

INCREASING READING MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENT IN THE
INTERMEDIATE CLASSROOM THROUGH INDEPENDENT READING TIME,
INTERACTIVE BOOK TALKS, AND COOPERATIVE BOOK ACTIVITIES

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Abstract
of
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Statement of the Problem

The reading of real books is the ultimate aim of reading instruction and the hinge that opens the door to a lifelong love of reading. However there appears to be little available time for self-selected reading of real books in today's test driven, standard's based curriculum. The time needed to achieve this goal of motivated, independent readers has taken a back seat to reading time filled with instruction on phonics, skills and comprehension strategies. Children have been expected to "read when they finish their work" or "read at home." Educators face a three dimensional dilemma: teaching children how to read, providing time, space, and selection of relevant literature in the classroom, and finally, instilling in children the desire to choose to read such that they become lifelong readers. This study aimed to address the effects of reorganizing the classroom so that children spend more time actually

reading than they do learning about reading. The study proposed that teachers can increase student motivation to read by allowing self-selection of appropriately leveled books, providing time within the school day for independent reading, and engaging students in interactive book discussions and book activities with peers. Determining a valid approach to motivating students to do more wide reading may help educators counteract the decline in reading as students enter the intermediate grades and on into adulthood.

Sources of Data

The teacher researcher established her classroom as the treatment group in order to follow students' reading preferences, volume, interest, and instructional reading level over a 10week period. Students in the fifth grade intervention classroom received 20 minutes of independent reading time, self-selection of reading materials, and an additional time allotment of 10 minutes for literature based social activities and book talks. Data gathered from the intervention classroom included the following: (a) student surveys that addressed preferences, attitudes, and behaviors involving reading; (b) on-going reading logs and Student Record Reports from the Accelerated Reader program that monitored reading volume; (c) Pre and post STAR Reading tests to determine instructional reading level and a reading range ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development); and, (d) researcher observations and notes taken during book talks, as well as book wall contributions made by students in treatment group.

Conclusions Reached

Several conclusions were reached at the end of this study. Students in the intervention classroom demonstrated several positive effects of the treatment:

1. Their motivation to read was enhanced through book talks and book wall contributions as meaning and personal connections were made resulting in deeper understanding of the text.

2. Their Instructional Reading Level (IRL) improved as observed in a positive correlation between pre and post scores on the STAR Reading Assessment.

3. Their self efficacy beliefs increased as seen in students choosing books at a higher level, completing more books, and learning to share their personal reflections of the literature.

4. Students demonstrated an increased eagerness to read as a result of experiencing reading as an interactive social activity shared with peers.

It can be concluded that a strong relationship exists between providing independent reading time and interactive book activities and the students' desire to read and continue reading.

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Date

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Within the community of educators, questions regularly focus on the quest to create lifelong readers. Educators who compared the 2004 National Assessment of Educational Progress scores with those from 1971 have found that after 30 years dedicated to national educational reform and raising reading standards, adult recreational reading of literature was down 22%. It appears that our schoolchildren grow into adulthood without a lifelong love of reading. Much is known about the skills and strategies that readers need, but the motivational factors that inspire children to read are not nearly so well documented (Anderson et al., 1985). Research suggests "the amount of independent, silent reading children do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement" (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 64). The reading of real books is the ultimate aim of reading instruction and the hinge that opens the door to a lifelong love of reading. However, there appears to be little time available for self selected reading of real books in today's test driven, standard's based curriculum. The time needed to achieve this goal of motivated, independent readers has taken a back seat to reading time filled with instruction on phonics, skills, and comprehension strategies. Children have been expected to "read when they finish their work" or "read at home." Educators face a three dimensional dilemma: teaching children how to read, providing time, space, and a selection of relevant literature in the classroom, and finally, instilling in children the desire to choose to read such that they become lifelong readers.

Statement of the Problem

The results of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al., 1985) focused the nation's attention on the fact that children spend less and less time reading outside of school. The report stated that fifth graders read four minutes a day outside of school, suggesting that teachers must find the time to give children more time inside of school for self-selected reading. The task at hand is to determine the best approach to luring children back to choosing reading as a free-time activity both at school and at home. Since reading is a skill that requires much practice to perfect, activities that practice reading, bringing both success and enjoyment to children, will help foster an ongoing interest in reading as an activity of choice (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). Unfortunately, most schools offer a standard schedule to all children and often actually organize instruction so that the lowest achieving children are scheduled for the smallest amounts of reading opportunity (Allington, 1991; Roth, Brooks-Dunn, Linver, & Hofferth, 2002). Many scholars propose that reorganizing classrooms in ways that expand children's opportunities to read will enhance their achievement. Fielding and Pearson (1994) recommended that classroom reading instructional blocks be organized so that children spend more time actually reading than they do learning about reading, or talking and writing about completed reading assignments.

The approach that was employed in this research study to increase wide reading in students was based on Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reader response (1989). Her premise is that when a student interacts with peers regarding the literature they have been reading, the interaction moves the student beyond literal

comprehension to relating events and characters from a book to the reader's own life. In light of the fact that reading is not an activity of choice among American children when they have free time (Anderson et al., 1985; Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1984), this study proposed that children given daily independent reading time and motivated by interactive book talks and cooperative activities, would not only choose to read when given the time, but would see an improvement in their Independent Reading Level. The hypothesis was that teachers can increase student motivation to read by allowing self-selection of appropriately leveled books, providing time within the school day for independent reading, and engaging students in interactive book discussions and activities with their peers. Determining a valid approach to motivating students to do more wide reading may possibly help educators counteract the decline in reading as students enter the intermediate grades and on into adulthood.

Rationale

Increased independent reading is strongly associated with reading achievement. Students who read actively and frequently improve their comprehension of text as a consequence (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992). Teachers across the United States frequently find that there are large numbers of students in their classrooms who can read, but are choosing not to. Even the best readers appear to be less enthusiastic about reading with every year they are in school (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Furthermore, students who struggle with reading, logically, often avoid the discomfort by choosing to not even try. Studies show what common sense tells us: the more students read, the better they read and the more pleasure they get out of reading.

Unfortunately, the opposite also holds true: children who read very little usually have poor reading skills, and derive little pleasure from the task, thus avoiding it whenever possible. It is as true for reading as for most endeavors in life that we become skilled at the things on which we spend time. Among all the ways children spend their time, time spent reading books has been the best indicator of reading achievement (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988). The relationship between independent reading and positive academic development include a significant correlation between wide reading, increased academic vocabulary and cognitive development (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003).

There are multiple factors that motivate students to read for pleasure. Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) wrote that,

Within a given classroom at any given time, some students are intent on reading to understand. They focus on text meaning and avoid distractions. These engaged readers exchange ideas and interpretations of text with peers. Their devotion to reading spans across time, transfers to a variety of genre, and culminates in valued learning outcomes. In contrast, disengaged readers are inactive and inert. They tend to avoid reading and minimize effort. Rarely do they enjoy reading during free time or become absorbed in literature. (p. 403)

Consequently, the intent of this research is to use the data and analysis thereof, to demonstrate how various interactive processes actually facilitate reading engagement and motivation among fifth grade students.

A recommendation for improving student's literacy learning includes establishing ownership of literacy as the overarching goal of the language arts curriculum (Au, 1997). In her work on literacy, Au (1997) referred to children's ownership as their sense of self confidence and command of reading. These are related to engagement. Turner (1995) studied students' intrinsic motivation, referring to their enjoyment of reading for its own sake, which is essential to engaged reading. Motivation to participate in independent reading can be multifaceted. Classroom teachers place great emphasis on mandating a required number of minutes of independent reading out of school each day. Reading logs are required along with parent signatures, and records of number of pages read per day, all with little regard for a child's motivation to read independently. Extrinsic motivation for reading is the desire to receive external recognition, rewards or incentives (Deci, 1971). Working from this body of research, this study also looked at incentive programs that provide rewards and school recognition for book reading. Reaching a predetermined reading goal and receiving classroom recognition was one approach to motivating students to do more independent reading. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are moderately and positively correlated (Miller & Meese, 1997; Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). Both predict children's reading amount and frequency, however this study also considered how extrinsic motivation can produce self-terminating behavior. Deci's (1971) study found that when students received tangible extrinsic rewards for participating in an already intrinsically interesting activity, the incentives actually caused the students to be less interested once the reward is terminated.

In her study of on task and off task behaviors of good and poor readers, Gambrell (2007) noted that when poor readers had access to reading material they could read comfortably, their off-task behavior became comparable to the good readers. This study employed the use of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978) to ensure that during independent reading time, all students had access to material that was not too difficult for them.

A classroom that focuses on building a community of readers and learners is a literature based classroom. Scholarly research posits that the distinguishing features of a literature based classroom that engages students and motivates them to read independently include opportunities for students to independently read books of their own choosing every day; provides students with sustained opportunities to read (including both independent and collaborative activities); and social interaction such as discussions of literature and related activities among students is encouraged (Cullinan, 1987; Galda, Cullinan, & Strickland, 1993; Tompkins & McGee, 1993).

Methodology

The research lauding the benefits of conversation and peer interaction in making meaning of text had a strong influence on the experimental design of the methodology used in this study. To address the reading motivation needs of the 30 fifth grade students who participated in this study, this teacher researcher established her classroom as the treatment group in order to follow their reading volume, interest, instructional reading level and reading preferences over a ten week period. The fifth grade students were assigned to receive intervention through 20 minutes of

independent reading time three days a week. Self-selection of reading material, an additional time allotment of 10 minutes each day for literature based book talks and peer discussions, as well as a 'book wall' for recommendations were all part of the reading intervention.

The teacher researcher used a variety of tools to gather information on the participants' reading volume, instructional reading level, attitudes, and motivation. The researcher administered the STAR Reading test to each participant to determine a baseline instructional reading level as well as a reading range ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development). Post STAR Reading tests were administered to determine growth over the course of the intervention on students' instructional reading levels. Pre- and post-attitude surveys were also administered to ascertain changes in students' sense of self-efficacy, preferences and perceptions toward reading. Finally, the Accelerated Reader Student Record Report gave an account of the reading volume and comprehension for each student based on the book quizzes attempted and passed throughout the treatment.

Both quantitative and comparative analysis measures were used to interpret the data for determination of changes in reading attitudes, increased reading volume, and improved reading comprehension. Quantitative methods of interpretation were used to interpret scores from the surveys to establish changes in student attitudes, preferences, and self perceptions. Variances in reading volume and improvement in instructional reading level were confirmed through comparative analysis of the AR and STAR Reading reports.

Definition of Terms

Accelerated Reader Program (AR). A commercial reading program designed for students to select books at the readers' ZPD levels and to read at their own pace. Upon completion of each book, students take a computerized, multiple-choice quiz aimed to motivate and monitor the reading practice. Students receive immediate feedback and teachers receive information to monitor student progress.

Interactive Literature Activities. The classroom use of 'book walls' and 'book talks' as an opportunity for students to share/advertise the literature they had read. This was a vehicle to spark interest among students and motivate them to read and discuss books their classmates had previously chosen and enjoyed.

STAR Diagnostic Report. A computerized test and subsequent report that presents diagnostic information about the student's general reading skills, based on the student's performance on the STAR Reading test. The diagnostic information includes the students ZPD, instructional reading level, grade equivalency, and national Percentile Rank (PR).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). "...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or through collaboration" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Books leveled in this zone are intended to provide optimal reading challenge without frustration.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research

The research produced valuable information using the prescribed treatment, but generalization of the findings is limited for a variety of reasons. The treatment of additional classroom independent reading time, in conjunction with added emphasis on book sharing conversations and book wall contributions, occurred within a high population of English Learners with specific decoding, fluency and comprehension problems as noted by district reading assessments. Because of this, more guidance to encourage peer discussion, interaction and book sharing was required on the part of the teacher researcher to accommodate the English Learners in the treatment group as compared to the English only subjects in the treatment group.

The experimental design of this study covered a 10-week time frame that may not have been adequate to measure long-term progress experienced by the treatment group or to arrive at conclusions for students across the intermediate grades' population. The lasting progress of the treatment group, or conclusions regarding treatment group's motivation to read for life could not be effectively predicted from the results of a study of such short duration.

Another drawback related to the experimental design is the data collection of the on-going Reading Logs from all students on a weekly basis. The students were not always consistent with their entries. The intention of the Reading Logs was that an entry should be made each time the student read independently. The entry should have included the duration of the reading in minutes as well as the total pages accomplished during the reading session. Unfortunately, some students only recorded the 30 minutes

nightly reading required as classroom protocol because they found it inconvenient to complete the Log every time they had an independent reading session. Many students mentioned during discussions that they had read far more than they had recorded on their Reading Log. Students at the target elementary school are accustomed to recording 30 minutes of reading nightly as part of their assigned homework. However, once the homework assignment is fulfilled, any further reading is either not remembered, or not recorded on the daily reading log. The reading logs may not reflect the actual amount of independent daily reading completed by a student and therefore are not a reliable source of documentation of reading minutes completed for the week.

Another limitation was that the treatment group students had been involved in the Accelerated Reader program at the target elementary school site since they were in second grade. Because the AR program is a part of the curriculum and student evaluation process at the site, passing the AR test, achieving the goal points, and attending the pizza party as a reward was too often viewed as reading success by both students and their parents. It was hard to distinguish if improved reading attitudes on the students' surveys were from the intervention or from improved AR test scores and achieving goal points.

Regardless of these potential limitations, this research topic was worthy of study as it adds to the existing body of research that advocates the importance of reading volume and reading motivation.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter 2 of the thesis reviews relevant literature as it relates to the value of reading, approaches to motivate students to read more, and the impact daily independent reading time, self selection of reading books, and interactive book talks can have on motivating students to read independently. Chapter 3 details the population and participants of the study, the methods used to gather and analyze data, and the intervention plan implemented with the treatment group. Research findings related to student reading progress, volume of reading and attitudes toward reading are revealed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 concludes with a summary and reflection on the findings of the study, the potential contributions to the body of knowledge related to increased reading, elaboration on the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research as well as classroom practices.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

The one maxim that there seems to be little debate over in the field of educating children is that individuals who read a lot also tend to be good readers (Chall, 1992; Krashen, 1999). This review of the literature supports the premise that wide reading has a direct effect on all academic development, but most certainly in the areas of broadening the child's base of background knowledge, increasing vocabulary knowledge, and improving competence in writing. The literature also shows that overall cognitive skills are enhanced through wide reading.

