Read Alouds and Their Impact on Students' Literacy Development

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Read Alouds and Their Impact on Students' Literacy Development

Rebecca L. Walch

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the impact of reading aloud to upper or intermediate elementary students. The purpose of this study is to research how fourth grade students respond to a variety of read aloud texts, and how these rich literacy experiences impact students’ literacy development. This study gives background information about read alouds in the classroom and explores one fourth grade class's responses to read aloud text including the impact of these read alouds on students' literacy development.
Introduction

“The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” stated Jim Trelease (2006) in his book, The Read-Aloud Handbook (p. 3). Many teachers take time out of their busy school day to read a book aloud to their students, but they may be unaware of the potential benefits of reading aloud. As students progress through their elementary years, the focus shifts from listening and learning to read, to reading and learning for themselves (Harlaar, Dale, & Plomin, 2007). The read aloud tends to get lost in upper elementary years, and there are very few research studies on the impacts of reading aloud to intermediate students.

Problem Statement

When do read alouds stop being so important? As students develop their reading abilities, elementary teachers shift their focus from reading aloud and modeling good reading for their students to having their students read and practice independently for themselves (Harlaar et al. 2007). Pentimonti and Justice (2010) stated that read alouds are particularly beneficial for young children. Although targeting of read alouds is found most often in primary classrooms and independent reading is the focus for older students, it is important and also necessary to find a balance between these modes of reading at each elementary level.

Many teachers will agree that reading aloud is fun and enjoyable for students, but could there be more to a read aloud’s full potential? Does reading aloud to students really help them grow in their individual reading skills? This study takes a deeper look at a fourth grade classroom to see how read alouds impact students’ literacy development.
Rationale

This particular study on read alouds and intermediate students is important for many reasons. First, it is necessary for more research to be done in this field because the majority of research studies on the topic of reading aloud to students focus on primary elementary grades. Baker, Santoro, Chard, Fien, Park, & Otterstedt (2013); Strachan (2015); Silverman, Crandell, & Carlis, (2013); and Fien, Santoro, Baker, Park, Chard, Williams, & Haria (2011) are just a few of the researchers who have explored the benefits of reading aloud to young elementary students. Fien, et al. (2011) states, "Read aloud approaches are a prevalent component of reading instruction in the early grades" (p. 308). Strachan (2015) adds that the verbal interaction and discussion between teacher and young learner helps promote social and reading skills. While there is much current research to support young learners and their development of reading skills, the research on read alouds involving intermediate students is limited.

Another reason this study is needed is because of the limited scope of the current focus of many research studies on read alouds. There is an abundance of research studies on reading aloud to students that focus on two main literacy aspects: vocabulary and comprehension. Some of the researchers of these current studies state that there can be many positive effects on students' vocabulary or comprehension abilities when listening to a text (Silverman et al. 2013; Delacruz, 2013). Delacruz (2013) states that previewing vocabulary and extending the read aloud with a written reflection or response may also lead to improvement in student reading comprehension. Students will get the chance to hear new vocabulary words from each read aloud text that is read to them (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001). Even if teachers are not particularly promoting these new vocabulary words, students are still audibly hearing and adding these words to their own vocabulary knowledge. Comprehension is a second popular topic among read aloud
studies. Teachers can also use read alouds to model comprehension strategies (Fien et al. 2011). These "think alouds" can help students understand the way readers should be thinking as they read to themselves, and this strategy can help develop comprehension.

Although the components of vocabulary and comprehension are crucial aspects of literacy, I am curious if there are other elements that might be impacted as a result of reading aloud to older students. My research study explores what happens when intermediate students engage in classroom read alouds.

**Purpose for the Study**

As a classroom teacher, I am very interested in this topic because along with many teachers, I like to take time to read aloud to my students. I observed the literary impact read alouds had on my students. I assessed a fourth grade class's response and reaction to interactive read alouds. I gathered data that revealed the effect of read alouds on intermediate students and how this relates to students' literacy development. For this research project I explored the areas of literacy that were expanded when students listened and interacted with a read aloud text.

