THE IMPACT OF LITERATURE CIRCLES ON READING MOTIVATION AND COMPREHENSION FOR STUDENTS IN A SECOND GRADE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

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Many school districts use a basal reading series to teach the various components of reading instruction to students. However, oftentimes a basal series can seem monotonous and does not encourage students to want to read and complete the work. Over the years, research studies have shown that many different reading instructional strategies are beneficial, but it is often a challenge for teachers to determine which will be the best for their classroom of students. However, it is known that classroom discussions about books facilitate learning. The benefits of teacher read-alouds and follow-up discussion, for example, have been widely researched. Additionally, in 1982, Karen Smith’s fifth grade class began implementing literature circles (Daniels, 2002). More recently, teachers have begun to use literature circles within their classrooms, but some teachers are still apprehensive because they do not know whether they are as beneficial as the reading instruction/discussion strategies that they are already using.

This investigation was designed to determine the impact of literature circles compared to read-alouds on reading comprehension and student reading motivation for second grade students. After collecting and analyzing the data over the course of four weeks, the researcher determined that there did not appear to be a difference between the literature circles and read-alouds in regard to reading comprehension. However, some of the scores did indicate that some students did benefit more from literature circles than read-alouds, and visa versa, but the data were mixed.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Determining the most effective reading instruction for students in a second grade classroom can be a daunting task. According to Piaget’s (1965) stages of development, second grade students are able to think literally as well as take information and make generalizations about reality and ideas based on similarities and differences. Discussing books that have been read is a proven way to help students think critically. As stated by Trelease (2006) “The highest literacy gains occur with children who have access to discussions following a story” (p.80). However, the most effective form of discussion has yet to be determined.

Many teachers believe that small group discussion will be highly beneficial for their students. Small group discussion opportunities during reading instruction provide students with the opportunity to continue to develop critical thinking and comprehension skills. Research has demonstrated that “Small group work ensures that children will have opportunities to talk and construct meaning with others, without being overpowered by their more language-proficient peers” (Nichols, 2006, p. 20). Many researchers have stated that the more children are presented with opportunities to have open-ended conversations, the more likely they are to feed off other students’ thinking that help them expand their own thinking (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Daniels, 2002). Hudgens and Edelman (1986) suggest that students are more likely to participate at a frequency equal to other students when they are in a small group situation rather than whole group.

Literature circles are considered to be one form of small group discussions, which can be implemented in a classroom. Daniels strongly believes that literature circles are beneficial to students, because they encourage students to read more, think deeply about books,
listen carefully to classmates, share their responses and interpretations of texts, and often become lifelong readers.

Even though small group work has been shown to be beneficial, many teachers still struggle with giving up teacher-directed instructional time for students to discuss books in small groups when there are so many standards to teach. Ivey (2003) believes that teacher read alouds and discussions help to “enhance students’ understanding and their inclination to read independently” (p. 812).

Statement of the Problem

Oftentimes, school districts require teachers to use a specific basal reading program for reading instruction in the elementary grades. However, the use of a basal reading program does not always evoke strong discussion or in-depth thinking on the students’ part. There are a wide variety of instructional options available other than basal reading programs that can be implemented in the reading classroom, but it is often difficult to know which technique will be the most effective strategy to use with students.

Frequently, in conventional classrooms all students are required to read the same books, making it difficult for struggling readers to succeed (Yatvin, 2004). Oftentimes the classroom teacher will stay focused on whole class instruction and discussion as a way to attempt to reach all students, and provide effective instruction at one time for all students. However, teachers may wonder whether whole class instruction and discussion is as beneficial, or more beneficial, than small group discussions in regards to reading motivation and comprehension. Literature circle (small group) discussions and teacher read aloud/whole-class discussions have both been offered as effective strategies, but which is really the best strategy for encouraging reading motivation and comprehension?
Research Question

Finding the optimal conditions under which to operate to ensure all students are successful was the focus of this investigation. The question driving this research study was “What is the impact of literature circles compared to read alouds on reading motivation and comprehension for second grade students?”

Rationale

There are a wide variety of effective reading instruction strategies available for teachers to use in the classroom setting. It is believed that small group discussions should have an impact on reading motivation and comprehension for every child in the classroom when used as one component of reading instruction. Nichols (2006) states, “The small group structure offers more time for children to engage in extended, supported talk with others” (p. 20). Cullinan (1993) believes that students learn through the act of talking. She indicates that taking concepts and putting them into one’s own words allows that person to hold on to that concept and make it more memorable. Daniels (2002) believes that student discussions in regard to books need to be conversations. Students should not have specific stipulations on what they need to discuss. Daniels believes that this can be achieved through the use of literature circle type discussion groups.

Although research has shown small group discussion and literature circles to be effective, many teachers still believe that read alouds allow them to more effectively teach reading, comprehension, and communication skills in an efficient manner. According to Nichols (2006), “During Read Aloud, the most supportive instructional approach, we are teaching children to think about text in increasingly complex ways”
(p.52). Lane and Wright (2007) believe that “read-alouds provide a wonderful opportunity to promote children’s love of literature” (p. 673).

Definition of Terms

This section is comprised of academic terms that will be used in this research investigation.

Aesthetic Response- Occurs when the reader is able to personally connect with the story, typically creating some type of emotional response to the text (Rosenblatt, 2005).

Basal Reading Series- “Instructional materials (generally designed for grades K-6 or K-8) consisting of sequential lessons that incorporate the use of student books, teacher guides, assessment materials, and other ancillary materials” (Hendricks & Rinsky, 2007, p. 211).

Comprehension- “Reading comprehension, the goal of all reading instruction, is a cognitive act of extraction and construction of meaning, an act that is influenced by characteristics of the reader, the text, and the activity or goal, each of which is influenced by multiple sociocultural texts” (Walpole & McKenna, 2007, p.7).

Differentiation- According to Tomlinson (2001) differentiated instruction is proactive, more qualitative than quantitative, rooted in assessment, a blend of whole class, group, and individual instruction, and provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product.

Efferent Response- Occurs when the reader “carries away” facts or information from a text (Rosenblatt, 2005).
Foundational Literacy- “The ability to participate effectively in language activities within various groups in which one is a member on a regular basis” (Yatvin, 2004, p. 47).

Frustration level- “A level of text that is so demanding and difficult that the reader is unable to construct meaning” (Walker, 2008, p. 377).

Inclusion – “Teaching students who have disabilities or special needs within the general education classroom” (Gunning, 2008, p. 524).

Independent level- The reading level at which a student can successfully read without adult assistance (Walker, 2008).

Instructional level- The reading level at which students can successfully read during instructional time, in which the teacher provides some assistance (Walker, 2008).

Literature Circles- Peer-led discussions in a small group setting about a book that the students have chosen to read (Daniels, 2002).

Metacognition- Thinking about ones own thinking while reading text (Strickland, Snow, Griffin, Burns, & McNamara, 2002).

Read Alouds- Reading a book out loud to a child or group of children, and allowing time for discussion of the story (Trelease, 2006).

Response Journals (logs)- Journals that serve as a “place where kids can capture and save responses while they read or immediately after they read” (Daniels, 2002).

Whole Language Approach- “A naturalistic theory of literacy learning based on the premise that students learn to read and write by being actively involved in reading and writing for real purposes” (Gunning, 2008, p. 456).
Limitations

Although the school selected for this investigation had four second grade classrooms, only one classroom was used in this investigation. This is due to the fact that the other second grade classrooms did not actively use literature circles within the classroom setting. This limited the population size to 22 students.

On Mondays, the students were provided with time to read their book for the week; then the books were placed in bins at the front of the room for students to access throughout the week. Even though students had access to the books during the week, this does not mean that they chose to read their book more than once. Some students chose to read daily, and some students chose to read the book only on Monday. The number of times the book was read may very well have had an impact on the student’s comprehension of the content. This may have altered the comprehension results at the end of the week.

Since each student was given the choice of the books that he/she wanted to read for the literature circle, it is not guaranteed that the books were at their independent or instructional reading level. The book choices may have been at the students’ frustration level, which could have caused the student to have great difficulty when reading the story, discussing it, and completing the comprehension test over the text.

Since literature circles had not been used on an extremely regular basis before the investigation was implemented, the format was relatively new and students were still getting comfortable discussing the books with their peers. The amount of “air time” allotted to each student was not controlled.
According to Daniels (2002) students should not be required to take a test over the books read for literature circle discussions. However, for this investigation the students were required to take comprehension tests to provide data for the research. This was a limitation for this study because it violates the premise of literature circles, which in turn may have limited the students’ desire to use literature circles.

The comprehension tests on the www.bookadventure.com website included questions that evoked a literal efferent response. Some of the questions were: “What animal did the bears find?” “How many bears went out in the night?” Who was waiting for the three little bears when they got home again?” Many of the literature circle discussions consisted of the students expressing a more aesthetic response to the stories that were read, which could have affected the comprehension scores for literature circles.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review previous research regarding reading instruction. The chapter will be divided into seven sections. The first section will focus on the history of reading instruction. There are numerous strategies that researchers have deemed beneficial over the years. This research leads to the second section of the chapter, which discusses specific theories that framed this research. These theories include the social interaction theory, motivation theories, reader response theory, and flow theory.

The third section of the chapter discusses research related to differentiation. Differentiation has been shown to be a beneficial strategy to use with reading instruction. The fourth section discusses research related to comprehension, an extremely crucial skill, which is the goal of all reading instruction. The fifth section discusses research in regard to reading motivation. Evoking motivation in reading is very important when trying to encourage students to be lifelong readers.