It is too often the case that our students read at grade level, meeting benchmarks in fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, but lack the motivation to read independently when given the free time to do so. The issue of motivation will be addressed in this review of literature, as motivation is crucial to our children's choices about when, and how much independent reading they will do. The scholarly literature reviewed in this chapter clearly supports the premise that wide independent reading is a pivotal ingredient to cognitive growth and development among children as readers and in their everyday lives (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998) and extensive reading helps build vocabulary (Anderson & Nagy, 1992). Some evidence-based strategies for teachers to employ to increase student motivation to become independent wide readers will be presented in this chapter. One of these strategies, interactive book sharing and reporting as part of the regular language arts curriculum will be the focus at the end of this chapter.

Academic Development and Independent Reading

Educators have known for a while how children learn to read and the foundational milestones they must achieve to become fluent and accomplished readers. But now we are seeing that the amount of print children are exposed to has profound cognitive consequences, and that the act of reading itself serves to increase the achievement differences among children. Independent reading has shown to have genuine effects in areas of vocabulary acquisition in both first and second language learners (Nagy, 1995; Trelease, 1989), the individual's competence in writing style (Allington & Cunningham, 2007), as well as the development of cognitive skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). These areas are affected by substantial amounts of independent reading because the act of reading requires practice in thinking (Allington & Cunningham, 2007), and engages children's higher order thinking skills. Research has shown that early success at reading is clearly one of the keys that unlocks a lifetime of reading habits. Children who crack the spelling-to-sound code early appear to enter something like a positive feedback loop, a reciprocal effect in which reading increases their ability to read (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). This may explain the Matthew Effect seen so often in literacy development, a rich-get-richer and poor-get-poorer phenomenon that shows early acquisition of reading skills yielding faster rates of growth not only in reading achievement, but other cognitive skills as well (Stanovich, 1986; Walberg & Tsai, 1983). Research points to the development of reading skills as the major foundation for all school-based learning. Without the ability to read, opportunities for academic success and, in turn, occupational success are

limited. Clearly, schools need to support independent reading among students. *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al., 1985) focused the nation's attention on the fact that children spend less and less time reading outside of school. Fifth graders read four minutes a day outside school, suggesting children must be given more time inside of school for self-selected reading. Our children are neither learning to read adequately, nor choosing to read independently. The consequences of reading failure are dire. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 38% of the nation's fourth graders cannot read at a basic level. The scholarly research will show that as children get older, they read less and less, and their motivation to read diminishes as they grow into their adolescent years. The selected literature will show that educators strive to create an environment that creates excitement about learning, using critical thinking skills, and promotes both cognitive and social growth. Julius Lester, a well-known juvenile author and educator, reflects on the kind of literary excitement he remembers experiencing during his adolescent years.

Although I do not remember specific books, I remember reading, as if the act of reading was more important than what was being read. As I recall, I read fiction and nonfiction, biographies, history, and geography, and I realize now that each subject area took me out of my immediate environment. Through biographies I could be someone else, and in books about history and geography I could live in another time and place. I am thankful my parents and teachers did not impose literary judgments on me but left me alone to read what I

wanted to. They trusted me to educate my soul as I saw fit, though I did not know that was what I was doing. (2004, pp. 117-118).

Increasing Vocabulary Knowledge

The premise that independent reading may help explain the wide achievement gaps between our students is most easily seen in the field of vocabulary development (Anderson et al., 1988). The study asserted that after children have acquired decoding skills, a child's vocabulary is one of the most important factors in fluent and easy reading. Children naturally, and very soon, come to dislike reading when their limited vocabularies cause them to struggle over word after unfamiliar word while trying to read a sentence. Their ability to make sense of the idea of the sentence is lost in the great effort to simply decode the words. Research has pointed to children's vocabulary growth resulting more from reading volume and indirect language exposure rather than direct instruction or oral language encounters. This has been shown through Hayes and Ahren's (1988), research analyzing the frequency and complexity of words a person might encounter in different contexts. For vocabulary growth to occur, especially after the middle grades, children must be exposed to words that are relatively rare. Hayes and Ahrens found, for example, that children's books have 50% more rare words in them than adult prime-time television, or the conversation of college graduates. It is print that provides many such word-learning opportunities. The implication for children's vocabulary development is clear. If most vocabulary is acquired outside formal teaching, then opportunities to acquire new words occur vastly more often while reading rather than listening. Encouraging children to log

many hours on printed pages is the way to improve their vocabulary and reading fluency (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988).

Unfortunately, there is a huge difference in reading volume between avid and reluctant readers. Data from a study of out-of-school reading time by fifth graders shows that a child at the 50th percentile reads about five minutes a day, or a half-hour per week - more than six times as much as a child at the 20th percentile (Anderson et al., 1988). The enormous differences in word exposure generated by children's different proclivities toward reading are illustrated in the example that just two days' out-of-school reading for a child at the 90th percentile amounts to an entire year's reading for a child at the 10th percentile! (Anderson et al, 1988).

Since most theorists are agreed that the bulk of vocabulary growth during a child's lifetime occurs indirectly through language exposure rather than direct teaching (Miller & Gildea, 1987; Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Nagy, Herman & Anderson, 1985; Sternberg, 1987), reading volume, rather than oral language, is considered the prime contributor to individual differences in children's vocabularies (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988; Stanovich, 1986).

If most vocabulary is acquired outside of formal teaching, then the only opportunities to acquire new words occur when an individual is exposed to a word in written or oral language that is outside his/her current vocabulary. Hayes and Ahrens' (1988) *Table for Selected Statistics for Major Sources of Spoken and Written Language* illustrates that this will happen vastly more often while reading than while talking or watching television. A rare word is defined as one with a rank lower than

10,000; roughly a word that is outside the vocabulary of a fourth to sixth grader. For vocabulary growth to occur after the middle grades, Hayes and Ahrens (1988) find children must be exposed to words that are rare. It is print, they contend, that provides many more such word-learning opportunities.

The data from a study of the out-of-school time use by fifth graders conducted by Anderson et al. (1988) shows the large differences created by the variability among children in exposure to literacy activities. From dairies that the children filled out daily over several months' time, the investigators estimated how many minutes per day individuals were engaged in reading and other activities while not in school. One example of the results showed that a child at the 80th percentile in amount of daily independent reading time (14.2 minutes) was reading over 20 times as much as the child at the 20th percentile. This same study estimated the children's reading rates and used these, in conjunction with the amount of reading in minutes per day, to calculate a figure for the number of words that the children at various percentiles were reading. The study illustrated the enormous differences in word exposure. For example, the average child at the 90th percentile reads almost two million words per year outside of school, more than 200 times more words than the child at the 10th percentile, who reads just 8,000 words outside of school during a year. Put another way, the entire year's out-of-school reading for the child at the 10th percentile amounts to just two days reading for the child at the 90th percentile. Anderson et al. (1988) concluded that these dramatic differences, combined with the lexical richness of print, act to create large vocabulary differences among children.

Literacy Contributes to Competence in Writing

Research definitely supports the premise that literature is an effective model for writing in the classroom (Lancia, 1997) and recognizes the important role that literature plays in the writing program. Researchers consistently suggest that literature offers important models for children to emulate when composing (Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1989). Research tells us that children learn about writing by interacting with professional writers. A form of mentorship develops between students and the author (Harwayne, 1992). This natural connection between reading of literature and writing, entices our students to interact and connect with their books, as they personalize the plots, characters, settings, problem and solution to their own lives. The hope is that students will "discover that reading shares much in common with writing, that reading, too, is an act of composing" (Zamel, 1992, p. 463). As students interact with stories, they personalize them by making text to self, text to world, or text to text connections. In this domain the "literature functions as a platform for children's creativity and becomes a significant playground for the imagination" (Dahl & Farnan, 1998, p. 87).

Literacy research has begun in the homes of young children, tracing their literary development from birth until the time they read and write. This observational research demonstrated that children in literate home environments engage in reading and writing long before beginning formal schooling (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Children born into homes where someone reads and writes with them, walk into school with a foundation on which instruction can easily build. These children

experience an average of over 1,000 hours of quality one-on-one reading and writing activities (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). When parents read to children, interact with them about the print they see in the world - signs, cereal boxes, advertisements - and encourage and support their early writing efforts, reading and writing develop and grow with listening and speaking, concurrently rather than sequentially as pointed out in *Schools That Work* (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). This scholarly research claimed that children need enormous opportunities to read and write 'real things'. Some children come from homes where lots of real reading and writing take place. Parents write notes to each other about telephone calls, they write lists and schedules that are posted on the refrigerator, they read the newspaper and write editorials in response. The parents talk to each other and their children about the things they are reading. These are the children who are likely to find learning to read and write in school relatively easy (Allington & Cunningham, 2007)

Writing is an approach to reading that lets children figure out reading "from the inside out" (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). As children write, they spell words they later see and recognize in their reading. Even when they can't spell a word perfectly, they try to 'sound spell' it and actually put to use whatever letter-sound knowledge they have learned. Children who write are more avid and sensitive readers. Reading is a source of writing ideas and information. Reading also provides the writer with models of various writing styles. Like reading real books, writing is an authentic activity, and children who write become more fluent in reading (Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). The most important factor in determining how much readers will comprehend

and how well writers will be able to communicate about a given topic is their level of knowledge about that topic (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). The role prior knowledge plays in reading comprehension and writing cannot be overstated (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Spivey, 1996). According to their 'schema theory', prior knowledge provides a schema - a framework or structure- that helps scaffold thinking about new material.

The National Commission on Writing (2003) claimed that there are three elements forming the mainstay of learning: "how to say things correctly; how to say them well; and how to make sure that what was said made sense" (p. 9). They contended that most students can write but do not write well as described by the factors stated above. These components support the importance of reading because one who reads a great deal enjoys many more experiences with text from a variety of genres and writing styles. The avid reader comes across many more opportunities to observe, think, and make judgments about text. The encounters prepare him to further observe, think, and make judgments on paper (The National Commission on Writing, 2003).

Skill subjects (the three R's - reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic) are often the literacy instruction focused on in the elementary schools. The knowledge subjects of the curriculum (usually found in science, social studies, literature circles, and writing across the curriculum) may not occur until after the third grade. Teachers often find, however, that by then their students can read their textbooks, but do not understand what they are reading (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). Modeling, explaining, and

demonstrating are essential teaching activities if children are to learn to read and write. For example, writing a summary of the most important ideas of a read-aloud in front of children while talking aloud demonstrates composing as a thinking process.

Research questions the readiness/mental age theory with a leaning towards the emergent literacy approach. Rather than needing to learn all the skills (phonemic segmentation, letter names, right-to-left progression, and more) before they begin reading and writing, children need lots of print exposure and literacy activities (even scribbles and scrawls). Children with these emergent literacy experiences learn the basic skills as they begin reading and writing (McGill-Franzen, 2006). Readiness to read and write would appear to have more to do with book, story and print experiences that occur before school entry than with drill on any subset of skills or achieving any particular mental age.

The Effects of Independent Reading on Cognitive Development

The premise of R. J. Sternberg (1987) was that most vocabulary is learned from context. Although estimates of adult vocabulary sizes differ, Sternberg based his research on three findings from earlier research. First, there is no disagreement that the typical adult has in his or her vocabulary tens of thousands and in exceptional cases, an excess of 100,000 words; second, one's level of vocabulary is highly predictive if not determinative of one's level of reading comprehension; third, vocabulary tasks primarily measure acquired knowledge while reading comprehension tasks seem to primarily measure the ability to acquire new knowledge, and that the correlation between these two tasks is exceptionally high. If, as Sternberg asserts, most

vocabulary is learned from context, then it would follow that the more knowledge of the world an individual has, then the more words that person will know. During the course of a person's lifespan they are exposed to innumerable words through seemingly countless sources; textbooks, novels, picture books, magazines, billboards, newspapers, etc. Even if only a small number of the words thus encountered become working vocabulary, an individual could plausibly develop a vocabulary of tens of thousands of words. Surely our students could not even scratch the surface of building an adequate vocabulary through vocabulary list study and quizzes. Certainly no person has ever sat down and memorized tens of thousands of words. It is difficult to see any other way in which so many words could be learned outside of wide reading, and building cognitive correlates through thinking, writing, and interacting with peers on literature.

Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are integrated, because all are primarily communicative processes (Silliman & Wilkinson, 1994). The traditional view of literacy is that it begins when children begin formal schooling because children must be 'ready' to learn to read and write (Terrell, 1994). Emergent literacy in contrast refers to knowledge children acquire about relationships among oral language, reading, and writing before entering school (Morrow & Smith, 1990). Multitudes of literacy experiences before ever entering kindergarten "equip the child's mind to think" (The National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 11). Literacy experiences that lay the foundation for vocabulary building, reading comprehension, and writing competencies have cognitive consequences as well (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Leamson

(2002) suggested that cognition is not limited to lifting meaning from print or putting clear thought into writing, but includes reasoning and problem solving. Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) suggested from their studies that cognitive gains are derived from reading volume. Children who read more simply learn more and increase their verbal intelligence, that is to say, people can get smarter by learning more. Even children with modest levels of cognitive ability can compensate for their lack through the act of reading, consequently building vocabulary and general knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).

Motivational Factors for Students to Read for Pleasure

How to increase students' motivation to read has long been a priority in what teachers want to know. Recent studies have suggested that few adolescents choose to read on their own (Strommen & Mates, 2004). According to Guthrie and Wigfield (1997), motivation is defined in terms of "beliefs, values, needs, and goals that individuals have" (p. 5). It would follow then, that the closer the literacy activities and tasks match these values, needs, and goals of our students, the better the likelihood that students will expend their time reading as an independent activity. According to Edmunds and Bauserman (2006), motivation has frequently made the difference between learning that was temporary and superficial and learning that was permanent and internalized; therefore, educators need to understand what motivates children.

Children who read frequently grow to become skillful readers (Stanovich, 1986). Given sufficient print resources, how often a child reads is explained by two factors. The first is initial success in acquiring reading skills (Stanovich, 1986). The

second factor is motivation (Pressley, 2002). Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) reported that highly motivated children read three times as much outside of school as their less motivated peers, concluding that motivation is the “preeminent predictor” (p. 250) of frequent reading. Unfortunately, educators face every day the realization that poor readers, the children most likely to benefit from frequent practice, are often the most unmotivated to read. One study (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007) found that low-skilled first graders (a) considered reading to be difficult, (b) viewed themselves as less competent readers, and (c) held more negative attitudes towards reading practice. Teachers rated the low skilled readers as more avoidant of classroom reading activities. Because of its link to reading practice, poor readers' lack of motivation is increasingly suggested as an underlying cause of long-term reading difficulties (Pressley, 2002; Stanovich 1986). Is there any wonder that teachers voice one of their most pressing concerns is to find ways to boost reading motivation. Stanovich (1986) hypothesized that these reading difficulties lead to "negative Matthew effects" (p. 360). Because these negative Matthew effects interact to discourage children from reading frequently, they lead to a "poor-get-poorer" situation. Low motivation thus acts both as a consequence of limited skill acquisition and a cause of later reading failure (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). It appears that early reading interventions that focus on skills such as phonological awareness or letter knowledge are critical for struggling readers. However, skill boosting interventions may be insufficient in helping students become proficient readers unless teachers and parents also help overcome poor motivation. This bidirectional relationship between reading skills and reading motivation points to

the importance of addressing both the "skill" and "will" in helping poor readers develop proficiency (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007).

