


12-2011

Multimodal Texts and Student Motivation in School Writing

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Multimodal Texts and Student Motivation in School Writing

by:

Jenna Cortash
December 2011

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development
of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master in Science in Education

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Jenna Cortash

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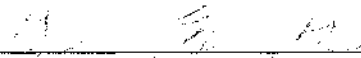
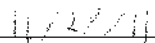
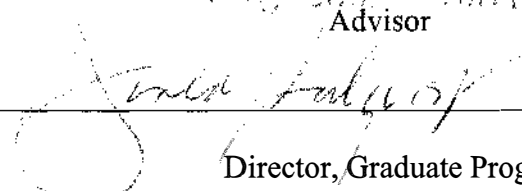
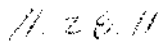
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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explain the benefits of using multimodal texts in a classroom environment. So much emphasis is placed on fluency, accuracy of words read, expression and pace. While these elements are crucial for successful readers, I aim to suggest that a reader can demonstrate reading behaviors with wordless picture books. Students generate a storyline, and feel ownership toward the book because they have connection. Every student will notice various details and not everyone's story will be alike.

The research questions that will be answered in my work are 1) How can a teacher use wordless picture books to spark imagination and engage students in the writing process?; 2) In what ways can a teacher assess student comprehension while using wordless picture books?; and 3) How can teachers keep students motivated through use of the multimodal text and throughout the writing process?

There were two focal students that participated in this four week long study. They attend a public, suburban school in Upstate New York. These students are in a fourth grade 12-1-1 Special Education setting. Both students had a teaching assistant that differentiated instruction for them in all content areas. They have low motivation and confidence in regards to school work.

Results of this study suggest that implementation of wordless picture books and other multimodal texts are very beneficial in any classroom setting. I recommend that fellow teachers include all varieties of books in their libraries, regardless of students' reading level.

Chapter One

Introduction

Growing up, I always have enjoyed reading all kinds of children's literature. My bedroom had shelves upon shelves of books of various interest levels and readability levels. While I followed a more traditional, linear sequence of reading picture books and then moving onto chapter books, I have always enjoyed spending a few minutes enjoying a picture book. To this day, I would rather curl up with a picture book with high quality images, than sitting down to read one of the books on the New York Times Best Sellers list.

I feel that students in this day and age do not have the freedom or flexibility sit down and truly enjoy reading a book for leisure. It is often assigned to read 20 minutes per night, but when students are assigned to do something they often resist it. I wanted my students to *want* to pick up a book and spend their days reading whichever mode they are interested in reading.

Problem Statement

In schools, in order to meet the demanding schedule for mastering New York State standards, students often are forced to work exclusively with textually structured books. The students' books are leveled and students are placed in groups based on their reading level. Teachers expect students to focus mostly on the written print, decode the word and read fluently. Students are expected to only look at the illustration to provide clues to figuring out the unknown word. However, there are many benefits in using multimodal sources to provide instruction to students in

schools. Students can benefit from using a different source to collect information from.

Recently, I began working in a fourth grade Special Education classroom at an elementary school in Upstate New York. In this classroom, there are eight students and three adults. I worked specifically with two children that are academically much lower than the rest of their peers in the class. Both students, Allison and Kenneth (all names are pseudonyms) have much difficulty in the whole group setting; and must have all information differentiated for them. Since I was still attempting to figure out where to go with them instructionally in all content areas, I was intrigued to work with them on writing.

Both students took alternate assessments, which meant that they were not required to partake in the state assessments. Therefore, it was my responsibility to assess the students' understanding of all content areas. I planned to find wordless picture books and develop a storyline that correlates, in order to assess their comprehension of the text. Once we created the story, we would begin with the preliminary steps in the writing process to get our ideas down on paper. My goal is for students to outline their ideas, create a rough draft, conference with each other and with me, and to generate a final copy. I also wanted Allison and Kenneth to present their story to the rest of their peers at the end of the process. During this study, I plan to answer several questions including:

- How can a teacher use wordless picture books to spark imagination and engage students in the writing process?

-In what ways can a teacher assess student comprehension while using wordless picture books?

-How can teachers keep students motivated through use of the multimodal text and throughout the writing process?

Significance of the Study

My research is significant because there are many children all over New York State, and nationally that are not required to take State assessments, but their progress must still be monitored. Teachers with students that require alternate assessments must find projects to meet the standards of their state. It is important for students to understand the writing process. To meet the needs of my students, I used wordless picture books to spark imagination; so that I will not discourage them with books that they cannot read on their own. It is crucial for the teacher to generate lessons that will meet the needs of the student as well as state requirements.

Purpose

The purpose of this four week study was to arrange for my students to read a wordless picture book to generate a storyline. After securing comprehension of the multimodal source, the children will then go through the writing process to document their understanding of the piece. I want to learn more about the students that I had begun to work with, as well as learn how to meet their needs as a teacher. I also planned on learning more about alternate assessments in all content areas, beginning

my search with writing and the process a student goes through to complete a written piece.

It is important for me to conduct this research so that future teachers may generate ideas of what lessons to do with students that are far below grade level academically. Critical information that will be stated will include how to engage students, and keep them motivated throughout the entirety of the writing process, how to use multimodal texts to inspire students and how to successfully write a piece that the students feel proud of.

Organization of Thesis

There will be five chapters in this thesis. In chapter one, I plan to explain the reasoning behind completing my thesis. I also specifically list the three questions I will be focusing on in my study. In chapter two, I will outline several scholarly articles that support my findings in the classroom setting. I plan to research benefits of utilizing wordless picture books, how to monitor students' comprehension throughout the use of the multimodal source and finally how to keep students motivated throughout the duration of the writing process. In chapter three, I will delve deeper into information regarding the research contexts and participants of this study. I will also explain my sources which I will use to collect and analyze the data. Chapter four will report my findings, and will include graphs and other graphic sources used to document the students' progress throughout the study. In chapter

five, I will provide readers with a broader summary and recommendations for individuals working with students like the children in my study.

Summary

In conclusion, I worked with two students that are processing instructional information well below grade level. I am required to complete alternate assessments with these individuals, so that I can ensure they are meeting state and district standards. My goal was to successfully scaffold the writing process for Allison and Kenneth, using wordless picture books to engage them. They will use their imagination to create a story, in which they will start with brainstorming and end with presentation of a full story. I will report on scholarly research articles found to support my study, and will document progress of my two students over the course of several weeks. The goal of my research is to change readers' thoughts on the use of non-textually structured books, because students will benefit from their use.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Students are expected to learn and utilize textually structured texts. Due to the hectic schedule provided by both the district, as well as the state, teachers must “rush through” the curriculum as there is little time to “waste”. In order to accomplish many goals at once, teachers use traditional text and picture books to assess comprehension, fluency and other aspects of reading. It is my belief that including multimodal texts into our classroom will benefit our students as much as a traditional textually structured book. Students sense the monotony of the school day, and would be highly motivated if there was a change in the way their education was presented to them. Increased motivation would in turn increase productivity.

A multimodal literacy block encompasses many sources of informational sources. Maureen Walsh (2008) offers this definition: “Multimodal literacy is the meaning-making that occurs at different levels through the reading, viewing, understanding, responding to, producing and interacting with multimodal texts and multimodal communication” (p. 63). Students are able to read, write about and listen to multimodal texts just as they are to any other sort of book. This research focuses specifically on two children’s’ interactions with a wordless picture book and their thought processes throughout the duration of the writing process. The following section provides a detailed explanation of how wordless picture books entice students.

I. Wordless Picture Books

Use of Picture Books

Emergent literacy researchers have worked to generate a linear schedule with milestones that each child should reach in a specific order. Peg Syverson (2008) states “The conventional view of literacy learning is as the acquisition of a set of skills for the apprehension (consumption) or creation (production) of text-based materials, such as books, periodicals, signs, worksheets and forms. The process in this view is linear.” (p. 109). Some researchers believe that once a child reaches a particular milestone, the only direction they should be going is further down the linear sequence. In other words, once a child is able to read a book’s print, they should no longer be reading simple picture books; they should increase their vocabulary and phonological awareness with more challenging books. However, it is beneficial for students to broaden their horizons and read all modes.

Our world is heavily weighted with multiple sources of modes in which to collect information. There was a prominent shift from a low tech environment to where students are now surrounded by technology. It is rare to see intermediate aged student handwriting a paper, when they have access to a computer in their own classroom. Students have learned to comprehend information from various modes throughout their entire day. Having students interact with wordless picture books allow them to have another source in which to collect information from.