The final two sections of the chapter will reference research about literature circles and read-alouds. Various researchers have focused their studies on both reading instruction strategies over the last several years.

History of Reading Instruction

Historically teachers have used a variety of instructional strategies when teaching reading. Basal reading programs have been used for decades. However, they have changed drastically over the years (Smith, 1986). According to Hendricks and Rinsky (2007), basal reading programs are “Instructional materials (generally designed for grades K-6 or K-8) consisting of sequential lessons that incorporate the use of student books, teacher guides, assessment materials, and other ancillary materials” (p. 211). Basal
reading programs generally contain excerpts from full stories, which are placed in an anthology and used to help teach specific skills to students (Gunning, 2008). However, Smith indicates that the first basal books were based entirely on religious instruction. It wasn’t until 1890 -1910 when books were produced that promoted using authentic literature to teach students and promote literacy interest (Martinez & McGee, 2000). According to Smith, teachers began using supplemental reading materials during that same time.

During the 1930s and 1940s reading readiness books became a part of a typical basal reading series (Teale, 1995). There were two different types of reading readiness books. One was in the form of a student workbook, and the teacher used the other when he/she worked with small groups of students. During this time period, the Scott-Foresman Reading Series introduced the Dick and Jane books as well. Teale indicated that in the 1960s and 1970s basal reading programs were still being used, and they had an emphasis on phonics for the first grade classrooms. Teale and Sulzby (1986) also indicate that during the 1960s and 1970s many lessons involved teacher-led instruction, which often included a great deal of worksheet pages.

In the 20th century, some teachers followed a whole language approach to reading instruction. In 1990, Reutzel and Cooter noted, “Whole language is an approach to reading and language instruction that is gaining increasing popularity nationwide” (p. 252). According to Gunning (2008), whole language supporters believe that reading and writing instruction should be learned in the same ways as we learn to speak, which is by doing. With whole language, reading instruction is accomplished by having the students learn to read by engaging them in authentic literature, with word study occurring in
context. This was a significant change from the traditional approach in which teachers first taught students specific reading skills, and then required practice with stories in which that skill was applied. Reutzel and Cooter (2004) state, “Whole language used only trade-book literature, and all instruction was whole-words which were never broken down or removed from context for analysis” (p.10).

In the late 1990s, balanced reading instruction emerged as a popular approach to teaching reading (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004). According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000), balanced literacy incorporates phonics, fluency, and comprehension. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) believe that balanced literacy not only includes a well-structured class that incorporates read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading, but it also requires home, library, and community involvement. However, Daniels (2002) describes balanced literacy as having a relatively even amount of teacher-directed and student-directed activities, whole group, small group, and individual activities, as well as intensive and extensive reading and writing. According to Pearson (2001), “Balance is not a matter of evening the score; instead it is a matter of assembling an array of skills, strategies, processes, and practices that are sufficiently rich and synergistic to guarantee a full and rich curriculum for all students” (p. 82). Strickland (1996) adds:

Achieving balance in our literacy programs is not meant to imply that there is one specific Balanced Approach. Nor should it suggest a sampling method in which a little of this and a little of that are mixed together to form a grouping of disparate approaches… Finally, balance does not mean having two very distinct, parallel approaches coexisting in a single
classroom in the name of “playing it safe”-- for example, literature-based instruction on Mondays and Wednesdays and skills worksheets the remainder of the week. (p. 32)

Spiegel (1998) believes that a balanced approach “is built on research, views the teacher as an informed decision maker who develops a flexible program, and is constructed around a comprehensive view of literacy” (p. 117). According to Walker (2008) and Spiegel, when teaching with a balanced approach, teachers are always thinking about the students and what is best for them. Teachers make thoughtful choices about how they can help improve their students’ reading abilities.

Even though there is a great deal of literature that supports whole language instruction and balanced instruction, researchers are now suggesting that there should be an emphasis on comprehensive instruction (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004). According to Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007), “Comprehensive literacy instruction emphasizes the personal, intellectual, and social nature of literacy instruction, and supports the notion that students learn new meanings in response to new experiences rather than simply learning what others have created,” (p. 14). Rasinski and Padak (2004) state,

We call for literacy instruction to become comprehensive about the balance in its approach and implementation. To be comprehensive, literacy needs to be integrated within the literacy curriculum itself: literacy needs to be integrated within all facets of the classroom and school, literacy needs to be integrated within the home, and literacy needs to be integrated into the life of the community itself. (p. 101)
Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007) suggest that there are at least ten different “evidence based best practices” that illustrate comprehensive literacy instruction. They consist of creating a classroom environment that allows and encourages literacy motivation; teaching reading in a way that allows for true meaning-making literacy experiences; including scaffolded instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension; providing a great deal of reading time to students; making high-quality literature from a variety of genres available to students; balancing the amount of teacher-led and student-led discussions; linking and expanding concepts through the use of technology; and using a wide range of assessment techniques to inform instruction.

Theories

There are several theories that undergird this research. The first is Vygotsky’s social interaction theory. Vygotsky (1978) believes that cognitive development cannot occur without social interaction. He states:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (p. 57)

Based on this theory, it is logical to believe that group discussions (social level) will help lead the child to more in-depth independent thoughts (individual level), and in turn expand cognitive development.
The next theories relate to motivation. Eccles (1983) developed the “expectancy-value” theory of motivation. This suggests that one’s reading motivation is based on whether one believes that he/she will succeed or fail, as well as how personally interesting and valuable the activity seems. Ford’s (1992) motivational systems theory also focuses on the belief that people will attempt to do something if they believe that they can do it and if they value the task. Based on both theories, if a student finds a book or an activity related to a book to be interesting, or perceive it as worthwhile, then he/she is more likely to put forth more effort.

The third theory is reader response theory. According to Probst (1988), students need to be able to respond to literature before they can analyze more elaborate texts and details of texts. No matter what text is read, the reader’s thoughts and views are always going to merge with the author’s words to create meaning (Probst; Rosenblatt 1938). Rosenblatt (2005) believed that readers typically have either an aesthetic or an efferent response when they read. An aesthetic response is when the reader is able to truly connect with the story, and typically have some type of emotional response to the text. However, an efferent response is based solely on the content of the reading rather than making a personal connection.

The fourth is flow theory, the term coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and discussed by Smith and Wilhelm (2006). Csikszentmihalyi believes that “flow” occurs when a person is happy, content, and completely immersed in the task at hand. The person is highly motivated if he/she is experiencing “flow.” Smith and Wilhelm believe that students benefit from “a sense of control and competence, a challenge that requires an appropriate level of skill, clear goals and feedback, and a focus on the immediate
experience” (p.3). All of these skills are incorporated in flow. In 1999, Whalen interviewed Csikszentmihalyi about his flow theory. Whalen (1999) states:

Flow refers to an optimal state of immersed concentration in which attention is centered, distractions are minimized, and the person attains an enjoyable give and take with his or her activity. In this state, people report that they lose track of time and their daily problems, forget about hunger and fatigue, and feel well matched to the activity at hand. (p.161)

Through their discussion, Whalen learned that Csikszentmihalyi believes that people need to become intrinsically involved in what they are learning to do to deem it valuable in the future. The type of learning that occurs when people are forced to do something is not as effective in the long run (Whalen).

Differentiation

Recently, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on differentiated instruction. Benjamin (2003) identifies differentiated instruction as “a broad term that refers to a variety of classroom practices that allow for differences in students’ learning styles, interests, prior knowledge, socialization needs, and comfort zones” (p. 1). According to Tomlinson (2001) differentiated instruction is proactive, more qualitative then quantitative, rooted in assessment, a blend of whole class, group, and individual instruction, and provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product. “A differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively” (Tomlinson, p. 1). There are many pros to using differentiated instruction in the classroom setting. Teachers provide students with successful learning environments
and the ability to meet academic expectations for task completion at appropriate skill levels through differentiated instruction (Waldron & McLeskey, 2001). George (2005) writes:

Opportunities for individual growth and development are maximized in the heterogeneous classroom; that greater opportunity for detecting late developing talent, or for preventing premature labeling, is offered there. In an effective heterogeneous classroom (one where curriculum and instruction are properly differentiated), students and teachers, I think, are more likely to view their differences as assets that strengthen the whole school. (p. 187)

Tobin and McInnes (2008) believe it is essential to ensure that students are taught in a variety ways and that the teacher base lessons on their differences to allow for all students to succeed.

Differentiated instruction is highly beneficial for struggling readers. Tobin and McInnes (2008) report, “Various school districts use different criteria to establish which students qualify for supportive services. Subsequently, many of the students who are challenged in developing reading and writing skills do not qualify for such support” (p. 3). George (2005) also discusses the fact that due to inclusion, many low level learners are now placed in the regular education classroom, which makes it difficult to successfully teach all students through whole group instruction. Through differentiation teachers can effectively meet the needs of the struggling readers in their classrooms by providing them with instruction based on their specific skill needs. Allington and Baker (2007) argue it is important to provide intervention for struggling readers throughout the
entire school day by ensuring that they have books at their reading level for all content areas, as well as activities based on their ability level. Yatvin (2004) believes in differentiated classrooms, in which students at different reading levels may be aware that there are reading ability differences within the classroom, but these do not impede their ability to work together and learn from one another. She also discusses the fact that if students are provided with reading materials at their own reading level then “foundational literacy is within reach of all students and applicable to real-world situations” (p. 47).

