Reading Aloud by the Elementary School Teacher

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READING ALOUD BY THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the Department of Education and Human Development State University of New York College at Brockport in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the read aloud practices of elementary school teachers. It also examined those practices in regards to the differences exhibited among the different grade levels.

Seventy-six teachers responded to the questionnaire developed by the researcher. The responses of the returned questionnaires were tallied and recorded according to the frequency and similarity of responses. A descriptive analysis was then made of the responses according to the two questions posed by the researcher.

The findings of this study revealed that many teachers are reading aloud to their students on a regular basis. Many purposes were mentioned, but the majority of teachers read aloud for enjoyment. Most of the teachers selected a wide variety of literature to read to their students. Many activities accompanied the read aloud sessions. The most popular were to hold book discussions and assign art and writing projects. Almost all of the teachers reported
that their students enjoyed listening to stories and many of the children would select books that the teacher had previously read to the class.

Implications for future research included examining the read aloud practices of middle and high school teachers and addressing the role of the parents in reading aloud in the home environment.
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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the read-aloud practices of elementary classroom teachers. This study focuses on such factors as how much time is allocated to reading aloud, various instructional activities that may accompany reading aloud, and the types of literature used.

**Questions**

The questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are the read aloud practices of classroom teachers in the elementary grades?

2. Are there any trends evident among different grade levels involving amount of time spent reading aloud, activities used before or after reading aloud, and the types of literature read to the students?

**Need for the Study**

Students of all ages enjoy listening to an adult reading a story to them. This alone should be sufficient reason to read aloud to children. However, research has shown that
reading aloud to children has a positive effect in helping students achieve success in school (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Durkin, 1961; Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986; McCormick, 1977; Morrow, 1979; Pearson, Hansen, & Gordon, 1979; Raferty, 1974; Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon, 1989). Reading to children can motivate them to learn to read and become independent readers (Arbuthnot, 1964; Casteel, 1989; Cullinan, 1992; Durkin, 1982; McCormick, 1977; Routman, 1991; Trelease, 1985). Routman (1991) states that, "Reading aloud is seen as the single most influential factor in young children's success in learning to read" (p. 32). Reading aloud to children expands their knowledge of the world around them and provides an opportunity for many children to hear stories that they would be unable to read on their own (Arbuthnot, 1964; Minderman, 1990).

Findings of research (Cohen, 1968; Feitelson et al., 1986; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Raferty, 1974) have also indicated that reading aloud to children can improve reading achievement. Other research (Morrow, 1979; Feitelson et al., 1986) has shown
that reading aloud to children acquaints children with literary language and introduces them to patterns of language (Chomsky, 1972). Reading aloud to children provides a time for children to interact with the adult reader. The adult reader serves as a positive role model. He displays mature reading behavior while providing an exciting atmosphere for the child to listen to the story being read (Altwerger, Diehl-Faxon & Dockstader-Anderson, 1985; Ecroyd, 1991; Heath, 1982; Minderman, 1990; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Trelease, 1985). "The value of an adult partner who shares books and who thinks aloud in response to literature cannot be ignored" (Roser & Martinez, 1985, p. 489). This sharing may involve discussing illustrations, vocabulary, and relating the events in the story being read to personal life experiences. Hearing good literature read by an enthusiastic adult is an important motivating factor in helping children become readers. One of the best ways to interest children in literature is to actually read aloud to them. This reading aloud will generate further interest in books. Huck and Kuhn (1968) state that, "Good oral reading should develop a taste for fine literature" (p. 659).
Since reading aloud has been shown to be an effective means of helping children become successful readers, and since children enjoy this activity and it helps them to become motivated to read on their own, it could be concluded that reading aloud to children would be an important part of the school day for children of all ages. Johns (1978) states that teachers should make every attempt to read daily to their students. Such oral reading should be considered an essential part of a daily reading program. Youngsters of all ages should experience the pleasure of an adult reading to them. McCormick (1977) feels that reading aloud should be part of every teacher's curriculum.

Research now provides evidence of direct relationship between reading aloud to children and reading performance, language development, and reading interest. The evidence indicates that reading to children should be scheduled regularly. Hearing good literature read is as important as any other element of the curriculum, or any other activity. (p. 143)

Anderson, et al. (1985), in their book Becoming a Nation of Readers, stated that, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p. 23). They also stated that "there is no substitute for a teacher who
reads children good stories. It whets the appetite of children for reading, and provides a model of skillful oral reading. It is a practice that should continue throughout the grades" (p. 51).

The benefits of reading aloud and the benefits of the interaction between the adult reader and the child during the reading of the story have been substantiated by research (Altwerger et al., 1985; Elley, 1989; Morrow, 1979; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Raferty, 1974). This present study was designed to see if the knowledge of these benefits is apparent in the classroom. Are elementary teachers reading aloud to their students on a consistent basis?

Limitations of the Study

1. The participants in this study were selected on the basis of their willingness to respond to the questionnaire.

2. The voluntary nature of the survey limited this study to the number of responses received.
Chapter II

Review of the Literature

This study described the read-aloud practices of a select group of elementary school teachers and examined these practices in relation to the findings of past research. The literature reviewed in this section focused on the benefits of reading aloud in general and more specifically in relation to the findings of research conducted into the relationship between reading aloud and early literacy, reading and language development, and interest and attitudes.