A wordless picture book is a book filled with pictures in which students generate their own storyline. A high quality picture book would not need words for a

student to be able to decipher the storyline. They are using their visual literacy to analyze what is happening in the illustrations of the story. Students interpret facial expressions and how the illustrator depicted mood and emotion based on color choices. Students pull information from their schema, or background knowledge, to relate to how the character is feeling or analyze what they would do in the same situation. French et al. (1990) state that “The pictures prompt students to speak, read and write because the pictures stimulate the students to tell the story in their own words” (p. 525). By this, they mean that various modes in books allow the New York State learning standards to be met in the classroom.

For this study, my students will be working with and analyzing wordless picture books to generate a storyline; which they will go through the writing process to get down on paper. Jalongo et al. (2002) discuss in their article that “young children’s stories that are told *with* a wordless book as a prop are more sophisticated in terms of length, setting, plot, characters, theme, style, complexity, and vocabulary than stories that are generated without a wordless book” (p. 175). Once the students feel success with creating a story, their motivation to read a wordless book will increase and will support their growth in literacy, both in writing and in reading.

Judith T. Lysaker (2011) completed a study using wordless picture books to assess a student’s comprehension and role of self in 2006. The study took place in a Midwestern city school district and focused on eighteen emergent readers. The focal students were selected by teachers due to their “experiencing language and/or literacy difficulties and were not yet reading conventionally” (p. 34). This researcher has

reasoned that many elements are observable and recordable while watching a student read a wordless picture book. First, the data collector will notice the child's book handling skills. More importantly, the researcher can grasp whether the student comprehends the storyline or not based on what story the reader tells.

Lysaker points out "A book with no print would relieve children of any concerns about decoding, allowing them to focus on the telling of a story" (p. 40). My two focal students become frustrated and lose motivation to read due to the struggles that they face with decoding unknown words. Lysaker used unknown wordless picture books to document a truly authentic experience on the students' behalf. By selecting wordless picture books that the student is unfamiliar with, they are responsible for generating a storyline that would make sense by accessing their prior knowledge and relatable experiences. If a familiar picture book is selected, the storyline may be memorable and the child would then be assessed on their ability to remember the details of the story.

The wordless picture book that was selected by Lysaker was *We Got a Puppy*. In this story, a young boy goes to a house and selects a puppy to bring home with him. All students were able to discuss the various events that occurred in the book, because they were able to relate to the child in the story by being pet owners themselves. They were able to make a connection with the story. The students were engaged with the multimodal source due to the colorful, engaging illustrations.

Comprehension is becoming a main focus by literary authority, as a main need of students is achieving a deep level of understanding about the book they are

reading. The author determined that the children in this study did in fact demonstrate their knowledge about comprehension strategies while reading the multimodal source. She says that the “comprehension strategies themselves may be valuable in helping children construct relationships with and among texts, the fundamental capacities to *use* these strategies may be the result of something more fundamental” (pp. 51-52). By this, she means that students are able to predict and ask questions based on the current information that has been presented in the book.

Lysaker determined that a curriculum that allows for opportunities for children to engage in reading rich multimodal texts, in addition to textually structured books, will benefit the students. Children can learn from all sources and should be given the flexibility to do so. If we keep our expectations high for students to succeed, we must supply access to all modes in which students can learn and benefit from.

Selection of Appropriate Picture Books

Shelley-Ann Epstein and Julie Phillips (2009) also completed a study based around students' interactions with wordless picture books. The students in this study have specific language impairment. This connects to my research as one of my students as a speech and language impairment. Their research finds that the students' ability to focus on the illustrations to drive meaning allows the freedom of word retrieval. They also found that the series of connected pictures, rather than a single picture in a textually structured book, allows for a more substantial, complex storyline

generated by participants. This type of processing would correlate with the Bottom Up teaching model, where students focus on the book and then determine the narrative.

In this study, the women worked with eight students that were between the ages students were given both wordless picture books to generate a narrative and in another study, the same children were given conversation prompts (e.g.. going to the doctor's office) to generate a story. In dealing with the wordless picture book, the book selected as entitled *Frog, Where are You?* The book had 24 pictures in which the students were to interpret. The researchers provided neutral feedback, and only directed the student where to look if there was confusion.

The results of this study determined that the wordless picture books required the students to give more information as there were 24 pages in which to gather information from; rather than giving a few sentences of information based on a conversational prompt. The two researchers determined that “This task required different skills to the wordless picture book as it required the participant to structure the event and outcome and to bring in further information/incidents via unspecific and neutral verbal prompts, such as “then what happened” and “tell me more”” (p. 290).

II. Picture Books and Comprehension

Processes of Comprehension

Caitlin McMunn Dooley and her research partner Mona Matthews (2010) completed a three year long study analyzing student comprehension. They conducted

that there are four main phases a student goes through when learning about books and how to make meaning from them. The four phases are using the book as a prop, book as invitation, book as script and finally book as text. At first, students use the book more as a toy. Children in this phase do not understand that lines of print mean something and cannot find a connection between pictures and a storyline. They merely identify that what they are holding is a book, in some cases at least. When they reach the book as invitation phase, the children now realize that the book has meaning. They spend more energy looking at and reflecting on the images, instead of the print on the pages. This is where true comprehension begins to emerge. The third phase, book as script, initiates when the student realizes a connection between the image and what is written, however they would be unable to comprehend the text alone. In this phase, children enjoy being read to and like to mimic the reader, including intonation, expression and pace. Finally, in the final phase, students have now made a connection to the pictures on the pages and the text written. The students would demonstrate directionality, finger pointing and other concepts of book awareness.

Interestingly, these researchers determined that “over time the children (in their study) became more attuned to abstract representations of meaning in multiple sign systems (image, oral language, print) within the books” (p. 128). The children’s interpretation of reading was changing dramatically and could be assessed at each phase. When teachers educate themselves on multimodal texts, they will begin to

understand how important it is to encourage students to use all sorts of books from which they can generate meaning from.

How to use Picture Books for Comprehension

As previously stated, some literacy experts suggest that learning to read is a linear process. Dooley, 2002 points out that “young children’s comprehension, or meaning making, begins prior to conventional reading and emerges over time” (p. 120). Students should be taught to take cues from all areas of the book, not merely just reading along the lines of text. The layout of the book helps the student to make meaning.

While a student is learning to read, as teachers, we must continually assess their levels of comprehension. According to Vygotsky (1978), a theory developed in the 1930s which states a child has a Zone of Proximal Development in all areas of their education. The Zone is what the student cannot do unassisted. Teachers have to provide high quality first teaching to ensure their students can master the strategies to reach the Zone of Actual Development. Once the student reaches this phase, they have mastered a skill and can now perform it individually, free of assistance from peers or teachers.

In a study on the help or hindrance of graphic sources in a text, Rebecca R. Norman (2010) notes that illustrations in a story either are representational of the text in the story, or also may provide the reader additional information not found in the words of the book. As students were presented with one of two books, every time the

researcher noted that the second grade students looked at a picture, she would question “I notice you are looking at this picture, what are you thinking?” (p. 10). She also found that students that reflected on the pictures presented in the two stories helped in three main categories. First, the illustrations provided literal descriptions to go along with the text. Next, she found that students made predictions for upcoming pages based on the information gathered from the pictures. Finally, she found that students were monitoring their knowledge. For example, one girl stated “Well, I always thought sea lions and seals are the same thing just then they can be called different things just like crocodiles and alligators. But when you show two of them together they look different” (p. 23). These three ideas coincide with standard thoughts on comprehension dealing with textually structured books. Norman found that one aspect unique to illustrations are the use of captions, labels and map keys.

III. Picture Books and Writing

Increased Motivation during Writing

Roger Burning and Christy Horn (2000) state “Although it seems that we have much to learn about developing motivation to write, we do have a solid understanding about the processes of writing itself” (p. 26). Unfortunately, many articles focus on the writing process itself; not much emphasis is placed on increasing motivation during the writing block in schools. Some students and teachers have a certain attitude when the writing block approaches in the daily schedule, if time allows for a writing block at all. The feeling is that with all the stresses in reading and math in

today's education curriculum, the writing block seems to be "shoved in" whenever it fits, and that portrays writing in a certain light. The hurried feeling to squeeze writing in whenever possible does not make a student feel motivated to put effort in during this time. As teachers, we must go back to being engaged in the writing process, so that our students feel the teacher's excitement.

In addition to this "forced" feeling, there are other serious factors that teachers must consider in order to want to increase motivation the students' part during writing. Karen R. Harris, Steve Graham and Linda H. Mason (2006) state that "Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that three out of every four students in the 4th, 8th and 12th grades demonstrate only partial mastery of the writing skills and knowledge needed at their respective grade levels" (p. 296). This evidence is extremely unsettling. As teachers, we must change these statistics by placing more emphasis on the writing block and engaging students.