Not only is it important to provide differentiation for struggling students, it is also highly beneficial to provide differentiated instruction for gifted or high level students as well. It is important that, in an instructional environment, students read material that is somewhat challenging to them, because if they read material that is too easy, they will limit their achievement (Strickland et al., 2002). Providing higher-achieving students with more challenging texts will encourage them to think metacognitively, which means to think about ones own thinking while reading text (Strickland et al.).

Comprehension

Often times with differentiation, students are placed in small groups to ensure that all students receive the specific instruction that is appropriate for them. By receiving more specific instruction in reading, students can more effectively learn comprehension skills. According to Strickland et al. (2002), comprehension is much more that just remembering facts or details from a book. Walpole and McKenna (2007), for instance, state, “Reading comprehension, the goal of all reading instruction, is a cognitive act of extraction and construction of meaning, an act that is influenced by characteristics of the reader, the text, and the activity or goal, each of which is influenced by multiple
sociocultural texts” (p. 7). The report of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) listed comprehension as one of the five key features of reading instruction. The panel identified three themes that have been found in reading comprehension research:

First, reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that cannot be understood without a clear description of the role that vocabulary development and vocabulary instruction play in the understanding of what has been read. Second, comprehension is an active process that requires an intentional and thoughtful interaction between that reader and the text. Third, the preparation of teachers to better equip students to develop and apply reading comprehension strategies to enhance understanding is intimately linked to students’ achievement in this area. (p.13)

Cullinan (1993) believes that after reading a book, students should talk about the book, because “it increases our understanding of the story by giving us the opportunity to express and share ideas about it. In this way, talk improves and deepens comprehension” (p. 2).

Motivation

Even though it is important to have effective comprehension skills, it is also important for students to have the motivation to read and continue to develop their comprehension skills. Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007) state, “Motivation often makes the difference between superficial and shallow learning and learning that is deep and internalized” (p. 19).

It is very important that teachers demonstrate a genuine interest in reading and foster their students’ reading motivation. Many researchers believe that to motivate
students to read, the teacher must, in fact, enjoy reading and model this to his or her students (Daniels, 2002; Dreher, 2003). Daniels and Dreher also discuss the fact that many teachers are beginning to hold book clubs to help build on their love of reading, which, in turn, affects their ability to motivate students to read. According to Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007), “Teachers support students in their reading development by creating classroom cultures that foster reading motivation, such as providing a book-rich environment, opportunities for choice, and opportunities for interaction socially with others” (p. 19). Daniels also believes that it is highly important that students periodically select their own books or reading material to help motivate them to read and encourage a lifelong love of reading. As Hickman (1996) discusses, teachers can help motivate students to read by “inviting” them to read a certain book. According to Hickman:

Some of the best teachers I know seem to be playing host at a party as they introduce books to their prospective readers. “I thought of you right away when I saw this book,” they say, or “The main character reminds me so much of you.” These are invitations hard to resist because there is nothing generic or impersonal about them. (p. 8)

Reading motivation can differ greatly with each gender. According to many researchers, boys typically prefer to read comics, action and adventure, sports, science fiction, joke books, and picture books, which often are not as likely to be found in school libraries (Spence, in press). According to Spence, “For the teacher it is a balancing act between encouraging a boy’s competitiveness and his social need to be part of a group. Boys should have numerous opportunities to work with partners and in groups” (p. 53). Spence also states that boys’ and girls’ learning styles are different, which can also affect
the way they learn how to read and interact in a classroom setting. Boys prefer to work in groups, have challenges and competitions, use technology, take quizzes, participate in discussions or oral work, and learn actively. However, most girls are quite comfortable sitting quietly and working independently. Spence also discusses the fact that boys’ and girls’ brain develop differently, which indicates why they have such different learning styles.

Reader response can greatly influence reading motivation for students. A person can respond to a text in many ways such as through writing, talking, or through an emotional reaction to the text. Rosenblatt (2005) discusses the importance of making a connection between self and text in order to help motivate students. In (1978) she introduced the “transactional” theory of reading. She describes this as the relationship that exists between the reader and the text. She believes that it is a two-way relationship, because the reader has to interact with the text to create a connection and establish meaning. Rosenblatt (2005) believed that readers typically have responses that range on a continuum between aesthetic and efferent when they read. An aesthetic response occurs when the reader is able to personally connect with the story, and typically has some type of emotional response to the text. However, an efferent response is based solely on the information presented in the reading rather than a personal connection. This can consist of reading the text to gather data or determine the setting, main idea, and characters. By making a personal connection to the text, the reader will likely become more interested and retain the information more effectively.

Peterson and Eeds (2007) also touch upon the fact that when reading, people often get so involved in a story that they connect with it or feel emotions toward the
story. “When we read a story, we truly merge heart and intellect” (Peterson & Eeds, p. 18). Daniels (2002) suggests that Louise Rosenblatt was a firm believer that each person interprets literature differently based on his or her previous life experiences. He suggests that she also believed there is no one right or wrong interpretation of literature. However, according to Daniels,

Today we know a lot more, Keene and Zimmerman argue about how proficient adult readers actually think: while reading, they make personal connections with the text, they ask questions, they look for important elements or themes, they create sensory images, they make inferences or judgments, and they create ongoing summaries or syntheses as they read. In other words, a skillful reader’s “response” includes several kinds of active, ongoing thinking. (p. 38)

Motivation plays a significant role in the reading process. Based on the abundant amount of research above, researchers agree that providing students with choices in their reading instruction will help to motivate them. This will encourage them to respond aesthetically as well as efferently to literature, and produce an even stronger motivation to read.

Literature Circles

According to research, literature circles are an effective way to help motivate students to read (Daniels, 2002). As discussed by Daniels, Karen Smith’s fifth grade class was one of the first to officially implement literature circles in 1982. It was by pure chance that they began their discussions groups. Her students found sets of books that she had tucked away in the back of the classroom, and on their own began talking to
classmates about the books and determining how far they would read before discussing the books again.

Harvey Daniels and 20 other teachers joined in 1993 to begin to write a book about a reading strategy that they had begun using in their own classrooms. This strategy was literature circles. Since then, literature circles have been implemented in tens of thousands of classrooms around the world (Daniels, 2002).

Literature circles can be used to help students learn several skills. Nichols (2006) states, “The children need to learn strategies for holding themselves and others accountable, inviting and expecting quiet members to contribute, and monitoring the purposefulness of their talk and the negotiation of meaning” (p. 95). Daniels (2002) believes that there are “11 key ingredients” for literature circles:

- Students choose their own books.
- Small temporary groups are formed, based on book choice.
- Different groups read different books.
- Groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule to discuss their reading.
- Kids use written or drawn notes to guide their reading and discussion.
- Discussion topics come from the students.
- Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about books, so personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are allowed.
- The teacher serves as a facilitator, not a group member or instructor.
- Evaluation is by teacher observation and students self-evaluation.
- A spirit of playfulness and fun pervades the room.
• When books are finished, readers share with their classmates, and then new groups form around new reading selections. (p. 18)

Daniels (2002) indicates that literature circles are an excellent way to help students take ownership for their learning. Literature circles allow students book choice, as well as the ability to set schedules with their group members to determine how many pages they should read at a time. They also help students to develop their communication skills, by deciphering the most effective way of expressing their thoughts in a way in which all group members can understand their main point.

Long and Gove (2004) completed a study involving engagement strategies and literature circles. Their research concluded that participation in these activities allowed students to think and respond more critically, become more reflective, and push themselves to read, talk, question, feel, and think outside of the box. Wilfong (2009) states, “Traditionally, the literature circle strategy was applied to fiction. Recently it has been updated and used with a variety of texts including nonfiction” (p.164). Even though the literature circle format is highly effective according to research, there are other reading activities that have been proven to be effective as well.

Read Alouds

The read aloud strategy is believed to be another highly effective technique to use when attempting to evoke discussions about books with students. Morrison and Wlodarczym (2009) define a read alouds as “an instructional practice where teachers, parents, and caregivers read texts aloud to children” (p. 111). For many generations parents and teachers have been reading aloud to children/students. It is widely known that it is very beneficial to read to children to help promote a love for reading, and to help
them to become better readers. Over the years there has been a great deal of research completed that has supported this belief. Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) state, for instance, that “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (p. 23).

Trelease (2006) believes that there are several dos and don’ts related to read alouds. Some of the dos include:

- Set aside at least one traditional time each day for a story.
- Vary the length and subject matter of your readings, fiction and nonfiction
- Before you begin to read, always say the name of the book, the author, and the illustrator - no matter how many times you have read the book.
- The first time you read a book, discuss the illustration on the cover. Ask “What do you think this is going to be about?”
- As you read, keep listeners involved by occasionally asking “What do you think is going to happen next?”
- Occasionally read above children’s intellectual levels and challenge their minds.
- For classroom read alouds, questions should be reserved until after the reading is complete. With twenty students all deciding to ask questions to impress the teacher, you might never reach the end of the book. (pp. 75-80)

Trelease’s read aloud don’ts include:

- Don’t read stories that you don’t enjoy yourself. Your dislike will show in the reading, and that defeats your purpose.
Don’t overwhelm your listener. Consider the intellectual, social, and emotional level of your audience in making read-aloud selections.

Don’t feel like you have to tie every book to class work. Don’t confine the broad spectrum of literature to the narrow limits of the curriculum.

