The Use of Confidence Building Strategies and Self-Concept of Emergent Readers

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The Use of Confidence Building Strategies and Self-Concept of Emergent Readers

by

Gina Bessing

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education or The College at Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Literacy

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Abstract

This research study explores how confidence building strategies impact students’ self-concept as readers. The purpose of this research was to discover strategies or teaching practices that may help students form a positive self-concept as readers. Data were collected over the course of four weeks using student interviews, field notes, transcribed audio recordings, and parent surveys. Data were analyzed for how often students discussed using reading strategies, made meaningful comprehension while reading wordless picture books, and how students rated their self-concept as readers. Results showed students were better equipped and more engaged in discussing use of reading strategies when explicitly taught. Students made deep meaningful comprehension while reading wordless picture books, and confidence building strategies did not necessarily impact students’ self-concept as readers.
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Introduction

When engaging in a read aloud on kindergarten orientation day, I always have a handful of students who exclaim, “I don’t know how to read!” When students start kindergarten, some are eager to begin the reading journey. These students literally attack the process by looking around the room for connections, engaging in shared reading, flipping through pages in the library, and doing all they can to understand what is put in front of them. In my time as a teacher I have also encountered other student reading behaviors. Some students are quiet, and try their best to blend into the bookshelves. Others tend to be outspoken with their desire to do anything but read. This can be seen through their words and actions such as talking with their friends, laying on the table, hiding under the table, or running around the room searching for a distraction. From these experiences, I have noticed a lack of self-confidence or seeing oneself as a reader seems to present challenges for some of my kindergarten students.

I truly believe there is not a day that goes by where someone does not read. We as humans read all the time. If we could figure out confidence building strategies to help our youngest readers, we could assist them in having a better self-concept of themselves as readers, and in the process help them become lifelong readers. In this study, I explore what teachers could do to help build this positive self-concept around reading. I researched to find out how the use of confidence building strategies could impact students’ self-concept as readers. I also wanted to explore the ways in which students with a positive self-concept of reading present themselves.
Topic and Research Problem

Kindergarten is distinctly different than what it once was. Due to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, the demands of kindergarten continue to become more rigorous as time goes on (Marxen, Ofstedal & Danbom, 2008; Goldstein, 2008). “Where kindergarten was once a place for children to learn to socialize through play, many kindergarten classrooms have become replicas of first grade…” (Marxen, et al., 2008, p. 81). Teachers now have the obligation to teach not only social, emotional, and school readiness skills such as the routines of sitting and listening. They also have higher expectations for their academic learning. The push to have five and six year olds reading at a level C is a challenging task for one adult of twenty, or more, little beings. The result of this pressure is that children may develop a poor self-concept as they struggle to meet this high and questionable benchmark.

Often when children are first reading books, they are not conventionally reading. They are looking at the pictures and creating the story, or phrasing from memory a loved story that has been read to them over and over and over. Collins and Glover (2015) discuss how children get to a stage in their literacy development where they no longer feel like readers. The authors state, “Another challenge arises when children realize, sometimes all of a sudden, that the pictures and illustrations don’t support their reading of the book. In other words, in the case of a narrative text, children may read a text with a particular story line until an illustration contradicts their interpretations” (Collins, & Glover, 2015, p.53). Students begin to find out the reading they have been doing is not conventional and the words they are saying do not match the words that are on the page. Now the children need to problem solve how to create meaning without being able to
conventionally read yet. Some students may get stuck in this stage of development and
not know how to problem solve through their reading. It is this fixed mindset that may
lead to a poor self-concept as a reader.

**Rationale**

The importance of this study is directly related to my experience as a kindergarten
teacher. It has shown me that some students may struggle to see themselves as readers. I
have students who currently exclaim daily, “I don’t know how to read!” Yet, are able to
read level A texts independently, which for November, is a wonderful start. These
experiences led me to think about what I could do to help my students see themselves as
readers.

Collins and Glover (2015) define reading as, “an interaction with a text during
which the reader uses a variety of resources within the text (i.e. words, pictures, graphic
elements, etc.) and within themselves (schema skills, [reading] strategies) to make
meaning” (Collins, & Glover, 2015, p. 10). The researchers also discuss how there is a
time where children begin to understand if they cannot read the words conventionally
then all a sudden they feel they cannot read (Collins, & Glover, 2015). I explore the
ways that I can help my students gain confidence while reading and also show them what
they are doing is reading.

**Purpose of Project**

I wanted to get a better idea of students’ mindsets when it came to how they view
themselves as readers. “Growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities
are things you can cultivate through your efforts” which is the belief that “everyone can
change and grow through application and experience” (Dweck, 2006, p. 7). Students’
mindsets are shaped through success and failed experiences (Määttä, Mykkänen, & Järvelä, 2016). It is important we provide our students with successful experiences around literacy to build their confidence and self-concept as readers. When students feel they will succeed, they become more motivated, more engaged, and more confident in their abilities. Which in turn helps children form a positive self-concept of themselves as readers (Määttä, et al., 2016).

My goal was to explore confidence-building strategies to help all my students perceive themselves as readers. I wanted to find strategies or teaching practices that will help support my students’ positive self-concepts. This will not only help my own teaching practice, but also to see if these methods could be used to help all students with a poor self-concept as a reader. Dependent on the outcomes, perhaps these findings could also be used to help poor self-concepts in other areas of literacy other than reading such as language or writing.

Research Questions

- How could the use of confidence-building strategies impact students’ self-concept as readers?
- How do students with a positive self-concept present themselves?

Literature Review

Introduction

The following literature review will focus on three topics that seem to impact students’ self-concept as readers. From the research, I found the following themes: early literacy development, self-efficacy and self-concept, and how student encouragement affects a students’ ability to see themselves as readers. I have taken much thought in
analyzing the research to find what was most profound when looking at students’ reading self-concept. Here I have outlined how these trends are related to the importance of understanding a students’ ability to build a positive self-concept of themselves as readers.

**Early Literacy Development**

The ultimate goal for our children is for them to become independent readers. Parents and teachers are influential in providing children with their first literacy experiences. It is critical to provide students with meaningful and positive early literacy experiences to shape their early literacy development.

“Emergent literacy refers to the beginning behaviors and concepts that bolster and develop into conventional literacy” (Dooley, 2010, p. 120). It is a difficult task to set up the right infrastructure for each student. With literacy learning you must be able to understand students’ prior experiences, positively affect their present, and have full awareness of where the students are going with the experiences they have.

Children are learning from the time they are born. When it comes to literacy, exposure and environmental factors have a major influence on children’s reading success (Buckingham, Beaman, & Wheldall, 2013). Through children’s daily experiences they form their own concepts and schemas to help them make sense of the world around them. “A concept or schema is a mental structure in which we organize and store all the information we know about people, places, objects, or activities” (McGee, & Richgels, 2012, p. 2). In order for children to understand themselves, they must have appropriate concepts and schemas in place to help them make sense of their experiences. As children grow, their awareness changes, which in turn changes their concepts. From birth until the age of seven, children develop at an overwhelmingly fast pace. The concepts they form
during these early stages become the foundation for their lifelong learning (Cohrssen, Niklas, Logan, & Taylor, 2016). Assistance with literacy during this time in a child’s life is important in order to set up a positive self-concept of themselves as readers.