Gambrell (1996) reported the results of a national survey conducted by the National Reading Research Center, which showed that reading motivation was a topic that teachers would like to see investigated, and acknowledged that a lack of motivation was at the root of many of the problems they faced in teaching. Not surprising is that of the 84 topics included on the survey, teachers identified developing an interest in reading as their first priority for reading research. In the top ten, three other topics associated with motivation also appeared. Those topics included increasing the amount and expanse of reading; increasing intrinsic motivation to read; and investigating teachers', parents', and peers' roles in children's reading motivation (Gambrell, 1996). When children first enter school, they are excited about learning and are very motivated. However, it is baffling that their motivation to learn appears to decrease during the elementary school years in all academic subjects, including reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Children's motivation to read in the school and home environment decreases as they get older, but the decrease appears to be greatest from first to fourth grade. This decline in motivation has been attributed to children's growing awareness of their own performance as compared to others, as well as to instruction that emphasizes competition and does not address children's interests. (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Because teachers are so aware of the importance of motivation in reading development and achievement, they have tried a variety of educational practices to

build motivation and encourage children to read. Because so many students continue to lag behind in skills and motivation it behooves educators to take a more in-depth look at what really motivates children to read. After frequently hearing comments such as "I hate to read," or "I never read a book," teacher researchers Edmunds & Bauserman (2006) became determined to change these negative comments into positive ones. They decided in their 2006 study "What teachers can learn about reading motivation through conversations with children," that it was time to ask the students what motivated them to read. They collected data in Conversational Interviews using the constant comparative method introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Data was coded by patterns into six categories.

Category 1 revealed influences on interest in narrative text. This category showed that children get excited about reading narrative text when they found books that related to their personal interests as indicated in the comment "I like camping. They were fishing and stuff." Another factor that influenced excitement over narrative text was characteristics of the books such as exciting book covers, action-packed plots, and humor. This was illustrated through a response such as, "Because on the front cover it showed three kids, and they opened a box. The box had gold in it!" The importance of choice was revealed throughout the interviews as children shared recent narrative texts they had read. Eighty-four percent of the children discussed books they had selected themselves. The following responses demonstrate the influence of choice: "I found it in the school library," and "It is one I chose myself."

Category 2 illustrated factors that get children excited about reading expository text. Based on the children's responses about why the expository texts were important to them, it appeared that books they could read to gain knowledge, books they chose (seventy-six percent shared books they chose themselves), and books that related to their personal interests affected their motivation to read the most. The following comments were excerpts that showed knowledge gained, choice, and personal interest were high motivators for expository text: "I could learn about different animals. I see what they eat and what they look like," "I picked it out myself from the school library," and "Because it was about an Indian, and I am interested in Indians."

The pattern revealed factors that get children excited about reading in general. Once again, factors that got students really excited about reading fell heavily into characteristics of books and knowledge gained. Responses included, "I like books that are scary, funny, and fall stories. Scary books make you wonder what is going to happen next..... I like funny stories because they make me laugh, and I like stories about fall because I like fall, it is not too hot or too cold." Knowledge gained positively influenced their motivation to read as the following comment shows. "When I have not read the book before, and it has stuff about places where I have not been before, I want to find out about places you can go."

In Category 4, children were asked to share how they found out about books they were currently reading or had read recently. Several sources emerged, such as the school library, teachers, family members, and peers. When discussing narrative and expository text, the children overwhelmingly reported that they found out about their

books from the school library. The school library positively affected the students' motivation to read by exposing them to a variety of books. The role of the teacher, family members (particularly the mother), and peers were mentioned, but predominantly, students sharing their favorite book with their peers was the fact that most motivated the child to read the book.

Pattern responses revealed that the children's interest in and excitement about reading was sparked by family members, teachers, peers, and themselves. The children also often attributed themselves as their motivation to read. "I read books, because I just like reading books."

Category 6 examined the actions of family member, teachers and peers who motivated the children to read. Three important themes that emerged in this category were the action of giving or buying books for children motivated them to read, the children highly valued and enjoyed being read to by others, and sharing their books through active involvement with others.

Children who are motivated to read will spend more time reading independently thus increasing their reading achievement. Based on their findings in this study on motivation, Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) made five recommendations for motivating students in the classroom: self- selection, attention to characteristics of books, personal interests, regular access to school libraries, and active involvement of peers. (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

Competence and Self Efficacy

Competency beliefs are "estimates of how good one is at a given activity" (Wigfield et al., 1997, p. 451). In the area of reading, competency relates to whether a child considers himself or herself capable of being a good reader. Self-concept and self-efficacy are two types of competency beliefs (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Self-concept refers to more general beliefs about one's capabilities; self-efficacy refers to more task-specific beliefs. Competency beliefs are often the first indicator of young children's motivation (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998). Gottfried (1985) argued that young children experiencing early task mastery in reading should have higher perceptions of competence and, consequently, greater motivation. Conversely, early declines in reading competency beliefs precede declines in motivation, and later, less frequent reading practice. It would appear that children's reading motivation is directly tied to their reading competency beliefs.

Consistent with the Matthew effect, high achievers improve more rapidly than low achievers over time in school (Stanovich, 1986). As relatively good readers tend to read more, they increase their competence, which increases their reading ability. This suggestion is that motivation mediates the Matthews effect, or simply put, increasing competence is motivating, and increased motivation leads to more reading. From this perspective, motivation leads to competence and is the link between frequent reading and reading achievement. This link sustains the upward (and downward) spiral of achievement (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999)

Researchers studying the development of children's motivation have found that motivation changes in important ways across the middle childhood and early adolescent years (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998). In brief, children's competence beliefs, values and intrinsic motivation for learning tend to decline across the elementary school years. Children's extrinsic motivation tends to increase, as does their focus on performance goals. Children's competence and efficacy beliefs become more closely tied to indicators of their performance (Eccles et al., 1998). Changes in children's motivation have been explained in two main ways. One explanation focuses on children's increasing capacity to understand their own performance. For some children this leads to a growing realization that they are not as capable as other children, thereby reducing their motivation. A second explanation focuses on how instructional practices may contribute to a decline in some children's motivation. Practices that focus on social comparison between children, with too much competition between them, can lead to declines in competency beliefs and intrinsic motivation (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). What can be done in the classroom to make all readers believe in their own ability to be successful? Regardless of the name it goes by; self-efficacy, self-concept, or self-esteem, the idea of believing in yourself as a reader would appear to be pivotal in becoming competent as a reader. Jinks and Lorschach (2003) referred in simple terms to self-efficacy as "what we believe we can do with whatever skill we have, rather than our actual ability or skill" (p. 115). In other words, how well a person thinks he or she will do in the completion of a task has a significant role in how well that person will actually do. Positive self-beliefs have

been linked to many benefits, including increased levels of persistence and motivation, willingness to try difficult tasks, higher achievement, and greater strategy use (Bandura, 1997; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks & Perencevich, 2004). On the other hand, Bandura (1997) also noted that negative ability-related beliefs can incur adverse consequences. In brief, students with low self-efficacy and doubts about their abilities show lower levels of intrinsic motivation and commitment, give minimal effort, and believe that poor performance is related to the lack of ability (Guthrie et al., 2007). Theorists refer to self-efficacy as being situational specific. For example, an individual can have a positive self-concept about himself or herself as a learner, but a low self-efficacy in reading (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003)

In his recent study on improving self-efficacy, Michael Putman (2009), concluded that we can train our students to become efficacious readers. Promoting efficacy in readers begins with setting short term, and long-term goals. Short term goals are attainable goals that help the reader achieve immediate success and maintain momentum. Putman relates his experience with one struggling reader who tended to choose books beyond his reading level which resulted in his quickly becoming overwhelmed when reading. The long-term goal for this student was to select books that were appropriately challenging and finish the books. For the short term goal, Putman motivated this student by tapping into his interest in comic books to teach him strategies (i.e., establishing text difficulty). Because the comic books had a limited number of panes for each story, this allowed the student to note tangible progress more

quickly and build confidence along the way. Struggling readers who have experienced failure all along the way, refuse to try, believing that the same thing will happen again. For these students, Putman believes that choice must be used as a 'hook' to catch their interest and motivate them. Research has revealed that students need a feeling of control over a situation/activity to promote motivation and, once motivated, they demonstrate greater effort and persistence - hallmarks of efficacious behavior - in comprehending material presented in the literature they choose (Guthrie, 2004). To maximize the opportunities for choice of reading materials, Putman used themes within his instruction. Students designed their own projects, created their own artifacts, and developed their own rubric to demonstrate their understanding of the text within the theme. His belief is that students will choose what interests them and what interests them will motivate them. The hook for building self-efficacy was the motivation of an opportunity to learn about something in which a child was intrinsically interested. Putman's (2009) third phase was to provide explicit instruction about strategies. He claims, "Poor readers showed enhanced skills and attitudes as a result of training in self-efficacy in conjunction with strategic reading skills" (p. 56). Putman focused on questioning and reading for purpose in expository text. Using sticky notes also helped his students maintain focus as they wrote questions and comments on the notes and posted them in their books as reminders of their purpose. The research in this area is clear; poor readers show enhanced skills and attitudes as a result of training in self-efficacy in conjunction with strategic reading skills (Guthrie, 2004; Wigfield et al. 2004). Students need constant feedback to maintain their focus

and provide support in reaching their short-term and long-term goals. Putman (2009) provided positive feedback to his students to improve their competency beliefs, which in turn increased self-efficacy. He held frequent meetings during which his students were asked to demonstrate the reading strategies being used within the context of the theme. He gave feedback using the "sandwich" approach, first identifying a strength, then an area to improve, and last another strength. Putman felt it was important that the student go away feeling that progress was being made. Although Putman acknowledged that research is mixed on the approach of celebrating successes with certificates and rewards, he feels that successes should be noted along with looking back at how far the student has come. Celebrating the accomplishments of the smaller goals will lead to the greater outcome - proficient reading and greater confidence. A notable researcher has cautioned against using rewards because doing so may cause the reader to attribute success to something other than his/her own actions (Bandura, 1997); while other researchers have pointed out that these same rewards may produce increases in performance levels as individuals strive to meet self-determined goals (Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006). Extrinsic motivators' effect on intrinsic motivation is the topic of the next section of this research project.

Extrinsic Motivation's Effect on Intrinsic Motivation

As mentioned earlier in this report, research over the past twenty years demonstrates that student's motivation is a primary concern of many teachers, in fact, most classroom teachers acknowledge that a lack of motivation and how to counteract it is the most pervasive problem they face in their classrooms (Guthrie & Anderson,

1999). The result of a poll conducted by the National Reading Research Center of randomly selected teachers and principals, revealed "creating interest in reading" and "intrinsic desire for reading" as the number one concerns among educators (O'Flahavan et al., 1992). Various approaches have been studied to determine the when and how to effectively motivate children to increase reading activity. Two common terms associated with the literature on motivation are extrinsic and intrinsic. These terms describe very different types of motivation and a child who is intrinsically motivated undertakes the task for very different reasons than the child who is extrinsically motivated. In their study on improving student's motivation, Meece and McColskey (1997) analyzed what kind of motivation schools ultimately hope to cultivate: intrinsic or extrinsic? Schools have not focused on improving student motivation as an important outcome, but rather have focused mainly on improving test scores or achievement. The upshot of this is that school improvement has not been about improving student motivation through improvements in the learning environment, but rather as seeing students as the problem and needing to use incentives to improve their achievement (Meece & McColskey, 1997). These researchers found that intrinsic motivation is characterized by students who have "task-oriented" goals for doing their homework. These students say they work to gain mastery or understanding and feel good about accomplishing challenging tasks. They judge their abilities by their own internal standards: how much they learned, how much they improved, and how hard they tried. When they experience difficulty, they

increase their efforts because "they believe effort is the key to success and/or improvement" (p. 23).

It is clear that incentives are provided to children for reading in a large majority of classrooms. Most schools, including the teacher researcher's school are actively involved in sponsoring extrinsic motivation programs as one way to encourage reading engagement. A majority of respondents to a study done by Fawson and Moore (1999), identified the primary goal of reading incentive programs was to encourage positive attitudes toward reading. Reading incentive programs are designed to provide external rewards to children for completion of reading tasks. Fawcett and Moore's study posits these rewards may have an undermining effect upon the development of intrinsic interest in literacy tasks. This is especially true when rewards are provided for activities that should hold some natural intrinsic value to the child. They recommend that rewards only be used with children who need a jump-start in their reading and then, as soon as they begin to increase their competence, the rewards be made less significant. The end goal then, is that extrinsic rewards may be eliminated altogether and the reading behavior be pleasurable enough that it will support itself.

Reading is a behavior that educators hope will carry a large measure of inherent intrinsic value. Thus by providing children with rewards, children may begin to question whether they should really enjoy reading for its own sake. Educators may indeed countermand positive attitudes for reading since control for reading is placed outside the child. Children must participate in the incentive program, therefore, they

likely will attribute their effort to a force outside themselves. The study by Fawcett and Moore identified the focus of almost all reading incentive programs was on successful completion of the reading task rather than on task competence. Students were merely encouraged to read more. While the literature confirms that this plays some role in improving reading ability, designing incentive programs that track and reward the quality of the reading experience would seemingly bring about an even greater improvement in reading. For example, involving children in book talks and book sharing might deepen the interaction the child has with the text. Task competence, rather than simple task completion, would clearly be a better focus for reading incentive programs.

Engaging Environments and Activities to Promote Reading

In today's world, it would appear that children are limited in the amount of time they spend engaged in actual conversation with adults. As busy lifestyles provide children few opportunities to engage in conversations, support for critical thinking and cognitive development also diminishes. Students who are expected to be quiet for most of the school day continue to have little opportunity to practice thinking strategies or show cognitive development. In other classrooms where teachers model thinking strategies and encourage student discussion, reading and thinking strategies get better as students practice their use. The reading that students are doing or hearing in the classroom provides a perfect framework for keeping students talking and focused on the topic at hand. Students actively engaged in the conversation process can, over time, become reflective critical thinkers. Ketch (2005) states that

conversation helps individuals make sense of their world. It helps to build empathy, understanding, respect for different opinions, and ownership of the learning process. It helps students sort out their ideas of the world and begin to understand how they fit into it. Used as a connection to cognitive strategies, conversation fosters comprehension acquisition.