Don’t impose interpretations of a story upon your audience. A story can be just plain enjoyable, no reason necessary, and still give you plenty to talk about. (p. 79-80)

After completing a study of the most common set of implementation practices of read alouds in the classroom, Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) conclude there are seven essential components of an effective read aloud. The seven components consist of:

- Choosing books that match the students’ interests as well as developmental, emotional, and social levels.
- Teacher previews and practices reading the books before reading them to the class.
- Establishing a clear purpose for the read aloud
- Teachers model fluent reading when they read the text
- Teachers should be animated and use expression when read the story.
- Teachers need to stop periodically and thoughtfully question the students to help focus them on specific parts of the texts.
- Connections should be made between the text and independent reading and writing. (p. 10-11)

Read alouds provide teachers with the opportunity to lead discussions with students about books that have been read together. Gunning (2008) believes it is important for the
teacher to ask a variety of questions during and after read alouds, which may involve recalling important details from the story, drawing conclusions, making inferences, sequencing, and even questions to help students make a personal connection to the story. According to Lewin (1992), teacher-led shared text “is an efficient, effective means of teaching developing readers and writers how to proceed through the difficult process of making meaning with text, either by composing their own or comprehending someone else’s” (p. 588).

According to Trelease (2001), “Every time we read aloud to a child or class, we’re giving a commercial for the pleasure of reading” (p. 44). Fisher et al. (2004) also believe that read alouds are a wonderful way to reiterate to students that reading can be a great source of enjoyment. They also believe that it is important to truly establish a purpose for reading when implementing a read aloud. This will help the students to focus on the story more and think about the story in different ways. Santoro, Chard, Howard, and Baker (2008) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of read alouds on reading comprehension. They found that students who participated in read alouds were able to give longer more detailed retells than students who did not participate in read alouds.

Albright (2002) believes that read alouds can be effective in the content areas as well. “They can allow for both individual and collaborative meaning construction through aesthetic and efferent responses to literature and content” (p. 428).

**Summary**

Research suggests that, over the years, reading instruction has changed significantly (Martinez & McGee 2000; Smith, 1986). In more recent years, there have
been several reading instructional approaches that have been debated as the most effective. These strategies are whole language (Gunning, 2008; Reutzel & Cooter, 2004), the balanced approach (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Spiegel 1998; Strickland, 1996), and the comprehensive approach (Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2007; Razinski & Padak, 2004).

Research has also shown that it is extremely important to allow students to respond and discuss their thoughts to help them more effectively understand and comprehend information (Cullinan, 1993). Differentiation may involve dividing students into groups to allowing them to have small group discussions (Allington & Baker, 2007; Tomlinson, 2001; Yatvin, 2004;). Once students are in small groups, they may have student-led literature circle discussions to help promote reading motivation and comprehension (Daniels, 2002). Read alouds provide another effective opportunity for students to discuss the stories that are read with their teacher, and to learn through teacher modeling and guidance (Lewin, 1992).
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research indicates that small group discussions are highly beneficial for improving students’ reading motivation and comprehension (Nichols, 2006). This study was designed to determine the impact of literature circle discussions compared to read aloud discussions in regards to reading motivation and comprehension for second grade students. In exploring the effect of two types of book discussions on student motivation and comprehension, the sections below describe the study’s research design, participants, activities, and evaluation plan.

Methods

Research Design

The study was organized as a comparative design. It is considered a comparative design because it is analyzing the difference between two different discussion types. This design format was used to determine the impact that literature circles (small group discussions) have on reading motivation and comprehension compared to read aloud (whole class discussions) for students in a second grade classroom.

Participants

The setting used in this investigation was a second grade classroom in a suburban school district in the Midwest. It was selected for this study due to the teacher’s desire to determine ways in which students might most effectively comprehend stories that are read, and to determine which method was most effective in motivating students to read.

The second grade class chosen was part of a school district that required the teacher to use a basal reading series for the majority of the reading instruction. However, the teacher was also able to supplement with other reading books as he/she saw fit.
Second grade students were selected for this investigation because they were at the point in their education in which reading instruction is highly important, and most of the students can successfully read independently. At this point, students are also learning effective communication skills, and often enjoy telling others about what they learn. The students in the class studied range between the ages of seven and eight years old, and were able to effectively express themselves verbally.

There were 22 students of mixed backgrounds in the second grade class being studied, with 10 girls and 12 boys. Two students belonged to minority groups, while the other 20 students were Caucasian. Many of the students came from middle class families. However, there were several students who came from low-income households, and a few came from upper-class backgrounds. The elementary building where these students attended school was in a suburban area in Northwest Ohio.

**Instrumentation**

For this investigation, two types of discussion groupings were implemented. Students participated in whole-group teacher-led discussions, as well as small-group peer-led discussions. The teacher-led discussions followed a read aloud format, which involved the researcher reading a teacher-selected book to the whole class and as a group discussing the book with researcher questioning and modeling. The student-led discussions followed the literature circle format, which allowed the students to choose their own books and discuss the books in small groups without the teacher guiding the discussion. The students took comprehension assessments at the end of each week, which does not comply with the recommended literature circle accountability measures. A typical literature circle format is not formally assessed. Rather, the teacher makes
observations and might use checklists to determine whether or not students are effectively participating and expanding their thinking. The researcher for this investigation chose to slightly modify the literature circle format by requiring the students to complete comprehension assessments to effectively gather data.

Each week, the researcher presented the students with six books, which would be used for the literature circle groups that week. The students were then able to choose which books they would be interested in reading for that week, based on the pre-selected books. The books from which the students chose each week, as well as the read aloud book chosen by the researcher, were pre-selected by the researcher to ensure that comprehension assessments were available online at www.bookadventure.com for those particular books. The researcher also chose the books based on the reading level of the books. The reading levels spanned from a first thru third grade reading level, which is the typical range of reading level for the students in the class. Five copies of all books that the students were allowed to choose from each week were brought into the classroom by the researcher during the week of use. The books were also left in the classroom during the following week to allow the other students to read the books if they so chose. The researcher located copies of these books at local libraries.

Comprehension of each book was assessed through 10-question comprehension assessments on www.bookadventure.com. This website provides assessments for a wide variety of children’s literature. There are lists of books on the website with corresponding comprehension assessments. The books cannot be read online, but the assessments are taken online. To complete the assessments online, the students needed access to computers with Internet connections. The school has a computer lab, which allows the
students access to 28 computers. However, the class needed to be assigned a time slot each week to guarantee access to the lab. The researcher designated a half-hour time slot for the students to take the tests every Friday during the four-week study.

At the end of the fourth week, the students were also given an attitude survey. The attitude survey was designed to determine the students’ thoughts about the two discussion formats that were used. The questions asked about students’ preferences and overall thoughts about the experience. The questions all required the students to circle yes or no, based on their thoughts.

Throughout the implementation period the researcher gathered qualitative data through anecdotal notes from observations. The researcher circulated the room and documented observations as the students read and discussed the books with their literature circle groups. After read aloud discussions, the researcher would also document any notable observations that were made.

Procedures

During the implementation period, literature circle discussions and read aloud discussions were used in addition to the district required basal reading series. This allowed for the teacher to stay on track with the district requirements, and for the researcher to observe students during the reading of basal stories as well.

Before implementing the study, the researcher read the student assent form to the possible participants to explain the procedures that would be used. The parental consent form (See Appendix A) and the student assent form (See Appendix B) were sent home with students, so they could also discuss the requirements with their parents and make an
informed decision about whether or not to participate. Each student’s data was used only
if both forms were signed and returned.

Implementation began in the middle of January. For the literature circles, the
researcher presented to the students on Monday six picture books that would be used for
the literature circle groups that week. The books were *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut* by
Dr. Seuss (1978), *Amelia Bedelia and the Baby* by Peggy Parish(1981), *I Wanna Iguana*
by Karen Orloff (2004), *The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree* by Stan and Jan
Berenstain (1978), *Teacher From the Black Lagoon* by Mike Thaler (1989), and *Glasses
For D.W.* by Marc Brown (1996) (See Appendix C.). The researcher gave a brief
description of each book so that the students could effectively determine which books
they would be interested in reading. She also reminded students that one of the goals of
literature circles was to help them to read new books that they had not read before. She
encouraged them to select books that they had not read so that they would have the same
starting place as all of the students in their group.

The students were then presented with a half-sheet of paper, which listed each of
the books. The students were instructed to mark their first, second, and third choices for
the book that they would be interested in reading for the week. The researcher then
collected the slips and determined the groups for the week, based on the students’ book
preferences. Not all students were able to get their first choice due to the extreme
popularity of some books, but all students were able to receive one of their top three
choices.

On Monday afternoon, the researcher informed each student which book he or she
would read for the literature circles that week. The students were then given 25 minutes
to read their literature circle book for the week, and were encouraged to write in their reader response journals if they so chose. The students were introduced to response journals in December to prepare them for this aspect of literature circles. The students were informed that response journals could be used as a way to help them remember information that they would like to share with their group. They were also informed that they could write or draw in their journals, depending which strategy worked best for them. In December, the teacher had taught a mini-lesson about how to use response journals, so the students had received some initial guidance to help them effectively use the response journals. On Tuesday, each group met for approximately 20 minutes to discuss the book that they read. The researcher walked around the classroom to make observations, document observations in a journal and act as a facilitator. The discussions were entirely student-led. However, occasionally the researcher would help to make sure that the discussion time went smoothly by helping students talk through disagreements or redirect them back onto topic by referring them back to mini-lessons that the teacher had taught in December in regards to the social skills necessary for effective discussions.