Reading Aloud and Early Literacy

Research has shown that children enjoy being read to (Mason & Blanton, 1971) and for many children story reading begins at home. Reading aloud to children contributes to positive family life and children's attitudes toward reading (Manning, Manning, & Cody, 1987). "Families that have the habit of reading aloud acquire a common fund of happily shared experience and of memories that last a lifetime" (Adams, 1990,
p. 332). The bedtime story is a widely accepted and natural way for parents to interact with their children and also serves as their children's literacy orientation (Heath, 1982). Parents and other caregivers set the stage for natural reading development when they read to young children and when they provide children with a rich literary environment (Hoskisson, 1979).

Philips and McNaughton (1990) studied the practice of storybook reading to preschool children in mainstream New Zealand families. The authors investigated the social practice of book reading in ten families where parents read regularly to their preschool children. They found that reading stories was a frequent child-centered event in the homes studied and that reading was enjoyed by both the children and the adults. The children were having positive reading experiences before beginning school and formal reading instruction.

Lomax (1976) studied twenty-eight preschool children identified as having either a high or low degree of interest in books and stories. It was found that all high-interest children
had considerable experience with stories at home. This was true for only some of the low-interest group.

Many educators feel that one of the important activities children need in order to have eventual success in learning how to read is reading aloud to children (Anderson et al., 1985; Chomsky, 1972; Durkin, 1961; Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986; Lomax, 1976; Mason & Blanton, 1971; Pearson, Hansen, & Gordon, 1979).

Yaden, Smolkin, and Conlon (1989) feel that storybook reading is an important factor of early literacy acquisition.

Storybooks provide a variety of information about the way print communicates meaning and represents the sounds of oral language. Exposing children to as many sources of written information in the environment as possible before school cannot help but give them the kind of foundation needed for successful mastery of this most complicated human invention. (p. 211)

Reading stories aloud introduces children to the world of written language and this exposure to literature provides a wealth of knowledge and a desire to learn more from books (Morrow, 1979). Listening to books read aloud is positively related
to the linguistic stage. The child who hears a variety of rich and complex material being read to him benefits from a range of linguistic inputs that is not available to the child that is not being read to (Chomsky, 1972).

Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein in a 1986 study investigated the effects of reading a series-format, many-volumed story to disadvantaged first graders. Experimental and control groups were selected. Children in the experimental group were read to in a whole-class setting for twenty minutes during the six months. Those children in the control group were not read to. Children in the experimental group outscored children in the control groups on measures of decoding, reading comprehension, and active use of language. "Extensive reading to young children before they are able to do so themselves may develop attitudes, abilities and skills beyond the decoding-related insights supposedly enhanced by other daily-life literacy events" (p. 340). Being read to introduces children to literary language that is not familiar from face-to-face interaction. This knowledge should be useful
when children start to read on their own.

One of the most interesting outcomes of the present study was the influence reading to children had on their own active use of language. This effect suggests that hearing stories read aloud acquaints children with the literary language and that the impact of this is so strong that it extends beyond the children's passive language skills and affects also their active use of language. (p. 354)

Durkin (1961) initiated a longitudinal study of California children who learned to read at home before entering first grade. Forty-nine first graders were identified as having some ability in reading prior to school instruction. A look at the families of these children revealed that all of these children had been read to regularly at home by an adult. In some instances this reading began at the age of two.

Reading Aloud and Language and Reading Development

Research by Chomsky (1972), Raferty (1974), Cohen (1968), and Elley (1989) has shown that children who are read to develop more sophisticated language structures. "Effective oral reading by the teacher will help develop sensitivity to beautiful and descriptive language, fine
characterization, and appreciation of plot structure" (Huck & Kuhn, 1968, p. 659).

Chomsky in her 1972 study of children found that "those pre-readers in higher linguistic stages were read to by more people and hear more books per week and at a higher complexity level than those children at lower linguistic stages" (p. 27).

Cohen's 1968 study of socially disadvantaged second graders in New York City showed that those students exposed to literature read in the classroom scored significantly better on measures of vocabulary, word knowledge and reading comprehension that those students who were not exposed to literature read in the classroom. Cohen concluded that reading stories to children is a vital precursor to success in learning to read. Children need continued exposure to literature in early childhood. This exposure affects the basic, beginning stages of the transition that must take place in growth from comprehension or oral language to the final use of symbols in reading.
Raferty (1974) investigated 353 second graders and the effect that literature that was read by adults had on their reading development. Using pretest and posttest measures, it was found that children who were read to at least three times a week made significant gains in reading comprehension, word discrimination, and word knowledge over those who were not read to.

Elley (1989) measured the extent that oral reading influences the development of children's vocabulary. Classroom teachers in New Zealand read stories aloud to elementary school children and administered pretest and posttests to measure the extent of the new vocabulary the students acquired from the reading. Results showed that reading aloud constituted a significant source of vocabulary acquisition. Those students read to without teacher explanation of vocabulary showed gains of 15 percent. Students who received explanations during the reading showed gains of 40 percent.
One long-range goal for reading instruction is to teach children to read for enjoyment. "Children who enjoy reading will probably read more and enhance their knowledge of the world around them" (Saracho, 1984, p. 19). A major emphasis in reading instruction should be on developing independent readers (Cullinan, 1992; Harkness, 1981; Mason & Blanton, 1971; McCormick, 1977). Mason and Blanton (1971) surveyed 180 preschool children to find their reading interests. All but nine children said that they enjoyed having stories read to them. Many of the children wanted to read the stories that were read to them. "Exposure to a good story increases one's desire to read it for himself" (p. 796). Mason and Blanton go on to say that, "Perhaps children should routinely be read aloud those stories which will later be used for their early instruction in reading" (p. 796).