**Research Questions**

I explored answers to the research question: how can reading aloud to fourth grade students have an impact on their literacy learning? Throughout this study I also spent time exploring the question: what happens after a classroom or small group read aloud? Lastly, I extended my findings to investigate and help equip teachers to better employ read alouds in their own classrooms by researching the question: what strategies make for a successful and engaging read aloud in the classroom?
Literature Review

Introduction

Reading aloud to students is on the daily schedule for many primary elementary classrooms but lacking in many intermediate elementary settings. Prior research on read alouds includes benefits and definitions of read alouds, verbal linguistic intelligence, genres, and listening comprehension. This literature review will highlight the main elements of read alouds in elementary classrooms.

Read Alouds

Read aloud can be defined as an activity that "provides a context through which adults and children share a joint topic focus, which affords an opportunity for children to participate in increasingly sophisticated conversations that move beyond a perceptual focus to encompass conceptually oriented discussions" (Pentimonti & Justice 2010, p. 242). Strachan (2015) continues this definition by describing read alouds more in depth by stating, “During interactive read-alouds, teachers scaffold children’s sense making and support their learning of new concepts through direct instruction; asking questions before, during, and after reading” (p. 209). An interactive read aloud is time for the teacher to read a book aloud and discuss it with his or her class. The teacher and students take turns asking questions, listening intently to the text and others’ comments, making predictions, and discussing the text with others to comprehend the book.

Discussions. Discussions during a read aloud text experience are crucial, but are not the only benefit of reading aloud to a student. "Physical and verbal interactions between students and teacher during interactive read-alouds allow teachers of young children to refute misconceptions" (Strachan 2015, p. 209). Vocabulary in the text could halt the meaning for a student. If the words
don't make sense to the child, meaning of the text can be lost. When teachers read and discuss the
text aloud it helps alleviate misconceptions or loss of understanding of the book. When the
teacher and the students have a discussion about the text, it can provide the teacher with insight
to what the students are clearly understanding and what parts of the text have lost meaning.

**Connections.** Another advantage reading aloud to students can have is building student
ability to make connections. Strachan (2015) wrote, “Regular interactions throughout a read-
aloud have the potential to help students recognize connections between the text, their lives, and
the larger global community" (p. 209). Students who make connections as they read or listen to a
text often have a deeper understanding of the text because they are taking time to create meaning
(Waller & Barrentine, 2015). The connection or relation with a text can also resonate greater with
the student if they can empathize or bond with the character or setting of a text.

**Read Alouds with Primary Students.** There have been many noted benefits for reading
aloud with younger elementary children. Younger students benefit from read alouds for many
reasons. Wiseman (2011) stated, "Interactive read alouds are important learning opportunities for
emergent readers because teachers and peers can actively model and scaffold comprehension
strategies, engage readers, and cultivate a community of learners" (p. 431). Teachers can use an
interactive read aloud to model fluent reading. Teachers may also use read alouds to help scaffold
a text that would be too difficult for the students to read on their own. Pentimonti and Justice
(2010) define scaffolding as "the process of temporarily providing support to a learner and then
gradually withdrawing this support as the learner becomes capable of independence in
performing tasks" (p. 241). Strachan (2015) continued to write about the importance of reading
aloud to primary students. She researched impacts of read alouds for kindergarten students.
Strachan (2015) stated that discussions about a text help clarify the information of the passage for younger students.

**Read Alouds with Intermediate Students.** There is limited information on the impact for intermediate students and their responses to read aloud texts. One study by Clark & Andreasen (2014) explores impacts of read alouds to sixth grade students. The findings of their study indicate that students had mixed feelings about being read to aloud, but that all students could state instructional benefits of read alouds (Clark, 2014). A second study researched comprehension and higher-level thinking skills. Wolf, Crosson, and Resnick (2005) researched elementary and middle school students' comprehension and thinking skills during read alouds. Their findings concluded that the discussions associated with read aloud texts did help improve student comprehension (Wolf et al. 2005). My current study continues to fill this research gap of limited information by observing the impact of reading aloud to fourth grade students.

**Verbal Linguistic Intelligence**

Listening to verbal speech is crucial in read alouds. Reading aloud to students taps into verbal intelligence because teachers use oral language to communicate the written passage and students use the verbal communication to make meaning and discuss the text.