On Wednesday, the researcher read *The Berenstain Bear Scouts and the Stinky Milk Mystery* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1999) for the read aloud book for that week. As she read, she would stop periodically to ask questions and allow for discussion. The questions were intentionally planned to encourage the students to predict, infer, and draw conclusions. After the story was finished, she would ask more questions to evoke more student discussion. On Thursday, the students met in their literature circle groups one more time to give them the opportunity to discuss the literature circle stories again before they were assessed over the story. The week was concluded with the students taking a
comprehension test on [www.bookadventure.com](http://www.bookadventure.com) for both the literature circle book that they read as well as the read aloud story.

During the second week, the researcher and students followed the same format. The researcher began the week by presenting the students with the literature circle books for the week. The books were *Llama Llama Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney (2005), *Principal from the Black Lagoon* by Mike Thaler (1993), *Come Back, Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish (1995), *Fancy Nancy and the Posh Puppy* by Jane O’Connor (2007), *The Lost Tooth Club* by Arden Johnson (1998), and *Pinkerton, Behave* by Steven Kellogg (1979) (See Appendix C). Once the researcher gave a brief description of each book and the students marked their book selections for the week, the researcher placed the students in their groups for the week. Again, not all students were able to get their first choice due to the extreme popularity of some books, but all students were able to receive one of their top three choices. The students were then given 25 minutes to read their literature circle book for the week, and were allowed to write in their reader response journals if they so chose. On Tuesday and Thursday, each group met for 20 minutes to discuss the book that they read. The researcher walked around the classroom to make observations and act as facilitator.

On Wednesday, the researcher read *Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs* by Judy Barrett (1982) for the read aloud book for that week. As she read, she would stop periodically to ask questions, and allow for discussion. After the story was finished, she asked more questions to evoke more student discussion, such as “Is this a realistic story? Why or Why Not?” and “How were their lives different from ours? The week was
concluded with the students taking a comprehension test on www.bookadventure.com for the literature circle book that they read as well as the read aloud story.

The third week followed a slightly different routine. The researcher chose to present the students with short chapter books to read for the week. On Monday, the researcher presented the students with six books, which would be used for the literature circle groups that week. The books were Nate the Great and the Boring Beach Bag by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat (1987), The Magic Finger by Roahl Dahl (1966), Junie B. Jones Smells Something Fishy by Barbara Park (1998), Frog and Toad are Friends by Arnold Lobel (1970), The Magic Tree House: Afternoon on the Amazon by Mary Pope Osborne (1995), and The Case of the Secret Valentine by James Preller (1999) (See Appendix C.). Just as in the first two weeks, the researcher gave a brief description of each book so that the students could effectively determine which books they would be interested in reading. The students were instructed to select their top three choices on the half sheet paper, and were placed in groups based on their preferences. On Monday afternoon, the students were then given 30 minutes to read the first three chapters or the first fourth of the number of pages depending on which book they were reading for the literature circle that week, and were encouraged to write in their reader response journals if they chose to do so.

On Tuesday morning, each group met 20 minutes to discuss the first portion of the book. The researcher walked around the classroom to make observations and act as a facilitator. After the discussions, the students decided as a group how far they would read for the next day. The researcher reminded them that they would need to finish reading the books on Thursday so that they could complete the final discussion session for the week.
on Friday. The researcher also began reading the read aloud story for the week on Tuesday morning. The read aloud book was also a short chapter book: *Cam Jansen and the Mystery of the Television Dog* by David Adler (1981). The researcher read the first fourth of the book on Tuesday. The researcher would periodically stop reading and ask questions as she did during the read aloud for the first two weeks. The students were also encouraged to make predictions about what they believed would happen next. In the afternoon on Tuesday, the students were given 30 minutes to read the next portion of their literature circle book.

On Wednesday morning, the students met in their literature circle groups again to discuss the second portion of the book for 20 minutes, then selected the pages/chapters that they would read for the next day’s discussion. The researcher then read the second portion of the read aloud book, and the teacher and students discussed that portion of the book. In the afternoon, the researcher provided them with time to read the third portion of the books.

On Thursday morning, the students met in their literature circle groups one more time, for 20 minutes, to discuss the third portion of the chapter book, and the researcher read the third portion of the read aloud book. The class then discussed that portion of the read aloud book with the researcher. In the afternoon, the students were provided with time to read the conclusion of their books.

On Friday morning, the students met one last time for, 20 minutes, to discuss the final portion of their literature circle books, and the researcher read the conclusion of the read aloud book. The class and the researcher then discussed the conclusion of *Cam Jansen and the Mystery of the Television Dog* (1981). On Friday afternoon, the students
took comprehension tests on www.bookadventure.com for the literature circle book that they read as well as the read aloud story.

For the fourth and final week, the researcher chose to have the students conclude the study with shorter stories again, which enabled the researcher to follow the same structure as the first two weeks. On Monday, the students were presented with *Scooby Doo: Mummies at the Mall* by Gail Herman (2002), *Imogene’s Antlers* by David Small (1985), *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig (1980), *Humbug Rabbit* by Lorna Balian (1974), *Frederick* by Leo Lionni (1967), and *I Fly* by Anne Rockwell (1997) to choose from for the literature circle discussions that week (See Appendix C.). The researcher placed students in literature circle groups based on their book preferences. On Monday afternoon, the students were given 25 minutes to read their literature circle book for the week, and were encouraged to write in their reader response journals if they so chose. On Tuesday and Thursday, each group met for 20 minutes to discuss the book that they read. The researcher walked around the classroom to make observations and act as facilitator.

On Wednesday, the researcher read *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1984) for the read aloud book for that week. As the researcher read, she would stop periodically to ask questions, and allow for discussion. After the story was finished, she would ask more questions to evoke more student discussion. The week was concluded with the students taking a comprehension test on www.bookadventure.com for the literature circle book that they read as well as the read aloud story.
On Friday afternoon, the researcher also gave the students an attitude survey in which they had to circle *yes* or *no* for each of the seven questions (See Appendix D.). The students had the full attitude survey in front of them, and they were instructed to follow along as the researcher read the questions to them. The researcher paused in-between each question so the students had a chance to think about the answers and circle their choice. The researcher chose to read the questions to the students to ensure full understanding of the questions, since all students are at different reading levels.

**Data Collection**

This investigation produced two forms of quantitative data as well as qualitative data through observations. Every Friday, the students went to the school’s computer lab and took the comprehension tests for that week. The students took a test over the literature circle book for the week and a test over the read aloud book for the week. The tests were comprised of 10 literal multiple-choice questions, which required an efferent response. Each student’s results were sent to the researcher’s account to be accessed and printed.

On the last Friday of the implementation period, the students were given an attitude survey in regards to their thoughts and feelings about the procedures used. All questions had *yes* or *no* answers, which the students circled.

While the students worked in their literature circle groups, the researcher walked around the room to observe and take anecdotal notes about the discussions that the students were having, as well as the way the students interacted. During the read alouds the researcher also observed, and later documented the way in which students responded
in the discussions, as well as their overall dispositions during the reading and discussion periods.

Data Analysis

The data from the online comprehension tests was collected and analyzed to determine a mean, median, mode, and range for the literature circle book comprehension scores and the read aloud book comprehension scores for each week.

After the students completed the attitude survey on the last Friday of the study, the researcher tabulated the results and created a table to discern the number of students who answered yes and no to the different questions.

Throughout the investigation, the researcher observed the students during reading and discussion times to make notes about their interactions and reactions. The researcher later reviewed the notes to help draw conclusions for this investigation. The notes consisted of observations the researcher found particularly noteworthy due to limited time to document observations, since the researcher was also in charge of maintaining order in the classroom at the same time.

Summary

This study was conducted over a four-week time period. Students were placed in literature circle groups based on their book preference each week; thus the literature circle groups changed weekly. The researcher also selected a book for the read aloud each week. After the researcher read the book, the researcher and the class had a discussion over the story. At the end of each week, the students took a comprehension test online at www.bookadventure.com over the read aloud book and their literature circle book for the week. Throughout the reading and discussion times, the researcher walked
around the room to observe and document student attitudes and to hear the types of
discussions that were taking place. On the last day of the investigation, the students were
given an attitude survey to determine their views of the process, and to help determine
their motivation levels for each book discussion format.
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of literature circles compared to teacher read alouds on comprehension scores and student motivation. Students participated in weekly discussions of a book read aloud by the researcher and a book read for literature circles. The total number of books each student either listened to or read during the four-week duration of the study was eight. The data generated in this study came from online comprehension tests that the students took at the end of each week on [www.bookadventure.com](http://www.bookadventure.com). The scores from the tests over the literature circle books and the read aloud books were analyzed at the end of each week to determine if there was a difference between the literature circle comprehension scores and the read aloud comprehension scores. Data were collected each week for four weeks.

The online tests consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions. The scores were based on a scale of 100, which made each question worth 10 points. Quantitative data was also gathered from the attitude survey that students completed on the last day of the investigation. Qualitative data was derived from observation and notes made by the researcher throughout the process.

This chapter will offer a detailed explanation of the data that were collected and the results that the data produced. A mean, median, mode, and range were calculated for the weekly literature circle comprehension scores and for the weekly read aloud comprehension scores. The researcher also calculated the difference between the read aloud comprehension score and the literature circle comprehension score for each child per week. Attitude survey results were also tabulated and documented to determine
student attitude in regard to the instructional strategies used. The observations made by
the researcher will also be discussed in this chapter.