Reading aloud to children contributes to a child's ability to read independently. Over time, a child makes the connection between the
sounds of words and the marks on the page (Cullinan, 1992). Reading aloud provides entertainment, exposes children to the beauty of language, and encourages children to want to read for themselves (Huck & Kuhn, 1968; McCormick, 1977; Trelease, 1985).

As a child's language matures, more complex stories are read aloud to him. Vocabulary and knowledge of syntax are expanded. He may learn that interesting information useful to his own life can be learned from books (Chadwick, 1982; Harkness, 1981).

A major emphasis in reading instruction should be placed on developing positive attitudes and interests in reading (Arbuthnot, 1964; Casteel, 1989; Eaton, 1967; Huck & Kuhn, 1968; Manning & Manning, 1990; Minderman, 1990; Routman, 1991; Saracho, 1984). Reading aloud to children motivates them to want to learn to read. Durkin (1987) says that,"the most successful (and enjoyable) way to interest children in acquiring the ability to read is by reading to them frequently from carefully chosen books" (p. 115).
Reading aloud introduces books to children that they might otherwise miss, gives renewed pleasure from old favorites, and provides a standard for measuring books in the future (Baker & Greene, 1977). Children are able to understand books read to them on a reading level beyond their reading ability (Minderman, 1990). Arbuthnot (1977) states, "A good book, well read, brings responses from children who could not enjoy and respond to the book on their own because their reading ability would not permit it" (p. 528).

Adults who share this positive attitude toward reading are serving as models. Hearing good literature read by an enthusiastic reader is an important motivating factor in helping children become readers (Huck, 1979). Roser and Martinez (1985) observed the storytime of preschool children at home and in schools. Analyses revealed that children not only focused on the characteristic components of stories, but also made inferences and predictions about the stories to which they were listening. The children tended to respond to literature just like the
adult who was reading the books to them. The adult reader was serving as a model of mature reading.

Students see teachers as their role models. When a teacher reads aloud to students, the students are receiving a message that reading aloud is important. The opposite may also be true. When a teacher does not read aloud, then reading may be viewed as not being very important or worthwhile (Ecroyd, 1991).

The adult as a reading role model is extremely important to the child's development into a mature reader. Eaton (1967) states that

The presence of the book in the reader's hand, the possibility of touching it, of seeing the pictures as the book is held up or passed around gives to little children a very vivid sense of what it means to be able to open covers of a book and find waiting for them the wonder and magic of a story. (p. 332)

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter shows that reading aloud to children can have a definite impact on children's attitudes towards and achievement in reading. Reading aloud can help develop language structures. It can motivate children to learn to read.
Reading aloud also can stimulate interest in other areas. Casteel (1989) states that, "Reading orally motivates students to embark on other areas of interest" (p. 100). Reading aloud can also improve children's comprehension of stories.

The role of the adult reader as a role model can not be ignored. "Adult interaction with children is necessary if children are to learn about written language" (Schickendanz, 1978, p. 23). Reading aloud also encourages children to become independent readers. This should be one of the main goals of all reading instruction.

In conclusion, children of all ages enjoy listening to stories. This easy and enjoyable experience, which is beneficial to children's literacy development, should be a regular part of every school day.
Chapter III

Design

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the read-aloud practices of elementary classroom teachers. This study focused on such factors as how much time is allocated to reading aloud, various instructional activities that may accompany reading aloud, and the types of literature teachers choose to read aloud to their students.

Questions

1. What are the read-aloud practices of elementary classroom teachers?
2. Are there any trends evident between different grade levels involving amount of time spent reading aloud, activities used before or after reading aloud, and the types of literature read to the students?
Methodology

Subjects

The subjects in this study were 77 elementary classroom teachers in seven different school districts in western New York. Nine were kindergarten teachers, eleven were first grade teachers, seventeen were second grade teachers, thirteen were third grade teachers, fourteen were fourth grade teachers, and thirteen were fifth grade teachers.

Materials

The material used for this study was the questionnaire entitled "Read Aloud Questionnaire" (Appendix A) designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was used to discover the read aloud practices of elementary teachers such as, the amount of time spent reading aloud, the various activities that accompanied reading aloud, and the types of material used by the teachers.

Procedure

Approximately 125 copies of the questionnaire were delivered by the researcher to colleagues and to teachers in a reading masters thesis
seminar to distribute to their colleagues whom they felt would be willing to participate in this study.

Analysis

The responses of the returned questionnaires were tallied and recorded according to the frequency and similarity of responses. A descriptive analysis was then made of the responses.
Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data

Analysis of the Responses to the Questionnaire

This study examined the read aloud practices of seventy-seven elementary school teachers. Nine kindergarten, eleven first grade, seventeen second grade, thirteen third grade, fourteen fourth grade and thirteen fifth grade teachers responded to a questionnaire designed by the researcher. The responses were tallied and categorized according to the frequency of the responses. It is important to note that one fifth grade teacher said that he does not read aloud to his students because of a conflict in the lunch schedule makes it impossible to read to the students. Therefore, only seventy-six questionnaires were used to record the actual read aloud practices of the elementary school teachers. It is also important to note that in some cases the totals do not equal 100% as some teachers responded with more than one answer, and in some cases teachers may not have responded at all. In all cases totals have been rounded
to the nearest whole percent.