Students attain knowledge through a variety of learning styles. Gardner introduced this theory of Multiple Intelligences in 1983 (Gardner & Moran). Gardner and Moran (2006) state "an intelligence is defined as a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture" (p. 227). There are eight main classifications of learning styles in Gardner's research theory of Multiple Intelligence (Bas & Beyhan, 2010). Verbal or linguistic intelligence is explained as learning via language of both oral and written communication.
There are different intelligences according to Gardner and Moran (2006), but students are unique in the variance of strengths each can possess. Bas and Beyhan (2010) state that students may have times where any of the learning styles benefit their understanding but people usually are stronger in just one or two dimensions. Also, each person's strengths are unique to his or her own perceptions. Learning style strengths may change for individuals as tasks or assignments vary (Bas & Beyhan, 2010).

Vocal or verbal instruction is a popular form of teaching in the classroom. Yenice and Aktamis (2010) state that most traditional forms of teaching are directed from verbal intelligence. Verbal intelligence is obviously not the only style of teaching, but it is used daily throughout the classroom. There are many forms of this intelligence, and reading a book aloud is only one example of vocal instruction.

Genres

Reading categories have many classifications, but perhaps one of the most common would be cataloging a book as fiction or nonfiction. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines fiction as a "written story about people or events that are not real" (Fiction, 2015). Nonfiction is defined as "writing that is about facts or real events" (Nonfiction, 2015). I thought it would be important to see how read alouds differ when reading from a variety of genres.

**Fiction.** Many teacher read alouds use fiction texts. These fiction stories include key literary elements such as plot, characters, setting, main idea, and supporting details. Fiction can be used to teach new reading lessons in the classroom. Oueini, Bahous, and Nabhani’s study (2008) is one example of a research study where fiction texts were the only genre read. They conducted a ten week study reading five fiction books to kindergarteners. The main focus of this study was to answer their research questions about influencing students’ vocabulary and
comprehension as a result of read alouds. Oueini et al. (2008) found through their research that students had a gain of both comprehension and vocabulary development as students were able to interact in classroom discussions about the fiction texts. Vocabulary words were also found in collected writing samples and displayed students’ growth in the ability to recreate their understanding through means of written communication (Oueini et al. 2008).

**Nonfiction.** Although many read aloud texts are fiction stories, other genres of books are used for read alouds. Strachan (2015) researches the benefit of reading nonfiction texts to kindergarten students. Her findings show that even young students can gain knowledge and a deeper understanding of core subject material, in this case economics, through read aloud texts (Strachan, 2015). Lori Greenawalt (2010) also conducted a study about read alouds and student comprehension using a nonfiction text. She asked students yes or no and open ended comprehension questions about the read aloud text. Her study revealed students had a good understanding and were able to discuss and interact with the nonfiction text (Greenawalt, 2010). During teacher read alouds, it is important to balance the genre of the passage using both fiction and nonfiction texts.

**Listening Comprehension**

During a classroom read aloud, the teacher is holding the book and reading aloud to her class. Students will not be able to see the printed text up close. Students are not following along as their teacher reads a picture book or chapter of a larger book. These students are relying upon their listening skills of the read aloud to comprehend the text.

"Comprehension skills have two dimensions: reading and listening comprehension" (Tok & Mazi, 2015, p. 1). Listening skills are important in schools and reiterated by many classroom teachers. There is a need for student development in listening comprehension (Hemmati,
Gholamrezapour, & Hessamy, 2015). Tok and Mazi (2015) continue to state that listening is a higher level thinking skill and the importance of listening to reading is often underestimated. Good listening comprehension entails understanding the main idea and supporting details of a text, as well as the ability to infer, predict, connect, and question a text (Tok & Mazi, 2015).

In a study by Hemmati et al. (2015), it was found that storytelling and read alouds were avenues to effectively practice and enhance listening skills. Some students may have greater strengths in listening than others, as some students are auditory learners, or learn best when they can hear information (Bas & Beyhan, 2010).