As readers comprehend, they make connections (Hansen, 1981). It is these connections to the text, to the world, to background information, and to experiences that make readers feel like the characters, connect to the story, or remember similar experiences. Connections are often fostered through conversations.

In a national study of how much elementary school-aged children liked recreational and school reading, McKenna et al. (1995) found that children's liking of both kinds of reading was higher among younger than older children. Oldfather and colleagues (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994; Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993) found that student's intrinsic motivation to read declined even further as students went into junior high school. They attributed the change in motivation to changes in the classroom structure. Children in their study moved from a self-contained, responsive classroom that honored student's voices and invited students to take an active role in the classroom learning environment, to a teacher-centered environment in which students had fewer opportunities for self-expression and self-direction in literacy instruction.

The research has established that it is important to utilize and integrate a variety of instructional methods when teaching reading. Scholarly studies confirm that providing sufficient practice time and reading self selected texts is necessary for

children to develop independence. Choice is motivating. Providing choices is a prominent practice among experienced reading teachers (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hexter, 1998). Turner (1995) found that teachers who develop reputations as highly motivating often provide many opportunities for making choices during a lesson. Teachers promote student choice by giving students a voice regarding which books will be used as read-alouds. Giving students opportunities to engage other students in book conversations, sharing their text choices with classmates on a book wall, and responding to peers' queries in the form of book sharing are other examples of affording students' choices. Choice is motivating because it affords student control. Children seek to be in command of their environment rather than being manipulated by others.

Benefits of Sustained Silent Reading

In a recent study conducted by Fawson and Smith (2008), concerns were expressed with the traditional implementation of Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) as described in the literature and as implemented in many classrooms across the nation. The concerns included the absence of interaction involving the reading of texts, and the lack of accountability for whether or not students were actually reading during the allocated SSR time. Stahl (2004) noted that "many SSR advocates do not allow teachers to check up on students, or recommend that teachers read their own books during this time to be a model of a reader.... one failing of SSR is that teachers may not monitor their students' reading" (p. 206).

Bryan, Fawson, and Reutzel (2003) demonstrated that when classroom teachers monitored their students during SSR through brief interactions and accountability conferences, even the most disengaged students in the class remained on task for up to three weeks without additional monitoring visits. These findings concur with the previous research of Manning and Manning (1984) about the positive impact of student discussions and teacher conferences, rather than teachers reading silently during SSR. This same study found that reading scores improved slightly when peer discussion and teacher conferencing on text was added to the traditional SSR format. Scholarly literature indicates that traditional implementation of SSR has been criticized for the lack of teacher's teaching, monitoring, interacting with and holding students accountable for time spent reading.

In light of these concerns, this teacher researcher sought to provide consistent and adequate independent reading time to the treatment group, in conjunction with literature discussions and book sharing opportunities.

Building a Community of Life-Long Readers

A review of the literature for this study provides substantial evidence of the effects that wide reading has on the academic development of children. The effects of independent reading on academic development become evident through increased vocabulary knowledge, contributed to competence in writing, promoted cognitive development, and increased competence and self-efficacy beliefs in our students. This body of scholarly literature also addressed how educational practices can motivate students to read more. The scholars contended that motivated readers and learners are

influenced by their environment, and engaging classrooms motivate our students to collaboratively think, learn, and read more. This study proposes to find a relationship between students given daily independent reading time and interactive book activities, and an outcome of improvement in students' Independent Reading Level and motivation to read independently.

According to Castleman and Littky (2007), the main goal of teaching is to help students to become life-long learners: and to be successful in any academic area, reading is an underlying factor. Most reading authorities agree that when reading is reduced to a school subject or a set of skill-based worksheets, then the purpose and desire to pursue reading as a lifelong practice is lost (Anderson et al., 1985; Trelease, 1989). Au (1999) maintained that when a child is enthralled by the magic of books at the beginning of the literacy journey, then he will make sense of the instruction that follows: learning letter names and sounds, and other strategies that promote the cognitive process of reading. Au clearly stated that while skills and strategies cannot be neglected, skills and strategies also cannot be the starting point for reading instruction - student interest has to be the beginning of the reading process. Research substantiates the claim that most students feel motivated and empowered when given the opportunity to construct and negotiate an understanding of what was read. In the classroom setting, discussions focused on the reading students are doing, or hearing, provides the framework. The understanding of all participants increases as individual contributions are made for the benefit of the group. In the traditional classroom environment, students are held accountable for their own successes and failures in

learning. Just as the student is not dependent on anyone else, no one depends on him. Shallert & Reed (1997) contrasted the traditional setting to a community setting that values its participants and places great importance on the presence of each member in the learning community. In this classroom environment, each learner values the presence of all members, including his own, and realizes that his presence makes a difference in the learning community. These individuals are not merely working together side by side, but a mutual dependence is cultivated between all members and the result is the accomplishment of greater learning together and strengthening of an interdependent learning community within the classroom. The implications are that teachers must explicitly dedicate time to read aloud, foster literary discussions with and between their students and provide time for self selected reading of a wide genre of literature within the classroom in order to motivate students to become life-long readers.

The review of the literature for this study provides substantial evidence of the effects that wide reading has on the academic development of children. The scholars contend that motivated readers and learners are influenced by their environment. Providing an engaging classroom motivates students to inquire, think, research, and read. An engaging environment that focused on structured activities including book talks, book wall contributions, peer conversations focused on reading students were doing or hearing, and daily independent reading time were all included in this study. It is the aim of this study to find a relationship between participation in the structured

activities, increased IRL (Instructional Reading Level), and students' motivation as it relates to the amount of time spent in independent reading.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

With the wide variety of literature available to our students today, why do children tend not to choose independent reading as an activity of choice in their free time? The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) conducted a national survey of teachers that showed that academic motivation was the most pressing issue confronting education today (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999). The 'capstone' for the Framework For Literacy Assessment and Instruction is motivation (success, pleasure, relevance, and purpose) (Shefelbine, 2008). The questions often posed by colleagues in education focus on finding strategies for increasing student motivation to read. This motivation must entail the desire to learn to read, the patience and practice to read well, and the willingness to sustain the process long enough to become accomplished readers. There is a dilemma in education because of the emphasis we must place on teaching and testing of reading content standards. As a result, too little emphasis is placed on students' motivation for independent reading. Because of the tremendous advantages to be gained from wide reading and engagement in literature (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003), educators are looking for a more balanced approach: one that teaches reading skills but also acknowledges the importance of engagement. This study intended to address the question of whether teachers can increase student motivation to read by allowing self-selection of appropriately leveled books, providing increased independent reading time, coupled with peer literature sharing time.

The following section details the population and participants of the study, the methods used to gather and analyze data, and the intervention plan implemented with the treatment group.

Population

This study took place at an elementary school located in a semi-rural community in southern Sacramento County. The school is one of five K-6 elementary schools in the Galt Elementary School District. Surrounded by 20-year-old homes in the neighborhood of a rural community, the school has a large enrollment of students in need of English language development, economic resources, and emotional support. In 1992 three hundred students and 12 teachers opened the school that was originally a K-3rd grade configuration in the then newly established community. In 1994 the school became a K-6th grade school. The majority of the 720 students that the school now serves come from single family, middle class homes in the immediate neighborhood community surrounding the school. As the community expanded and developed over the next 17 years, the immediate neighborhood and the school's demographics began to change. The school's most recent demographics are quite different from that of the first eight years of its operation. Original homeowners have been replaced by many renters in the neighborhood and more low income housing has been built.

The majority of students at the elementary school site are Caucasian, but the Hispanic population has grown substantially in the last five years to the point that within the next five years the district predicts that the school population would exceed

50% Hispanic students who require substantially more English Learner services. Of the 720 students enrolled for the 2009-10 school year, 49% were Caucasian, 44% Hispanic, and a combined 7% were African American, Asian, and Filipino. That same year the target school reported to have 288 students (40%) qualifying for free and reduced priced meals. 252 students (35%) of the total population were English Learners, including 60 Kindergarten through grade 2 students who were enrolled in the Alternative Bilingual Program receiving language arts instruction in their primary language of Spanish.

The target elementary school operated day to day with a full-time principal and a curriculum coach who also fulfilled many administrative duties. The support for students in regular education included services from a second curriculum coach who also served as a Bilingual Resource Specialist, a P.E. Specialist, a Music Education Specialist, a Library Clerk, and eight part-time Instructional Assistants. There were several special-education programs housed on the campus: half-time Resource Specialist (RSP), Special Day Classes (SDC) for primary and intermediate, and two Autistic classes (pre-K through 2nd). A Speech and Language Pathologist, School Psychologist and a half-time Outreach Consultant worked tirelessly to support both regular and special education populations. Summaries of the school's students' academic and English language progress for the past three years are presented in Tables 1-4.

Table 1

*CELDT (California English Language Development Test) Results for 2008-09:
Number of Students at Each Language Proficiency Level*

Target Elementary School

| | K | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th |
|--------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Advanced | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Early Advanced | 2 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 13 | 8 |
| Intermediate | 6 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| Early Inter. | 12 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Beginning | 22 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Students Tested | 42 | 23 | 23 | 27 | 24 | 20 |

Table 2

*CST (California Standards Test) Summary Comparisons for 2007-09: Percentage of
Students who are Proficient or Above*

Language Arts

| Year | Target Elementary School | | | District | | | State | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|------|------|----------|------|------|-------|------|------|
| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Grade 2 | 58 | 70 | 62 | 33 | 41 | 48 | 35 | 42 | 47 |
| Grade 3 | 69 | 47 | 54 | 34 | 33 | 35 | 30 | 31 | 37 |
| Grade 4 | 68 | 76 | 65 | 40 | 48 | 50 | 39 | 47 | 49 |
| Grade 5 | 77 | 69 | 65 | 48 | 44 | 44 | 40 | 43 | 43 |

Table 3

CST (California Standards Test) Summary Comparisons for 2008-9: Percentage of Students who are Proficient or Above

Mathematics

| | Target Elementary School | | | District | | | State | | |
|---------|--------------------------|------|------|----------|------|------|-------|------|------|
| Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Grade 2 | 78 | 82 | 86 | 54 | 60 | 65 | 51 | 56 | 59 |
| Grade 3 | 84 | 74 | 78 | 57 | 61 | 60 | 48 | 54 | 58 |
| Grade 4 | 79 | 71 | 74 | 47 | 50 | 58 | 45 | 50 | 54 |
| Grade 5 | 81 | 74 | 72 | 43 | 46 | 49 | 38 | 44 | 48 |

Table 4

CST (California Standards Test) Comparisons for-2007-2009: Percentage of Students who are Proficient or Above

Science

| | Target Elementary School | | | District | | | State | | |
|---------|--------------------------|------|------|----------|------|------|-------|------|------|
| Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Grade 5 | 45 | 50 | 59 | 25 | 27 | 29 | 24 | 28 | 32 |

Participants

This study involved students from one of the three fifth grade classes at the school. Of the 93 students enrolled in the fifth grade 30 of the students were involved in the study as members of the treatment class. The teacher/researcher enlisted

students from her fifth grade classroom. Thirty-one students were invited to participate in the treatment group of this research study. Parental consent (see Appendix A) was received for 30 of the students which formed the Treatment Group. The male/female ratio was 19 to 11 and the ethnic representation was 13 Hispanic, 14 Caucasian, 1 Native American, 1 African American and 1 Pakistani. The socioeconomic status represented by the participants' families showed that 13 of the 30 students (43%) received free or reduced breakfast/lunch. Four students (13%) were English Language Learners as well as 3 out of 30 students (10%) were classified as Special Education with Learning Disabilities. Eighty-one percent of the treatment group was proficient or above in the 2008-09 California Standards Test (CST) - English Language Arts (ELA): 12 advanced, 13 proficient, 2 basic and 3 below basic. At the outset of the treatment, the STAR Reading Summary Test, administered to all students in the treatment group showed an Instructional Reading Level (IRL) distribution as follows:

Table 5

Instructional Reading Level Prior to Treatment

| Instructional Reading Level | Students | Percent |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------|
| 1.0-1.9 | 1 | 3.0 |
| 2.0-2.9 | 2 | 6.6 |
| 3.0-3.9 | 7 | 23.3 |
| 4.0-4.9 | 8 | 26.6 |
| 5.0-5.9 | 3 | 10.0 |
| 6.0-6.9 | 7 | 23.3 |
| 7.0-7.9 | 1 | 3.0 |
| 8.0-8.9 | 1 | 3.0 |

In relation to the overall population, the treatment group closely represents the ethnicities of the entire student body. However, the percentage of participants scoring proficient or above in the 2008-09 CST - ELA was noticeably higher than the overall school performance. This phenomenon could be attributed to the fact that this teacher researcher has in previous years been assigned a large cluster of GATE students (gifted and talented education) and continued to have a large number of students of this designation placed in her class each year. These GATE students historically scored proficient or advanced each year on the CST (California Standardized Test). It is important to note that all names used in this study were changed to student identification numbers to protect the students' rights to privacy.

Data Collection

Several tools were used to gather information on the reading volume of the subjects of this study. Students in the intervention group had the responsibility of keeping track of their reading in on-going reading logs (see Appendix C). To supplement the reading logs, the researcher also conducted pre- and post- student surveys (see Appendix B) to note changes in reading habits and attitudes of the group. Another method employed to compare the amount of reading pre-treatment and post-treatment in the group was the use of the Accelerated Reader (TM) Student Record Reports (see Appendix C). A final method of determining gains in IRL (Instructional Reading Level) was to administer the STAR Reading Diagnostic Test to all students in the Intervention group both pre- and post-treatment. Each of the tools mentioned will be discussed in greater detail below.

Reading Logs

Data collection began in January, 2010 with the distribution and use of the researcher-designed reading logs. The reading log was designed to record daily reading as part of the assigned homework during the week. The reading log assigned by the teacher/researcher required students to record the title and author of the book, the minimum reading time of 30 minutes Monday through Thursday night, two summary sentences about what was read, and a parent signature for verification. However, for the purposes of this study, an additional teacher/researcher designed form was distributed to record independent reading throughout the day. The reading logs used in this study recorded the beginning and ending time for each reading session, and the number of pages read during this time. Its purpose was to document independent reading time both at school and at home. The students were asked to turn in the daily reading logs with other homework assignments each Friday (see Appendix C).