The analysis of the responses is divided into two sections. One section is devoted to each of the two research questions addressed in this study.

**QUESTION 1: READ-ALOUD PRACTICES**

What are the read aloud practices of elementary school teachers?

In this section a number of questions from the questionnaire have been stated and data pertaining to the question have been analyzed.

**Do you read aloud to your students?**

Ninety-nine percent (76 of 77 teachers) of the responding teachers read aloud to their students. Ninety-seven percent of the teachers read aloud to their students at least a couple of times per week. The majority of the teachers (86%) read aloud on a daily basis. Nine teachers (12%) read to their students a couple of times a week. Two teachers, a fourth and a fifth grade, (3%) read once a week to their students. See Appendix B.

**For how many minutes do you read aloud?**

Seventy percent of the teachers read for 16-30 minutes. Nineteen teachers (25%) read
aloud for 0-15 minutes. Two first grade teachers and one fifth grade teacher read for over 30 minutes to their students. See Appendix B.

**What time of day do you usually read aloud?**

The responses to this question were divided into twelve categories. See Appendix C.

The majority of teachers (59%) read to their students after lunch. Fifteen teachers (20%) usually read at the end of the day. Twelve teachers (16%) read at the start of the day. Other times included mid-morning (13%), before lunch (13%), various times (12%), during reading and language arts instruction (9%), mid-afternoon (7%), after specials (4%), after recess (3%), before specials (1%), and at rest time (1%).

**Where do you usually read to your students?**

Forty-four of the seventy-six responding teachers (58%) usually read aloud to their students while the class gathers on the floor around the teacher. Seventeen teachers (22%) read while the students sit at tables or desks. Fifteen teachers (20%) read while their students
were either on the floor or at desk and tables. One third grade teacher had her students usually sit at their desks while she read because "they are extremely active!" One first grade teacher sometimes reads to students outside on the grass. A fifth grade teacher, who usually reads to her students while they sit at their desks, would like to have the floor space that would allow them to sit around her on the floor. A teacher in fourth grade mentioned that where the students sit depends on the purpose of the reading.

What types of literature do you read?

Responses to this question were categorized according to the percentages of teachers that read each type of book, and how often they read that type of material. See Appendix D.

Fiction chapter books was the most popular type of material chosen for reading aloud. Twelve percent of the teachers responded that they always read this type of literature. Seventy-four percent of the teachers read fiction chapter books some of the time. Picture story books were read always by twenty-one percent of the
teachers. Sixty-one percent of the teachers sometimes read this type of literature. Only three percent always read non-fiction chapter books, but sixty-four percent read this sometimes. No teachers responded that they always read wordless books to their class. Twenty-eight teachers (37%) read wordless books sometimes. Wordless books had the highest percentage of teachers that seldom read (32%) or never read (14%) this type of book. Poetry had the second highest percentage (13%) of material that was always read. Sixty-eight percent of the teachers said that they read poetry to their class some of the time. However, poetry also had the second highest percentage of teachers that never read this type of literature (9%). Biographies and autobiographies were read always by only one percent of the responding teachers. This type of literature was read sometimes by sixty-eight percent of the teachers and twenty-six percent seldom or never read biographies or autobiographies to their class.
Why do you read aloud?

Purposes for reading aloud were divided into sixteen categories. They are presented in rank order in Appendix E.

Teachers had many reasons for reading to their students and most usually responded with more than one purpose. Reading aloud for enjoyment was the most often mentioned reason (58%). The next most prevalent reason for reading aloud was to encourage appreciation of literature (33%). Developing skills, such as vocabulary and listening, was listed by thirty-two percent of the teachers. Thirty percent read aloud in order to model reading for students. Sixteen percent read in order to relax or quiet down their students. Fourteen percent read aloud in order to allow students to gain information. Other purposes for reading aloud included: To expose students to various types of literature (13%), to hear language read properly (12%), to reinforce units or lessons being taught (12%), to promote certain authors or genres (8%), and
to read books that may be too hard for students to read on their own (8%). Purposes that were listed by five percent or less were: To encourage students to read on their own, to promote writing, to have discussions, to read to children that are not read to at home, and to relate to the current interest of children.

In what kinds of pre-or post-activities do you engage?

The responses were divided into 16 categories and are presented in rank order in Appendix F.

The teachers responded with many different activities that they use before, during and after reading aloud to their students. The most prevalent activity was to have book discussions. Thirty-nine percent of the teachers discussed the reading with their students at some point. The next most popular activities were to have some follow-up writing assignment or art project. Both activities were mentioned by twenty-six percent of the teachers. Previewing a book before the teacher began to read it was reported by twenty-four percent of the teachers. Twenty
percent of the teachers engage the students in predicting as they read aloud. Eleven percent of the teachers use some form of questioning as they read. Seven percent of the teachers seek reactions and responses from their students as they read. Four percent stated that they engage in summarizing, and four percent mentioned the making of story maps or charts. Three percent of the teachers mentioned the use of role playing. Also, discussing the author was mentioned by three percent. The following activities were mentioned by one percent: Evaluating, recalling previous day's events, relating to current events, doing worksheets, and looking up unfamiliar vocabulary words.

How do you choose the material that is to be read aloud?