Diakidoy, Stylianou, Karefillidou, & Papageorgiou (2005), conducted a 612 student study to research the correlation between reading and listening comprehension among various text types. Students were observed in grades two, four, six, and eight. The results showed that students scored higher in the listening comprehension assessments over the reading comprehension assessments in all grades other than grade eight (Diakidoy et al. 2015). Also, reading genres did not play a role in which comprehension type scored higher (Diakidoy et al. 2015). Listening comprehension is an important element to grasp and a crucial piece of literacy during read alouds.

**Summary**

Read alouds can be a powerful tool in the classroom, but there is a limited amount of research that displays the benefits of reading aloud to intermediate students. I have highlighted four themes that relate to my current research study and that support the importance of reading aloud to elementary students. Read alouds, verbal linguistic intelligence, genres, and listening comprehension have all influenced my research, and are important aspects of read alouds.
Methods

Research Questions

This study explores answers to how reading aloud to fourth grade students can have an impact on their literacy learning. Throughout this study I have also spent time exploring the question regarding what happens after a classroom or small group read aloud. I also am extending my findings in the hopes of helping equip teachers to better employ read alouds in their own classrooms. I investigated the question about what strategies create a successful and engaging read aloud in the classroom.

Participants

The participants in this study include eighteen fourth grade students. These students are all members of the same class and range in age from eight to ten years old. There are ten boys and eight girls in this study. The demographics of these students represent a variety of ethnicities. White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and European students comprise the classroom. English is not the first language spoken at home in three households. Of the eighteen students, one student has an IEP and another student has 504 accommodations to help them work to their full potential in the classroom. Two students are receiving pullout services similar to an RTI intervention twice a week for thirty minutes each session. Also, one student receives a pull out group speech session twice a week with a fifth and sixth grade student. All students in this one particular fourth grade class were selected as participants to represent a variety of diverse learners.

Context

This study was conducted in a fourth grade classroom at a small, private Christian school. The school is located in a suburban district in the Northeastern United States. The school busses
in students from many of the surrounding urban, suburban, and rural districts. Grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth are taught in the same school building. There currently is only one class per grade level on the elementary side of the school, but more students and grade levels make up the high school. This private school is not restricted by Common Core State Standards, or other government funding programs.

In the context of the specific classroom, there are eighteen students, myself (the teacher and the researcher), and a consultant teacher who pushes in for four hours a week. This is my third year teaching fourth grade at this school.

**Positionality**

I graduated from college in 2012 with my Bachelor's Degree in Childhood and Special Education. I began subbing in multiple school districts, and quickly was offered a long-term subbing position at my alma mater high school, where I had graduated in 2009. After seven weeks teaching high school algebra, statistics, and geometry, I was offered my dream position as a fourth grade teacher to start the following September.

In addition to being a graduate student at The College at Brockport, and an alumni in the school I work for, I am a wife, Christian, sister, and daughter. I enjoy reading and love teaching. These characteristics may influence the way I think about the issues I am researching.

In this study I have many roles. First, I am the general education teacher in fourth grade, teaching all general subject areas. I am the facilitator of learning and the keeper of our daily classroom schedule. My students know me and feel comfortable participating and taking risks in their learning in my classroom.
I have a role being an observer during the course of this study. In that time of observing, I participate by reading books aloud to my students and noting their reactions and responses. I also take notes and administer comprehension assessments and informal checks.

**Data Collection**

This is a qualitative study because it is an exploration of a problem (Clark & Cresswell, 2015). These authors explain that this type of research relies on the views of participants and asks questions of the participants to collects data and display themes (Clark & Cresswell, 2015). To determine answers to my research questions I used various tools to collect data including comprehension checks, post reading journal writing, observational notes, and survey questions. Through observation and study of these methods, I was able to provide more insight into my research question on the impact of read alouds for intermediate students.

**Comprehension checks.** There was a comprehension check after the read alouds that displayed data on how much of the text students understood. The comprehension checks have multiple forms. First, informal classroom discussions provide insight as to how much detail from the text my students understood. I used short answer response papers that ask questions about details from the passage. Lastly, comprehension assessments were pulled from the current classroom curriculum. These comprehension assessments are digitally composed questions through Accelerated Reading and the Renaissance Learning Company ("Renaissance Learning" n.d.). Students electronically took these comprehension quizzes and results were recorded.