Not every child’s journey to read is the same. Snow and Matthews (2016), assert there are two types of literacy skills that shape students’ reading abilities. Constrained skills are the skills that are teachable and fixed. An example is a students’ knowledge of the 26 letters of the alphabet (Snow, & Matthews, 2016). As students grow older, they need to use unconstrained skills, which are vocabulary and background knowledge, when interacting with a text (2016). The researchers state unconstrained skills “are particularly important for children’s long-term literacy success” (2016, p. 57). Together these skills increase students’ reading potential.

Children have a different level of exposure to reading, but as they learn to read they show similar behaviors while interacting with a text. Collins and Glover (2015) have studied how children work with texts at the very beginning stages of literacy, to the time children are independently reading for meaning. The researchers found before children are conventionally reading (with conventional reading defined as accurately reading the words and the pictures to understand the meaning of a text) children are still able to use a number of different strategies to read. Prior to learning concepts about print, letters, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, word study, etc. students are still able to read. When children flip through the pages of a familiar text and retell what they remember from the story, they are reading. Collins and Glover stress how educators and parents cannot discount what children are doing as reading (2015). How we approach
students’ reading abilities is just as important as teaching students the skills and strategies they need to conventionally read.

The experiences children have influence students’ literacy learning. From these experiences, students need to be able to interact with texts using an endless list of strategies. Teachers need to provide students positive literacy experiences to help students form positive concepts about themselves as readers. It is also essential to explicitly teach phonics and vocabulary skills to help build students’ background knowledge to prepare them to be conventional readers. Lastly, Collins and Glover (2015) stress the importance of giving children the opportunity to freely explore books. It is in these experiences where students are authentically learning about the reading process and building their own foundation of literacy strategies.

**Self-Efficacy and Self-Concept**

Self-efficacy and self-concept are two terms that came up a great deal in the research and seemed to be used interchangeably. Both themes are related to how students may present themselves in school, but their definitions are slightly different. Efficacy refers to “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes” (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Self-efficacy then would be defined as the way in which one is able to successfully perform a behavior in order to produce the correct outcome. Prochnow, Tunmer, and Chapman (2013) define reading self-efficacy as “children’s beliefs about their sense of agency and control in reading tasks…the belief individuals have in their ability to organize and execute a task to achieve successful outcomes” (Prochnow, Tunmer, & Chapman, 2013, p. 189). Efficacy is how successful someone believes they are in accomplishing a task. In terms of reading, Prochnow et al.
The students have expressed self-efficacy as the students’ feeling in control of their ability to read based on how successful they feel.

Concept was talked about earlier as being a way for children to organize and store information (McGee, & Richgels, 2012). Marsh and Hattie (1996) define self-concept as, “a person’s self-perceptions formed through experiences with and interpretations of his or her environment” (Marsh, & Hattie, 1996, p. 58). In other words, self-concept refers to how we identify ourselves in relation to our experiences. Reading self-concept defined by Prochnow et al. “refers to children’s beliefs regarding ability and proficiency in reading tasks, perceptions of experiencing reading as a difficult task, and attitudes toward reading” (Prochnow, et al., 2013, p. 189).

Self-efficacy and self-concept are closely related, but diverse in meaning. Self-efficacy is your belief in your ability and self-concept is how you identify yourself. These definitions link together in the ways in which children form their self-concepts through their environment and experiences. By having a strong self-efficacy in reading, or believing you are good at reading, would most likely lead you to having positive experiences of reading. In turn allowing children to form a positive self-concept as a reader, and vice versa.

In this study, I focus on kindergarteners’ self-concept as a reader, but I question whether students are developmentally able to form a self-concept. Cohrsen, et al. (2016) presented a similar question and asked if first year students were able to form academic self-concepts of themselves. From their research children showed a negative correlation between self-concept and performance outcome. That is, children who self-identified having a high self-concept actually performed the lowest. At the end of the study,
students’ academic self-concept “was positively associated with almost all child outcomes” (Cohrssen, et al., 2016, p. 7). This is important to understand because it allows us to see children ages four and five are able to form a self-concept of themselves, but it is not necessarily accurate until after they enter school. The above information made me think about what happens in schools that allow children to form an accurate self-concept of themselves.

A child needs a number of experiences to form a self-concept of himself or herself as a reader. All experiences help students form concepts about themselves and the world around them. Määttä, et al. (2016) studied how students felt successful. Their findings concluded students frequently mentioned ‘previous experience’ when assessing their own success, and ‘skills’ when assessing peer success. They also indicated when students had more previous experience they felt more successful than those who did not have previous experience (Määttä, et al., 2016). The findings reinforce how students’ prior experiences shape the way they feel successful during academic tasks, which links to how students will form a self-concept of themselves as readers. I want to take a closer look at what practices are occurring in my own classroom that could contribute to students forming their own self-concept as readers.

Encouragement

“What we say to others can deeply affect their [students’] sense of who they are and who they might become” (Denton, 2014, p. 4). Parents and teachers need to be aware that what we say and do has a profound effect on a child’s self-concept. Parents are children’s first teachers. What they do will be the child’s first impression of literacy and reading. These experiences will usually be the first time children are able to form an
opinion about reading and how reading fits into their own lives. Teachers will come secondary to this learning and have the important task of building on these skills while also teaching the required reading strategies necessary for lifelong reading.

Merga (2014) found the highest sources for encouragement for adolescent readers were mothers and English teachers (Merga, 2014, p. 476). I find this incredibly interesting when it comes to looking at child development. What happens in students’ home and school environment seem to have the most impact on children. It makes sense if you think about this notion in terms of time. When children are young, the majority of their time is spent either at home or at school. These are the experiences children have most often, so these are the moments they have the most concepts about. The vast amount of time spent at home and school may be the reason why parents and teachers are students’ biggest encouragement systems.

How does this relate to our emergent learners? A study done by Guéguen, Martin, and Andrea (2015) explored the impact encouragement had on nursery school children ages 3-5 and primary school children ages 8-9. They found, “children who received verbal encouragement related to success before beginning their task succeeded more often than the children who received no encouragement” (Guéguen, Martin, & Andrea, 2015, p. 57). The researchers also mentioned that just providing verbal encouragement once made a difference in students’ success. The results demonstrate just how influential our words and encouragement are in a child’s life. The fact that parents and teachers are so significant in a child’s life means providing students with encouragement throughout their struggles will help them form positive self-concepts and develop a love of learning.
Encouragement plays a critical role a child’s ability to form their self-concept as learners. The same may also hold true in the ways students form a self-concept of themselves as readers. I want to be sure I am encouraging all my students of their success as readers to hopefully help them see they are readers whether reading conventionally or not.

**The Reading Process: What Students Need to Learn**

Before we are able to comprehend how children use the concepts they create to see themselves as readers, we must explore how children learn to read. It is here where confidence-building strategies come into play.

Children learn to read in a variety of ways, but a few elements about learning to read remain essential. One of which is that, “Learners need direct, explicit instruction in the strategies of proficient reading” (Calkins, 2015, p. 21). What now comes so simple to us is a very complex process when first starting out. Teachers need to teach that symbols have meaning, and those symbols together create a word. Those words are then used to form sentences, and sentences create stories, and stories create books! Each of these words, sentences, stories, and books have their own meaning! To help our students succeed in the process of reading, “…readers will need instruction in skills that are foundational to the development of becoming a reader: print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word readings strategies, and fluency” (p. 21).