Data Analysis

*Mean, Median, Mode, and Range*

Throughout the investigation, the students took online comprehension tests over
the read aloud book and literature circles books for each week. Each student took two
tests per week for a total of eight tests in all.

The data from the comprehension scores for the literature circle books (see Table
1) and the read aloud books (see Table 2) were analyzed, and the mean, median, mode,
and range were calculated each week of the 22 students in the class. An overall mean,
median, mode, and range were also calculated for the literature circle books and read
aloud books throughout the entire study.

*Literature Circle Comprehension Scores*

There was only one week in which the literature circle mean score was higher
than the read aloud mean score. During the first week of the study, the mean score for the
comprehension test for the literature circle books was 83.64, which was lower then the
read aloud mean score. During the second week of the study, the mean score for the
literature circle comprehension tests was higher than the mean score for the read aloud
comprehension test. The mean score for the literature circles tests was 80. The lowest
mean score for the literature circle book tests occurred during the third week. The mean
score was 76.36. During the final week of the study, the mean score for the literature
circle book tests was 83.64, which again was lower than the read aloud book test mean.
An overall mean for the literature circle book tests was 80.91.
Table 1

Weekly Comprehension Scores- Literature Circles

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<th>Student</th>
<th>Week 1 Score</th>
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<th>Week 3 Score</th>
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Table 2
Weekly Comprehension Scores - Read Alouds

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Read Aloud Comprehension Scores

During three out of the four weeks, the read aloud mean scores were higher than the literature circle scores. For the first week of the read aloud, the mean score was 87.27, which was higher than the literature circle mean score for the week. The lowest mean score for read alouds occurred during the second week of the study. The mean score for the read aloud book tests was 78.6, which was lower than the literature circle mean score. The read aloud mean score for the third week was higher that the literature circle mean score since it was 79.09. For the fourth and final week, yet again the mean score for the read alouds was higher than the literature circle mean score. The mean score for the read alouds was 89.09. An overall mean score for the read aloud comprehension tests was 83.41. (See Table 3 and 4, and Figure 1 for a summarization of all scores.)

Table 3
Mean, Median, Mode, and Range of Weekly Literature Circle Comprehension Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
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Note: n = 22
Table 4

Mean, Median, Mode, and Range of Weekly Read Aloud Comprehension Scores

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<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
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Note: n = 22

Figure 1. Mean Comparison Graph
Differences Between Read Aloud and Literature Circle Comprehension Scores

After reviewing the mean scores each week, the researcher determined that a more detailed analysis was required. The researcher calculated the difference between each student’s literature circle comprehension score and read aloud comprehension score for each week (See Table 5 and Figure 2 for a more detailed depiction of scores.). The researcher subtracted the literature circle score from the read aloud score. A negative difference determined that the student scored higher on the literature circle test than on the read aloud test. During week one, there were just as many students who scored higher on the literature circle test as there were students who scored higher on the read aloud test. During week two, eight students scored higher on the literature circle test, seven scored higher on the read aloud test, and seven students had equal scores for the two tests. The results for week three indicate that seven students scored higher on the literature circle test, eight students scored higher on the read aloud test, and seven students received the same score on each test. For the fourth and final week, the number of students who scored higher on the literature circle test was the same as the number of students who scored higher on the read aloud test. Of the 88 comprehension test comparisons completed, 31 of the differences demonstrated that the students scored higher on the literature circle comprehension tests, 31 demonstrated higher read aloud comprehension scores, and 26 of the differences indicated that the students received the same score on the literature circle test as they did on the read aloud test.

After calculating the differences for each week, the researcher also determined how many times each student scored higher on the literature circle tests, how many times each student scored higher on the read aloud tests, and how many students scored the same
Table 5

Differences between Read Aloud Scores and Literature Circle Scores Each Week

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<th>Diff. Wk 1</th>
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<th>Diff. Wk 3</th>
<th>Diff. Wk 4</th>
<th>Better on L.C</th>
<th>Better on R.A.</th>
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9 8 7 7 31

Total higher L.C score

9 7 8 7 31

Total Higher R.A. Score

4 7 7 8 26 No Difference
score for both tests. One student scored higher on the literature circle tests during all four weeks. Three students scored higher on the literature circle tests during three of the four weeks. Four students scored higher on 50% of the literature circle tests, higher on 25% of the read aloud tests, and they received the same score on 25% of the tests. However, no students scored higher on all four read aloud tests. Three students scored higher on the read aloud test for three out of the four weeks. Four students scored higher on the read aloud tests 50% of the time, higher on the literature circle tests 25% of the time, and received the same score 25% of the time. Overall, the scores were very comparable.
**Attitude Survey Results**

The researcher tabulated the results of the seven-question attitude survey to determine the students’ interest in and views of the activities (See Appendix E.). The results indicated that 20 out of 22 students enjoyed talking to the other students while in their literature circles. Questions 3 and 4 asked the students whether they preferred to have the teacher read to them, or whether they preferred to read on their own. Twelve students of 22 indicated that they preferred to read on their own. However, 13 of 22 students that stated that they preferred to have the teacher read to them. When asked whether they preferred to choose their own books rather than the teacher telling them what to read, 12 of 22 students stated that they prefer to select their own books. The students were also asked if they thought that they learned a lot from the literature circle discussions and the read aloud discussions. Nineteen of 22 students believe that they learned a lot from the literature circle discussions. However, 19 of 22 students also believe that they learned a lot from the read aloud discussions as well. When the students were asked if they would like to continue to use literature circles as a way to learn about the books they read, 18 of 22 students said that they would like to continue using literature circles.

**Researcher Observations**

While observing students, the researcher made notes in a notebook to document what she considered distinctive in the students’ discussions or behaviors. The researcher was also the facilitator of all activities, which made it difficult to make highly detailed notes. During the time in which students were to read their literature circle books, it was noted that students would read diligently until they were finished reading their book or
portion of the book that was required for the next discussion. Students often wrote in their response journals to help remind them of parts of the story that they wanted to remember to share with their groups, and they appeared to be reading very carefully to allow them to understand the story well enough to discuss it within their groups. It was noted that one student, in particular, would sit and write diligently in his response journal after he read the story. When the researcher looked at his response journal, it was noted that what was writing was a detailed summary of the story.

While in their discussion groups, all students participated and made their thoughts know. The students would often use their books to show other students specific parts of the story that was being discussed, and would frequently refer to their response journals to remind themselves of different portions of the book that they had read. Some students, however, did appear to have a more difficult time with the implementation of the literature circle structure. It was also observed that the student who wrote detailed summaries in his response journal would also read word-for-word out of his response journal during group discussions, and would not deviate from it. He did not have fluid discussions with his group members, which caused the group members to lose interest in what he was saying.

The researcher also observed the students making connections between the books they read and their own lives, as well as with other books that they had previously read. One student even made a connection between *The Magic Finger* by Roald Dahl (1966) and *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig (1980) with respect to the magical elements and how they would not be possible in “real life.” Students also discussed their favorite parts of the book, as well as portions of the book that they did not necessarily
like. They also explained elements of the story to other students who may not have understood.

During week three, it was observed that one student repeatedly became so engrossed in reading his book, that he would read significantly further than he was assigned. The researcher had to remind him to be careful not to divulge those portions of the story during group discussions until the rest of the group had a chance to read those pages first.

During read aloud discussions, some students did not appear to focus well on what was being read. They would be looking all around the room, and trying to play with things that were near them. During the discussions, some students would not raise their hands to answer any questions, and would not make eye contact with the teacher. Other students would raise their hands for almost every question, and would give thoughtful responses. However, the students who were actively participating had excitement in their voices and gave thoughtful answers.

During the fourth week, the students were told that it would be the last week for literature circle implementation. It was noted that the students immediately let out groans, and said “Oooh, but we thought that we were going to keep doing them all year. We don’t want to stop. We like them.”

The researcher also made a few observations during the students’ designated Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) time, which they have on a daily basis. The researcher noticed that during this time period, even though the students had the opportunity to choose their own reading material, they were often off task. Many students repeatedly asked to help with jobs around the classroom, and would often change their book
selection several times during the designated time period. Students would also try to talk to their friends during this time. The students were continuously reminded that this time period was for reading and not socializing. A small number of students did stay focused and read diligently. However, the majority of the students did not appear to stay focused on their books for more than a few minutes.

Since the basal reading series was still being used during other portions of the day while the study was being implemented, the researcher chose to document a few observations during this time as well. Oftentimes, the story would be read to the students or the students would listen to the story on CD. While the students listened to the story, they were required to follow along in their textbook. It was observed that many students would not follow along carefully, and would rarely show any type of response to the text. During discussion time, students were asked questions about the story and they would answer, but the answers were short and precise. The students would not elaborate on their thoughts, or attempt to relate the text to anything in their own lives or to other books that they had read.

Discussion of Results

During the study, the specific question that was investigated was: “What is the impact of literature circles compared to read alouds on reading comprehension and student reading motivation?” Based on the data, there was not a large difference between the impact of literature circles and read alouds with respect to reading comprehension or motivation.

The mean scores each week differed between read alouds and literature circles. During three out of the four weeks, the mean score was higher for the read aloud tests.
However, when the differences between each student’s individual weekly scores were calculated, there did not appear to be much of a difference between the two strategies. The number of students who scored higher on the comprehension tests for each strategy was either equal or nearly equal each week.