The responding teachers use a variety of resources for selecting reading material. The most popular was selecting books based on units or themes currently being taught. This was found to be true in all the grade levels. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers use this as one way of selecting books. The next most popular was
based on student interest. Twenty-eight percent of the teachers use recommendations from students or books they know students will enjoy listening to. Teacher favorites from past years was mentioned by twenty-six percent. Book lists or recommendations from peers was next at eighteen percent. Eight percent reported using award winning books for their selection. Seven percent chose stories from favorite authors. Three percent select high quality books with good illustrations or exceptional writing styles. The following were reported by one percent: New book releases, books with a video to show after reading, higher level reading, and books at a level that most students can read on their own. See Appendix G.

Do students seek out the books you have read aloud to them?

Eighty-four percent of the teachers reported that their students always or sometimes choose books that have been read to them for their own reading. Only seven teachers (9%) reported that their students seldom sought books that had been read to them. Three teachers (4%) in the intermediate level reported that their
students never select books that had been read to them. See Appendix H.

How do students feel about you reading aloud to them?

Ninety-six percent of the teachers reported that their students really enjoy hearing stories read aloud. Three percent reported that most of their students enjoyed it. One fourth grade teacher stated that some are bored and not good listeners. Other students are restless and rude during this time.

QUESTION 2: TRENDS

Are there any trends evident between different grade levels and: 1) stated purposes for reading aloud, 2) amount of time spent reading aloud, 3) activities associated with reading aloud, 4) types of material used for reading aloud.

For the purpose of this study, a response rate of 75% or more indicates a trend.

Purposes for Reading Aloud

The purposes of the responding teachers were placed in sixteen categories. See Appendix I.
The seventy-six responding teachers had many different purposes for reading aloud to their students. Many of the teachers offered more than one purpose for reading aloud. The most frequently stated purposes that appeared across all grade levels were reading for enjoyment, literature appreciation, developing skills, modeling, and reinforcing units being taught.

The nine responding kindergarten teachers offered eight purposes for reading aloud to their students. Fifty-six percent of the kindergarten teachers read in order to have their students appreciate literature. Reading for enjoyment was mentioned by forty-four percent. Reading to develop skills was reported by thirty-three percent of the kindergarten teachers. Language development was listed by twenty-two percent. Eleven percent of the kindergarten teachers listed modeling, reading for information, reinforcing units being taught, and reading material beyond the ability of the students.
The eleven first grade teachers stated nine purposes for reading to their students. Eight of the teachers (73%) read for enjoyment. Forty-five percent listed developing skills. Language development and literature appreciation were mentioned by thirty-six percent. Modeling and reading for information were listed by twenty-seven percent. Eighteen percent listed relaxing students, reinforcing units, and reading books beyond the ability of their students.

The seventeen second grade teachers stated eleven purposes for reading aloud. Reading for enjoyment was the most popular reason for reading aloud at this level. Seventy-six percent of the teachers stated this purpose. Developing skills was reported by forty-seven percent. Thirty-five percent listed literature appreciation modeling, and reading for information. Exposing children to different literature was reported by twenty-three percent. Twenty-three percent also stated promoting genres and authors. Eighteen percent listed relaxing students as one purpose for reading aloud. Language
development, reinforcing units, and promoting writing were listed by twelve percent.

Thirteen third grade teachers reported thirteen purposes for reading aloud. Reading for enjoyment was the most popular purpose at this level at sixty-two percent. Exposing children to various literature was mentioned by thirty-one percent. Twenty-three percent listed literature appreciation, developing skills, modeling, and relaxing. Encouraging students to read on their own was reported by fifteen percent. Eight percent reported reading for information, language development, reinforcing units, reading books beyond the ability of the students, promoting writing, and for discussions.

Fourteen fourth grade teachers reported eleven purposes. Once again the most popular purpose was reading for enjoyment. Fifty percent of the teachers listed this. Forty-three percent stated literature appreciation. Twenty-nine percent stated developing skills. Twenty-one percent listed reading to relax the students. Fourteen percent reported modeling, reinforcing units being taught, and reading to children not
read to at home. Seven percent read aloud for discussions, to contribute to the current interests of children, to promote genre and authors, and to expose students to various forms of literature.

Thirteen fifth grade teachers listed ten different purposes. Sixty-two percent of the teachers at this level stated that they read aloud in order to model good reading. Thirty-one percent listed reading for enjoyment. Reading aloud to encourage students' own reading and reading books beyond the ability of the students was listed by fifteen percent. Eight percent read aloud to develop skills, to promote genres and authors, and to reinforce units being taught. Eight percent also read aloud to expose children to various types of literature, to relax or quiet down students, and to develop literature appreciation.

The only trend evident is that second grade teachers read aloud to their students for the purpose of enjoyment. Reading aloud for enjoyment was the most mentioned purpose in first, second,
third, and fourth grade. This was also the second most popular purpose for reading aloud listed by kindergarten and fifth grade teachers. All elementary grade levels list reading for enjoyment as either the first or second most popular purpose for reading to their students.

**Amount of Time Spent Reading Aloud**

One hundred percent of kindergarten and first grade teachers read aloud their students on a daily basis. Eight-eight percent of second grade teachers read aloud each day. Twelve percent read to their students a couple of times per week. In the third grade, eighty-five percent read daily. Fifteen percent read a couple of times per week. In fourth grade, seventy-one percent read daily, while twenty-one percent read a couple of times per week. One teacher read once a week. Seventy-five percent of fifth grade teachers read on a daily basis. Seventeen percent read a couple times per week. One teacher read once a week. See Appendix B.