Surveys on Attitude and Behaviors

In addition to the reading logs, the students in the treatment group were asked to respond to a pre- and post- survey designed by the researcher to address the topics of attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. The construction of the survey was based on literature-based elements important to students in their motivation to read such as student choice of reading material, having time to read, feelings of personal confidence, need for social interaction, and reasons to read (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999). The purpose of using a pre- and post-survey was to note any

changes in attitude, self-efficacy, and reading behaviors of the students as a result of the intervention (see Appendix B).

A second survey, The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) (see Appendix B), was given to the teacher-researcher's class in January at the outset of the treatment. It was administered to discover students' post-treatment attitudes towards recreational and academic reading motivation. The ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990) is a 20 item instrument designed for students in grades 1 through 6. The first 10 items assess attitudes toward recreational reading (e.g., "How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?"), and the next 10 assess attitudes toward academic reading (e.g., "How do you feel about taking a reading test?"). The scale has a 4-point response system using pictorial anchors. Each of the four anchors shows a picture of a cartoon face. The most positive picture shows the smiley face with a happy laughing expression and the caption "Love it!" The most negative picture shows the face with a scowling expression and the caption "Don't Like it!" The more positive of the two middle options shows a smiling face with "Like it" whereas the face is mildly upset with the caption "Ho Hum" in the other picture. For each of the 20 items, the students choose the facial expression that is most representative of their feelings. The survey was administered independently to students both pre and post treatment. The pre and post attitude surveys were tabulated by totaling the point values 1, 2, 3, or 4 received for each of the 20 questions. The pre-intervention mean for each question was then compared to the mean calculated for each of the 20 questions on the post-intervention survey. McKenna and Kear (1990) reported developing the ERAS, "a public-domain

instrument... that would enable teachers to estimate attitude levels efficiently and reliable” (p. 626), in an attempt to increase research on attitudes toward reading. The 20-item instrument yields a score for recreational reading (10 items) and an academic reading score (10 items). The pre-intervention data indicated a generally positive attitude toward reading.

Accelerated Reader Student Record Reports

Using the Accelerated Reader (AR) reporting system provided the researcher with an individual ongoing record for the books that were read and tested by each of the treatment students before and during the period of study. The purpose of the AR program as used by the target school's teachers was to challenge students to read independently in their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), with the hope of motivating students to read more as they experienced success. The AR program encourages teachers to use their program reports and monitoring systems to guide and encourage students to select appropriate books and oversee student progress. The AR Student Record Reports provides an ongoing account of the quizzes (book titles) taken over the course of the school year, the percentage of accuracy of the students, and the date on which the quizzes were taken. This ongoing report is a tool available to all teachers and was used by the researcher to view the treatment groups' reading volume for this study. AR (Trademark by Renaissance Learning) has been used in the Target School for more than 10 years as a program for literature-based reading practice. Informal discussions with the staff of the target school indicate that teachers believe the AR program motivates students to read more books while

enabling teachers to evaluate, monitor and record student progress. A generic sample of the AR Student Record Report can be found in Appendix C.

STAR Reading Diagnostic Reports

In addition to the reading logs, written surveys, and Accelerated Reader Student Record Report, the STAR Reading Assessment (Renaissance Reading) was administered both pre- and post-intervention to every student in the treatment class. The STAR Reading Assessment provided the teacher/researcher accurate, reliable, norm-referenced reading scores. The assessment helped the researcher determine the appropriate level to challenge each student to personalize and maximize reading practice. The STAR Reading Assessment also enabled the researcher to track growth in student reading achievement longitudinally over the course of the 10 week treatment period. This data facilitated analysis of changes in individual student's instructional reading level (IRL) post-treatment. The STAR computerized reading test is a product of Renaissance Learning. As students take the test, the questions continually adjust to the student's responses. Detailed reports immediately provide accurate, reliable, norm-referenced reading scores including grade equivalents, percentile ranks, and normal curve equivalents. The target school has used the STAR norm-referenced scores since 2004 to assess students' reading levels, place new students, determine appropriate level of challenge for each student, measure reading progress, and identify those who need individual help. The reliability and validity data for the STAR Reading assessment is based on the 1999 study, "Relationship of STAR Reading to other Standardized Tests of Reading and Higher-Order Thinking Skill."

This study conducted by The Institute for Academic Excellence provides empirical evidence for the correlation between reading ability and higher-order thinking skills by analyzing the results gathered from the STAR Reading computer-adaptive reading test and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Test results gathered in April and May 1998 revealed strong and highly significant relationships between the two instruments.

Book Wall Treatment

The 'Book Wall' covered the double 6 foot doors of the target classroom's supply closet. The doors were covered with construction paper to ensure that students would be encouraged to 'interact' with the wall. Interaction included students adding a recently completed book title along with a 1-5 star rating of the book. An illustration of a character, the setting, plot, or short written endorsement of the book could also be included on the wall. Students were invited to contribute to the 'Book Wall' upon completion of each book they had selected. Colored markers and Sharpie pens were provided as art supplies for student contributions.

Book Talk Treatment

To establish the Book Talk intervention, participation was modeled by the teacher researcher and focused on sharing connections students had made while reading. Traditional teacher posed questions that focused on recall of detail were abandoned and students were encouraged to share a deeper understanding of the text by sharing the connections the text made to them personally. The class read-aloud *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (C. S. Lewis, 1950) was used to model discussion Book Talk expectations of student pairs and small groups. After several readings,

students were asked to take time to think about the character "Edmund" in the book who continually said and did mean things to others. The students were then asked to turn to their book share partner and share other words that might describe the character.

Students in the treatment group read and promoted picture books, storybooks, novels, and other popular literature during Book Talks. The students discussed with classmates books they read, heard, or "discovered." The shared selections were ones read to them by a teacher, librarian, or they were books students had read themselves. Book Talks were scheduled during daily shared literature time. Its purpose was to focus students' attention on enjoyable and informative print, as well as providing opportunities for students to share responses to a book and to exchange ideas with peers. The researcher hoped to entice students to read peer-recommended selections while encouraging them to develop personal interpretations and responses to literature by reflecting upon, discussing, and evaluating selections.

Treatment/Methodology

Participation and Responsibilities of Treatment Class Students

The treatment group of thirty 5th graders participated in a 20 minute silent, independent reading block three times a week, followed by a 10 minute literature sharing time that included both contributions to the Book Wall and Book Talks. The initial discussion with the 5th grade treatment group began with an explanation of the components of the 10 week treatment. The preliminary topics included (a) book selection, (b) participation in independent reading and social interaction of Book

Talks/Book Wall, (c) the format of the 20 minute daily independent reading time and 10 minute Book Talks, (d) the pre- and post-written surveys, and (e) reading record keeping on daily reading log. The researcher explained that the research project duration would be for 10 weeks (until the end of the second trimester), and that the project would focus on meaning making, discussions and making connections to text versus answering questions or passing Accelerated Reader quizzes. The teacher researcher's anticipated outcome was that the students would develop a love of books and reading and encourage each other to read widely.

The treatment process began the first day with the researcher/teacher addressing the treatment group regarding her perception that reading is the single most important skill an individual can possess and continued with the explanation students are not born readers; it is a learned skill that requires practice every day to build and maintain proficiency. The purposes of the 10 week treatment were to focus students' attention on enjoyable and informative print, provide opportunities for students to share responses to a book and exchange ideas with peers, and to entice students to do more wide reading through access to peer-recommended selections.

The researcher continued using explicit instruction to model 'Book Talk' behavior and thinking. The researcher demonstrated advance preparation and thinking students would use to prepare to briefly talk about books of their choosing. Students could participate in a Book Talk by summarizing it, reading an interesting or exciting part, showing illustrations, dressing like one of the book's characters, talk and/or act like one character, or answering questions about the book. Listeners were encouraged

to ask questions. Short 10 minute sessions were scheduled for three times a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) following the 20 minutes of independent reading time. Only a few participants would share each session, and initial participation was voluntary. The researcher then modeled contributing to the Book Wall by adding the title of a familiar 5th grade selection along with a 1-5 star rating, and an illustration of the setting of the book.

The researcher/teacher showed treatment group a weekly schedule of when independent reading times and Book Talks/Book Wall activities would be built into the classroom agenda (Mon., Wed., and Fri. 12:00-12:30).

It was communicated to the treatment group that as part of this study, they would take pre- and post-surveys to express their personal feelings and motivations toward reading. The researcher took the first session of the intervention to explain and administer the attitude surveys and introduce the research reading logs.

It is common practice at this school site for students to take the Computerized STAR Reading Diagnostic test at the beginning of each trimester (10-12 week period). It is also standard procedure for students to take the computerized AR quiz upon completion of a book to inform the teacher of their comprehension level of the book. Both assessments were briefly reviewed with students. One identifiable difference between reading in preparation for Book Talks and reading to pass an AR quiz is that the focus is on sharing ideas, not on answering factual questions. To teach and model this form of social interaction, the researcher was a participant, but also acted as a facilitator to keep discussion going during Book Talks. Prior to treatment beginning,

students were administered the STAR Reading Diagnostic Test to determine their current ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), thus ensuring their book choices were at an optimal level for success.

At the outset of each independent reading session students were asked to record the time and page number where they were beginning their reading. At the end of the 20 minute sessions, participants recorded the minutes and number of pages read during that intervention session. During the week, the participants also recorded the number of minutes and pages each time they selected to read independently. This ongoing research reading log was used in addition to the homework log they were already committed to filling out Monday - Thursday nights as part of their regular homework assignments.

Focus on Meaning Making and Making Connections

From the initial session and throughout the treatment, the importance of making meaning of text and making connections to life was emphasized. The researcher stressed the importance of sharing ideas during Book Talks and on Book Wall contributions as opposed to arriving at the correct answer to pass Accelerated Reader quizzes. Passing AR quizzes would be a by-product of independent reading sessions, Book Talks, and Book Wall contributions, but would not be the goal of this treatment.

Analysis of the Data

A variety of tools were used to collect data to study the amount of student reading, student attitudes toward reading, and reading achievement. The methods in

operation included the students recording minutes on reading logs, students' responses to pre- and post-attitude surveys, researcher observations/notes, the AR Student Record Report of the number of books read for the research project, and STAR Reading Report of students' Instructional Reading Level. The types of information gathered required the use of various methods to interpret the data.

The reading logs and attitude surveys, using a numerical Likert Scale, were interpreted through descriptive statistics to summarize information about the range of data (Vogt, 2007). This analysis aimed to look for patterns within the treatment group and compared before and after treatment period. The use of mean scores would investigate the quantitative evidence.

Comparative analysis was used to interpret observation notes. The comparative analysis looked for patterns of responses from members of the treatment group during independent reading and book talk time. The verbal responses, discussions and questions were documented to indicate if any changes were noted in participant attitudes toward reading.

The descriptive method interpreted findings from the AR Student Record Reports and the STAR Reading Diagnostic Reports. AR Student Record Reports were analyzed to give a count of the number of books students read and the results of the reading quizzes for each title during the intervention period. The AR Student Record Report allowed the researcher to follow any changes in the student's reading and testing habits pre and post treatment. Some of the reading behaviors recorded in the Student Record Reports were the length of books selected, the reading level of the

titles, the accuracy percentage on the reading quizzes, and the number of quizzes taken. The STAR Reading Diagnostic Report presented the researcher with the students' Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), and Instructional Reading Level (IRL) for students pre- and post-treatment. Use of the ZPD also helped the researcher guide students to select books of an appropriate level in order to maximize growth and provide optimal reading challenge without frustration. Data collected during this study is the focus of the interpretation in Chapter 4. It was the aim of the analysis to make assertions that 20 minute independent reading sessions, followed by 10 minute student Book Talks and contributions to the Book Wall had positive impacts on the reading behaviors, ZPD, and instructional reading levels of the students in the treatment group.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Educators continually grapple with the importance of utilizing and integrating a variety of instructional methods when teaching reading comprehension and promoting reading volume among their students. Providing ample time for independent reading as well as daily collaborative book activities is the approach explored by this teacher researcher.

The teacher researcher established her fifth grade classroom of 30 students as the treatment group in order to follow students' reading preferences, volume, interest, and instructional reading level over a ten week period during the school year. Students in the fifth grade intervention classroom received 20 minutes of independent reading 3 days a week, self-selection of reading materials in their ZPD range, and an additional time allotment of 10 minutes 3 days a week for literature- based social activities and book talks. Data collected from the 10-week study contributed to the assertions that the independent reading time, interactive book talks and cooperative book activities positively influenced students in a variety of behaviors. Intervention participation promoted both social interaction and students' self-efficacy beliefs toward reading which resulted in increased motivation to read and a deeper understanding of text. The treatment addressed the research question, "Can student motivation to read be increased by allowing self-selection of appropriate leveled books, providing adequate independent reading time and social interaction for students to share the literature," through the use of several different data sources. The teacher researcher administered

two print surveys before and after the treatment. The surveys addressed the participants' preferences, attitudes, and behaviors involving reading. Additional data was gathered from on-going reading logs, Student Record Reports from the Accelerated Reader program, pre and post STAR Reading assessments measuring instructional reading level, and researcher observations and notes.

Social Interaction Leads to Increased Student Understanding of Text

One measure of students' understanding of text was to analyze Accelerated Reader Diagnostic Reports of Students' Reading Practice. Accelerated Reader goals are set each trimester by the classroom teacher and students during a 'Goal Setting Conference' the first week of each trimester. Reading success is partially measured by the student's progress toward these goals. Students achieved these trimester goals through the process of reading books in their individual ZPD ranges, passing each appropriate AR book quiz at 85%, and then selecting another book and continuing the process throughout each trimester of the school year. Each book's assigned point value is based on the difficulty and length of the book. Students earned a percentage of the possible book points based on the percentage correct on the quiz. Even though this is a limited view of reading comprehension, it is one measure of understanding of the text on a factual level. A generic printout of the Accelerated Reader Diagnostic Report of Student's Reading Practice can be viewed in Appendix C which presents the various components of the AR monitoring system. Tables 6-7 present AR information for the treatment group pre and post intervention period, and Table 8 shows a comparison of any changes that occurred between the two tables.