The data from the attitude surveys indicated that most of the students enjoyed the literature circles, and would like to continue to have literature circle discussions. Through observations during implementation, the researcher was also able to confirm this belief. When students were told during the fourth week that it would be the last week for literature circle implementation, the students immediately let out groans, and said “Oooh, but we thought that we were going to keep doing them all year. We don’t want to stop. We like them.” However, two students indicated that they did not like discussing the books with their classmates. One of the students goes to speech class, and the other student is rather shy and quiet on a regular basis. These two points may indicate why the two students did not particularly like to discuss the books with their peers.

Through observation, the teacher was also able to determine that even though the means of the students’ scores were higher for read alouds, it does not necessarily mean that the students did not get as much out of the literature circle discussions. Students’ discussions were thoughtful, and the students appeared to have a much more aesthetic response to the stories. Some students did respond efferently, and would solely discuss details that they read in the story. However, many students responded more aesthetically, which, in turn, encouraged them to discuss what they thought as they read, related the book to other books and things that had happened to them, and talk about things that they liked or did not like about the story and characters. The researcher also observed that the
literature circles seemed to empower the students and make them more willing to talk and voice their opinions and views to their peers. During the read aloud discussions, many students attempted to avoid giving their opinion, whereas with the small group setting of the literature circles, the students appeared more at ease, and they provided encouragement to the other students in the group to help ensure that everyone gave their thoughts about the book.

Observations also indicated that students were more interested in reading when they had book options and knew that they were going to discuss what they read with their classmates. When the students were given time in class to read the books, they all sat quietly and focused on the task at hand. They did not get out of their seats to ask for drinks or go to the bathroom, nor did they attempt to switch books. The researcher also observed the students during their designated Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) time, which they have on a daily basis, and the atmosphere was very different. During SSR time the students are allowed to choose their own books, but they do not discuss the books with their classmates. While observing students during SSR time, the researcher documented that students were talking to peers rather than reading, getting out of their seats regularly, asking to use the restroom or get a drink, changing books frequently, and often didn’t even appear to be reading the books at all (rather flipping through the pages).

Summary

The data from the online comprehension tests were analyzed at the end of each week. The mean, median, mode, and range were calculated to determine whether literature circles or read alouds had more of an impact on reading comprehension. The
mean scores indicated slightly higher scores for read alouds compared to literature circles.

The difference between each child’s literature circle comprehension score for each week and his/her read aloud comprehension score was calculated to more effectively analyze the data, and to determine the most effective strategy for individual students. The differences between individual student’s scores did not indicate a difference. Based on this data, literature circles and read alouds were much more comparable.

Responses from the attitude survey data were also tabulated to determine student attitudes and preferences based on the strategies used. This data, along with researcher’s observations indicated that students were motivated by and enjoyed both the teacher-led and student-led book discussions.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many school districts use a Basal Reading Series to teach the many components of reading instruction to students. However, oftentimes a Basal Series can seem monotonous and is rather unmotivating when it comes to encouraging students to want to read and complete the work. Reading comprehension is the main goal of all reading instruction, and motivation plays a large role in keeping students attention when teaching reading skills. Teachers are constantly looking for the most effective ways of encouraging reading comprehension development and reading motivation for students. This research investigation was designed to determine “What is the impact of literature circles compared to read alouds on reading motivation and comprehension for second grade students?” In this chapter, a summary of the findings, conclusions based on the data, and future recommendations will be discussed.

Summary of the Project

Over the years, research studies have proven that many different reading instructional strategies are beneficial, but it is often a challenge for teachers to determine which will be the best for their students. For years, research has proven the benefits of read alouds. However, as discussed by Daniels (2002), Karen Smith’s fifth grade class began implementing literature circles in 1982, which was the inception of a new field of study. More recently, teachers have begun to use literature circles within their classrooms, but some teachers are still apprehensive because they do not know whether they are as beneficial as the reading instruction/discussion strategies that they are already using.
Teachers are constantly agonizing over the best ways to teach the required reading standards and still make learning fun and rewarding for the students. Student motivation plays a significant part in determining whether or not students will put effort into the lesson at hand.

This investigation was designed to determine the impact of student-led literature circles discussions of books as compared to teacher read alouds on students’ reading comprehension and reading motivation. The investigation was implemented over a four week time period. Each week the students were given the choice between six different books to read for their literature circle discussions. Students were placed in their literature circle groups based on their book preference, which made the groups change weekly. Each student read his/her book independently, and then met with his/her group throughout the week to discuss the book.

One book per week was selected by the teacher to use for the read aloud. The teacher would read the book to the class, and then have a discussion about the story with the whole class. At the end of each week, the students went online to www.bookadventure.com to take a comprehension test over their literature circle book and a comprehension test over the read aloud book. A third data source was researcher observation. Throughout the four-week time period, the researcher observed how the students interacted with each other, and how they appeared to react to the overall process. The teacher was able to observe the students making connections with the books that were read, and she witnessed the students putting a newfound effort into reading and discussing the books, especially during the literature circle portions of the study. On the
last day of the implementation process, the researcher gave the students a written survey in which they were required to circle yes and no answers, generating a fourth data source.

After collecting data and analyzing the comprehension scores for literature circle discussions and read aloud discussions over the course of four weeks, there did not appear to be a difference between the literature circles and read alouds in regards to reading comprehension. However, some of the scores did indicate that some students did benefit more from literature circles than read alouds, and visa versa, but the data was very mixed.

Conclusions

Through observations and the student survey, the researcher was able to draw the conclusion that the students appeared to be motivated to read and discuss the books more when they knew that they were going to discuss them with their peers. The literature circles encouraged all students to participate in the discussions, including the students who would usually not volunteer to talk during whole-class discussions. Implementing the literature circles technique was a wonderful way to demonstrate that the students have learned comprehension skills, and are now able to take those learned skills and effectively read, analyze, and discuss a book to help ensure their own understanding of the story.

One of the main conclusions drawn from this investigation is that it is quite obvious that each student responds differently to certain activities. Some students may benefit more from one strategy than from another. This is why it is important to implement a variety of strategies in classrooms, so that all students have the opportunity to succeed. During the read aloud portions of this investigation, some students were more
willing to participate in discussions than others. Some students appeared to avoid teacher eye contact as a way to avoid joining the discussion. They may have been listening, but they were not willing to participate. For the most part, the students appeared to enjoy listening to the stories that were being read. However, other things easily distracted some students since they did not have their own individual books with which to follow the story.

During the literature circle discussions, all students participated and had their own books in front of them, but some were able to more effectively express themselves than others. However, based on the data, there was not an extreme difference between the impact of read alouds and literature circles on comprehension and motivation in the second grade classroom. The lack of difference between literature circle comprehension scores and read aloud comprehension scores might lead to the belief that literature circle discussions can be as beneficial as read alouds. The literature circle strategy appears to be a suitable strategy to use in a classroom when the goal is to encourage comprehension development, and to allow students to think for themselves as they read and discuss books to help develop their comprehension abilities. Since students are unique and respond differently to strategies used in the classroom, it is suggested that both of these instructional approaches, as well as other motivation and comprehension strategies, be implemented in order to effectively reach all students.

This investigation also demonstrated that students could become very excited about books and want to show their abilities when they are given more control over their learning. Allowing the students choices about book selection appeared to encourage them to become excited about the book that they were going to be reading. By requiring
students to read stories exclusively from a basal reader, the students appear to lose a sense of control over their learning, which may lower their motivation to read. When the researcher observed students as they read stories from the basal reading series, it was noted that they simply followed along as the story was read to them, and then briefly answered the questions that were presented to them. They did not show any excitement towards the stories, nor did they attempt to relate the stories to other stories or their own lives. However, as students read for their literature circles, they would often write in their response journals to help remind them of parts of the story that they wanted to remember to share with their groups, and they appeared to be reading very carefully to allow them to understand the story well enough to discuss it. If students do not feel as though the book is worthy of their time and effort, then they are less likely to read the book and simply hope that they will be able to answer questions on a test when necessary. However, as observed in this study, those same students are more likely to put in the effort if they are interested in the book, and know that they will need to share their wisdom with their classmates. Based on the observations and survey from this study, it can be concluded that literature circle discussions can motivate students to read carefully and make thoughtful comments when discussing books.

As noted earlier, the comprehension tests consisted of questions that required an efferent response. It is believed that this could have had an impact on the results of the study. During the literature circle discussions, most of the conversations were based on aesthetic responses. Students were relating the books to other books that they had read as well as experiences that they had in the past. The students would summarize the stories,
but they did not discuss the minor details, whereas during the read aloud discussions, the teacher encouraged the students to respond both aesthetically and efferently.

Recommendations for Teachers

For this particular classroom, it appears as though both literature circles and read alouds are beneficial in helping to motivate students to read, as well as help some students to more effectively comprehend what they have read. It is recommended that this teacher, as well as other teachers, implement literature circles and read alouds on a more regular basis. Since all students learn differently, it is important that the teacher implement both strategies to more effectively meet a variety of students’ needs. The read-aloud discussions with the teacher can help to model effective thinking, which may help to broaden the discussions in the literature circle groups as well.

Allowing students to participate in literature circles during the time in which they normally have sustained silent reading may also benefit some students. This would help to provide students with a true purpose for reading during this time, since they will be discussing the stories with their classmates.