The amount of minutes teachers spent reading to their students when they read aloud was divided
into three categories: 0-15 minutes, 16-30 minutes, and over 30 minutes. See Appendix B.

Sixty-seven percent of the teachers in kindergarten read to their students for 0-15 minutes. Thirty-three percent read for 16-30 minutes.

In first grade, eighty-two percent of the teachers read for 16-30 minutes. The other eighteen percent read for over 30 minutes. In the second grade, seventy-six percent of the teachers read for 16-30 minutes. The other twenty-four percent read for 0-15 minutes.

Sixty-two percent of the third grade teachers read for 16-30 minutes. Thirty-eight percent of the teachers read for 0-15 minutes.

In the fourth grade, eighty-six percent of the teachers read for 16-30 minutes. The other fourteen percent read for 0-15 minutes. In the fifth grade, seventy-three percent read for 16-30 minutes. Eighteen percent read for 0-15 minutes. One teacher in fifth grade read for over thirty minutes.

The results indicate that the majority of
elementary teachers (71%) read for 16-30 minutes. Twenty-five percent read for 0-15 minutes. Only three elementary teachers (4%) read for over thirty minutes.

At the primary level (k-2), sixty-eight percent of the teachers read for 16-30 minutes. Twenty-seven percent read for 0-15 minutes. At the intermediate level (3-5), seventy-four percent of the teachers read for 16-30 minutes. Twenty-four percent read for 0-15 minutes.

Read-Aloud Activities

The activities were categorized and the number of teachers that engaged in the activities were listed. See Appendix J.

Fifty-six percent of the kindergarten teachers had children do some type of writing assignment. Fifty-six percent also engaged students in some type of drawing or art project. Twenty-two percent discussed the book, previewed the story before reading, sought responses or reactions from students, engaged in role playing, and questioned the students.

In first grade, thirty-six percent of the teachers previewed the book, assigned students a writing activity, and engaged students in an
art project or drawing activity. Twenty-seven percent held book discussions, questioned students, and had students make predictions. Eighteen percent sought reactions and responses from students.

Almost half (47%) of the second grade teachers held book discussions. Thirty-five percent did a writing assignment, art project or drawing, previewed the book, and had the children predict events. Twelve percent questioned the students, and created charts or maps. Six percent did worksheets, discussed the author, and sought responses from students.

In the third grade, twenty-three percent of the teachers had students do an art activity and asked students to make predictions. Fifteen percent had children write, previewed the book, and summarized the events. Eight percent held book discussions, questioned students, and evaluated the book when completed.

Discussing the book being read was the most prevalent activity at the fourth grade level (64%). Activities that were mentioned by seven percent were recalling previous events,
creating story maps or charts, predicting, previewing the book, doing art projects, and doing a related writing assignment.

More than half (54%) of the fifth-grade teachers discussed the story or book that was read aloud with their students. Twenty-three percent previewed the book, and did some type of writing assignment. Eight percent listed doing an art project, predicting events, relating the book to units being taught, discussing the author, summarizing events, and looking up unfamiliar vocabulary words in the dictionary.

Five activities appeared across all six grade levels. The most popular was holding book discussions, followed by writing or art projects. Previewing the book and predicting events were also mentioned in all grade levels.

Types of Material Used for Reading Aloud

Responses from the teachers were categorized according to the types of material and the amount of time each is used at the various grade levels. See Appendix K.
Teachers in all grade levels use a wide variety of literature when reading aloud to their students. In kindergarten, one hundred percent of the teachers read story books always or sometimes. Poetry was also read always or sometimes by one hundred percent of the teachers. Sixty-seven percent sometimes read wordless books. Biographies or autobiographies were sometimes read by sixty-seven percent. Thirty-three percent seldom read this type of book. Fiction and non-fiction chapter books are read sometimes by only eleven percent. None of the teachers reported that they "always" read this type of book.

One hundred percent of first grade teachers read story books always or sometimes. Poetry books were read by ninety-one percent always or sometimes. One teacher (9%) never read poetry. Wordless books are used by seventy-three percent of first grade teachers always or sometimes. Fiction chapter books were always or sometimes read by ninety-one percent. Chapter book of non-fiction were read sometimes by forty-five percent and seldom by fifty-five
percent. Biographies or autobiographies were read by fifty-five percent sometimes. This type of book was seldom read by thirty-six percent and never read by nine percent.

In second grade, one hundred percent of the teachers read fiction chapter books sometimes at this level. Eighty-eight percent read non-fiction chapter books sometimes. Story books were used always or sometimes by ninety-four percent of the teachers. Poetry books were used by eighty-two percent sometimes and eighteen percent seldom used this type of material. Seventy-six percent read biographies or autobiographies sometimes. This type of material was used seldom by twenty-four percent. Wordless books were used sometimes by only forty-one percent of the teachers at this level.

In the third grade, only two teachers (15%) chose the "never" category, and this was for wordless books. Most of the choices the teachers made were "sometimes." Seventy-seven percent or more of the teachers at the third grade level sometimes read story books, fiction
chapter books, and poetry. Sixty-nine percent read non-fiction chapter books sometimes and sixty-two percent sometimes read biographies or autobiographies. The type of material that was chosen "seldom" by the most third grade teachers were wordless books. Sixty-two percent seldom read this type of material.