In addition, students may sometimes feel discouraged due to the complexity of writing. Burning and Horn point out in their article that "Learning to write is an extraordinary complex linguistic and cognitive task requiring close attention to the conditions for developing motivation and skill" (p. 26). Students must be completely focused on all aspects of writing including meaning, grammar and usage, and spelling in order to write a well written piece. For some students, this feels like a daunting task that they are sure to fail.

In their same article, Burning and Horn researched how to develop motivation in writing. They have generated four "motivation-enhancing conditions" that must be

in place for a student to have increased engagement during the writing process. The four clusters are having nurturing functional beliefs about writing, the next is fostering student engagement through authentic writing goals and context, the third is providing a supportive context for writing and finally a positive emotional environment must be in place to set the students up for success.

In the first of four clusters, the researchers determined that students' anxiety decreases if successful writings from both students and the teacher are displayed around the room. Also, writing should be addressed every day and multiple genres of writing should be presented to students. In other words, students should focus on multiple modes of writing including friendly letters, narratives, essays, etc. In regards to the second cluster, students should be surrounded by written work outside of the writing block. This would include writing responses in math; perhaps on how the problem was solved. Students should be taught how to address various audiences. In this phase, students should be encouraged to write about topics of personal interest, in order to increase their desire to complete the assignment.

In the third cluster, students should be breaking up the complex writing process into smaller, more manageable parts. Therefore, students should dedicate time and energy into completing a graphic organizer, an outline, a rough draft, editing this rough draft and eventually reaching the final copy. Students should be able to monitor their progress throughout each stage of the written process. It is during this phase where students should begin to feel comfortable sharing their work with peers, perhaps during the editing phase. In the final of four clusters, the researchers

determined that students should continue seeing positive attitudes displayed by teachers and peers to have their motivation maintained. There should be a safe feeling in the environment since students need to feel free to share their work with one another. An important part of the writing process is to share work at the end to show that there is a connection between their written work and oral language and that there was a purpose to their writing. While in previous stages, students were told that they could monitor their own pace in the writing system, phase four offers a bit more independence with students more freedom in choosing their own writing topics.

If students begin to feel frustrated with their work, their level of motivation is going to decrease dramatically. The feeling of a safe, welcoming environment must be maintained throughout the entirety of the writing process. Otherwise, select students will begin to procrastinate and will fall behind their peers. Perhaps for some students that would mean that the teacher alleviates some of the pressures of writing by removing some of the negative conditions. When a child brings up work to be edited, the teacher may have to refrain from whipping out the red pen and correcting every mistake made by the student. If they are handed back a paper covered with red scribbles and markings, they will begin to feel defeated.

Benefits of Using Picture Books

There are many benefits to introducing various styles of books to students. Often times, students associate books solely with text that they are forced to read and decode in order to understand the story the author has created. However, high quality

wordless picture books can provide an excellent mode to present information to students in a new and exciting way. A study by Crafton, Brennen and Silvers (2007) found that in the recent decade, there has been a greater emphasis placed on visual representations in stories. An illustrator's role is very important in children's books, but what they mean by their study is that the teacher is asking much more thought provoking questions to the students while reading. For example, they mention that the teacher in the research, Mary, often asked higher level thinking questions while reading, beginning with the cover of the book and also throughout the reading. They state "Over time, the students came to understand that there was a purpose and perspective behind each story, picture, or illustration and that, like language, images embody messages regarding underlying power relations" (p. 512).

A study by Colleen Reese (1996) tracked the students' perceptions and interaction with the books. Reese applied for a grant and was awarded 44 wordless picture books. She generated a whole unit around purely these multimodal sources. She began by introducing the books to the whole class. The teacher flipped through the book one page at a time, and she had her students orally discuss with one another their thoughts and ideas of what was being depicted in the illustration. Any idea that a child shared was written down on a piece of chart paper. A second reading occurred the following day, and the students selected the main idea of what was happening on the particular page and that sentence, taken from the ideas written on chart paper the previous day, was added to the story. To show ownership of their

story, students were selected to read their book to the principal and to fellow classrooms.

The assessment of this lesson was the Colleen Reese asking her students if the story made sense, and also based on feedback from the principal and fellow classrooms. The majority of students were extremely engaged with this lesson and based on the positive response, Reese decided to pursue this unit further. This time, more independence was given to the students. There was still the whole group aspect of the lesson, where they read the picture book together on the first day. However, Reese prompted students to develop their own sentences based on what they felt was the main idea on each page. She says “The sentences were short and often used different tenses: ‘Two angels come along and Santa gets an idea. They turned the sled over and lifted Santa back into the sleigh.’” (p. 172). Over time, the more exposure students had to the wordless picture books, the more developed their sentences became. They began to include dialogue between characters and included more descriptive language.

In order to take this unit to the next step, Reese provided more wordless picture books where students went through the process only with a partner. The whole group aspect was removed from this point on. Reese provided sticky notes where students could document their ideas and leave them directly on the pages of the book. After both partners were content with the storyline that was generated, they gave their story to Reese to type. They presented their story to another classroom. Finally, the last stage of the unit was for each student to develop a storyline to a

wordless picture book on their own. There had been so much exposure to the picture books at this time that all students were highly motivated to go through the processes of writing.

Reese was extremely happy with the results of teaching this unit to her students. She says “They learned to summarize pages with multiple pictures, at the same time making sure the sentences matched the action shown in the pictures” (p. 173). Their writing improved with each transition from whole group to partners to individual. They wrote higher level sentences, included dialogue between characters and many students personalized their story by giving characters and places names.

Summary

Wordless picture books are a fantastic source to introduce to students to increase motivation in the classroom during the reading and writing block. In our world, students are exposed to various modes in their environment, as they should be in schools. Books solely focused on texts will not help set our students up for success as they leave school. Students are able to gather much information based on information collected based on focusing only on illustrations. The teacher must be sure to select appropriate picture books, with high quality illustrations, in order for the student to grasp the concepts being taught. The student’s comprehension may be assessed throughout the reading of the multimodal text based on their understanding of the storyline. This process will also increase the student’s motivation to put their story on paper, as they will feel an ownership with the plot of the story they created.

In the following section, information on the school district as well as the two focal students will be presented. Also, data collection instruments will be addressed.

Chapter Three

Introduction

This chapter will introduce a research design for the study. Specifically, I will present the current information about the school where the research is being collected. Also, additional information will be offered on the classroom where the two target students are for their academic day. This information will be beneficial to the reader, so that they will have a clear understanding of the community. Also, the research collected will be specific to this particular school's discourse. This study will explore how wordless picture books spark the imagination of two fourth grade students in an Upstate Elementary school, located outside of Flower City in Western New York. Information will also be presented on how to keep students motivated while reading wordless picture books and going through the writing process.

Context and Participants:

School

Upstate Elementary is a large elementary school located just outside of Flower City, New York. The school's population is just under 900 students. The building is a rather old; two story facility with many classrooms. 95% of the population within the school is Caucasian with the remaining 5% making up African American, Asian and Hispanic. The average class size is 22 students. 20% of the students at Upstate Elementary receive a free or reduced rate lunch. The students truly enjoy their day at school; over 96% of students are in class on average.

Upstate Elementary did meet the requirements for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Under the guidelines of No Child Left Behind, a school meets the requirements as long as their New York State test scores meet the minimum levels of growth in regards to the students' performance.

Community

The students' families in the community have an average income of \$40, 381; and their average home worth's are \$140, 838. The middle class families are able to contribute to many fundraisers throughout the school year. Upstate Elementary is the only elementary building within the community. Once students reach sixth grade, they all filter into the same middle school Upstate Middle School. Finally, once they begin to attend ninth grade, the students go to Upstate High. In the community, there are several parks, one public library and a lake. Many of the students at Upstate Elementary enjoy spending their summers boating and swimming in the water.

Classroom

The classroom in which I conducted this study consists of eight students, one special education teacher, a teaching assistant and a classroom aide. Our students often work in small groups, so that they may receive more one on one attention. Everyday, our students begin the day with a Morning Meeting, followed by our specials. We have a five day schedule, and each day represents a different special area to visit. For example, on Day One we have 45 minutes in the computer lab and

on Day Two we have Physical Education. At 10 o'clock, when the students are picked up, we begin our academic day with reading for 45 minutes. During this time, we break up the students into groups of 2-3 and have 3 fifteen minute center rotations. It was during this block that I completed some my research. After reading, the students have a twenty minute lunch break. After lunch, the afternoon goes by very quickly. We have a thirty minute writing block where I will be completing the remainder of my research. Writing is followed by an hour of math. After math ends, we have another thirty minutes of reading, followed by a twenty five minute break for recess. Finally, our day ends with a quick snack and either social studies or science.