In the emergent stage, learning phonological and phonemic awareness is necessary when learning to read. Calkins (2015) states, “Phonological awareness is the ability to hear individual words in oral language as well as small sounds within words…” and “Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate phonemes-the smallest
sounds within a word (eg. /c/-/a/-/t/)” (p. 21). These skills will provide students a greater understanding of letters, words, and how they work. Phonological awareness helps them understand how words are the same and different. Phonemic awareness allows children to create and problem solve words based on their phonemes. When reading this is essential because it will give students the knowledge they need to read for meaning. Students need to have an understanding of the small meanings of letters and words, before they can uncover the greater meaning of sentences and stories in books.

Phonics add to the building blocks of a balanced literacy approach. Calkins (2015) describes phonics as “…the ability to match letters with their corresponding sounds…” meaning children need to recognize the letter and the sound it makes alone and within words (p. 22). It not only aids the reading process, but the writing process as well. An understanding of phonics supplies children with the tools necessary to decode words within a text.

Lastly, fluency is multi-faceted in the reading process. Fluency is students’ ability “to read continuous text with good momentum, phrasing, appropriate pausing, intonation, and stress” (Fountas, & Pinnell, 2011, p. 359). Another element of fluency is students’ ability to comprehend text with the end goal being reading comprehension. If students are spending their time decoding in order to read, they will be less likely to understand what they are reading (Rasinski, 2000). For this reason fluency is one of the many imperative characteristics of the reading process.

The above-mentioned foundations of reading should not only be taught in isolation, but children also need to be taught how to apply these skills to their reading practice (Ehri, C., Nunes, R., & Willows, M., 2001). Even if a child understands how to
break a word into phonemes, you do not want them to always use this strategy while reading. Students need to understand when best to use a specific strategy and how. It is here where we as teachers need to build students’ confidence around the elements of literacy learning in authentic ways. If teachers are able to create successful experiences around the foundations of reading; this confidence will help shape students’ self-concept of themselves as readers.

**Instructional Setting: Workshop Model**

In my classroom we use Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Reading (2015). Calkins uses the workshop approach in her teaching. The basics of reading workshop are a mini lesson, whole group practice, independent practice/conferencing, and closing (Calkins, 2015). Typically during the mini lesson the teacher will state what the students will be learning that day and show how to use a specific reading strategy, and then will ask the students to practice with him or her. It is expected during independent practice the students go off with individual book bags and practice the strategy learned in their books. During this time, the teacher goes around to confer with students on their reading. After conferencing, the teacher invites the students back whole group to discuss what they worked on, or what he or she noticed during reading workshop that day.

The positive of using the reading workshop approach is students are provided direct instruction of a specific reading strategy, and then the work is naturally differentiated to meet the students’ needs. When students go off for independent practice, they are working with books appropriate for their reading level. When the teacher comes to confer with the student, he or she is able to direct the conversation to
what is most meaningful for that specific student, rather than generalizing instruction to meet the needs of the whole classroom at once. We have been using this approach in reading for about two months and the students are grasping the procedure of it.

**Confidence Building Strategies**

For the purposes of this study, I define confidence building strategies as explicitly teaching reading strategies to students, the use of wordless picture books to help build student comprehension, and the conversations teachers have with their students. Using these three strategies I explore how this may impact students’ self-concept as readers.

**Explicitly teaching reading strategies.** For this study, I used the Lucy Calkins Units for Teaching Reading (2015) where she teaches our earliest learners reading strategies using Super Powers. Calkins talks about how Super Heroes are brave and tackle crime, and we could do the same thing when we read books. The method provides a detailed lesson about each reading strategy or Super Power. The teacher models how to use each strategy while reading. Then the teacher and the students work together as a group with the strategy. Then, the teacher sends the students off to practice the Super Power on their own. The four strategies taught were Pointer Power (one-to-one correspondence), Picture Power (using the picture to help you figure out the word), Sound Power (looking at the beginning letter to figure out the word, and Sight Word Power (recognizing sight words to help you read) (Calkins, 2015). I am curious to see if explicitly teaching these strategies the way Calkins suggests will impact students’ self-concept as readers.

**Wordless picture books.** How do we show children they have the power of reading even if they are not conventionally reading yet? Wordless picture books may
give children the opportunity to explore and read for themselves while still feeling like readers because they are reading an actual book. I can tell students they are readers when they are in a grocery store, or at school reading signs posted on the walls. However, I feel my students still do not define these accounts as reading. In my experience, children only see reading as “reading a book.” Perhaps the use of wordless picture books will allow students to see themselves as readers because they are involved with a physical book.

When children are reading wordless picture books they are still using reading strategies. Lysaker and Hopper (2015) configured a variety of early print strategies and looked at a six-year-old girl to see if she was utilizing comprehension strategies while reading wordless picture books. The strategies the researchers investigated were: searching, cross-checking, self-correcting, and rereading/repeating as described below:

- **Searching** is when a child gathers information from the page by reading the print and text.

- **Cross-checking** is when the student compares the meaning of the print with what they know about the world and what would make sense.

- **Self-correction** happens when a child comes across information that does not match what they previously stated, therefore needing to correct their information.

- **Rereading/repeating** occurs when meaning making is happening. Students may reread a section to give themselves time to think about the story and what is happening.

Researchers found their student used all four reading strategies, demonstrating students are able to use reading strategies before they are able to conventionally read (2015).
For the purposes of this study, I would like to see if the same is true for my students. I would like to record my students reading wordless picture books to see if they are using the same strategies that Lysaker and Hopper (2015) suggest in their study, and if this helps students see themselves as readers.

**Teacher and student talk.** Our teacher language holds power. The language we use as teachers needs to be explicit. Peter Johnston (2004) describes teacher talk as, “…the central tool of their trade. With it they mediate children’s activity and experience, and help them make sense of learning, literacy, life, and themselves” (Johnston, 2004, p. 4). The words we say to our students, not only impacts the learning aspect of their lives, but allows them to make sense of the world around them in relation to themselves. Teachers have the facilitative role to encourage students’ reading self-concept. “Teachers’ comments can offer them [students], and nudge them toward, productive identities” (p. 23). For this study, I bring a heightened awareness to the language I use around my students to hopefully help them see themselves as readers.

Students use language to help them make sense of themselves. Although as teachers we may stress that our students create a reading or academic identity, it is important to understand it is more complex with our emergent learners. They are still discovering who they are personally and socially. “As children are involved in classroom interactions, they build and try on different identities…” (p. 23). A large part of this is children’s language and how they act in these different interactions. Students’ language may change frequently until they find one that they are able to identify with. Perhaps students will be more inclined to identify themselves as readers if they are given more positive experiences and conversations around reading.
Summary

My intention for this literature review was to understand how literacy development, self-efficacy and self-concept, and how student encouragement impact students early reading, formation of self-concept, and to seek out strategies to help my students see themselves as readers. The experiences children have seem to shape how they view themselves as readers. It is our job as educators to make these experiences as positive and memorable as possible. For this study, I encouraged every stage of reading to enable my students to see themselves as readers from the earliest stages of literacy development. These strategies make a lasting impression on my students as they move through their literacy learning. Using even a few confidence-building strategies to help our students realize their potential as readers will help them carry the value of reading with them wherever they go.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to discover how confidence-building strategies impact students’ reading self-concept. Data were collected for 4 weeks and incorporated in a variety of sources: including pre-and post-strategy teaching interviews with the students, observational field notes, and parent surveys.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected because they are all students in my kindergarten classroom for the 2016-2017 school year. The class is made up of 21 students, 8 boys and 14 girls. Two students are African American, one student is Hispanic, and one other student is of mixed race, the rest are Caucasian. Three students speak another language in addition to English at home. Six of the students attended a
pre-school setting before entering kindergarten. The rest either stayed home, or went to
day care. There are students who come from varying socio economic backgrounds and
students who receive free and reduced lunch. I have eight students who are being
progress monitored through AIMs Web once every two weeks, and six others who are
being serviced in reading for twenty minutes in small groups outside of the classroom
everyday because they are currently below grade level expectations for reading. For this
study, I was granted permission to research five students: three girls and two boys. All
are Caucasian, none receive free or reduced lunch, and two are being progress monitored
through AIMs Web. I am the only educator in the classroom and am the sole provider of
instruction in English language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Setting