In the fourth grade only two teachers chose the "always" category, and this was for fiction chapter books. Most of the choices the teachers made at this level were "sometimes." Fiction chapter books were read by seventy-one percent of the teachers sometimes. Biographies or autobiographies were also sometimes read by seventy-one percent. Seventy-nine percent sometimes read non-fiction chapter books at this level. Fifty-seven percent sometimes read poetry and forty-three percent sometimes read story books. Only twenty-nine percent of the teachers read wordless books sometimes and twenty-nine percent seldom or never read this type of material.

One hundred percent of the fifth grade teachers always or sometimes read aloud
fiction chapter books. Eight-three percent always or sometimes read poetry. Sixteen percent seldom did. Seventy-five percent always or sometimes read non-fiction chapter books aloud to their students. No teachers chose the "always" category for story books, but sixty-seven percent read this sometimes. None of the fifth grade teachers always read biographies or autobiographies, but this type of literature was read by seventy-five percent of the teachers sometimes. Wordless books were hardly read at this level. No teacher chose the "always" category, and only one teacher (8%) read this sometimes. Seventeen percent seldom read this type of material and forty-two percent never read wordless books.

These results indicate that all types of literature are read throughout the various elementary grade levels. At the primary level, teachers tend to read picture story books (97%), poetry (89%), and fiction chapter books (76%) always or sometimes. At the intermediate level, teachers tend to read fiction chapter books (95%),
and non-fiction chapter books (77%) always or sometimes.

**Summary**

The analysis of the data of this research was organized according to the two questions posed by the researcher. The responses to the questionnaire were recorded, tallied and categorically arranged in the accompanying appendices.

The results of question 1 revealed that ninety-seven percent of the responding teachers read aloud to their students. The majority of these teachers (88%) read aloud on a daily basis. Seventy percent of the teachers read aloud for sixteen to thirty minutes. The majority of teachers usually read to their students in the afternoon. Fifty-nine percent read after lunch and twenty percent read at the end of the day. More than half (58%) of the teachers usually read aloud while their students would be seated around them on the floor.

The most popular types of literature
were story books, poetry, and fiction chapter books. Most teachers listed a number of different resources for selecting material to read to students. The most popular choice was to select books based on units or themes that were taught in class. This was done by sixty-seven percent of the teachers. Most teachers read aloud for many purposes. Reading for enjoyment was the most popular reason (58%). Thirty-three percent listed developing a child's appreciation of literature and thirty-two percent read to develop skills, such as vocabulary and listening.

Teachers responded with many different activities that they used before, during or after reading aloud to their students. The most prevalent activity was to discuss the book with the class. The second most popular activity was to have children do an art project or writing assignment.

Eighty-four percent of the teachers reported that their students always or sometimes would select a book for their own reading that had previously been read aloud. Ninety-six percent
of the teachers reported that their students enjoy hearing stories read aloud.

The results of question 2 revealed that reading aloud for the purpose of enjoyment was found to be common among first, second, third, and fourth grade teachers. Kindergarten teachers tended to read to develop appreciation of literature and fifth grade teachers read aloud in order to model for their students. Reading for enjoyment was listed as the second most popular purpose for kindergarten and fifth grade.

Results indicated that seventy percent or more of the teachers at each grade level read aloud on a daily basis. One hundred percent of the teachers at the kindergarten and first grade levels read each day. At the primary level, sixty-eight percent read aloud for 16-30 minutes. At the intermediate level, seventy-four percent read for 16-30 minutes.

Teachers at all grade levels used a wide variety of activities. Book discussions was the most prevalent at the second, fourth, and fifth grade levels. Kindergarten and first
grade teachers tended to use writing and art projects as activities. Predicting events and art projects were the most popular activities at the third grade.

Teachers at all grade levels used a wide selection of reading material. At the primary level, teachers read story books, poetry, and fiction chapter books. At the intermediate level, teachers read fiction chapter books and non-fiction chapter books.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the read-aloud practices of elementary classroom teachers. This study focused on such factors as how much time is allocated to reading aloud, purposes for reading aloud, various instructional activities that may accompany reading aloud, and the types of literature used.

Conclusions

Research has shown that children enjoy being read to and that reading aloud to children has a positive effect in helping students achieve success in school. The results of this research indicate that teachers are using the read aloud activity in the elementary classroom. Many teachers responded that they enjoyed reading to their class and that their students loved this part of the day and often asked for more.
Ninety-nine percent of the responding teachers who returned the questionnaire read aloud to their students. The majority of the teachers (86%) read aloud on a daily basis. Seventy percent of the teachers usually read aloud for 16-30 minutes a session.

Teachers incorporated many different activities in the read aloud event. Book discussions, writing, art projects, previewing, and predicting were the prevalent activities used throughout the grade levels.

Many different purposes for reading aloud were mentioned by the responding teachers. Many teachers offered more than one purpose for reading aloud. Simply reading for pleasure or enjoyment was the most mentioned purpose. More than half (58%) of the teachers stated this as a reason for reading aloud. Developing a student's appreciation for literature, modeling mature reading behaviors, and developing skills were also stated by many of the teachers as purposes for reading to their students.

Primary and intermediate teachers all
reported reading a wide variety of material to their students. Story books, poetry, fiction and non-fiction chapter books were the most prevalent. The large majority of teachers (84%) stated that their students always or sometimes selected for their own reading the books that were previously read by the teachers.