The class' seating arrangement has the students sitting at individual desks, in groups of two all of which are facing the SMARTBoard. We also have three desks, which the students rotate to during centers. The classroom has five computers for student use, and many manipulatives and activities for our students to use and enjoy. Finally, we also have a vast library with many different interests' books.

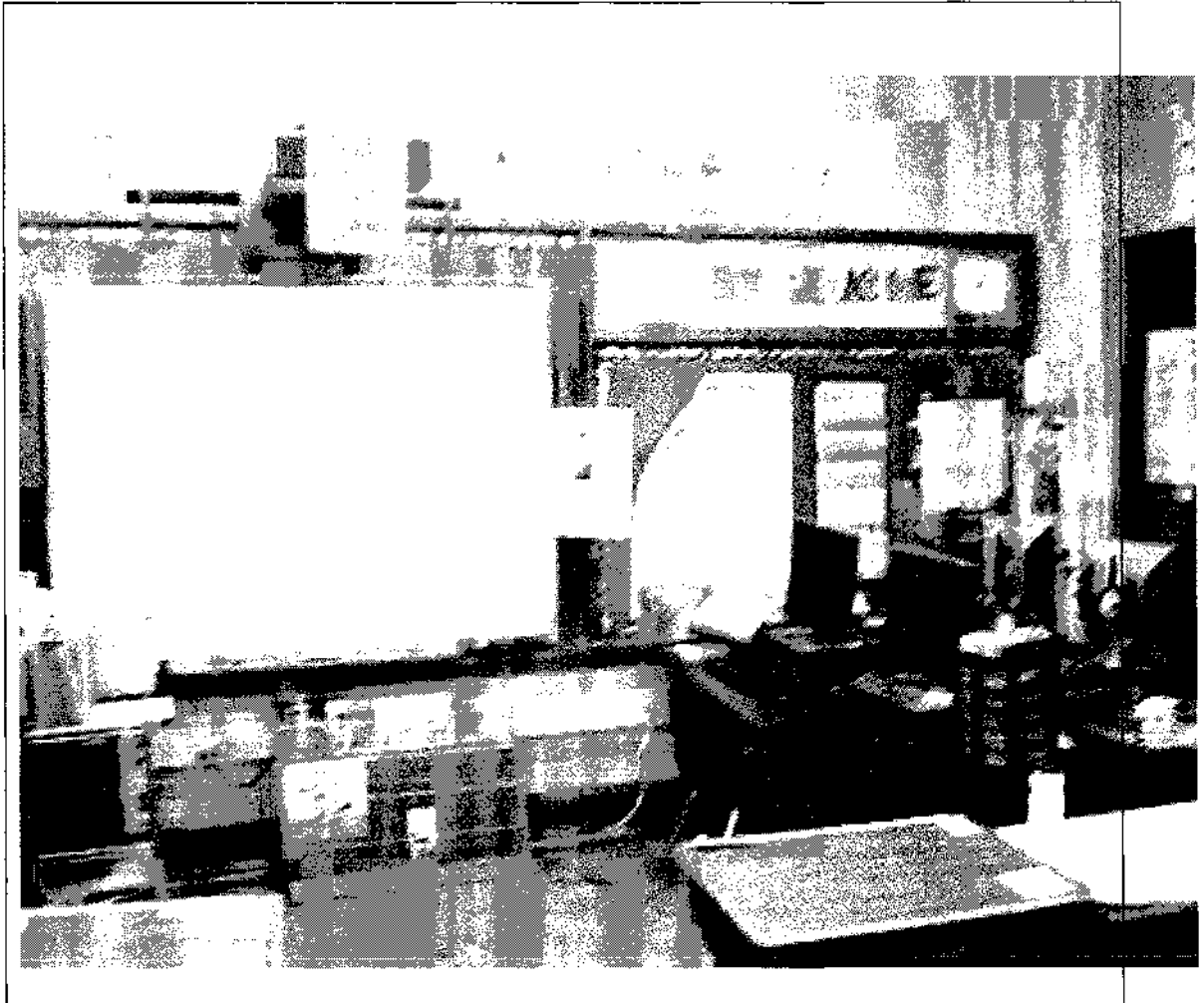
Picture 3.1

Our Classroom, view from door



Picture 3.2

Front of Classroom



Picture 3.3

Our Classroom, the reading table



Participants

All of the students in our classroom have an Individualized Education Plan. This means that every year the members of the faculty that work with the students as well as the parents meet to discuss academic goals and modifications that must be made to ensure that the student is learning all he/she can. The two focal students are performing both reading and math at a kindergarten or first grade level. The remaining six students function a bit higher, working with third grade reading and mathematics. Six out of the eight students receive a free or reduced rate breakfast and lunch.

Allison is a ten year old female that is a pleasure to work with. She has more difficulty processing information than my other focal student, Kenneth. She can only recognize four letters continuously, but cannot tell what sounds these letters make. She has difficulties transitioning when given prompts to do so; which in turn, causes her to lose instructional time. She enjoys being read to, creating activities based around books she has heard and drawing.

Kenneth is a nine year old male, who is very lively. While his reading level is a bit higher than Allison's; he still has much difficulty which means his instruction is differentiated from the rest of his peers. He has more skills that he can tap into while reading, such as searching for picture cues or focusing on the initial sound of a word but often needs a prompt from the teacher to do so. He enjoys working in the small group but yearns to work with his peers more often. He needs to grasp skills as a reader before he can do so, however.

My role as a teacher and researcher was to successfully have my students go through the phases of the writing process, while staying motivated and engaged in our lessons. Since reading ability is low, I have decided to introduce wordless picture books so that we may create a story together. I will serve as the primary writer, as both children have much difficulty expressing their thoughts in written form.

Both sets of parents of the two focal students have given permission for this research to be collected. They were aware of the duration of the study, and what was taking place. A copy of the permission letter can be found in the appendix.

Teacher Researcher

Jenna Cortash is a Caucasian female that has worked at this school for three years as a Contract Substitute Teacher. She recently was given a long-term substitute teaching position in the fourth grade special education classroom in which she completed the research study in. She has a degree in Childhood Education; and is currently finishing her studies to complete her Masters in Science Education in Childhood Literacy. Additionally, she is obtaining her degree in Students with Special Needs.

Data Collection Instruments:

Throughout my research, I will be recording anecdotal notes on the progress both Allison and Kenneth are making; as well as their level of engagement in the given topic. In addition to writing observational notes, I documented pertinent

conversations throughout the research collection in order to reflect upon what the students were able to come up with on their own. In order to validate my work, I have provided transcripts of conversations had when presenting my findings.

I collected work samples, when applicable, to document progress as well. This may be challenging based on that my students have much difficulty writing. Instead, I predicted that I will have to dictate much of the conversations generated to ensure that it gets down on paper.

Throughout the research, I will ask members of the faculty their thoughts on wordless picture books and their relationship with the writing process. I planned to write a survey of questions that will be placed in mailboxes in the Main Office. All pages and information distributed can be found in the appendix.

Procedures

During my four weeks of data collection, I planned to introduce the story for the first few days so that the students are very familiar with the pictures. I would also begin to write down thoughts and ideas presented by Allison and Kenneth on an easel, so that we can continue to add details for several days. Since both students have much difficulty expressing themselves in written form, I will then create a graphic organizer, in which they will help to fill out. After a couple weeks, we may have created a rough draft of the story we created based on the wordless picture book. At this point, we will edit the story together, deleting some information and adding

juicy details. Finally, we created a final copy and presented our story to the remaining six students and teachers.

Table 3.1
Schedule

Weeks	Plans:
1	I will introduce the multimodal, wordless picture book to Allison and Kenneth; and allow them to familiarize themselves with the book. We will discuss possible interpretations of the storyline.
2	We will begin to express our ideas in written form. I will do the majority of the writing, so that there will be low levels of frustration. There will be opportunities for both Allison and Kenneth to contribute with both writing and pictures to show comprehension in template form. We will also complete a graphic organizer to aid in writing.
3	Together, during writing, we will begin to write a rough draft of our storyline. We will continue to continue to add details to our story, with every “read” hopefully providing additional details. By the end of the week, we will be in the editing phase of the writing process.
4	We will begin the week editing our rough draft, and then write our final copy. On Friday, we will have completed our final copy and read our story to the rest of the class.