**Journal writing.** Post read aloud journal writings were another form of data collection. I gathered students' written journal responses and studied them to see how my students responded to the text. I also reviewed the journals and looked for signs of attempting to implement new
vocabulary into their reflections. Lastly, I looked for ways my students synthesized or made inferences on the passages.

**Observational notes.** I continued to collect data via observational and anecdotal notes throughout the course of the study. These notes were taken during classroom discussions, read aloud sessions, and post reading activities. I reviewed the notes every Friday and took time to reflect on the responses and my own teaching practices using a teaching journal. In my personal reflections I wrote about which lessons and strategies seemed to be the most effective in my classroom and thoughts as to why.

**Discussions.** Discussions were a way to collect data during the read alouds. Throughout each read aloud session, there were varying amounts of time for participants to discuss as a class or with small groups the important events as well as participants' predictions and connections regarding the text. By observing and taking notes throughout these discussions, I had insight to participants' thoughts about the read aloud. These discussions occurred throughout each read aloud and were an important element of data collection.

**Survey questions.** The last data collection method I used was survey questions. The survey questions consisted of read aloud related questions where students were able to reflect on how they feel about being read to and how they interactive during a read aloud. See appendix below for specific questions. Surveys were given at the beginning and end of the study in class for students to complete independently.

**Procedures**

The data were collected via formal and informal methods. The primary data source for this research study was comprised of observational notes and reflections on how students responded to interactive read alouds. Observations were recorded during and after read aloud
sessions and reflections were written to summarize the reactions of the students. Also, assessments in comprehension and vocabulary were created and explored to see if there was a pattern between literacy advancements and read alouds for fourth grade students. I pulled writing samples to see the comprehension of listening to a text and observed if vocabulary words were included in such responses. Lastly, I gave students a survey regarding their thoughts and feelings about listening to a text being read aloud to them.

As I conducted the various read alouds in the classroom I would record quick notes as well as many metal notes on how the class was responding. Being the researcher and the conductor of each read aloud made it difficult to take notes at times. My notebook was always close by for me to jot down thoughts and observations during or after the lesson. Each weekend I set aside time to reflect on my notes and glanced through that week's collected data. I used these reflections as times to begin to gather my thoughts towards a coding process.

This study produced a large amount of data as each read aloud not only had notes about the lesson and class discussions, but also asked participants to produce written work by using either quick check comprehension quizzes or written response journal writings. The appendix below displays an example of a comprehension quiz and a note taking sheet students used during a read aloud activity. A typical read aloud session would follow a similar pattern consisting of reading aloud the text to the participants, a varied level of classroom discussion and interaction, a post activity following most sessions, and personal journal reflection time after each specific read aloud.

**Trustworthiness**

I conducted this qualitative study on the impact of reading aloud to fourth grade students. I researched this study over a period of six weeks and kept an open mind while observing
reactions and responses in the classroom. The triangulation of multiple forms of data collection methods, including comprehension assessments, journal reflections, surveys, and other forms of note taking, seek to establish reliability of this study. I also invested much time and thought in order to outline my plan and courses of action throughout the entire study. The study was peer and critically reviewed to ensure accuracy and reliability. To support trustworthiness of this study I have used multiple quotes and writing samples from the participants. Specific examples are included in the findings sections below.
Analysis

Data Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative study was to research the impact of reading aloud to fourth grade students. Various data collection methods were used to gather data over a six week period, where eighteen read alouds took place in the classroom. I used a triangulation of data for this research study. The triangulation of data gave me a more accurate explanation in answering my research questions as multiple forms of data collection were used. The data were collected via comprehension checks, journal writings, note taking, class discussions, and independent surveys. Read alouds took place in the classroom on average three times a week throughout the course of the study. During each read aloud, students were expected to listen and discuss our text, and for most read alouds there was an extension activity during or after the book for participants to demonstrate or expand their understanding of the text.