Table 6

AR Data Before Intervention - Treatment Group

| | % Correct on Quiz | | Reading Practice Points | | Book Level | | Reading Practice Quizzes | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Goal | Avg. Earned | Avg. Goal Points | Avg. Points Earned | Goal | Avg. | Total Taken | Total Passed |
| Intervention Classroom | 85% | 78% | 25.9 | 23.7% | 5.0 | 5.1 | 66 | 59 |

Table 7

AR Data Post Intervention - Treatment Group

| | % Correct on Quiz | | Reading Practice Points | | Book Level | | Reading Practice Quizzes | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Goal | Avg. Earned | Avg. Goal Points | Avg. Points Earned | Goal | Avg. | Total Taken | Total Passed |
| Intervention Classroom | 85% | 81.1% | 27.6 | 40.6% | 5.0 | 5.6 | 87 | 72 |

Table 8

AR Changes Between Before and Post Intervention - Treatment Group

| | % Correct on Quiz | | Reading Practice Points | | Book Level | | Reading Practice Quizzes | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| | Goal 85% | Avg. Earned | Avg. Goal Points | Avg. Points Earned | Goal 5.0 | Avg. | Total Taken | Total Passed |
| Intervention Classroom | | +2.1 | +1.7 | +16.9% | | +3.0 | +21 | -6.6% |

As noted in the tables above, data gathered from the treatment group's AR Diagnostic Report of Reading Practice showed a positive improvement in average point goal attempted as well as average points earned by students in the intervention group from before treatment to post treatment. There was also positive growth in average percent questions correct on quizzes, number of quizzes attempted and average book level read by students before and after the treatment. The Diagnostic Report did, however, show a drop in book quizzes passed in relation to quizzes attempted from before and after intervention. A possible explanation for this drop will be discussed in Chapter 5.

As the treatment progressed, the teacher researcher observed that students were choosing longer books more at the top of their ZPD rather than a shorter book at the

bottom of their reading range that they could finish quickly and easily pass the AR test. Students were eager to set their AR goal higher for the third trimester within the treatment classroom. They completed more books and willingly took the AR quiz for that book before moving on to choose another book to read (see Table 8, AR Changes Between Before and Post Intervention). It should be noted that although students placed some importance in meeting their trimester AR reading goals, the point earning part of their independent reading diminished while their interest in contributing during book talks, adding to the book wall, and participating during literary discussions seemed to be their more primary focus during and after the treatment period. Students were highly motivated to check out and read books that their peers had recommended with "five stars" (the best book rating) on the book wall, or books that had been shared with the class during book talks.

Knapp (1995) noted that when teachers offered lessons with opportunities for students to discuss what they had read, reading achievement improved. The data analysis of the STAR Reading pre and post tests showed quantitative evidence that there was a positive effect of the treatment on reading performance. Based on the validity of the STAR Reading Assessment in measuring reading ability and the development of higher-order thinking skills (better readers develop into better thinkers), the fifth grade students in the intervention group were administered the STAR Reading Growth Assessment once at the beginning of the 10 week intervention and again at the end of the study. The t-test for non-independent samples used the

Scaled Scores (SS) of the 30 fifth grade students in the treatment group to show the growth summary was statistically significant ($t=3.39$, $df= 29$, $P< .01$).

Students were especially enthusiastic about the new approach the class would be assuming to AR goal points. At the outset of the treatment period, the class was informed that the passing of AR tests for the sake of earning goal points would be deemphasized and the class would be focusing more on the enjoyment and sharing of their literature for the duration of the treatment period. Even though students continued to place importance on meeting AR goals, they began to view themselves and their reading involvement in a different way. The idea of talking and sharing with friends appealed to them and conferencing with each other, even if they read different books, would be fun.

During book talks, students discussed with classmates books they had read, heard, or "discovered." The shared selections were ones read to the students by the teacher, librarian, parent, or ones the students had read themselves. This aspect of the treatment developed student's personal interpretations and responses to literature by allowing them time to reflect upon, discuss, and evaluate selections. In an attempt to develop students' capacity for engaging in conversations around the literature (as opposed to developing their proficiency for answering questions), students engaged each other in discussions during book sharing time. Book partners compared themselves to characters, speculated on character's motives, discussed accuracy and believability of the text, shared personal interpretations, and individual responses to the text. Book Talk conversations frequently evolved into discussions about siblings or

friends who were just like the book characters. Students described the character in great detail. At the conclusion of the conversation, students often shared words that they had come up with that described the character. Words like self-centered, spoiled, ungenerous, and selfish appeared in their discussions. Through their conversations, students had generated not only descriptive and meaningful vocabulary words, but also a better understanding of character traits and motives. During the book talks, each student was accountable for his or her own thinking. At the outset of each ten minute book talk time, the teacher researcher made statements that encouraged thinking and independence. She asked students to cite evidence from their own lives that had enabled them to make connections with their text. Questions posed to probe students' thinking included:

1. What did you think about when you chose to read this book?
2. What was the funniest or most surprising event that has happened in the chapter you are reading now and has anything like that ever happened to you or someone you know?
3. What do you think will happen in the coming pages?
4. What problems do the characters face and are any of these problems similar to the problems you face?

Students were obviously excited when the teacher researcher modeled how to make an addition to the Book Wall to "advertise" their book. Sharing a book during Book Talks was also modeled for the treatment group. Rather than trying to summarize the whole book, sharing an event from the story that was very exciting or

affected the student personally was emphasized. Students were asked to give their book a 'one to five star' rating each time they shared a book with the class during Book Talks. They also concluded any contributions they made to the Book Wall with a similar 'one to five star' rating. A photographic representation of the Book Wall is included in Appendix D. Analyzing Book Wall contributions revealed several noteworthy contributions from English Learners in the treatment classroom. Gabriella wrote about the main character, Count Olaf, in *The Miserable Mill* that the author must have spent a lot of time coming up with all the bad things the Count did. "The Count seemed to have no good parts in his heart," Gabriella wrote. "He was just full of pure evil." Another student, also an English Learner, wrote on the book wall that she was giving her book, *And Then What Happened, Paul Revere?*, a five star rating. Carmen wrote that she now knew all about Paul Revere's life and all the interesting things he had done such as being a bell-maker, silversmith, and dentist (who made false teeth from walrus bone). Carmen compared the biography of Paul Revere to our social studies text book saying that she now knew him as a real person and not just the midnight rider who had warned colonists about the King's soldiers.

Towards the end of the 10 week treatment period, one student, Abraham, confided in the teacher-researcher that he had made a list of all the five star books that his best friend Corey had contributed to the Book Wall. Abraham's plan was to read the books on this list so that when he had questions about the events of the stories, he could just talk call up his friend Corey to help him figure it out. This is a clear

indication of the impact that social interaction had on a students' motivation to continue reading.

The teacher-researcher felt that reading motivation increased as students made meaningful contributions to the Book Wall and provocative insights during book shares. These social interactions created interest and deeper understanding of the text which motivated students to continue their reading. Students' conversations appeared tentative at first, but as their conversations continued, the feedback they received from their discussion partners clarified, strengthened or diminished their original perceptions of the text. Anecdotal notes made by the researcher during one book share revealed that one student who had read *Henry and the Clubhouse* by Beverly Cleary was involved in a problem solving discussion. Kenny and Jovany, who lived on the same block, were trying to come up with ideas of what they would do if there was a neighborhood pest like Beezus that kept them from completing their daily paper route. The character, Beezus, in *Henry and the Clubhouse*, reminded them both of their younger siblings who were in real life constantly thwarting their plans and interfering with their fun. Kenny and Jovany developed a thoughtful list of possibilities that the character Henry might try to rid himself of the pest, Beezus. Their list of possible remedies evolved in creativity as their discussion continued. Their solutions ranged in complexity beginning with Henry simply discussing the problem with his parents, to writing a letter to Beezus addressed from Santa Claus or her favorite television character Sherriff Bud telling her that interfering with Henry's paper delivery simply must stop. By the end of their discussion, Jovany and Kenny had settled on the idea

that Henry might have to convince Beezus to not pester him by giving her a small portion of his paper route earnings. They both thought that would be a worthwhile investment on Henry's part. The teacher researcher noted that the students' conversation and thinking became more complex and creative as the discussion continued because of the different viewpoints they both contributed. These viewpoints developed into new thinking through their conversation.

During the first treatment session, the teacher researcher read the first chapter of *Chains* by Laurie Halsey Anderson (2008). The reading elicited several insightful responses from students as well as prompting four of the students to check the book out of the library at the next visit so they could read along as the teacher read aloud. At the end of the first chapter, one student opened the book talk time by asking what the difference was between a slave and a servant. Michael recalled that our social studies book had talked about an indentured servant being able to earn his freedom by working for his owner for several years. Michael observed that Isabel and her little sister Ruth, the main characters in *Chains*, were owned by Mr. Roberts with no hope of ever being free no matter how long or hard they worked. This prompted a class discussion with students speculating about the life of being a slave in the American colonies in the 1700s.

Another ironic insight made by students was that this story, *Chains* (Anderson, 2008), was written about the Revolutionary War Era, a time when people who had immigrated from other parts of the world were looking for freedom and liberty. One student, Carmen, whose family had come to the school community from Mexico when

she was only five, thought it was odd that Colonists were fighting for freedom, but thought it was 'okay' to keep African people as slaves with no freedom at all. That prompted a class discussion about people who say one thing, but do another. It reminded Andrew of a past soccer coach who always told him and his teammates to play fair, but then let a player on the team who was older than the age limit. Each book share session students discussed new insights that provided evidence of deepening critical thinking skills. There are several references to chains throughout the novel and each mention triggered a discussion of how the word "chain" was used as an antonym to the word "freedom."

At another read aloud session, the character Pastor Weeks in *Chains* (Anderson, 2008) claimed that teaching a slave to read only "leads to trouble"(p. 6). Ian, a Gifted and Talented Student, thought the author must mean that "The more you read, the more you know." Ian went on to explain to his classmates that, "If the slaves could read, they would find out how other people lived." Ian felt that it would not be long before knowing that others lived free might make the slaves want to rebel and that would cause the colonists 'trouble.' These student generated insights and discussions are clear indications of the treatment group's ability to think and understand text on a deeper level than had been demonstrated prior to the treatment period.

Social Interaction Affects Self-efficacy Beliefs in Students Leading to More Independent Wide Reading

As noted by Ketch (2005), teachers who provide a framework for talk among students and recognize the value of providing time for students to reflect, form ideas, and cite evidence of their thinking, will, over time, observe students become more engaged in reading. Student perceptions of themselves as readers improved over the course of the treatment as observed by the teacher researcher. Discussion was an engaging social interaction that increased students' self-efficacy beliefs which in turn, prompted students to complete more books and earn class credit by passing the AR quiz when the book was finished. Table 8 (AR Changes Between Before and After Intervention) shows that students were taking more AR tests and reading books at a higher level at the conclusion of the treatment period. This affirms the positive impact social interaction has on reading motivation as compared with the previous practice of reading in isolation for the sole purpose of passing the AR test.

The pre- and post-intervention surveys that addressed the students' "Reading Habits and Preferences" also support the changes in the frequency and the duration of reading sessions for several treatment participants. Table 9 shows the percentages of positive student responses pre- and post-treatment to four of the survey questions. Survey questions #6, #7, and # 8 directly addressed students' desire to read and share their reading with peers.

Table 9

Reading Habits and Preferences Survey - Treatment Group of 30 Students

| Survey Question | Pre-Treatment % | | Post-Treatment % | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| #6 Do you like to read? | 21 of 30 - 70% | 9 of 30 - 30% | 25 of 30- 83% | 5 of 30 - 17% |
| #7 Do you like to share what you are reading with friends? | 10 of 30 - 33% | 20 of 30 - 67% | 23 of 30 - 77% | 7 of 30 - 23% |
| #8 Do you read enough? | 19 of 30 - 63% | 11 of 30 - 27% | 6 of 30 - 20% | 24 of 30 - 80% |

The Table of Reading Habits and Preferences was especially revealing when students responded to "Do you read enough?" It was evident post-treatment that students' were eager to read more, thus having more to share during book talks and on the book wall. A sense of wanting to have a book to share with peers and 'advertise' on the book wall motivated more students to indicate on the post survey that they wanted to be reading more. It is also noteworthy that question # 10 of the survey asked "What was the worst part of reading" to which 21 of 30 students (70%) responded on the pre-treatment survey 'can't find a book.' At the conclusion of the 10 week treatment period, only 13 of 30 students (43%) felt that this was still a problem. The teacher researcher

noted that many of the students searched the Book Wall for peer recommendations when choosing their next book, or chose a book that a classmate had shared during Book Talk times. The students were helping each other become better readers by sharing their own literature 'best picks.'

A sample of the on-going Reading Logs students completed each time they engaged in independent reading can be found in Appendix C. As part of the nightly classroom homework, students were required to read 30 minutes, record the time on the Reading Log, and have a parent sign the Log before turning it in for credit each Friday. The teacher researcher used the class set of Reading Logs dated one week prior to beginning the study as the pre-treatment data. The class set of reading logs dated the last week of the study was used as post-treatment data. As noted in the data below, the post-treatment Reading Logs clearly indicate significant change over time in both number of independent reading sessions and number of minutes read during each session. For the purposes of comparison, the Reading Logs of five students who began the project with a high view and motivation toward reading were tallied, as well as the Reading Logs of five students who began the treatment with low self-efficacy toward reading. The five below-level students had struggled pre-intervention to complete a book and pass an AR quiz. Table 10 below presents the data compiled from the sample students' Reading Logs.

Table 10

Weekly Reading Logs Comparison Pre- and Post-Treatment

| | Pre-Treatment On Level (5)Students | Post-Treatment On Level (5)Students |
|---|---|--|
| Total # of Weekly Reading Sessions | 33 | 35 |
| Total Duration of Reading Sessions per week | 786 minutes | 843 minutes |
| | Pre-Treatment Below Level (5)Students | Post-Treatment Below Level (5)Students |
| Total # of Weekly Reading Sessions | 24 | 32 |
| Total Duration of Reading Sessions per week | 320 minutes | 642 minutes |

Table 10 of Weekly reading logs comparing the reading habits of the same five students pre and post treatment reveal that students who were readers before continued to read almost the same number of sessions each week with a slight increase in the duration of their reading time. The below level readers became more dedicated to what they considered (pre-intervention) the "task" of reading. The prospect of sharing their reading with peers during Book Talks and contributing their book reflections and preferences to the Book Wall prompted these five struggling readers to choose reading as an independent activity more frequently and for longer periods of time.

Social Interaction and Increased Independent Reading Time Affects Student Motivation to Read

For some time there has been the assumption that the desire to read and reading achievement are related (Ley & Trentham, 1987). However, McKenna and Kear (1990) observed that recent research in reading assessment was more concerned with comprehension rather than attitude, and argued that reading researchers were ignoring an important aspect in the development of literacy. Attitude toward reading has been defined as students' feelings toward reading, which result in approaching or avoiding reading tasks (Cooter & Alexander, 1984). The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey provided a quick indication of student attitudes toward reading. It consisted of 20 items and was administered to the entire class pre and post treatment. The initial survey allowed the teacher researcher to analyze class averages on recreational and academic reading attitude in order to characterize the intervention class generally on these two dimensions. The post survey served as a means of monitoring the attitudinal

impact of the treatment over the 10 week period. Each item presented a brief, simply worded statement about reading, followed by four pictures of a 'smiley-face.' Each face was designed to depict a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative. The teacher Researcher informed the treatment students that this was not a test, there were no "right" answers and sincerity was highly encouraged.