Data Analysis

I planned to assess both students along the way, by recording anecdotal notes of our sessions together. Their participation, engagement and motivation will be crucial for the success of this assignment. I triangulated data that I have collected in my journal with any student work samples, if applicable (drawings, word suggestions, etc) and surveys presented to other members of the faculty. By triangulating, I was proving to myself and readers that the information is valid and reliable. Also, I analyzed the collected data drawing on analytic codes such as types of multimodal resources, engagement levels for students, comprehension and expression meaning.

Summary

This research was collected over a four week span of time. In our classroom consisting of eight students, two focal students were selected. These two students are very hard working and determined to grow academically. Both students are functioning very far below their peers, and are often pulled aside for differentiated instruction. This means that their academic work is tailored to meet their needs. Their having to do a special project will make them feel very proud when they present all of their hard work to their classmates. I collected anecdotal notes throughout the duration of this study, in order to reflect on their levels of understanding and engagement. I also collected work samples from both students, where applicable in order to document progress. Finally, I interviewed both my

students and send a survey around to faculty members in order to collect information on their thoughts of this research collection.

Chapter Four

Introduction

This chapter will explain the results of the current study. There will be a series of tables and graphs to illustrate my findings. The project took four weeks to complete. We worked on and reviewed our wordless picture book three times a week for the duration of the study. The two students that I worked with benefitted tremendously from this work. As mentioned previously, both students were reading far below grade level. By the end of the four weeks, the students were able to retell the storyline we had generated to their classmates. Allison and Kenneth have never been asked to read aloud to peers, because they were unable to do without assistance. At the end of our project, they felt very confident and motivated to sit in a chair and read a book to their classmates. I feel that this study was very much a success for my students.

How can a teacher use wordless picture books to spark imagination and engage students in the writing process?

I sparked the students' excitement by explaining that we were going to work on a very important and fun-filled project that was special for our small group. Immediately, they were interested in working with me on a project that their classmates were not going to do also. This was interesting because much of their education was differentiated from their peers, although they seemed not to notice. I began by asking Allison and Kenneth what it means for something to be a book. We

made a list on the white board. They came up with that there should be pictures that were colorful and words to read. They brought over several books for me to see as an example. I asked them what they would think about if a book had no pictures. They did not seem to like the idea of it. I showed the two students a chapter book that I have been reading in my personal time. There are no pictures in the book at all. Therefore, we concluded that there can be books with no pictures. I then asked them again, does a book need pictures *and* words to be a book? They didn't answer right away as they had the first time.

Now, I proposed the question to the students if a book could be a book without any words. They seemed unsure of their answer at this point. Kenneth stated that you need pictures to help you figure out the words. I pulled out my copy of the 2005 Caldecott Honor book *The Red Book* by Barbara Lehman. I gave a copy to each student, and allowed them to flip through to see what they notice. Both students had smiles on their faces when they realized that there were no words for them to struggle reading through. I once again explained to the students what we would be doing over the next several weeks.

While Allison and Kenneth remained engaged in the project for the entire time that we worked on this project, they watched as I showed them the steps of the writing process. They would tell me what to add that night, and I would scribe their words verbatim. I would thoroughly explain what I would be doing that night in order to keep track of our story. It would have been more beneficial if I was able to guide the students through the writing process, but it would have been impossible. I

feel that they benefitted seeing the various stages, as when they were required to complete a writing piece there were never multiple copies written. Once their work was scribed, the piece was finished. I believe that the two students found it interesting how many times I wrote and re-wrote our story, and how much longer our story became once we added more details. This allowed for their motivation and engagement to grow.

Student 1: Allison

Allison was lower academically than her peer Kenneth, therefore she often loses interest in the material we are working on because it is at her frustration level. I had to differentiate the material, not only from the whole group, but also from Kenneth. Therefore, the selection of my thesis was based on finding a project that would increase Allison's motivation and confidence. My goals for Allison were much different from those I set for Kenneth for this reason.

Allison enjoys listening to stories, and telling her own stories based on looking at illustrations in books. When presented with *The Red Book*, she immediately began flipping through the pages and collecting information from them. Allison initially noticed that there were two main characters in the story, one from the city and one on an island. Allison is very aware of empathy, and looked at the characters' faces throughout the story. When prompted, she was able to identify when the characters were happy and when they were sad accurately. This was a goal that I had set for her to accomplish during the reading of our story.

I also wanted her to be able to identify the setting that the characters were in. She correctly identified that one of the characters lived in a city. She determined this because of the busy streets, busses and tall buildings. The area that the school district is in is suburb and Allison is not used to seeing landmarks that would appear in a city, so I was pleased that she made that connection. She also was able to identify that the other main character was on the beach. Allison often goes to the beach with her family, so she was able to determine that the beach was the setting based on the sand and sun in the sky.

Throughout this project, I asked Allison to read me the story. She knew to start at the beginning of the story, and flip the pages in the correct order. Book handling skills was another goal that I had set for Allison for this project. She was praised for handling the book the correct way, which in turn increased her motivation for reading. She thoroughly enjoyed reading the wordless picture book, because she enjoys bright, colorful pictures. While she did not spend very much time looking at any one picture in particular, she was able to notice new details every time that she flipped through the book. Finding additional information in the book which had not been found previously, or added to our list, made her happy.

As previously mentioned, Allison is a non-writer. She is only able to write the letters in her name correctly fifty percent of the time. Therefore, there was no option but for me to write the storyline for her. I wrote verbatim what she wanted me to write in the list of details that we found in the illustrations. Allison enjoyed watching

the list get longer and longer as we added more and more details. She knew that she had an important role in the telling of the story.

Student 2: Kenneth

Kenneth is a very easy-going student. He enjoys working on what is expected of him. He does not allow himself to become frustrated with the work set before him. Therefore, when presented with this new project; he was very willing to start looking for information in the pages of the book. It was more difficult for Kenneth to pull additional details out of the story on additional reads. He was quick to provide an answer, as he is used to struggling through a book. Kenneth has always relied heavily on the illustrations of a book, searching for keys to what the words say on the opposite side of the page. It became such a routine from him to guess the correct wording, based on the picture. While I always encouraged him to look for clues in the picture; I stressed for this project that all of the information was in the picture. This project was very beneficial for Kenneth in that regard.

Kenneth also is a non-writer. Much of what was true for Allison is also true for Kenneth. He was proud of himself when he noticed an additional detail and we added it to the list. He did a nice job of finding details that were minor, and perhaps off to the side of the page; instead of in the dead center. For example, on one page, he noticed that the character that lived in the city's peers and teacher did not notice when he pulled the red book out of his backpack and read it during class. The student reaching into his book bag was in the middle of the page, while the rest of the class

was looking straight ahead at the chalkboard and the teacher was talking. As I watched his eyes scanning the pages, I noticed that he looked all over to collect information.

Much of Kenneth's written work is typed on the computer, scribed by an adult in the classroom. Once it was typed, there were never multiple drafts completed unfortunately. It was extremely beneficial for Kenneth to see draft after draft of our storyline, each time growing in length.

In what ways can a teacher assess student comprehension while using wordless picture books?

The next few lessons allowed Allison, Kenneth and I to look through the book to notice elements to add to a list to begin to generate the storyline. Every time that we looked through the book, we found new details to add to our list to make the story more exciting. Both students struggle so much with reading that they began by only giving me one detail per page in order to push their way through the book, as they were used to doing. However, I had to keep pushing them to really look at the pages to find out what the author wanted us to know in order to understand her story. Their eyes began to eventually look around at the entire page, not just what the author placed in the middle of the picture. This was important, because the students were able to grasp many minor details that we were able to incorporate into our story.

Student 1: Allison

I was constantly assessing Allison's comprehension and understanding of the storyline. I triangulated data by writing observational notes, rating their comprehension on a scale of one through five and documenting exact quotations from the students. All three assessments should be able to be looked at by another adult and be easily understood.

The first time that *The Red Book* was introduced to Allison, I observed her to document how much time she spent looking at each picture. I marked this on my observational logs sheet:

Table 4.1

Observation Log

Observations	Interpretations
May 23, 2011 – I introduced <i>The Red Book</i> to Allison today. She spent approximately four seconds looking at each page on her own. When prompted to look for details in each illustration, she did spend a longer time on each page.	Allison is used to looking at pictures briefly to get the main idea of each page and then flips through to the next page. She makes the story up as she goes with most books she reads.