Once all the data were collected, I analyzed the information. I used open coding to examine my data and search for related themes or topics. In open coding, "researchers read the data and create codes based on their interpretation of the meaning of the data (Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 359). This open mindedness left the opportunity available to consider all data as relevant and of worth.

In beginning of the analysis process I searched the data for reoccurring themes or patterns. I read through the notes taken during and immediately after the read aloud sessions. I compared and categorized my notes of class discussions and personal reflections by grouping together insistences that occurred multiple times, as well as capturing unique moments. I considered room location and engagement by looked at when students participated in the most discussions which included what type of texts and prompts they responded to the best.
Next in my analysis process, I evaluated the comprehension checks. I noted responses to comprehension questions during the read aloud and compared participants' written summaries and answers to comprehension quizzes. I also looked specifically at all journal responses of both prompts and "free choice" writing based on each specific book. I analyzed the writing journals to see what patterns emerged. The final piece of data I analyzed was the reading surveys given at the beginning and end of my study. I asked students the same questions, but compared their responses and thoughts of read alouds. I looked across all this data for patterns and themes that emerged.

Findings

These data collection methods revealed many interesting components and responses from the read aloud texts implemented to this 4th grade classroom. I grouped my themes into four main finding categories. The four findings that show an impact on read alouds to fourth grade students include: how extension activities and classroom discussions can add to understanding, that specific reading strategies can be strengthened through read alouds, how choice can enhance engagement, and how participants' perceptions of read alouds shifted through the course of this study.

Extension Activities and Classroom Discussions Add to Understanding

The first finding I noted throughout my data was how extension activities and classroom discussions add to understanding of a text. There have been many studies that showed that read alouds have an impact on a student's reading comprehension (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001; Greenawalt, 2010; and Strachan, 2015). Comprehension is when the reader makes meaning that leads to understanding of a text (Mengyi et al. 2014). Read alouds can be an opportunity to teach and enhance students' comprehension reading skills (Santoro et al. 2008).
Comprehension in this study was seen through multiple types of data and classroom activities. Extension activities, such as comprehension quizzes and written reflections, as well as classroom discussions were main avenues to display how student comprehension or understanding was deepened.

**Extension Activities.** Many read aloud sessions were accompanied with an extension activity. These extension activities rotated between comprehension quizzes, written summaries, and journal responses. These activities were selected to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the read aloud text. Participants were engaged with many of the extension activities and enjoyed the range of events that followed or took place during the read aloud book. Originally, it was thought that these activities would display student comprehension, but I found that they also helped add to their understanding. I found that read aloud sessions that included an extension activity helped solidify and build a better understanding of that particular book compared to the read aloud sessions without an extension activity. This was determined by observations, discussions, and written responses.

Most read aloud sessions took place in the morning. Often after lunch I would ask the students a review question from the morning’s read aloud book. I observed that the participants were able to recall more details from the books that were accompanied with an extension activity compared to the books that were just read and discussed. *Pancakes, Pancakes, George Ferris: What a Wheel,* and *Dear Mr. Henshaw* were all read alouds that included an extension activity and were discussed with multiple detail during our after lunch review.

The extension activities seemed to create a more solid understanding of the text, and served as a review of key points which allowed the students to develop their thoughts about the book. One opposite example of this observation would be from the book *The One and Only Ivan.*
There was no extension activity after this reading, and little discussion took place. After lunch when I asked the participants a few review questions, there was very little discussion, and many key ideas from the text were not present in the participants’ comprehension. The after lunch questions had more participation where students were able to recall much more information if they had participated in an extension activity by writing about the book or answering comprehension quizzes, or participating in a classroom discussion.

One way participants strengthened their comprehension, or understanding of the read aloud text was through various comprehension quizzes. It was noted that on days when comprehension quizzes accompanied the read aloud that students had a more lasting understanding of the text as they had not only heard the read aloud, but reflected on the book as they saw the printed quiz and critically thought about the answers. These quizzes were given five times throughout the study and were taken from Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reading program. Appendix B shows a scan of a quiz print off. After a few different genres of read alouds I asked students to take the correlating comprehension quiz. Then I compared the data.