The setting for this study is a kindergarten classroom in a public suburban school
in Western New York. The school includes grades pre-k through second grade with six
classrooms for each grade level, excluding pre-k, which only have four half-day classes.
Overall, 62.8% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch (National Center for

The classroom is an open environment with six tables for students to collaborate,
one kidney-shaped table for guided reading and small group lessons, a Smartboard, dry
erase easel, a small classroom library with leveled books, big books, and themed story
books. There is a kitchen and tool workshop imagination center for play, as well as
puzzles, games, blocks, and other toys for the students to explore during recess time.
There is a large area rug for the students to sit at during instructional times with colorful
dots. At this school, the students are also provided one-to-one iPads, which I use during center activities to practice handwriting or letter recognition.

**Positionality**

My own background and upbringing affects my position as the teacher researcher in the classroom. I am a 24-year-old white female who was brought up in a middle class family. My mom stayed at home with my older sister, my younger brother, and myself growing up. Later in life my mom did attend college and is now a nurse. My dad was the first in his family to attend college and is a pharmaceutical sales representative. English is my only language.

I graduated from Nazareth College with my Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology and Early Childhood/Childhood Education. I have my initial teaching certification in early childhood, childhood, and special education for birth through sixth grade. I am currently a kindergarten teacher in a suburban district.

My younger brother has Down Syndrome and has shown me and my family a different kind of love. He is seven years younger than me and I’ve always felt a greater responsibility to be a kind and responsible older sister. I always strive to make him feel valued and successful in everything he does. I feel this is reflected in my teaching, and in the purpose of this study by my desire for my students to see themselves as readers.

In looking back on myself as a reader, I struggled with forming a self-concept. I feel the biggest reason for this was that I struggled to develop academically. I was a slow learner, and a slow reader. My earliest memory of this struggle is from kindergarten. The reading teacher videotaped the students reading a book at the end of the year. Mind you, it’s the end of the school year 1997. The expectation today is for kindergarten
students to be reading at a level C, which entails students to read multiple words on a page, more than one line on a page, pictures do not directly match the words, etc. I remember reading a book about a snail. It was a text with one word on each page and the picture matched the word. At first I was proud of myself that I read a book. Then the teacher praised me, took that book away, and placed the book for the next student to read on the desk. “Great work Gina! Now could you go get Jonny?” Jonny’s book looked way more involved than my book. Jonny and I aren’t reading the same book? Was I reading a baby book? Why wasn’t I asked to read Jonny’s book? What does that say about me? I went from feeling pride, to instant confusion.

As I continued school, a cycle of good and ill feelings about myself kept me from forming a positive self-concept of myself as a reader. To this day when I sit in classes and the professor says, “Read this article, take notes, and we will talk about it in 10 minutes.” I always think to myself, “Only ten minutes!?” In which I stress, look around the room to see where other students are, and proceed to skim the article because I know that’s better than not reading at all. I usually find one point to bring up and try to be the first to share so it looks like I read the assignment, when in reality my poor reading self-concept keeps me from ever completing it.

I do not want my students to feel this way, or feel they aren’t good enough readers. I want to give them the tools and the skills necessary to help them see themselves as readers no matter what that may look like.

**Methods of Data Collection**

**Teacher reflective field notes.** As the teacher researcher and participant observer I wanted to find out how confidence-building strategies impact students’ self-concepts as
readers. I was the one to modify my instruction and reflect on what I would be doing to help build students’ perceptions as readers.

**Semi-structured interviews.** I conducted pre- and post-interviews with all students using the Burke Reading Inventory questions to see what students’ self-concept as readers were prior to my research, and then see how these perceptions might have change based on responses at the end of the study.

**Audio recordings.** After the pre-interview, I taught confidence building strategies lessons. Throughout these lessons, I audio recorded conversations to grasp an authentic understanding of students’ reading and their perceptions of themselves as readers during literacy tasks.

**Parent surveys.** I wanted to gather an idea around what students’ home literacy looks like. I also wanted insight on how parents viewed their child’s self-concept as readers. I created a take home survey and sent this home in students’ take home folders.

Following data collection, I reviewed the student interviews, transcribed audio recordings, observational field notes, parent surveys, and my own reflections to look for trends. I wanted to see if there were changes in students’ self-concept of themselves as readers and analyzed if there were any specific strategies from the instruction that helped students form a positive or negative self-concept of themselves as readers.

**Procedures**

I first interviewed students to grasp an understanding of how they viewed themselves as readers prior to the study. Next I explicitly taught the reading strategies using the workshop model. Each week I introduced a new strategy and modeled what “good readers do while reading.” I was sure to give students time to practice the skill and
then monitored their progress and confidence of the skill throughout the week during literacy times in the classroom. I also incorporated wordless picture books into whole group, and small group instruction times. During this I audio recorded students and took anecdotal notes on how students were either utilizing the reading strategies or not. After all the strategies were taught, I interviewed students again to see if their view of themselves as readers changed. Once the study was complete, I reviewed the data for trends and themes to see how the confidence building strategies affected students’ self-concept of themselves as readers.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness of this study comes from triangulation of data collection.

“Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence about a finding from different individuals or types of data collection” (Clark, & Creswell, 2015, p. 364). I am using multiple forms of data to seek out trends in my own research and cross-reference information gathered. These types of data include pre-and post-interviews, field notes, audio recordings, and parent surveys.

**Data Analysis**

To begin my analysis I organized my interviews, field notes, transcribed audio recordings, and parent surveys into word documents. I dated everything so I could keep a close record of when events happened and who was involved in each account. Once the data was organized and transcribed, I read through the data I collected for what it was. Clark and Creswell (2015) describe this as a preliminary exploratory analysis to help the researcher gather a “general sense of the data, record initial ideas, thinking about the organization of the data” (p. 358). From this I created codes based on the emerging
themes I found such as PS for positive self-concept, NS for negative self-concept, codes for each reading strategy taught, and codes for what I noticed when students read wordless picture books and other texts in the classroom. When coding I was looking for times students were smiling, using reading strategies, or made positive connections with the text or peers while reading. I implemented this method to look for emerging themes to answer the question of how confidence building strategies impact students’ self-concept as readers. The constant comparative method was used when looking at my data by reviewing the pre- and post-interviews, field notes, transcribed audio recordings, and parent surveys throughout the study. The use of this method of analysis allowed me to gather a more accurate interpretation of my participants.

From my initial analysis, I categorized my data with each participant comparing the pre-interview and post-interview and his or her overall rating of his or her self-concept as a reader. Then I searched within the interviews where students presented a positive self-concept, negative self-concept, or mentioned reading strategies that helped form their self-concept as a reader. I placed this data alongside my field notes and then tallied these behaviors with each participant and created a chart documenting how often the behaviors occurred. Finally, I went through my audio recordings and categorized the actions presented. I was looking to see how students were making meaning while they were reading, considering whether students were thinking deeply, or expressing positive/negative reading behaviors.