The pre-intervention mean for each question was then compared to the mean calculated for each of the 20 questions on the post-intervention survey. The post-survey findings included in this section support the narrative analysis; by the end of the treatment period, 15 of the 20 survey questions the treatment group responded to showed favorable gains in mean scores of positive attitude toward reading tasks. The actual survey items assessing "Elementary Reading Attitude Survey" and the corresponding data tables can be found in Appendix B. Table 11 (Comparison of ERAS +/-mean changes) provides the scores and comparisons in student attitudes of reading tasks before and after the 10 week treatment period. Several significant findings from the ERAS scores included positive gains in mean scores on the following post treatment survey questions: #2, #5, #7, #13 and #3.

- ERAS Question #2 - How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time? (Mean points pre-survey 2.62. Mean points post-survey 2.86 (+0.24)
- ERAS Question #5 - How do you feel about spending free time reading? (Mean points pre-survey 2.34. Mean points post-survey 2.58. (+ 0.24)
- ERAS Question #7 - How do you feel about reading during summer vacation? (Mean points pre-survey 1.66. Mean points post-survey 1.90. (+0.24)

- ERAS Question #13 - How do you feel about reading in school? (Mean points pre-survey 2.93. Mean points post-survey 3.13. (+ 0.20)
- The most significant positive mean score gain was for question # 3.
- ERAS Question #3 - How do you feel about reading for fun at home? (Mean points pre-survey 2.10. Mean points post-survey 2.59 (+ 0.49)

Conversely, the ERAS highlighted important decreases in the mean score for these three academic reading questions: #16, #19, and #20.

- ERAS Question #16 - How do you feel when it is time for reading class? (Mean points pre-survey 3.00. Mean points post-survey 2.72 (-0.28)
- ERAS Question #19 - How do you feel about using a dictionary? Mean points pre-survey 2.41. Mean Points post-survey 2.21 (-0.20)
- ERAS Question # 20 - How do you feel about taking a reading test? Mean points pre-survey 2.97. Mean points post-survey 2.66. (-0.31)

These outcomes will be discussed further in the following chapter.

As evidenced by improved student attitudes toward recreational reading, the treatment focusing on social interaction to enhance reading enjoyment, proved central in motivating students to do more independent reading.

Table 11

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kerr, 1990)
Treatment Group Pre and Post Survey Comparison

Recreational Reading

| Survey Item # | Total # of pts Pre-survey | Mean Pts. | Total # of pts. Post-survey | Mean Pts. | Difference + / - |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1 | 72 | 2.48 | 73 | 2.52 | +0.04 |
| 2 | 76 | 2.62 | 83 | 2.86 | +0.24 |
| 3 | 61 | 2.10 | 75 | 2.59 | +0.49 |
| 4 | 73 | 2.51 | 74 | 2.55 | +0.04 |
| 5 | 68 | 2.34 | 75 | 2.58 | +0.24 |
| 6 | 91 | 3.14 | 95 | 3.28 | +0.14 |
| 7 | 48 | 1.66 | 55 | 1.90 | +0.24 |
| 8 | 47 | 1.62 | 45 | 1.55 | -0.07 |
| 9 | 89 | 3.07 | 93 | 3.20 | +0.13 |
| 10 | 87 | 3.00 | 90 | 3.10 | +0.10 |

Table 11 (continued)

Academic Reading

| Survey Item # | Total # of pts Pre-survey | Mean Pts. | Total # of pts. Post-survey | Mean Pts. | Difference + / - |
|---------------|------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| 11 | 62 | 2.14 | 66 | 2.28 | +0.14 |
| 12 | 47 | 1.62 | 52 | 1.79 | +0.17 |
| 13 | 85 | 2.93 | 91 | 3.13 | +0.20 |
| 14 | 69 | 2.38 | 67 | 2.31 | -0.07 |
| 15 | 79 | 2.72 | 81 | 2.79 | +0.07 |
| 16 | 87 | 3.00 | 79 | 2.72 | -0.28 |
| 17 | 75 | 2.59 | 76 | 2.62 | +0.03 |
| 18 | 59 | 2.03 | 60 | 2.07 | +0.04 |
| 19 | 70 | 2.41 | 64 | 2.21 | -0.20 |
| 20 | 86 | 2.97 | 77 | 2.66 | -0.31 |

The multi-faceted dilemma faced by educators to teach children how to read, providing time, space, and selection of relevant literature in the classroom, and instill in children the desire to choose to read such that they become lifelong readers was addressed by this study. The qualitative analysis of the findings was very helpful in understanding the impact the treatment had on the motivation to read for these intermediate grade students. The researcher assessed student understanding through the Reading Renaissance Star Growth Report which showed a statistically significant gain in students' Instructional Reading Level pre and post treatment. The researcher

also observed improved student understanding through records of discussions with peers during book talks. Motivation to continue independent wide reading and sample a wider variety of genres and authors was demonstrated by students' numerous contributions to the book wall. Student's self efficacy beliefs increased as seen in students choosing books at a higher reading level and completing more books as evidenced on Accelerated Reader Student Records. As students became more comfortable sharing their personal reflections of the literature, it was apparent that they were making connections between the text and their own lives on a much deeper level. As demonstrated by positive gains on specific questions of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, students demonstrated an increased eagerness to read as a result of experiencing reading as an interactive social activity shared with peers. Because of the brevity of this study, there is, however, no clear indication of long term behavioral effects of the enhanced wide reading motivation noted during this treatment period.

In Chapter 5 of this thesis, related issues will be addressed through discussion and conclusions of the potential contributions of this study, as well as recommendations for teaching and ideas for future research.

Chapter 5

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this culminating experience was to study the impact of restructuring the reading time of the fifth grade target classroom. The treatment was designed to increase student motivation to read and continue reading as a life-long endeavor. The study proposed that teachers can increase student motivation to read by allowing self-selection of appropriately leveled books, providing time within the school day for independent reading, and engaging students in interactive book discussions and book activities with peers.

The review of the literature in Chapter 2 of this study clearly supports the premise that wide independent reading is a pivotal ingredient to cognitive growth and development among children as readers in their everyday lives (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998), and extensive reading helps build vocabulary (Nagy, Herman & Anderson, 1985). However, when given a choice of activity, Anderson and the Commission on Reading (1985) argued that the majority of fifth grade students do not choose to read. Educators face a three dimensional dilemma: teaching children how to read; providing time, space, and selection of relevant literature in the classroom; and finally, instilling in children the desire to choose to read such that they become lifelong readers.

Reflections on the findings of this study, the potential contributions to the body of knowledge, and ideas for further research are addressed in this chapter.

Conclusions and Discussion

Data collected from the study supported the assertions that increasing independent reading time, engaging students in an interactive Book Wall, and introducing regularly scheduled Book Talks with peers positively influenced students in their self-efficacy beliefs toward reading. In turn, their motivation to read was enhanced as demonstrated by increased contributions to the classroom Book Wall, increased enthusiasm for sharing their reading during peer book discussions, and increased engagement during class Book Talks. As a consequence of the aforementioned treatment, the treatment group's Instructional Reading Level increased statistically significantly over the course of the 10 week study.

The 5th grade classroom that provided the context for this study showed that data collected from the 10 week study resulted in increased independent reading habits, a greater motivation to read independently and improved comprehension and critical thinking abilities of students in the treatment group as measured by the STAR Reading Computer-Adaptive Reading Test published by Renaissance Learning, Inc. As the research findings revealed, students in the treatment group demonstrated improved meaning making of text. The notion is well supported by Day et al. (2002) that meaning is made as readers negotiate their own understanding with the contributions of others. As the research findings revealed, treatment group students who participated in the book talks, contributed to the book wall, and who were provided additional independent reading time demonstrated progress in critical thinking and meaning making of the text. This progress was noted in a positive growth

summary between the pretest and posttest scores on the STAR Reading Assessment. A noteworthy dimension of data collected from the STAR Reading Assessment is that there were significant dividends for everyone - not just for the more able readers. Even the students with limited reading and comprehension skills built vocabulary and cognitive structures through reading.

These positive gains contribute to the body of research (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Smith, 1988) which shows that reading has the potential to improve with the right kind of practice. Cunningham and Stanovich (2003) argued that there are reciprocal effects of reading volume and that providing children, regardless of their achievement levels, with as many interactive reading experiences and as much independent reading time as possible is doubly imperative for those students whose verbal and cognitive abilities are most in need of bolstering. Unquestionably, it is the very act of reading and interaction based on that reading that can build those capacities.

With motivation to read increased, reading performance increased as well as reading volume. Student Reading Logs showed an increase in the number of minutes subjects spent in independent reading sessions, as well as increased numbers of pages read during the sessions. Reading Log data drawn from sample students reading both on grade level and below grade level showed increased reading duration and total pages read. Students participating in the treatment of Book Talks, Book Wall, and Daily Independent Reading demonstrated an increase in self efficacy beliefs as

measured by the researcher's survey, and as a result, increased their reading volume as indicated in Table 10, Chapter 4 (Student Reading Logs Pre and Post Treatment).

As discussed in Chapter 2, engagement theorists have maintained that a child's motivation to choose an activity is influenced by his beliefs about his potential success at the task (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997; Jinks & Lorschach, 2003; Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). In light of the scholarly research, it was important to explore the competence beliefs of the students involved in this intervention. Data gathered to support self-efficacy beliefs was drawn from student attitude surveys, reading habits and preferences surveys, researcher's observations and anecdotal notes. The outcomes support the aforementioned engagement theorists' research in that Elementary Reading Attitude Survey questions (#2, #3, #5, and #7) showed a strong positive increase in student response over the treatment period. The questions focused on free (independent) reading being an activity of choice at home, during free time at school, and during summer vacation. Researcher's observations of students' eagerness to set their AR Reading goals higher also indicated students' increased "I can do it!" mentality.

A considerable body of evidence strongly indicates that discussion fosters improved understanding (Day et al., 2002). Gaining information and knowledge is one established goal of reading, and that goal is accomplished when readers make meaningful connections with text in conjunction with the contributions of others. During Book Talks and Book Wall contributions, students' attention was focused on enjoyable and informative print. In addition to providing opportunities for students to

share responses to a book and exchange ideas with peers, the book wall and book talks enticed students to read peer-recommended selections while developing personal interpretations to literature by reflecting upon, discussing, and evaluating selections.

This type of reading activity elicited responses to literature beyond the surface level (Day et al., 2002). It's been reported that students who are presented with ample time and practice to engage in conversation about life issues and concepts will begin to develop as critical thinkers (Ketch, 2005). Book share participation in this research study played a vital role in helping to facilitate the students' critical thinking and meaning making through literature and its application to everyday life. Reading motivation increased when competence beliefs were raised as students made meaningful contributions during book share discussions. Frequent observations of increased competence beliefs were noted by this researcher as students moved from being timid about contributing selections to the book wall, to requesting that an additional classroom wall be covered to provide more space for writing and drawing about their books. Students' increased competence beliefs were also observed when the 'sign-up' sheet to present a book during book talk time had so many volunteers that there was a waiting list of several days. Ketch (2005) has written that with social interaction and conversation, students can explore and expand their developing thoughts. Without conversation, they were limited to their own insights. The social interaction treatment of this study appears to have created interest and understanding of text which fostered the motivation for further reading. Students not afforded the opportunity to dialogue with each other about content, meaning or personal

connections from their readings with lack of structured discussion may be less likely to develop or practice critical thinking skills. Ketch (2005) explained that without ample opportunity for practicing, the skills of asking meaningful questions, thinking critically, and making connections to real life situations have little chance of developing.

Students personal environments color their perceptions and understanding of social situations therefore affecting the meaning each person makes as they relate to the text (Day et al., 2002). Readers in this study appeared to gain deeper understanding of the characters and related to them in a more complete manner through dialogues with peers. During the dialogues, every student appeared to be engaged in the treatment classroom. Students wanted to be a part of the discussion. They appeared to like the opportunity to talk about what they knew and link it to what they were learning and hearing from classmates. The students seemed to know they could share their ideas in an encouraging and nurturing environment that promoted respect for each individual and his or her thoughts.

This study contends that the productive use of time for independent reading during the school day is critical to the development of both the skill and will to read. Clearly there are learning differences that require teacher monitoring in order for independent reading to successfully increase reading achievement. Independent reading, coupled with teacher monitoring of literature choices within students' appropriate ZPD range, asking questions, classroom accounting (through AR), and encouraging student discussions about books were all adaptations the teacher

researcher incorporated into the treatment. Scholars Edmunds & Bauserman (2006), Guthrie et al. (2007), as well as Strommen & Mates (2004), posited that choice is motivating and students within this treatment group were allowed the freedom to read self-selected material within their ZPD during the 20 minutes of independent reading provided three times a week. The strong positive increase in student response to Questions #2, #3, #5 and #7 on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey which inquired about choosing reading as a free time activity, bodes well considering the findings of the study conducted by Anderson et al. (1985) that children tend not to choose independent reading as an activity of choice in their free time.

The increased negativity in response to questions #16, #19, and #20 on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey can be explained by students' obvious delight and enthusiasm for parameters established during 10 weeks of interventions including increased independent reading time, self selection of text, time allotted at the end of silent reading time for students to discuss with a partner about what they had been reading, literature sharing through book talks, and book wall participation. The ERAS questions displaying negative mean data emphasized skills development, and performance/achievement mandates as compared with desire and motivation for reading. The professional literature appears to indicate that this achievement emphasis undermines student's motivation and interest in learning. The intervention activities were designed with social and meaning-making characteristics with the intention that the emphasis would shift away from skills assessment and earning AR points to a classroom community where readers make connections to the text, to the world, to

background information, and background information (schema) that motivates them to read widely.

The Commission of Reading in its summary of research (Anderson et al., 1985) concluded that "becoming a skilled reader requires....learning that written material can be interesting" (p. 18). Smith (1988) observed that "the emotional response to reading...is the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read" (p. 177). This research acknowledges that the student's attitude toward reading is a central factor affecting reading performance. As stated in Chapter 2 (Walberg & Tsai, 1983) there is a long history of research in which attitude and achievement have been consistently linked. This study supports the scholarly research that children who are motivated to read will spend more time reading, and increased reading has a positive effect on reading achievement as well as the likelihood of becoming lifelong readers.

Recommendations for Teaching

The results of this study may be useful to the teaching community by generating discussion among educators regarding teaching approaches to literature and motivation of their students. Based on the findings of this study, some classroom characteristics that were found to support young readers' motivation include the following: having a teacher who modeled reading and gave attention to personal interests of students; providing opportunities for self-selection of literature; provide access to both large amounts and wide variety of reading material in the classroom;

imbed independent reading time into the curriculum; and offer opportunities for students to interact with other children and adults in the classroom about their reading.