For her first interaction with the story, I felt that Allison did not put much effort into grasping the entire storyline. She was more interested in looking at the pictures instead of understanding the story. She would not have been able to retell the story with or without looking at the book. I knew that I would have to encourage her

to look through the book slowly and prompt her to find details that she may have missed in previous readings. The following is a transcript I wrote down on May 27, 2011:

Table 4.2

Transcript of Classroom Interactions

<p>J*: The boy with the balloons is getting closer, and closer and closer! But, how does the boy in the green shirt feel? A*: Mad J: Right, mad or sad, look how he is sitting with his head down. Why? A: Because. J: Tell me in a 7-up sentence**, Allison. A: He doesn't think his friend will come, because he dropped the book</p> <p>*J=Jenna, A=Allison **A sentence with more than seven words in it</p>
--

With correct prompting, Allison was able to interpret how the boy was feeling and correctly identify why the boy was feeling mad or sad. By asking Allison to use a 7-up sentence, which was a common practice for her, she was able to explain her thought process a little more so than she would have done without prompting.

Upon additional days working with this text, Allison's comprehension began to improve slightly. Again, it is difficult for this child to retain information day to day; which in turn affects her comprehension of the text. Since we worked with the story so frequently, it helped her to recall important story plot information. However, it seemed that in the beginning of our project, she did not recall accurate information

on her solo retellings of the story in our small group. On June 1, 2011, I recorded the following observational notes:

Table 4.3

Observation Log

Observations	Interpretations
<p>June 1, 2011 – Allison has been working with this book for over a week. I am still concerned that she is not grasping all of the details in order to read this story to her peers. Unaided, I asked Allison to retell the story while looking through the book. She proceeded to begin a sentence with “The elephant...” There is no elephant in the story.</p>	<p>Allison was not focusing on the pages in front of her, and was pulling information from her mind. I refocused her after she started the sentence by prompting “Is there an elephant on this page...? Should there be any sentences about elephants?”</p>

It seemed that Allison’s comprehension increased as the week went on, even though we worked on this project only three times per week. By Friday, she was able to tell me more details than she had been able to tell me Monday. There were some lapses when Monday’s reading came; however, as the weeks went on the level of comprehension continued to grow. This can be seen in my observational note for June 8, 2011:

Table 4.4

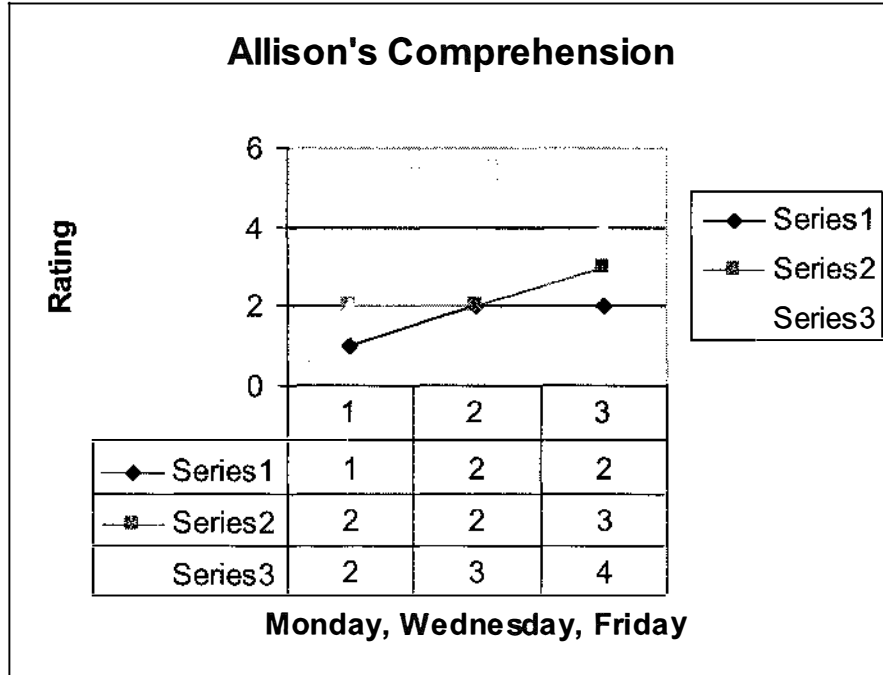
Observation Log

Observations	Interpretations
June 8, 2011 – Allison has had two weeks with <i>The Red Book</i> . Six sessions have been with me, but from time to time she comes up with ideas or thoughts about the text during other periods of the day. She continues to ask where the list is of ideas and the beginning of our rough draft is. I take this to mean that she is still interested and engaged in this project. When we read through the book today, was able to predict what was coming next in the story. We had discussed the sequence of the story several times the previous week, and she remembered some of the key phrases that we had said. For example, when the child buys the handful of balloons from the street vendor, she recalled that we said “Up, up and away!”	Allison recalls details from the book with repeated exposure. In other content areas, that we do not have the opportunity to revisit skills everyday; she tends to lose the information. Due to the practice that we have put into <i>The Red Book</i> , Allison can remember small and large details.

As I mentioned previously, I rated the students’ level of comprehension on a scale one to five after each session with them. The following chart outlines Allison’s level of comprehension from the second week through the fourth week. I did not begin the rating scale on the first week, because the book was so new and she was not retaining all the details. I figured since she had had at least three encounters with the book by Wednesday June 1, 2011; I should begin to document. Monday, May 30, 2011 was Memorial Day and school was not in session; otherwise, I would have begun the rating scale on that day.

Table 4.5

Allison's Comprehension



Student 2: Kenneth

Kenneth had an overall higher level of comprehension throughout the duration of the project. He picked up on smaller details in initial readings. He can retain information for a longer period of time as well. Because of this, he did not need to feed off of his peer, Allison's thoughts while reading the story. Instead, he was able to recall the sequence of the story himself. All of these factors contributed to his higher understanding of *The Red Book*.

On May 25, 2011, I recorded in my observational notes that Kenneth had begun looking around at more details in the book. I believe that he was getting

underwhelmed with the simple story that we had created thus far. This was what I was hoping for. Originally, I had asked the students to work in a pair to come up with one 7-up sentence that would make sense for the page. Kenneth had done so, and the first week that we worked on this project, we were able to repeat the story by Friday. By the following week, however, he was ready to add additional details to make the story more interesting. I praised him for this. By doing so, he also conjured up his partner Allison’s motivation, and from here, the story was able to become more exciting.

Table 4.6
Observation Log

Observations	Interpretations
<p>May 25, 2011 – Kenneth seems to be less than thrilled to read <i>The Red Book</i> today. He has read through the story more quickly than he had done last week. I thought that perhaps I should prompt him to see what else he could pull out, but I wanted to see if he would take this upon himself. In the past, Kenneth had been fine with “just getting through the book”; but it seems like today, he is more willing to devote some time to make the story interesting. He noticed that the child on the beach had nobody around, and began questioning who that child lived with and what he did all day. He made the connection to the other child in the city surrounded by classmates and a teacher.</p>	<p>I was proud that Kenneth took it upon himself to make the story more interesting. We had a long list of what we had noticed the previous week, but on Friday we were going to begin a rough draft of our story. All of the smaller details and connections he can make now will make our rough draft more exciting. He also feels ownership over our story. I made sure to praise him, so that he continues this reading behavior.</p>

Kenneth also did higher level thinking as the days progressed. In our small group, we discussed what good readers do while reading books. I explained that good readers ask questions and make connections. The following was a conversation I wanted to recall, and I wrote it down near my observational notes:

Table 4.7

Transcript of Classroom Interactions

<p>K*: He dropped his book...</p> <p>J*: Allison, where is it falling?</p> <p>A*: On the floor.</p> <p>K: Now, how is he going to get it?</p> <p>J: That's a good question; good readers ask questions while reading! How is he going to get it? What do you think he may have done?</p> <p>*K=Kenneth, J=Jenna, A=Allison</p>
--

I thought that Kenneth's understanding of the book was higher at that time. He was no longer focusing on the events of the story, he was now thinking about why the events of the story were happening. In this instance, he was pondering what the character would do to fix the problem in the story. We also paused to discuss how the boy was going to get the book that fell. I felt it was important to deviate from the reading of the book to talk about this with Allison and Kenneth, so that they know it is appropriate to stop and think about what we are reading; and we do not need to merely "push" our way through a book.