The purpose of my study was to see how confidence building strategies impact students’ self-concept as readers and to see how students with a positive self-concept present themselves as readers. I was looking to see how explicit teaching of reading
strategies and the use of wordless picture books could influence students’ self-concepts as readers.

After reviewing student interviews, field notes, transcribed audio recordings, and parent surveys, three themes emerged to the surface. The first theme discovered was that students demonstrate an increased awareness of reading strategies and excitement in utilizing them. The second theme identified was when reading wordless picture books, students move beyond the literal and are able to demonstrate deep, meaningful comprehension. The third theme suggests that confidence building strategies do not necessarily change students’ self-concept as readers.

**Finding One:** Students demonstrate increased awareness of reading strategies and excitement in utilizing them.

Prior to teaching students reading strategies, students demonstrated little understanding around what made someone a good reader. As shown in Figure 1, during the pre-interview, Ed mentioned reading strategies 0 times, Lauren 3 times, Michael 8 times, Jess 1 time, and Claire was absent for the pre-interview process. After the pre-interview, I began teaching reading strategies using the Lucy Calkins Units of Study Reading (2015). While teaching the strategies, I noticed students demonstrating their understanding of each.
In your first Pointer Power lesson, I hung all class poems and reference charts we made together. Students then walked around the room with their reading partners to point to words and read what they saw. Prior to this, students decorated their own popsicle sticks to emphasize their Pointing Power. As students walked with their Pointer Power, Lauren and Jess were holding hands, skipping around the classroom finding words around the room with smiles on their faces. Ed was running around the room from spot to spot, not really staying with his partner, but using his pointer and reading the name chart, “My name is ED!!” Michael was moving like a robot around the room, crawling on the floor searching for more words to point to and read. Claire sat quietly by the door with her partner using her pointer to touch each word of the poem and read each word accurately. When she looked up at me taking notes she said, “I did it! I read the whole thing!” Students showed their enthusiasm by skipping, smiling, and
yelling the words they were reading. The fact that students were engaged and working together to build their Pointer Power shows they understand how to point to each word and track print as they were reading. Emergent readers develop “greater control” in their meaning making abilities as they gain experience with reading skills (McGee, & Richgels, 2012). From their repeated experiences of using Pointer Power, students were able to understand how this strategy helped them conventionally read.

**Picture Power.** In library center Michael and Claire were reading, *There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*, by, Lucille Colandro and illustrated by, Jared D. Lee (2014). This book has a clear pattern and repetition throughout and adds on from previous pages. Michael was reading this book to Claire using Picture Power. He was looking at the pictures and saying the story from memory. The words he was saying did not match the words on the page, but they were similar to the rhythm of the story. “There was an old lady who swallowed a…fly…” If he forgot what happened he would flip back and forth between the pages and say what he saw on each page. Michael was using Picture Power successfully to help him understand the order of the book.

In readers’ workshop, Jess was using Picture Power to read her book “Rr.” Everything in the book began with the letter ‘r’ and was red. The book read, “red roses, red rabbit, red robot, red rug.” Jess used Picture Power by looking at each picture on the page and reading, “red rose, red bunnies, red robot, red carpet.” Here the meaning of the book did not change, but she was not reading the words correctly. Therefore, she was only using the pictures to help her understand the book.

**Sound Power.** One day I was sitting with Lauren in library center. She brought over a level A reader titled, “Clothes” and read it as “Colors.” We talked about how she
was using Sound Power to figure out the title because she saw the letter C and read the sound /c/. I supported her by inviting her to use her Sound Power and Picture Power to help her figure out the true title of the book. Here is our dialogue:

**Lauren:** Colors!

**Miss Bessing:** That’s a good guess! You are looking at the cover and using your Sound Power to see the first letter is a C and makes the /c/ sound. But what else do you see? What are these pictures of?

**Lauren:** A shirt, pants, a pair of socks, and a coat?

**Miss Bessing:** So what are these things?

**Lauren:** /c/ /c/ /cl/ …clothes!

**Miss Bessing:** Yes! The title of this book is “Clothes!”

You could see from our conversation how I guided her to use her Picture Power along with her Sound Power. She continued to use Sound Power to put the /c/ and /l/ sounds together.

In readers’ workshop, another day I was listening to Ed read a story titled “Cats.” “Cats” is a book his AIS group wrote together and his AIS teacher made into a book for them to read. Ed should be very familiar with the pattern and story as he had a part in creating it. As I sat with him I noticed he was still struggling with some of the words. The pattern is, “The cat is…” and then it talks about the cat climbing, walking, jumping, sleeping…etc. He struggled reading the title, smiling and stating, “Oh I don’t know…!” I asked him if we could tap the word out and look for the sounds we knew. Together we identified each letter and then I had him tell me the sounds, “/c/ /a/ /t/ /s/- cats!” I complimented his use of Sound Power and asked him to go through the book to see if he
could use it again. He read the next two pages, “The cat is…/c/ /c/ /c/ climbing. The cat is…/s/ /s/ sleeping.” Here we see how at first Ed was not very confident reading the text, but when supported using Sound Power, he was able to read the word correctly and establish the meaning of the text.

**Sight Word Power.** Michael has known all his sight words since February. He enjoys reading books and finding sight words in his books and in his environment. During reader’s workshop he asked me to read a book with him called, “Two.” When I sat down with him he said, “I know how to read this book because it has a lot of sight words in it! Can I read it to you?” Of course I said yes! He went through the book and read, “Here are two blue flowers. Here are two red flowers. Here are two purple flowers…etc.” After praising his super reading, I asked him to point out the sight words to me. He correctly pointed to ‘here,’ ‘are,’ and ‘two.’ I then told him the color words are also sight words and he was even more excited he was able to recognize more words as sight words.

Lauren loves pointing out sight words while reading and throughout the day. During morning routine one day I had an old poem posted and she ran over to me and said, “Miss Bessing! Miss Bessing! I read that whole poem! Come over, let me show you!” When I went over and listened she read the whole poem and exclaimed, “Want to know why I read this whole poem? Because look! The whole poem is sight words. All the words are sight words.” In the parent interview Lauren’s mom also talked about how she reads to Lauren every night and is noticing Lauren pointing out sight words, “She is finally starting to point at and read her sight words she is working on in class.” Lauren is confidently using Sight Word Power to read consistently at home and at school.
It was during my post interview that I saw an increased awareness in students’ talk and use of the reading strategies. Four out of the five students increased the number of times they mentioned the reading strategies and how it helped one be a good reader. Talking is an important skill when it comes to developing learning. Calkins (2015) states, “it is not surprising that social relationships are critical to a reading workshop” (Calkins, 2015, p. 23). When students are given the specific language, like the reading powers, to talk about reading, they are able to interact with text in positive ways.

Finding Two: When reading wordless picture books, students move beyond the literal and are able to demonstrate deep, meaningful comprehension.

