meeting there for lunch. Joe smiled and said, "We thought that the lion had you for lunch!"
4th Grade Reading Pre-Test
Please answer the questions about the story you just read.

Name __________________________

1) What was John Chapman’s main goal?

________________________________________________________________________

2) Why did John choose apples to plant instead of some other fruit?

________________________________________________________________________

3) Where did John get most of his seeds?

________________________________________________________________________

4) Why would John be able to get so many seeds from cider makers?

________________________________________________________________________

5) How do we know that John cared about planting apple trees?

________________________________________________________________________

6) How did John get to the many places he visited?

________________________________________________________________________

7) Name on hardship John suffered.

________________________________________________________________________

8) Why should we thank Johnny Appleseed?

________________________________________________________________________
Johnny Appleseed

John Chapman was born in 1774 and grew up in Massachusetts. He became a farmer and learned how to grow different kinds of crops and trees. John especially liked to grow and eat apples. Many people were moving west at that time. They were heading for Ohio and Pennsylvania. John knew that apples were a good food for settlers to have. Apple trees were strong and easy to grow. Apples could be eaten raw and they could be cooked in many ways. They could also be dried for later use. So in 1797, John decided to go west. He wanted to plant apple trees for people who would build their new homes there.

John first gathered bags of apple seeds. He got many of his seeds from farmers who squeezed apples to make a drink called cider. Then, in the spring, he left for the western frontier. He planted seeds as he went along. Also, he gave them to people who knew how valuable apple trees were.

John walked many miles in all kinds of weather. He had to cross dangerous rivers and find his way through strange forests. Often he was hungry, cold, and wet. Sometimes he had to hide from unfriendly Indians. His clothes became ragged and torn. He used a sack for a shirt, and he cut out holes for the arms. He wore no shoes. But he never gave up. He guarded his precious seeds and carefully planted them where they had the best chance of growing into strong trees.

John's fame spread. -He was nicknamed Johnny Appleseed. New settlers welcomed him and gratefully accepted a gift of apple seeds. Many legends grew up about Johnny Appleseed that were not always true. However, one thing is true. Thanks to Johnny Appleseed, apple trees now grow in parts of America where they once never did.
Appendix C

3rd Grade Reading Post-Test
Please answer the questions about the story you just read.

Name__________________________________________

1) The story took place on what day?

____________________________________________________________________________________

2) At the beginning of the story what was Rosa’s problem?

____________________________________________________________________________________

3) How old was Rosa on this birthday?

____________________________________________________________________________________

4) What did Rosa wish for before she blew out the candles?

____________________________________________________________________________________

5) What was on the video tape?

____________________________________________________________________________________

6) What special birthday gift did her grandfather give her?

____________________________________________________________________________________

7) How did the videotape help to solve Rosa’s problem?

____________________________________________________________________________________

8) At the end of the story where was the videotape?

____________________________________________________________________________________
A Special Birthday for Rosa

Today was the day Rosa had eagerly been waiting for, her birthday! She was very happy but she also felt sad. This would be the first birthday that she would celebrate without all her family around her. The company that Rosa's father worked for had given him a wonderful promotion. But this meant that Rosa, her parents, and her little brother, Jose, had to move to another state. Rosa liked her new home and friends. But, she really wanted to celebrate her birthday with her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all around her.

They had sent presents but it wouldn't be the same if she couldn't thank them in person. They wouldn't be there to watch her blow out all the candles. And what kind of a birthday would it be without listening to her grandparents' stories about growing up in Italy and Cuba? Also, four people could never sing as loudly or joyfully as her whole family could sing together!

That night, Mama made Rosa's favorite meal. Afterwards, there was a beautiful cake. Mother, Father, and Jose sang "Happy Birthday" while the eight candles glowed. Rosa made a wish, took a deep breath, and blew out all the candles. "I know I won't get what I wished for," she said to herself, "but I'm going to wish for it anyway." Then it was time for the presents. Rosa's father gave her the first present. It was a videotape. "I think we should play it right now before you open any more presents," her father said. He put the tape into the player. Suddenly, there on the television screen was the rest of Rosa's family smiling and waving and wishing her a happy birthday. One by one, each person on the tape asked Rosa to open the present they had sent. Her father put the tape on pause while Rosa did this. Then they explained why they had chosen that gift especially for Rosa. After all the presents were unwrapped, her family sang some favorite songs and Rosa, her mother, father, and Jose joined in.

Then, Rosa's grandfather spoke to her. "Rosa, this is a new story, one you have never heard before. I am going to tell it to you as a special birthday gift. It is about my first birthday in this country when I was very lonely for my friends and family. It is about how I met your grandmother." When Grandfather was finished, he and Grandmother blew Rosa a kiss and the tape was finished.

Rosa felt wonderful. It was almost like having her family in the room with her. Rosa hugged her parents and her little brother. "I didn't think I would get my wish but I did," she said. That night, when Mama and Papa came to say goodnight to Rosa, they found her in bed, already asleep, with the videotape next to her. It had been the best birthday ever.
4th Grade Reading Post Test
Please answer the questions about the story you just read.

Name__________________________________________________________

1) What was Amelia Earhart’s main goal?

2) What was Amelia Earhart doing in a plane when she first crossed the Atlantic?

3) How long did it take Amelia Earhart when she flew alone across the Atlantic?

4) Why would flying alone across the Atlantic be an especially dangerous thing to do?

5) What was one of the dangers of flying in those early days?

6) How do we know Amelia Earhart believed in equal rights for women?

7) What was Amelia Earhart trying to do when her plane disappear?

8) Why do you think her plane was never found?
Amelia Earhart was an adventurer and a pioneer in the field of flying. She did things no other woman had ever done before.

During World War I, Earhart worked as a nurse. She cared for pilots who had been hurt in the war. Earhart listened to what they said about flying. She watched planes take off and land. She knew that she, too, must fly.

In 1928, Earhart was the first woman to cross the Atlantic in a plane. But someone else flew the plane. Earhart wanted to be more than just a passenger. She wanted to fly a plane across the ocean herself. For four years, Earhart trained to be a pilot. Then, in 1932, she flew alone across the Atlantic to Ireland. The trip took over fourteen hours.

Flying may seem easy today. However, Earhart faced many dangers. Airplanes had just been invented. They were much smaller than our planes today. Mechanical problems happened quite often. There were also no computers to help her. Flying across the ocean was as frightening as sailing across it had been years before. Earhart knew the dangers she faced. However, she said, "I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be a challenge to others."

Earhart planned to fly around the world. She flew more than twenty thousand miles. Then, her plane disappeared somewhere over the huge Pacific Ocean. People searched for a long time. Finally they gave up. Earhart and her plane were never found.
References