I began to rate Kenneth's comprehension in the four and five range on the last week of our project. Coincidentally, this research coincided with our study of the

Native Americans. We read many of their legends and discussed how the story teller would tell these legends over and over again so many times that they no longer needed words in front of them to remember the story. They were able to just think about the story, and they would remember all of the details. Eventually, Kenneth was able to get to his point. He could recall all of the major elements of the story in the correct sequence. This can be shown in my observational note for June 17, 2011:

Table 4.8

Observation Log

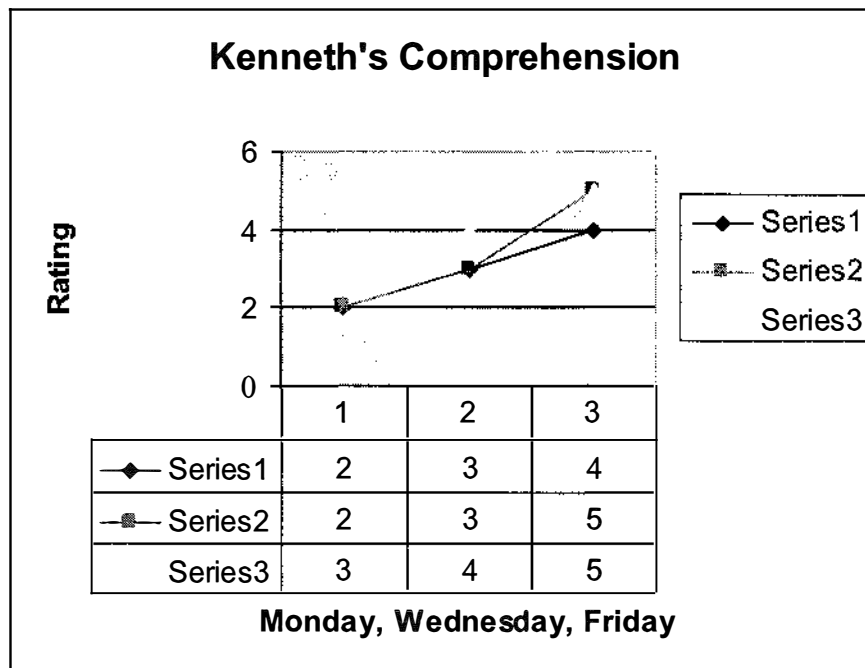
Observations	Interpretations
<p>June 15, 2011 – Today was our last small group session in order to practice for our read aloud to peers on Friday. Kenneth seems fully confident with the sequence of the story. He can recall all of the major details without the aid of the picture. However, he will have access to the book on Friday. I think he feels proud that he was able to read this book, and remember all of the important information. This does not come easily for him; however, with the repeated practice he has done so.</p>	<p>Kenneth needed a confidence boost; and this was a great project for him. He had had repeated exposure and was able to feel success recalling details from a story that was longer than the typical eight page stories he read from the Leveled Literacy Intervention kits we have to use for the English Language Arts block.</p>

The following is the chart that contains the information from the rating scale that I placed by my observational notes at the end of each session that we worked on this project. Kenneth’s eventual scores were fours and fives, which meant that he had

full understanding of the story. He used good reading behaviors, including asking questions, to extend this project further.

Table 4.9

Kenneth's Comprehension



Colleague Survey

While working on my project with Kenneth and Allison, I distributed a survey to my colleagues to determine their use of multimodal texts in the classroom. The questions that I asked of my colleagues were as such:

1. Most books used the classroom are solely text-based. To supplement instruction, do you use multimodal texts in your room to engage students?

2. If so, what types are used?
3. How would you determine student comprehension of multimodal sources?
4. Do you also include multimodal texts in the writing process?
5. Do you see evidence of students being motivated by a different source to collect data from?

The majority of teachers responded to this survey. It was blaringly apparent that the teachers at this school do not use multimodal texts in their classrooms. This was alarming because many of the teachers responded that they were unsure of how to approach this in their classroom. Most of the responses to question 1 were “No, but sounds like a great idea”. It was my hope to encourage teachers to increase their use of various types of books in their classroom. While the teachers felt that they needed to only teach skills that will be beneficial for the New York State tests, it is my belief that these skills are crucial for students to learn in the intermediate school age level.

More than half of the teachers that responded to the survey suggested that they felt that this was a great idea, and they would like to do additional research to see how they would complete this in their classrooms. Many reported back that they felt that their students would be too old, but upon hearing about my research now believe that this is a skill worth teaching. One teacher stated “This would help my students succeed on the DBQ (Document Based Questions, New York State exam given in spring) because there are pictures and political cartoons to interpret. Throughout the year, the kids are not exposed to these types of literacies until we practice the week or

two before the test.” It makes sense that students should be introduced to concepts throughout the year, and not merely when the teacher is “teaching to the test”.

Another teacher said in her response that she felt that “It would be very motivating for some, but frustrating for others”. She also mentioned that it would probably be considered a right brain/left brain activity. Students that are dominantly right brained are more motivated by words and numbers; while students that access their left brains more so are intrigued by pictures. She felt that this activity would benefit only students that are left brain centered. It would be an interesting addition to a future study.

Summary

After the first initial readings of the book, I began to monitor their comprehension of the text by placing a rating of one through five on my observational note template. One meant that their understanding was low and five was that they were able to tell the storyline fluently. It was my one of my goals to have both students reach fives by the end of the project. Their understanding went as followed for the four week duration of my study:

Kenneth’s comprehension was higher than Allison’s throughout the duration of the study. He is a reader while Allison is almost a non-reader. She does not recognize letters, except for those in her name, and it is much more difficult for her to follow the storyline. The repeated practice allowed for her comprehension to increase, but she never was able to fully tell the story unaided. The last rating was

taken while it was just our small group, practicing before reading *The Red Book* for our class. I did not want Kenneth or Allison's nerves of reading in front of their peers to invalidate my rating score.

How can teachers keep students motivated through use of the multimodal text and throughout the writing process?

While my students benefitted from looking into one story very thoroughly, it may be worthwhile for teachers of other students to create a unit about looking into wordless picture books. There are many great multimodal books in the field for a teacher to plan on working together in a whole group atmosphere, small groups and individualized. Students need the guidance of how to read a wordless picture book before they are asked to do so on their own. The teacher must model what to look for in the pictures. For example, I taught Allison and Kenneth to look at the characters' expressions. A lot of information was given based on what the characters' faces looked like. Also, it was important to talk about scenery in the background of the pages. It allowed our group to know the location of the story. This was especially important for our group as our story had multiple settings.

Students feel ownership of the book because they feel that they created the storyline based on the pictures. If they write their story down, they feel that they are the author of the book. It is a great idea to have several students look at the same book on their own, and have them read their stories to one another. Their stories will be similar; however, there will be many differences as well.

Student 1: Allison

As I mentioned previously, Allison was highly motivated throughout the project. She felt included, and enjoyed the material being at her level. She did not feel threatened or frustrated by the material. In fact, she was able to generate ideas on her own that I was not sure that she would come up with. For example, while we were on one of our many drafts, Allison asked a very interested question. The transcript of the conversation is as follows:

Table 4.10

Transcript of Classroom Interaction

J*: So, after the boy grabbed the balloons from the man on the street, he began to fly. Where do you think he was going?
A*: What is the boy's name?

J=Jenna, A=Allison

I thought it was extremely interesting that Allison picked up on the fact that neither character had a name. We had read the book several times, but we kept referring to the two main characters as the boy in the green shirt, and the boy in the red shirt. I praised Allison, which motivated her even more because it built up her confidence. Each of the two students gave the characters a name.

Allison was also engaged when it was time to read our story to the rest of the class. I allowed her to sit in a chair, hold a microphone and read the story that we generated. She was able to recall most of the details that we had practiced. Her

friends commented that they enjoyed the story, and we decided to add the book to our classroom library.

Student 2: Kenneth

Kenneth also had many successes throughout this project. He understands the concepts of print a bit more than his peer, Allison. He felt motivated and determined to pull details from the pictures from the very beginning. I praised him while he looked over the pictures, because that was a cue I gave him while reading a standard, print-based text. We determined that many ideas can be pulled from the expressions on characters' faces, the scenery in the background, how the characters are positioned and so on. I feel that he gained a lot through the conversations we had about this.

While presenting to the class, Kenneth was shy to begin with; but once he understood that he knew the book so well, he was able to relax and tell the story very accurately. His presentation was seamless after the flipping of a page. He recalled even the smallest details, down to certain exclamations we used while the characters were going. For example, when the boy was flying up in the air on the balloons, on one of the first days Allison exclaimed "Up, up and away!" Kenneth had recalled this during the reading, and stated that on the correct page.

Summary

The peers in our class were a fantastic audience that also gave praise to Allison and Kenneth. They were curious why they were not able to work on the project with us too. Allison and Kenneth felt special because they were able to work on something that the friends in their class were not able to do. Usually, they feel it is the other way around. They seem to feel that being pulled aside for the main content areas is a disadvantage. It was a good feeling to develop a project that we could do on our own that made them feel special, not segregated.