Over the course of the study, I read two wordless picture books with the participants. Figure 3 shows a pie chart of how often students made literal connections or
meaningful comprehension while reading wordless picture books. As you can see, during our conversations the majority of student comments demonstrated meaningful comprehension. The first book was *Journey* by, Aaron Becker (2013). The story is about a young girl who wants to play, but everyone in her family is busy. She goes to her room and finds a piece of chalk. When she draws with the chalk her imagination opens up across the pages and leads her on a journey where she saves a purple bird. The purple bird ends up coming to save the girl and introducing her to a boy whom she plays with. The second story was a wordless guided reading book I found called *Snowball Fight* by, Paul Shipton (2008), illustrated by, Lindsey Gardiner. This story focuses on a girl and her family at the park. She is feeding squirrels and her brother throws a snowball at her. She tries to throw a snowball back, but misses. At the end, you see the squirrels climb up a tree the boy is standing under, and they shake the snow off of the tree and onto the boy. The girl and the father stand by the brother smiling and laughing at the brother buried in snow.

![Pie Chart](image)

*Figure 3. Students Creating Meaning.* While reading wordless picture books, students made meaning from the pictures 68% of the time and made literal connections 32% showing they demonstrated deep comprehension more often than literal comprehension.
**Journey.** My first example of students making deep meaningful connections comes from Lauren. As we read the part of the book where the girl climbs through a small drawn door from her bedroom into a lush forest. Lauren made the remark, “And I know why this book is named *Journey*, because she journeys everywhere!” From this statement she showed her connection to the title of the book and what the girl is doing in the book. She also demonstrated her understanding of what the word journey means.

Michael demonstrated deep meaningful comprehension in a few ways by thinking beyond the text. When the purple bird first gets captured by the castle men, Michael made a comment, “If it didn’t have a long tail he probably wouldn’t get captured.” Confused myself, I asked him why he thought this and he said, “Because they might…the tail might get stuck in the net so if it didn’t have the tail then it could fly away.” Here Michael is thinking about why the castle men were able to capture the bird. The purple bird has a long flowing tail and in his mind, it would get stuck if he tried to escape the net.

After, the girl in the story releases the bird and is caged by the castle men as punishment. I asked Michael how the girl must feel here and he said, “She’s feeling sad and right here I think she’s hungry and she’s lonelier than when she was trying to play with the family because she knew she has somebody with her, but now she doesn’t have anybody.” He has not only shared that the girl is sad, but he shared why she is sad based on the previous events in the story.

The next part of the story showed the purple bird coming back to save the girl. The students also knew there was a boy with purple chalk, as he was shown in the title pages of the book. Michael poses the question to the group, “Do you think the bird is
making a friend? Do you think the bird is trying to help her make a new friend?” And dialogue continued:

**Michael**: Yeah, and then she comes out of the mailbox and then she makes a new friend.

**Claire**: It matches the color!

**Miss Bessing**: So the bird matches the color of the boy’s chalk.

**Claire**: The bird is his bird. I see the same color!

**Miss Bessing**: So do you think it was the bird that helped her or the boy that helped her get away?

**Michael and Claire**: Umm…

**Jess**: Umm right because he has lines and he has purple and he drawed the bird.

**Michael**: But I think, I think they both helped her get out.

**Miss Bessing**: You think they both helped her get out? Why Michael?

**Michael**: Because he drawed the bird and then, and then he went in there and the bird they tried to save her because it did.

**Miss Bessing**: What do you think Lauren?

**Lauren**: I think that since in the beginning of the story he wanted to play with her and he drawed on her wall to make a door and then she went in it and then she, and then she made a boat to lead to a different land and she just found the bird there and somehow it getted there and then, and then I think happened she came out to let the bird come to him.

Here you see the detailed conversation that ensues based on Michael’s first question and how the students are trying to make sense of how the two friends came together. The students are moved beyond the text by not only bringing their background knowledge to the conversation, but they are also creating new information based on their
own understandings, “and thinking about what the author has not stated but implied (Fountas, & Pinnell, 2011, p.18). Wordless picture books gave students the ability to think beyond the text in a variety of ways depending on their background knowledge and understanding of the text.

**Snow Ball Fight.** We first got our minds ready to read this book and I gave the students a small book introduction. After, Jess gave meaning to each character, “This is the dad, and the sister, and the brother. The daughter is getting the squirrels some food.” Then Claire added, “The dad is watching the girl looking at the chipmunks and feeds them and she suddenly saw a snowball go on her and it got on her snow jacket!” I brought attention to the picture, “What is her mouth doing?” and Lauren said, “She is surprised.” When I ask Lauren what the girl might say, Lauren just stared at the picture and said, “I don’t know.” Michael then added, “She might say, “Who just did that?” But she’s happy on this page, but then someone threw that snowball at her and now she’s sad on this page and the dad is across here and here the dad is happy…” Then Lauren said, “She might be feeling comsi comsa” which means “so-so” or “okay” in French. The first snowball had the students talking back and forth with each other about the characters’ feelings and why the girl might be feeling this way.

The students read through the next few pages on how the girl tried to throw a snowball at the boy, but she misses and now the squirrels are climbing up the tree. I brought their attention to the squirrels:

**Miss Bessing:** What are the squirrels doing here? We should pay attention to them too.

**Michael:** On this page they’re…

**Claire:** They’re smiling at the girl…?
Miss Bessing: Why might they be smiling at the girl?

Michael: Maybe because they are on the brother’s side, but she’s like ‘why are you throwing snowballs at me?’ and then maybe the squirrels are and maybe they’re not.

Claire: Ohhhhhh WAIT! What if they shake the tree and all the snow came down and then it end up being like this? (pointing to the boy)

Michael: Oh look! There’s no more snow! [looking at the tree that once had snow, now has no snow]

Claire: And then it started like this, [flipping from the previous page to the last page with the snow off the tree] but now it took off and landed on the brother! [noticing the difference from the beginning of the book to the end of the book]

With a little guidance the students were able to discover what happened and connect the pages together using only the pictures of the wordless picture book. Students used several of different strategies to make meaning such as searching, cross-checking, and rereading (Lysaker, & Hopper, 2015). When students read wordless picture books they were still able to comprehend the text in meaningful ways.

Finding Three: Confidence building strategies do not necessarily change students’ self-concept as readers.

Going into my research I was most curious to see if the use of confidence building strategies would impact students’ self-concept as readers. I began with a pre-interview to see what students’ ideas were around themselves as readers. Using the Burke Reading Inventory I asked students who a good reader was in their life, and then asked them to rate themselves on a scale of 1-5, with 5 meaning they are a terrific reader. I found most students already saw themselves as “terrific readers” with 75% students rating themselves
as a 5. Claire was not present for the pre interview process and data collection began when she came back. She rated herself as a terrific reader at the end of the study.

Michael and Jess rated themselves terrific readers in the in the beginning of the study and at the conclusion of the study. Lauren’s self-concept as a reader increased. She rated herself as a 3 during the pre-interview stating, “Because [the book] I got it was three and I thought I could readed some pages and I think I got it right.” In this statement she was talking about how she took what she thought was a level B book out of the library and thought she read it correctly. In her post interview, she rated herself as a 5 saying, “I have a book in my bag that I could kind of read that’s a square book and I have a book that’s a circle book and I could read the beginning!” In my classroom I have the books labeled with shapes so she is referring to a level B and a level C book. Whereas Ed rated himself as a terrific reader prior to the study exclaiming, “Because I’m reading all the time. I still want to get better at it.” Our last conversation left me questioning how Ed saw himself as a reader. At first he struggled to understand the question, rating himself as a 10 and then adding random noises. Here’s the end of our dialogue:

**Miss Bessing:** How would you rate yourself as a reader Ed, a one, two, three, four, or five?

**Ed:** 5.

**Miss Bessing:** So you would rate yourself a terrific reader? Why?

**Ed:** Because mommy and daddy help me read sometimes so I know how to read, but sometimes I don’t know how to read.

**Miss Bessing:** Sometimes you don’t know how to read? So, does that mean you are a 5?

**Ed:** I don’t know.
Miss Bessing: If you had to rate yourself, what would you rate yourself a one, two, three, four, or five?