*Henry's Freedom Box* was read aloud to this fourth grade classroom. As the book was being read, students were asked to think about what they knew about slavery and what we had been learning about during our study for Black History Month. Before the read aloud began, students were already activating their schema, or prior knowledge of this subject. The students were at their desks listening to the text and interacting with our class discussion as questions or opportunities for predictions or inferences were presented. After the read aloud students took the printed comprehension quiz independently. It was found that eleven of seventeen students scored a 100% on the quiz. Three students missed less than two questions out of eight, and three students missed more than four questions on the quiz. After lunch, many students still had a very
good comprehension or understanding of *Henry's Freedom Box* because the comprehension quiz had served as a review of key information.

![Comprehension Quiz Example](image)

**Figure 4.1 - Henry’s Freedom Box** comprehension quiz example. Many of the comprehension quizzes were multiple-choice such as this one.

Comprehension quizzes were used for multiple read aloud texts of both fiction and nonfiction genres. *Pancakes, Pancakes* by Eric Carle was just one fiction picture book that I read aloud to my class. The participants were asked to listen to the read aloud text, respond to comprehension questions throughout the reading, and then participate in the independent comprehension quiz.

It was noted that during this read aloud less discussion took place and resulted in nine out of seventeen participants scored a 100% on the quiz. After lunch, the participants had a good lasting understanding of the text and were able to identify key points for the book, mostly
sections that were included in the comprehension quiz. This type of data was a pattern throughout the research study that the points of the comprehension quizzes were brought up again during the post discussions.

At the bottom of the comprehension quiz, for a bonus question, I asked participants to list each ingredient that was needed for the pancakes and how the boy gathered the ingredients. During the post discussion of the book I noted that many students were able to list the ingredients for the pancakes because they had just tried to recall each one and wrote them all out on their quiz. All participants were able to list at least three of the five ingredients and state how the character in the story gathered them. The data shows that eight of the participants were able to list and explain how all five ingredients were gathered. Figure 4.2 shows an example of how many participants listed the ingredients for the bonus question on the comprehension quiz. I also observed that participants were flipping back through the quiz and using some of the questions from the quiz to help them answer the bonus question. This comprehension quiz served as a review of the main ideas and topics of the read aloud book and gave participants an opportunity to display and build their understanding of the text.

![Image of a quiz with ingredients listed]

**Figure 4.2** - Pancakes, Pancakes question where participants recalled and reviewed key details and information of the story by listing ingredients.
Comprehension quizzes were one form of an extension activity that gave participants the opportunity to display and add to their understanding of the text. I observed through my study the more classroom discussion that took place, the better the participants did on the comprehension quizzes. Also, I observed that when participants had the chance to turn and talk with a neighbor about the book, the scores of the quizzes were the highest.

Delacruz (2013) states that extending the read aloud with a written reflection or response may also lead to improvement in student reading comprehension. Journal samples served as a second extension activity in this study where participants were able to add to their understanding of the read aloud book. On multiple occasions, I asked the participants to journal, reflect, or respond to a prompt based on the text. Creative writing was even explored as participants took ideas from the books and extended them into their own writing. Journal samples were written after listening to multiple read aloud texts including *Groundhog Gets a Say, Cactus Hotel, and Almost to Freedom*.

Throughout the study participants were asked to write journal responses from either a variety of selected prompts or more open ended, free write options. These extended writing activities helped build student understanding of the text because they were reviewing their thoughts as they wrote and reflecting upon elements of the book. *Groundhog Gets a Say* was one example of an extension activity that included a journal sample and was read on February 3rd to the class. Participants enjoyed this book about a groundhog who demands more than one day a year to celebrate him. Groundhog's friends quickly point out that he is already the only animal that has his own national holiday. The participants were asked to listen and discuss the text as it was read, and then were sent back to their seat to respond to a journal prompt.
"What other animal do you believe deserves a day of recognition and why?" was the journal prompt on the SMARTboard. I observed many participants begin to write quickly jotting down all their ideas and opinions. Others had a little more trouble generating their first thoughts. After all students chose a topic, they were engaged and writing quickly because they could choose any animal they wanted to write about. I observed the participants using ideas of persuasion and informational facts, both of which were found in our read aloud picture book. I enjoyed seeing how participants were able to connect the elements, word phrases, and key ideas from our story into their own writing pieces successfully.