By generating this project, I was able to increase my students' motivation and confidence; as well as expand their knowledge about reading. They would normally become frustrated with a book before even opening the cover, because they already felt defeated. In this circumstance, they felt empowered because this book was at their level; and there were no words to hold them back. They truly accepted the role of being the authors of our wordless picture book.

Chapter Five

Introduction

The focus of this study was to determine the benefits of introducing various types of books to students that were reading below grade level. Specifically, I introduced a wordless picture book entitled *The Red Book* to my two students, Allison and Kenneth. The findings from this research lead one to believe that exposure to various types of books is beneficial for students. They were able to feel highly motivated and confident; rather than frustrated and overwhelmed as they usually feel during the reading block. Every student deserves to feel success in all content areas.

Conducting this research was very beneficial for many reasons. It developed a sense of motivation, encouragement and confidence that I had not seen in my students in a very long time. They are so used to feeling lost, in terms of not grasping the concepts, in math, reading and the other content areas. It was my goal to develop a research project in which my students would gain confidence. Since neither student was reading at their grade level, I determined that using a wordless picture book to develop their skills in interpreting pictures would be worthwhile.

My students were far below grade level in all subject areas. During reading, they often cringed or acted out when a new book was placed before them. They were doing so to avoid another frustrating event. I wanted to make reading a fun and enjoyable experience for both students. When questioned if a book can be a book without having words, both students automatically answered no. They were unaware that a book could just have pictures to interpret to tell the story. With a book like this,

there was no pressure to sound out beginning sounds or to look through the entire word. Their job was to look at the illustrations to develop a storyline. This was something that was attainable and enjoyable for each student.

Not only did their confidence rise during this research, their motivation to continue with the same book increased. Prior to completing my research with these students, I did notice they continued to gravitate toward older, familiar books that they could recall. I feel that they felt the same nostalgic feeling with our book *The Red Book* by the end of our four week research period.

Implications for Future Teaching

This study will affect my future teaching in many ways. I will consistently be more aware of all students' learning styles. The two students I work with are very visual, and were able to interpret the pictures more than the words themselves. Although both of my students were far below grade level in all content areas, students at various levels will benefit from being exposed to multimodal books. There is an extreme dependence on textually based books in school settings, due to the emphasis on state tests. However, as mentioned previously, multimodal sources will also aid in students' understanding and comprehension of various modes of information. For instance, students need to be able to interpret illustrations for the New York State DBQ test.

In the future, I will ensure to spend as much time as my students need to understand the content being taught. I felt that this project was the right amount of

time to devour one book; however, it would have been enough time to do a unit on. I would have enjoyed looking through several wordless picture books with my students, and allow for guided practice and independent practice on the skills we had worked on over the past several weeks. The students would feel an increased amount of pride if they were able to recall the skills taught on their own. Also, it would be exciting for students to develop a storyline on their own; without feeling the frustration of stumbling over words to get the points from the author.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Researchers

I would suggest to future researchers to demonstrate more of what is expected of the students in the beginning of the research. I had a limited amount of time to collect my information; therefore, we had to jump right in on *The Red Book* very early on. I would have liked to find a wordless picture book and demonstrate for my students how to pull information from the illustrations, and write the details in a list. I would like to go through the writing process, to show them what it takes to make a story work.

After watching my demonstration, it would be time for guided practice. The students would have more freedom in developing their storyline; with assistance provided along the way from me. Then, once they felt comfortable they would have even more freedom to develop their storyline with independent practice. They would

be on their own to show that they understand and grasp the concepts needed to be successful.

This project should not have been done exclusively using one book. While my students prevailed, it would have been more worthwhile for students to practice what they have learned with a different book. However, as mentioned previously, time did not permit this.

Recommendations for Future Practitioners

I would recommend that this project be expanded into an entire unit. There are many valuable multimodal texts there that can be purchased with money from a grant. If I had had the flexibility and no time constraint I would have liked to do much more with the idea of incorporating multimodal texts into the classroom library. The students gained so much confidence and enjoyed this so much; I would have liked to continue on with other wordless picture books. It would have been interesting to look into whether or not they used the same practices once they had a bit of freedom. We really worked as a team to develop the storyline of *The Red Book*. I wish that I had had the time to allow them to look at other multimodal texts to have some independent practice with the skills acquired.

I would also add that while I focused on multimodal literacies in regard to wordless picture books, that this idea of multimodal sources can range from books to technology. In the study completed by Crafton et al., the teacher, Mary, also introduced multimodal literacies in the form of computers. Originally, she had the

students log onto a phonics program individually, with headphones on so that they would not disturb their neighbors. However, Mary began to notice that the students were partnering up and working together to solve problems on the computer. She began to encourage these types of partnering up, and she the researchers stated “Like magnets, they quickly moved their chairs the short distance from one computer to another so they could partner, talk and problem-solve” (p. 514). This correlates to my study, because it is encouraging discussion between peers of multimodal sources.

The following is a great list of multimodal texts for a future unit. These books can be found in local libraries or perhaps purchased with money from a grant. These books will provide a good example for guided practice, as well as spark conversation and imagination for students when they practice on their own.

Table 5.1

Critical Literacy

- *Amazing Grace* by M. Hoffman
- *Fly Away Home* by E. Bunting
- *The Lady in the Box* by A. McGovern
- *Music of Dolphins* by K. Hesse
- *No, David!* by D. White
- *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by T. DePaola
- *The Piggybook* by A. Browne
- *Ruby's Wish* by S. Bridges
- *Three Cool Kids* by R. Emberly
- *William's Doll* by C. Zolotow

(Crafton et al, p. 513)

Table 5.2

Visual Literacy

- *Black and White* by D. Macaulay
- *The Color of Home* by M. Hoffman
- *Heckedy Peg* by A. Wood
- *If You Listen* by C. Zolotow
- *My Beautiful Child* by L. Desimini & M. Mahurin
- *The Polar Express* by C. Van Allsburg
- *Round Trip* by A. Jonas
- *The Salamander Room* by A. Mazur
- *Sky Tree* by T. Locker
- *Where Are You Going, Manyoni?* by C. Stock

(Crafton et al, p. 513)

Table 5.3

Wordless Picture Books

- *1, 2, 3 To the Zoo!* by E. Carle
- *A Boy, A Dog, and A Frog* by M. Mayer
- *Chalk* by B. Thompson
- *Clown* by Q. Blake
- *Free Fall* by D. Weisner
- *Have You Seen My Duckling?* by N. Tafuri
- *Museum Trip* by B. Lehman
- *The Silver Pony* by L. Ward

I truly believe that this research will benefit future researchers, teachers that incorporate multimodal sources into their curriculum and especially the students in the aforementioned classes. Through guided practice and independent study, the students will be able to interact with a book like they have never been able to do before. Teachers have the power to enlighten their students, and spark their curiosity with various styles of thinking. Instead of the same, routine text-based book; it would be very beneficial for students to have the chance to check in their their imagination and higher thinking skills by devouring multimodal texts.

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Appendices

Appendix A :

Observationnel Notes

Observations	Interpretations

Appendix B:

Colleague Survey

1. Most books used in classrooms are solely text-based. To supplement instruction, do you use multimodal texts in your room to engage students?
2. If so, what types are used?
3. How would you determine student comprehension of multimodal sources?
4. Do you also include multimodal texts in the writing process?
5. Do you see evidence of students being motivated by a different source to collect data from?

Appendix C:

Our Story

The Red Book

By: Allison, Kenneth and Mrs. Cortash

One day, there was a boy named Barry walking in the city. He was wearing a green jacket because it was winter. He saw a red book lying in the snow. He picked it up and took it to school with him. He kept it in his backpack, but he kept thinking about it. He opened the book and saw a map. He saw a boy in a red shirt on the beach.

The boy in the red shirt, named Billy, was walking along the beach, and sees something red in the sand. He picks it up and opens the book. He sees a picture of a city. The boys see each other! They know that they have found a magic book.

When Barry leaves school, he heads down the street and sees a man selling balloons. He buys every balloon that the man is selling. There are red, yellow, blue, green and purple balloons. He flies up, up and away when he grabs all of the balloons from the man selling them. He flies up over the city.

Whoops! As he was flying up, dropped the magic red book, and it falls back to the city. Billy sees the book fall, and feels sad because he doesn't think that his new friend will be able to visit him on the beach. But, Barry is flying in while Billy is not looking. They finally see each other and hug!

Back in the city, a boy named John was riding his bike. He sees a red book on the sidewalk and picks it up.

Appendix D:

The Red Book