Recommendations for Administrators

The read aloud strategy is currently a strategy that administrators support the use of in classrooms. However, new strategies, such as literature circles, can be just as beneficial. It is recommended that administrators provide support to teachers that are interested in implementing literature circles in the classroom. Since all students learn differently, administrators should support a variety of instructional strategies, so teachers will not be as apprehensive when attempting new instructional strategies. Literature circles can be a very valuable instructional strategy, based on current research. Providing
support for teachers who implement literature circles will also allow for more research opportunities, which may prove literature circles to be even more beneficial.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

It is highly recommended that teacher educators present a variety of strategies to pre-service teacher to allow them to be fully prepared to teach students who vary in the way they learn. The read aloud strategy and the literature circle strategy should both be presented to pre-service teachers, and they should be given the opportunity to experience and practice these strategies. Allowing pre-services teachers to participate in their own literature circle groups will help them to better understand the dynamics of a literature circle group setting, and allow them to more effectively prepare for questions that may arise when implementing them with students.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based upon the results from this investigation, it is recommended that further research be conducted to ensure that the literature circle strategy is a truly beneficial instructional strategy for improving student achievement. Time allotted for this investigation was a significant delimitation. Completing a longer investigation would give the researcher more time to gather data, which may change after the students continue to use the literature circle strategy on a more regular basis. Continued use of literature circles may improve the students’ ability to develop more effective comprehension strategies.

It is also recommended that a larger population of students be used for a future investigation. All students learn differently, and certain strategies are more beneficial for some students than others. A larger participant number would allow for a clearer
indication of the impact of literature circles and read alouds on reading comprehension and motivation.

It is suggested that an investigation be conducted to determine whether or not literature circle discussions improve comprehension scores over time. The current investigation indicates that literature circle discussions can be as beneficial as read aloud discussions, but did not investigate whether or not literature circles will continue to improve comprehension over time. Based on previous research and the information from this investigation, it is logical to believe that literature circles will help to improve student comprehension over time. However, many teachers and school districts will not use literature circles in their classrooms unless there is valid data that states that comprehension scores improve with this strategy.

Summary

This investigation required the implementation of literature circle discussions and read aloud discussions. The teacher was able to observe the students making connections with the books that were read, and she was able to witness the students putting a newfound effort into reading and discussing the books during both types of discussions. Implementing the literature circles technique was a wonderful way to demonstrate that the students have learned comprehension skills, and that they are able to take those learned skills and effectively read, analyze, and discuss a book to help ensure their own understanding of the story.

The data did not demonstrate a difference between literature circles and read alouds, but also did not show a negative effect from either strategy. Some students appeared to benefit more from literature circles, just as there were students who appeared
to benefit more from read alouds based on the data. Since all students have varying learning styles, different strategies are going to benefit them in different ways. Students also presented a very positive attitude towards both strategies, which is highly encouraging to the classroom teacher.
References


References- Reading Books for Each Week


Appendix A

Parental Consent Form
Dear Parents/Guardians,

As many of you may know, I am currently attending Bowling Green State University to receive my Master’s Degree in Reading. To fulfill the requirements for graduation, I must conduct a research study and write a Thesis paper. The study that I have chosen to complete will provide data that will help determine whether teacher-led discussions or student-led discussions about books are more effective in regards to comprehension and reading motivation.

This study will be conducted over a four-week time period. During this study, the students will participate in literature circle discussion groups and teacher read-aloud discussions each week. The teacher will choose six books per week to present to the students, and allow them to select which book each of them would like to read for the literature circle discussions. The students will then be placed in groups based on their book selection. The students will meet with their literature circle group each day during the week to discuss what they have read thus far. Each week the teacher will also read teacher-selected books aloud to the students. The whole class will have a discussion about the book immediately following the reading. At the end of each week the students will complete comprehension assessments on www.bookadventure.com for the read aloud book and the literature circle book that they read. At the end of the four weeks, the students will take a survey to determine how they felt about the literature circles and the read alouds. The survey results will be tallied and analyzed by the reaseacher.

All activities in this study are regular activities for the classroom; thus your child will need to partake in the reading activities. However, I request your permission to use observations of your child and your child’s comprehension scores for data within my thesis. Your choice to allow or not allow observations of your child and your child’s scores to be used in this study will not have an impact on your relationship with me or on your child’s grades. All activities in this study are regular activities for in the classroom, and will not pose any risk to your child for participating.

Your child’s confidentiality will be protected. His/her name will be known only to me, and the surveys and comprehension assessment results will be stored in my personal files. The data will be analyzed in the aggregate, so your child’s individual scores will not be specifically mentioned in this thesis.

I am excited about implementing this research study. If you have questions about the study, you can email or contact me at sbedee@bgsu.edu or sbedee@perrysburgschools.net, (419) 874-3123 ext. 29107 or my advisor Nancy Fordham, Ph.D. at nfordha@bgsu.edu, (419) 372-9819. You may also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University, at hsrb@bgsu.edu, (419) 372-7716 with any comments, questions, or concerns about this study or about participant rights.

Please fill out and return the attached permission form by Monday, January 25th, 2010, if you agree to allow me to use your child’s data.

I would truly appreciate your cooperation in this matter! Thank you!

Sincerely,

Miss Sarah Bedee
Bowling Green State University
Literature circle/Read Aloud Discussion Research Study

*If you will allow your child’s scores to be used in this study, please complete and return this form to school with your child by Monday, January 25, 2010.*

_____ Observations of my child and my child’s comprehension scores *may* be used for the thesis.

Student’s name: __________________________________________________________

Parent’s name: __________________________________________________________

Parent’s Signature: _______________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

Student Assent Form
January 22, 2010

Dear Student,

As you know, I am also going to school, but I am attending school at Bowling Green State University. Over the next four weeks, I would like to try a couple of different reading activities in our classroom. This will help me to learn new things for my schoolwork, and help me to get information for an important paper that I have to write.

Over the next four weeks, each student in our class will choose one book from a group of six books each week, and will read that book during the week. Based on the book that you choose, you will be placed in a small group to talk about the book. These group talks are called literature circles. At the end of each week you will go to the computer lab to take a quiz about your book on the computer.

Each week, I will choose a book to read aloud to the whole class. After I read the book, we will talk about the story as a class. At the end of each week, you will also take a quiz over the read aloud book while you are in the computer lab.

These activities are normal activities for a classroom, so you will need to participate in the activities. However, I am asking for your permission to use your scores from the Book Adventure quizzes and any observations that I make while you work. This information will be used in my paper if you give me your permission. I will not be upset with you if you choose to not allow me to use your information.

When I write my paper, I will not use your name at all. No one will see your actual scores except for me.

If you are willing to allow me to use your scores and any observations with that I make of you, please fill out the bottom of this page.

Thanks for your help!

Sincerely,

Miss Bedee

____I understand what will be done for this study, and I agree to allow my data to be used.

Student’s name:__________________________________________________________

Student’s signature:_______________________________________________________
Appendix C

Weekly Book List

Week 1

**Literature Circle Book Choices:**
*I Can Read with My Eyes Shut* by Dr. Seuss (1978) New York: Beginner Books
*The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1978)
*Teacher From the Black Lagoon* by Mike Thaler (1989) New York: Scholastic

**Read Aloud Book:** *The Bearenstain Bear Scouts and the Stinky Milk Mystery* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1999) New York: Scholastic

Week 2

**Literature Circle Book Choices:**
*Llama Llama Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney (2005)
*Principal from the Black Lagoon* by Mike Thaler (1993)
*Come Back, Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish (1995)
*Fancy Nancy and the Posh Puppy* by Jane O’Connor (2007)
*The Lost Tooth Club* by Arden Johnson (1998)
*Pinkerton, Behave* by Steven Kellogg (1979)

**Read Aloud Book:** *Cloudy With the Chance of Meatballs* by Judy Barrett (1982)

Week 3

**Literature Circle Book Choices:**
*Nate the Great and the Boring Beach Bag* by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat (1987)
*The Magic Finger* by Roahl Dahl (1966)
*Junie B. Jones Smells Something Fishy* by Barbara Park (1998)
*Frog and Toad are Friends* by Arnold Lobel (1970)
*The Magic Tree House: Afternoon on the Amazon* by Mary Pope Osborne (1995)

**Read Aloud Book:** *Cam Jansen and the Mystery of the Television Dog* by David Adler (1981)

Week 4

**Literature Circle Book Choices:**
*Scooby Doo: Mummies at the Mall* by Gail Herman (2002)
*Humbug Rabbit* by Lorna Balian (1974)
*Frederick* by Leo Lionni (1967)
*I Fly* by Anne Rockwell (1997)

**Read Aloud Book:** *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1984)
Appendix D

Student Attitude Survey

Number:______________________________________________

1. Did you enjoy talking to the other students in your literature circle group?
   Yes  No

2. Do you prefer to choose your own books instead of the teacher telling you which book you need to read?
   Yes  No

3. Do you prefer that the teacher read books to you?
   Yes  No

4. Would you rather read books on your own rather than the teacher reading them to you?
   Yes  No

5. Do you feel that you learned a lot during the discussions in your literature circle?
   Yes  No

6. Would you like to continue using literature circles as a way to learn about the books you read?
   Yes  No

7. Do you believe that you learned a lot from the discussions with the teacher after the read alouds?
   Yes  No
## Appendix E

Table E6

## Attitude Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Total Yes</th>
<th>Total No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you enjoy talking to the other students in your literature circle group?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you prefer to choose your own books instead of the teacher telling you which book you need to read?</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you prefer that the teacher read books to you?</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you rather read books on your own rather than the teacher reading them to you?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you learned a lot during the discussions in your literature circle?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to continue using literature circles as a way to learn about the books you read?</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe that you learned a lot from the discussions with the teacher after the read alouds?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>