This researcher gave students the vote between two award winning historical fiction books that focused on the Revolutionary War, an integral part of 5th grade curriculum and an era that garnered high interest among her students. Students chose *Chains*, by Laurie Halsey Anderson (2008), and eagerly anticipated the 10 minutes of daily read aloud time. This time was a perfect opportunity for the teacher researcher to model good intonation, fluency and prosody in oral reading. Students began to identify with the book's characters, their problems, and cheered for characters' attempts to improve their situations.

Although the treatment group's classroom library was substantial before this study began, more shelves needed to be added to the library as the study continued. Students began bringing in books they had finished to share with peers or swap for another book on the shelves. Books 'advertised' on the Book Wall flew off the shelves and all extra classroom funds were dedicated to book club purchases of a wide variety of popular titles. Students were also encouraged to take advantage of 'open' library times before/after school, and at recess. All books in the classroom library as well as the school library at the target school were labeled on the spine with the reading level of the book. Completion of the computerized STAR Reading Test by Renaissance Learning enabled the Teacher-researcher to accurately place each student within their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) such that students were not choosing books too difficult or too easy for their individual reading level. The school librarian was also

apprised of each student's reading range so that she could assist students in locating high interest books still within their ZPD.

Research suggests that children must be given more time inside of school for self-selected reading (Anderson et al., 1985). To ensure that all students had access to independent reading time, an important part of this study's treatment was allocating time within the school day, three days a week (20 minutes), for free reading. During this time there were no other activities scheduled and all students read books they had chosen. At the conclusion of the 20 minutes, 10 minutes were dedicated to students sharing through book talks, peer discussions, and adding newly completed books to the book wall. It would appear from the results of this study that when teachers recognize the value in providing time for students to reflect, form ideas, and share with their peers evidence of their evolving thinking, those students will, with practice, become reflective thinkers themselves. Educators might take advantage of the influence that peers have on children's reading motivation. The children in this treatment group demonstrated the effect their peers had on their reading motivation by frequently mentioning them when asked how they found out about a book, or why they were motivated to read.

Ideas for Future Research

As referenced in Chapter 2, although there is an immense amount of research that has been conducted about reading over the past 20 years, few studies have been conducted to determine the role of motivation in reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). One possibility for future research would be to conduct a study examining the benefits

of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation. A year-long study could include a control classroom that continued to focus on the target school's present Accelerated Reader program with all of the point rewards (stickers, pencils, candy, pizza parties). The treatment classroom in the study would eliminate the AR program (or at least curtail the tangible reward system), and focus on intrinsic motivators including book sharing, peer discussions and interactive book activities. Data could be gathered comparing the two groups reading volume and gains in Instructional Reading Level.

Another possibility for future study is to implement on-going literature circles in the classroom. The teacher-researcher conducts her own study to evaluate student motivation during the school year. The researcher would consider rotation of discussion groups to supervise and ensure the quality of discussion. Students would be grouped based on their literary interests and choices of literature titles. This would provide them decision making opportunities and ensure their investment in the literature discussions. A control group of students in a passive learning environment without literary interaction and discussion among peers would provide data to compare the two learning environments.

Many ideas and opportunities might be generated as a result of this study. One positive dimension of this research is that it demonstrates that reading yields dividends for everyone - not just for the "smart kids" or the more able readers. Even the child with limited reading and comprehension skills will build vocabulary and cognitive structures through reading. When reading is seen as fun, and students are excited to share knowledge learned when reading, they gain a sense of ownership and personal

connection with their learning; this positively impacts their motivation to read now and will begin to mold them into a self-motivated reader on into adulthood.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in Research



Consent to Participate in Research

Your consent is requested for your child to participate in research that will be conducted by Cinda Muser, a graduate student in the Department of Education at Sacramento State University. This study will be conducted at River Oaks Elementary School. The purpose of the study is to examine both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to increase students' independent reading habits. Reading motivation is important because the amount of independent reading children do is significantly related to gains in reading achievement.

groups using Accelerated Reader Program and/or literature interests and successes. Your child will be encouraged to read what he or she is learning through the books they read.

ed with an health risks. Your child may benefit from these lessons through more wide reading. Any assessments done to evaluate the success of the teaching procedure will not be identified with any particular (your) child. The identity of your child will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Cinda Muser at (209) 745-4614 or by email at cmuser@galt.k12.ca.us.

Your child may decline to participate in this study without any consequences. Your signature below indicates that you understand the above request and agree to have your child participate in the research.

Your child will be involved in the research using a small group or circles approach to sharing reading interests and successes. Your child will be encouraged to read what he or she is learning through the books they read.

These lessons are not associated with any health risks. Your child may benefit from these lessons through more wide reading. Any assessments done to evaluate the success of the teaching procedure will not be identified with any particular (your) child. The identity of your child will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Cinda Muser at (209) 745-4614 or by email at cmuser@galt.k12.ca.us.

Your child may decline to participate in this study without any consequences. Your signature below indicates that you understand the above request and agree to have your child participate in the research.

APPENDIX B





Surveys

ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

Student _____

Grade _____

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Love it! | Like it. | Ho Hum... | Don't like it! |

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|---|



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Like it. | Ho Hum... | Don't like it! | Love it! |

about reading for fun at home?

3. How do you feel

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Like it | Ho Hum | Don't like it! | Love it! |

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?



Love it!



Like it.



Ho Hum...



Don't like it!

6. How do you feel about starting a new book?



Love it!



Like it.



Ho Hum...



Don't like it!

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



Love it!



Like it.







Ho Hum...







Don't like it!

8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?

9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Love it! | Like it. | Ho Hum... | Don't like it! |

10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Love it! | Like it. | Ho Hum... | Don't like it! |







her asks you questions about

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| Ho Hum... | Don't like it! |





11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you to read?

| | |
|--|---|
|  |  |
| Love it! | Like it. |

13. How do you feel about reading in school?

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Love it! | Like it. | Ho Hum... | Don't like it! |

14. How do you feel about reading your school books?

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Love it! | Like it. | Ho Hum... | Don't like it! |



learning from a book?

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
|---|---|

15. How do you feel about

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
|---|---|

17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



Love it!



Like it.



Ho Hum...



Don't like it!

18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



Love it!



Like it.



Ho Hum...



Don't like it!



19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?



Love it!



Like it.



Ho Hum...



Don't like it!

19

Reading Habits and Preferences - Survey of Students



Reading Habits and Preferences - Survey of Students

Do you have a favorite book?

1) No 2) Yes If yes, _____

2. Do you have a favorite author?

1) No 2) Yes If yes, _____

3. Do you read more at school or at home?

1) At school 2) At home

2) At home

1) At school

How many times a week do you read at home (not text books)?

1) 1-2 2) 2-3 3) 4-5 4) 6-7

4. How many days a week do you read at school?

1) 0-1 2) 2-3

How long do you read each time you read? (Circle one)

1) 5-10 2) 11-20 3) 15-30 4) 31-45 5) 46-60 6) 60+

5. How many minutes do you read each time you read?

1) less than 5 2) 6-10 3) 11-15 4) 16-20

Do you like to read?

Yes

6. Do you like to read?

1) No 2) Yes

8. Do you read enough?

1) No 2) Yes

9. What is the best part about reading? (Circle as many as appropriate)

Use your imagination

relax

good story

learn something new

interesting

nothing good about it

other _____

10. What is the worst part about reading? (Circle as many as appropriate)

Not enough time

boring

can't find a book



nothing bad about it

other _

ircle as many as appropriate)

too much homework

makes it hard

11. What makes it hard to read enough? (C

Not enough time

boring

can't find a book

nothing

other _____

APPENDIX C

Student Reports

Accelerated Reader™
Student Record Report
 Monday, December 5, 2005 1:15:00 PM
 Reporting Period: 10/18/2005 – 12/1/2005 Marking Period

This report provides a detailed summary of the student's reading practice on all quiz types, including his performance on Reading Practice, Vocabulary, and Literacy Skills quizzes.

Group by Class

████████████████████

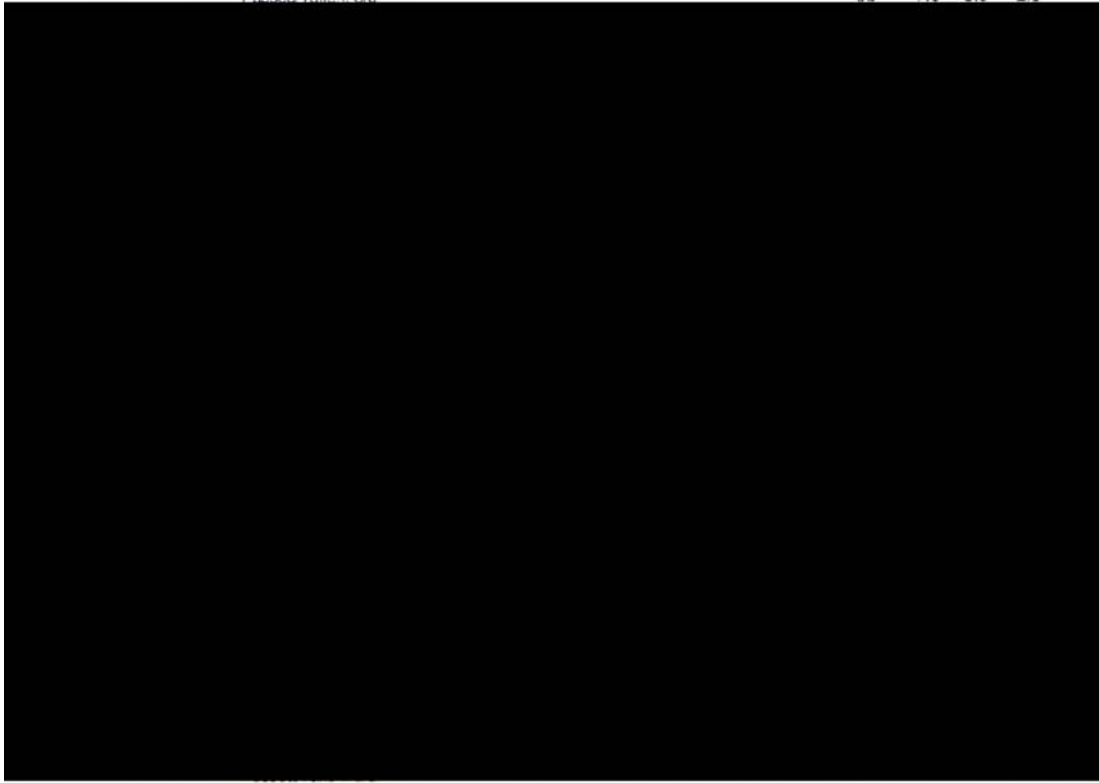
████████████████████
 Class: Grade 4 (████████)

Grade: 4
 Teacher: ██████████

ID: ██████████

Reading Practice - English

| Date | No. | Lang. | Title | Quiz | | Questions | | | Points | | ATOS | |
|-------------------|--------|-------|----------------------------------|------|-----|-----------|-------|---------|--------|-------|------|------|
| | | | | F/NF | TWI | Corr. | Pass. | % Corr. | Earned | Pass. | BL | |
| 10/24/2005 | 11420 | EN | It Goes Eeeeeeeeeee! | F | 1 | 9 | 10 | 90 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 2.9 | |
| 10/28/2005 | 5304 | EN | Mystery Ranch | F | 1 | 9 | 10 | 90 | 1.8 | 2.0 | 3.3 | |
| 10/31/2005 | 1663 | EN | From Caterpillar to Butterfly | F | 1 | 5 | 5 | 100 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 2.7 | |
| 11/3/2005 | 105257 | EN | The Real Thing | F | 1 | 5 | 5 | 100 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 2.6 | |
| 11/7/2005 | 55459 | EN | Allosaurus (Dinosaurs) | NF | 1 | 5 | 5 | 100 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 2.7 | |
| 11/21/2005 | 88859 | EN | The Big Blueberry Barf-Off! | F | 1 | 9 | 10 | 90 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 3.0 | |
| 11/28/2005 | 6151 | EN | African Animals (New True Books) | NF | 1 | 5 | 5 | 100 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 2.8 | |
| 11/30/2005 | 53784 | EN | Caleb's Story | F | 1 | 10 | 10 | 100 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.9 | |
| Passed/Taken: 8/8 | | | | | | | | | 96 | 7.6 | 8.0 | *2.9 |



Reading Practice - Spanish

APPENDIX D

Student Contributions to Book Wall

BOOK WALL

Picture Book

Here go through 4. Almost 5 stars. And parents find it interesting. I have the picture books. I have to call it 4.5 stars.

5 stars

Henry

A 2 month old baby who is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

Chan

This is about a boy who is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

Harry Potter

In this adventure Harry is entered in a tournament. He is a wizard. He is a wizard. He is a wizard.

Scot

Greg's 1st summer is a very thing but normal. A 4.5 star diary is written by Greg.

The Preemie

This is about a boy who is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

Simon

This is about a boy who is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

The Book

This is about a boy who is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

Guy Time

Guy Time is a book about a boy who is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

Greg and the Curse of the Warmblood

This book is good because it is ADVENTUROUS and fun by Chris.

Greg's 1st Summer

Greg's 1st summer is a very thing but normal. A 4.5 star diary is written by Greg.

The Whipping Boy

In this book Prince Brat and Tommy from The Whipping Boy escape from the castle.

The Harry Potter Series

Harry, Ron, and Hermione are the main characters. I love all of them. Harry was affected by the war. He was a hero and a wizard.

The Book

This is about a boy who is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

Red Wolf

When Red Wolf is a little boy, he is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

The Bad Beginning

The three children are in a very bad situation. They are in a very bad situation. They are in a very bad situation.

Malice

Malice is a steady comic book. It is a steady comic book. It is a steady comic book.

Black Beauty

It's about a horse who has a very nice master and always gets sold to a new owner.

Harry Potter The

I love the series of Harry Potter. It is about a boy who is a wizard. He is a wizard. He is a wizard.

Red Wolf

When Red Wolf is a little boy, he is a little bit of a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl. She is a girl.

The Bad Beginning

The three children are in a very bad situation. They are in a very bad situation. They are in a very bad situation.

Malice

Malice is a steady comic book. It is a steady comic book. It is a steady comic book.

Black Beauty

It's about a horse who has a very nice master and always gets sold to a new owner.

Harry Potter The

I love the series of Harry Potter. It is about a boy who is a wizard. He is a wizard. He is a wizard.

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