Ed: A one.

Miss Bessing: Why is that?

Ed: ‘Cuz mommy and daddy never read to me.

His view drastically changed from a five to a one. The vast change could be for a number of reasons which I will explain further in my discussion.

Results for all participants pre-and post-interview ratings are summarized above in Figure 4. Some students’ self-concept of themselves as readers changed, whereas others stayed the same. Due to the inconsistent responses, it is not clear whether confidence building strategies impact students’ self-concept as readers.
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to see if confidence building strategies had an impact on students’ self-concept as readers. From the four-week study, there are three major themes. First is that students demonstrate an increased awareness of reading strategies and excitement in utilizing them. This is supported by research done by Martin, and Kragler (2012). The researchers discovered how students are aware of the strategies they are using while reading. In Martin and Kragler’s (2012) study, participants made comments such as, “Sometimes if you look at the pictures, it helps you” (Martin, & Kragler, 2012, p. 147). Here students were demonstrating their metacognitive skills of understanding what strategies they were using while reading to help them become better readers. Similarly, Calkins (2015) describes ways to teach reading strategies to help students become successful readers.

The second finding of this study showed that students reading wordless picture books are able to move beyond the literal and are able to demonstrate deep, meaningful comprehension. Lysaker and Hopper (2015) discuss ways in which students formed early comprehension strategies while reading wordless picture books. The researchers noticed their student frequently used searching and cross-checking strategies to help the student create meaning (Lysaker, & Hopper, 2015). I also noticed my students using searching and cross-checking as strategies to help them make meaning of the text using wordless picture books.

Lastly, the third finding was that I could not properly determine if confidence building strategies changed students’ self-concept as readers. Students’ self-concept as readers differed across the participant group. Perhaps my students were not able to form
an accurate self-concept of themselves yet. This relates to a study by Cohressen, et al., (2016) found that students who had not been in school one full year could not form an accurate academic self-concept. The researchers noted, “children who rated themselves highly in fact achieved low scores, and vice versa” (Cohressen, et al., 2016, p. 7). The researchers became aware that their observations and findings based on their testing did not match student responses of themselves as readers. Using confidence building strategies with my students proved to be beneficial in helping students understand how to be good readers, but this did not clearly transcend to my students’ changing their self-concept as readers.

Conclusions

Explicitly teaching students reading strategies gives them the tools and language they need to be good readers and also talk about how they are good readers.

It is important to provide our students the strategies they need to become lifelong readers and the language they need to express themselves. Lucy Calkins (2015) labels a variety of “essentials” for teaching students reading, one of those essentials being, “learners need direct, explicit instruction in the strategies of proficient reading” (p. 21). Prado and Plourde (2011) studied if explicitly teaching reading strategies could impact student reading comprehension. The researchers found, “Most students involved in the study (40 out of 57) showed growth in the area of reading comprehension after they received instruction in how to use and apply the reading strategies” (Prado, & Plourde, 2011, p. 40). When teachers clearly teach the reading strategies, students will be able to understand what is expected of them to be good readers. Once students are taught this
expectation, they are able to practice what being a good reader looks like and sounds like. From there, students will be able to have engaging and thoughtful conversations while reading and talk about what makes them a good reader. By having more of these conversations it may help build students’ self-concept of themselves as readers.

When looking at my students I noticed after teaching a reading strategy they were eager to talk to me about what they were doing and how it would help them read. Similarly, Martin and Kragler (2012) also noticed their students being able to talk about what they were doing while reading. The researchers’ participants shared responses of using the pictures, sounding out words, and using sight words to help them figure out the meaning of the book (Martin, & Kragler, 2012). My students showed confidence in their reading strategies by talking about how they were using them effectively. After learning about pointer power, lots of my students would point all around the room and talk about how the recognized a letter or a word. Lauren and Jess would skip around the room, proving they were enjoying using the reading strategy and confident while performing it. Ed showed his confidence when shouting his name across the room. Michael enjoyed recognizing the sight words in his book and proudly asked me to come over and listen to him read. Claire is a professional in talking about how picture power helps her figure out the words while reading. Through these and many other experiences throughout my study, it is evident that teaching our students reading strategies supports students engagement in the reading process and provides them the tools to talk about what they are doing to help them read.
Students easily create meaning when reading wordless picture books.

Deep meaningful comprehension was present in my students’ overall conversation with wordless picture books 68% of the time and literal comprehension 32% of the time. It seemed in the beginning of our conversations students would make literal connections by stating what was directly on the page such as, “there is a red door” or “look, the purple bird.” Once students continued reading they were able to make deep meaningful comprehension with ease. One reason for this could be that students needed time to familiarize themselves with the context of the book. Lysaker and Hopper (2015) describe an early comprehension strategy called “searching” where students “begin reading a page of text, [and] gather information from multiple sources – print, image, background knowledge and experience – and then select elements of what is gathered to construct a coherent whole” (p. 651). You could tell by the way students would look at the picture, say something, wait, and then add more information, that they were continuing to gather more information each time they looked at the picture. During this time, students were developing their comprehension of the text. It is with this process of searching students were able to easily demonstrate deep meaningful comprehension connecting all the pages in the book.

Another aspect of the wordless picture book that may have helped students create meaning easily is the fact there were no words. Collins and Glover (2015) state there is a time where students realize they cannot read conventionally because they realize what they are saying does not necessarily match the text. When reading wordless picture books students do not have to look at the book and worry the story they were generating did not match the words. The children were able to gain confidence knowing there was
no right or wrong story. The absence of words made it easier for the students to focus on a spread of pages in the book and figure out what the meaning was. Then connecting these thoughts to the previous pages allowed students to make thoughtful predictions based on the story’s meaning.

**It is not determined if confidence building strategies impact students’ self-concept as readers.**

While I believe confidence building strategies are important and useful in the classroom, I was not able to determine if confidence building strategies change students’ self-concept as readers. I found a large part of this conclusion was a result of the last question I asked students on the Burke Reading Inventory Questionnaire. It stated, “On a scale of 1-5, 5 being you’re a terrific reader, how would you rate yourself as a reader?”Up until this point I do not believe my participants have ever been asked to rate themselves on a scale like the one suggested here. Many of the responses I received were, “I read 100 pages a day!” or “I practice my sight words every night!” They were not grasping what each number represented in the scale of being a “terrific reader.” Although some students’ self-concept did change, I am not able to assert this is truly how they feel about themselves as readers because of the varied responses.

Another reason for students’ inconsistency with rating their self-concept could be they may not be able to form an academic self-concept of themselves yet. Cohressen, et al., (2016) found students were not able to form an accurate academic self-concept of themselves until after their first full year in school. Michael, and Laruen have attended pre-kindergarten programs prior to kindergarten, whereas Ed, Jess, and Claire have not had formal schooling before their kindergarten year. The lack of school experience could
be a factor in why there were mixed responses across the five students. The students may not have been able to accurately form a self-concept of themselves as readers.

**Implications For Teachers**

Explicitly teach students different language for reading strategies to meet children’s individual needs.