In summary, the findings of this research indicate that teachers are reading a wide variety of literature to children on a consistent basis. They use predicting, writing, art, and dialogue as activities to enhance the read aloud experience. But most of all, teachers are sharing their joy of literature with their students in an easy, comfortable manner and this experience should have a positive influence on the literacy development of their audience.

Implications for the Classroom

The results of this research indicate that literature is being read to students on a consistent basis in the elementary grades. Teacher educations programs and school districts
should continue to encourage teachers to incorporate the read aloud event in the classroom on a daily basis. Teacher education programs and school district workshops should be implemented to help young and veteran teachers use reading aloud as an instructional tool in their classrooms. Teachers also need to be made aware that reading aloud only takes 15 to 30 minutes each day and that not only is this an enjoyable experience, but skills and information can often be incorporated in a session.

Teaching time in the school day is very valuable and teachers need to be made aware that students not only enjoy this part of the day, but reading aloud often motivates and encourages the children to read on their own. Reading aloud develops positive reading experiences while at the same time develops skills such as listening and vocabulary acquisition. It also allows children to gain information and share common experiences with all the members of the class. Reading aloud is a valuable teaching tool that should not be ignored nor should it be used only as a time filler at the end of the day.
Implications for Further Research

The questionnaire is not an efficient means of gathering information. While a number of respondents completed the entire questionnaire, some teachers did not answer all of the questions. Perhaps, in the future, personal observations and interviews may provide more detailed and accurate information as to what teachers are doing with reading aloud.

This study detailed the practices of just elementary school teachers. Since the research presented suggests that reading aloud is an enjoyable, motivating and valuable reading activity, are teachers in the middle schools and high schools reading literature aloud to their students? What about the home environment? Are parents reading to their children at home? Investigations into these areas may be informative and could be addressed in future research.
References


Appendix A

Read Aloud Questionnaire

Grade Level ___________  School District _______

Do you read aloud to your students?  Yes  No

Why do you or don't you read aloud?

How often do you read aloud to your students?

Daily  A couple times a week  Weekly

About how many minutes do you read aloud to your students?

When do you usually read to your students? (ex. start of day, after lunch, end of day)

Where do you usually read aloud to your students? (ex. with students of the floor, with students at their desk)

What, if any, pre-reading or post-reading activities do you often use?

What types of literature do you use when you read aloud to your students? Please circle.

Wordless books  always  sometimes  seldom  never
Picture story books  always  sometimes  seldom  never
Chapter books (fiction)  always  sometimes  seldom  never
Chapter books (non-fiction)  always  sometimes  seldom  never
Biography or autobiography  always  sometimes  seldom  never
Poetry  always  sometimes  seldom  never
Appendix A (continued)

How do you choose your books to read aloud?

How often do your students select books that you have read aloud to them?

Always     Sometimes     Seldom     Never

How do your students feel about you reading aloud to them?

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.
Appendix B

Days Spent Reading Aloud to Students

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<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Once a Week</th>
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Minutes Spent Reading Aloud to Students

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<th>16-30</th>
<th>Over 30</th>
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Appendix C

Times of Day for Reading Aloud

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>After Lunch</td>
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<td>End of Day</td>
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<td>Start of Day</td>
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<td>Mid-morning</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before Lunch</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Various</td>
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<tr>
<td>During Reading Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-afternoon</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>After Specials</td>
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<td>After Recess</td>
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<td>Before Specials</td>
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<td>Rest Time</td>
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Appendix D

Types of Material and Percentages of Responses

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<th>A</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
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<td>Wordless books</td>
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<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<td>Story books</td>
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<td>Fiction Chapter books</td>
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<td>Non-Fiction Chapter books</td>
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<td>5%</td>
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<td>Biography or Autobiography</td>
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<td>68%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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A= Always
ST= Sometimes
SD= Seldom
N= Never
### Purposes for Reading Aloud

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Literature Appreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>To Relax</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>For Information</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exposure to Various Literature</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Development</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>To Reinforce Units Taught</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote Genre and Authors</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Books Beyond Students' Ability</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage Students Own Reading</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote Writing</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>For Discussions</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Read To In Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Interests Of Children</td>
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Appendix F

Reading Activities

Book Discussion 39%
Writing Assignments 26%
Art Project or Drawing 26%
Preview Book 24%
Predicting 20%
Questioning 11%
Reactions and Free Responses of Students 7%
Summarize Events 4%
Make Story Maps or Charts 4%
Role Playing 3%
Discuss Author 3%
Evaluate 1%
Recall Previous Day's Events 1%
Relate to Current Units 1%
Worksheets 1%
Look Up Unfamiliar Vocabulary 1%
Appendix G

How Reading Material is Chosen

Theme Related  67%
Student Interest  28%
Teacher Favorites  26%
Recommendations/Book Lists  18%
Award Winning Books  8%
Favorite Authors  7%
High Quality Books  3%
Books with VCR Tape  1%
High-level Reading Ability  1%
Student-level Reading Ability  1%
New Book Releases  1%
Appendix H

Comparison of Grade Levels and the Amount of Time Students Select Material Read By the Teacher For Their Own Reading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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Appendix I

Comparison of Grade Levels and Purposes for Reading Aloud

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### Appendix J

#### Comparison of Grade Levels and Activities

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Appendix K

Types of Material Read at Each Grade Level

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A = Always
ST = Sometimes
SD = Seldom
N = Never