It is important for teachers to plan how they will explicitly teach reading strategies to their students. These are the tools they will need to help students be conventional readers. For this study I used the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Reading Instruction (2015) and she called each strategy a super power. Part of this was explaining to students each super power and how each power helped you become a better reader. When I worked in a different school district, we used beanie babies to help teach our students reading strategies. For example, “Eagle Eye” meant using the picture to help you figure out a word, or “Stretchy the Snake” helped you sound out the letters in the word. No matter how you teach reading strategies it is essential to provide various specific language around each strategy so all students are able to be successful. By providing specific language for the reading strategies, students will be able to use the language that they feel most connected with.

When teachers explicitly teach reading strategies it is doing more than helping children read. The language the teacher uses should be, specific and brief (Denton, 2014).Explicitly teaching the reading strategies gives our students the language they need to talk about how they are using the reading strategies and how this helps them be good readers (Calkins, 2015). It was exciting to see during my study as I taught a reading strategy the kids were more engaged in their reading and wanted to show me how they
were using each strategy. Lauren specifically would state, “Want to know how I read all of that? Because I used picture power!” When students are taught the language for the reading strategies they understand the process of reading as well as talk about how this makes them good readers.

**Teachers can use wordless picture books to help students create deep meaningful connections while reading.**

One of the most important parts of reading is reading for meaning. McGee and Richgels, (2012) assert meaning “involves interpreting messages” (McGee, & Richgels, 2012, p. 7). At times students are more concerned about reading each word correctly rather than understanding what messages are coming across in their reading. The use of wordless picture books takes this concern away so students are able to focus their attention on meaning making practices. As I watched my students engage in wordless picture books, their faces lit up when they noticed, “This book has no words!” Immediately the stress of “reading” was taken away and they were able to enjoy the book that was in front of them. The removed pressure to read the words helps children create meaning while reading wordless picture books.

Another reason why using wordless picture books may help students create deep meaningful connections while reading is the fact that “prior to formal schooling, children rely heavily on the reading of images to make sense of picture books” (Lysaker, & Hopper, 2015, p. 650). When students are in their emergent stage of literacy, much of their comprehension comes from reading pictures to create meaning. So it makes sense to start our reading instruction with wordless picture books. Most students will be familiar with the task of looking at pictures and talking about what they see. The more
teachers expose students to wordless picture books, the easier it will become for them to create deep meaningful comprehension from the text. These skills will only benefit our students when we teach them to read conventionally.

**Teachers need to find appropriate ways for students to assess their self-concept of themselves as readers.**

It could be a difficult task for our students to formally assess a self-concept of themselves as readers. The question I asked on rating students’ self-concept as a reader at the end of the Burke Reading Inventory felt long, and confusing to my five and six-year-old students. Perhaps the same way we explicitly teach our emergent readers strategies to help them read, we also need to teach them what a good reader looks like, sounds like, and thinks like. Forming lessons around what good readers do will show students exactly what they need to do to identify themselves as good readers. Once students understand what a good reader does, perhaps then students will be more equipped to assess their own reading self-concept.

When looking at other ways to understand students’ self-concepts I found the “Draw a Reader Test (DART)” (Shagoury, & Power, 2012). In this assessment researchers ask students to “draw a reader.” That’s it. When students are done, researchers go through and analyze the various aspects of the picture to understand “children’s beliefs about what it means to be a reader” (p. 162). The test is more developmentally appropriate for kindergarten, and we are still able to gather a lot of information on how a student may interpret what a reader is depending on what they draw in their picture or leave out of their picture. I did not know about this assessment until after my research while exploring other options for students to assess their self-
concept. The DART could be used in future research the same way I incorporated the pre-and post-interview. The DART could be given at the beginning of the study to see how students view readers prior to data collection, and at the end of the study to see if their view of what a reader is changes after being taught what good readers do. Depending on what students draw, and say about their picture, this would give researchers a better idea around students’ self-concept of themselves as readers.

**Limitations**

Two limitations of my research were lack of time to gather data and small sample size. The teaching of confidence building strategies only occurred in a four-week time period, which is not long enough to show significant change in students’ self-concept as readers. There were also only five students who participated in this research, which means the results cannot be generalized to other populations. More input from various populations of emergent readers would be needed to conclude if confidence building strategies change students’ self-concept as readers.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Based on my research I plan to explicitly teach reading strategies and help students create meaning while reading wordless picture books. I would be curious to see if students’ self-efficacy as readers impacts students’ self-concept as reader. In other words, does the way a student feels in control of their success as a reader correlate with their own self-perception as a reader? I think it would also be interesting to find other ways for students to assess their self-concept as a reader other than a rating scale. It is important to find other ways to help our students see themselves as readers, and part of
the journey is finding other ways for students to communicate how they see themselves as readers.

**Overall Significance**

This study is important as it looks to see the impact of confidence building strategies on students’ self-concept of themselves as readers. It provides teachers with confidence building strategies that could change students’ self-concept as readers. The results of this study show students talk more about reading when given appropriate language and are able to make deep meaningful comprehension while reading wordless picture books. Although this study did not conclude if confidence building strategies were able to change students’ self-concept as readers, I believe this is only the beginning in helping our students gain confidence with reading and seeing themselves as readers.
References


Dooley, C. (2010). Young children’s approaches to books: The emergence of comprehension. *Reading Teacher, 64*(2), 120-130. doi:10.1598/RT.64.2.4


Appendix A

Pre Interview Questions for Students


1. Who is a good reader you know?

2. What makes him or her a good reader?

3. Do you think that she or he ever comes to something she or he does not know when she or he reads?

4. If yes, what do you think she or he does?

5. If no, suppose that she or he does come to something that she or he does not know. Imagine what they would do.

6. If you knew that someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?

7. What would a teacher do to help that person?
8. How did you learn to read? What did you or someone else do to help you learn?

9. What would you like to do better as a reader?

10. On a scale or 1-5, 5 being a terrific reader, how would you rate yourself as a reader?
Appendix B

Post Interview Questions for Students


1. Who is a good reader you know?

2. What makes him or her a good reader?

3. Do you think that she or he ever comes to something she or he does not know when she or he reads?

4. If yes, what do you think she or he does?

5. If no, suppose that she or he does come to something that she or he does not know. Imagine what they would do.

6. If you knew that someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?

7. What would a teacher do to help that person?
8. How did you learn to read? What did you or someone else do to help you learn?

9. What would you like to do better as a reader?

10. On a scale of 1-5, 5 being a terrific reader, how would you rate yourself as a reader?
Appendix C

Parent/Guardian Teacher-Created Survey Questions

Please answer these questions as specific and detailed as possible to the best of your ability.

**Your Beliefs around Literacy**

1. How do you feel about reading?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

2. Do you remember how you learned to read? If yes, explain how.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

3. Who encouraged you to learn or keep reading? Explain how.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

4. Was there anyone who discouraged you from learning or continuing to read? Explain how.

______________________________________________________________________________
5. Tell me about your earliest reading experience.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Literacy in Your Home Environment

1. What are your earliest reading experiences with your child?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. Do you read to your child or does your child read to you? Explain in what situations.
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. What kind of access does your child have to books at home? Explain.
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
4. How do you feel about these reading experiences?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

5. How do you think your child feels about these reading experiences?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Child’s Self-Concept from Your Perspective

1. How do you think your child sees himself or herself as a reader?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

2. Why do you think this is? In other words, what shapes your belief of your child’s reading self-concept?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

3. What could I do as his or her teacher to affect your child’s feelings about himself/herself as a reader?

______________________________________________________________________________