Lastly, I observed students write summaries after various read aloud texts to demonstrate and add to their level of comprehension of the book. Students took time to reflect and build their comprehension of the text as they wrote down their understandings, and it was observed that students had a deeper understanding of the text on the days they wrote summaries as compared to the days when they did not. Comprehension of the text was determined based on how many details and key facts were included in each of the journal samples students recorded. Participants summarized multiple read aloud books in the form of a paragraph or bulleted list of events. Students were asked to write a summary of the read aloud after multiple read alouds including *George Ferris: What a Wheel, Dear Mr. Henshaw, Pancakes, Pancakes.*

I observed students use summaries throughout the study to demonstrate their comprehension. When students reflected at the end of the read aloud text, it helped expand their understanding of the text as they were thoughtfully reflecting on what they had just heard. On February 11th, I read the students the information text title *George Ferris: What a Wheel.* This book told of an architect named George Ferris and described his journey as he designed and created the first Ferris wheel. Students listened to the text being read aloud at their seats, with a
lined sheet of paper in front of them. Participants were asked to listen to our book, but were not
told what the proceeding activity would entail with their lined paper.

After participants listened to and discussed the text as a class, each participant was asked
to write a summary of the book. The paper was passed out before the reading and it was noted
that six students drew an illustration as the text was being read aloud. Below are a few images of
key details found in several written summaries.

**Figure 4.3** Many students included these key details as a part of their summaries for *George Ferris: What a Wheel*

Comprehension of the text and the main idea with supporting detail was clearly shown
through all eighteen summaries collected. I observed that these summaries were an extension
activity that helped build comprehension of the text as students were able to write down their
thoughts and review their understanding of the book. On days when comprehension quizzes,
journal reflections or summaries were asked to be written as the extension activity, students were
more involved in the discussions that followed than on days when an activity was not present. It
was evident that these activities allowed students to build their understanding as they thoughtfully reflected and critically thought about the text during each activity.

**Classroom Discussions.** Another way that I saw read alouds impact student comprehension was through classroom discussions. Lennox (2013) states that classroom discussions "actively engage children in reciprocal, conversational exchanges with participants sharing ideas with each other and listening to alternative perspectives" (p. 382). Discussions are opportunities for students to repeat what they understand or questions what they don't. Teachers can use these discussion times to build upon ideas to focus on the text and support and enhance critical thinking of the book (Lennox, 2013). Discussions should occur before, during, and after a read aloud text to help students create meaning (Clark & Andreasen, 2014).

All read alouds in this study had some sort of class discussion or involvement. Classroom discussions throughout this study consisted of students answering and asking questions about the text, making predictions and inferences, and summarizing or restating a piece of the text. It was observed throughout the study, that the more classroom discussion that took place, the deeper the understanding participants had of the text. Discussions including whole class, small group, and turn and talk to a partner conversations before, during, or after the read aloud session.

*Geoffrey Groundhog Tells the Weather* was one example of a book where students participated in a class discussion. I called the participants over to the rug on February 2nd, Groundhog's Day, to listen to the day's read aloud. As I read I paused to ask students comprehension type questions and allow them opportunities to make predictions or inferences on every few pages. I also had the participants turn and talk to a friend about the events and their thoughts regarding the text. I was able to walk around and listen as well as take notes as the students discussed the book together.
"I think that Geoffrey is nervous to say what he thinks about the weather because I would be scared if so many people were watching and waiting for me", I heard one student make a connection and inferences to the text. A second group was discussing the sequence of events in the book up to this point in the story. Having the time to discuss helped the students create a deeper understanding of the text. It was evident that the more time participants had to discuss the text, the better their comprehension of the book was, which was seen through higher scores on comprehension quizzes and more in-depth written reflections. Crickwing was one book read on March 1st. This book was read straight through and only paused one time for a partner discussion. After, when taking the comprehension quiz, overall students did not perform well. The average score was a 63% on this quiz, and three students scored only a 20% correct.

Discussion lacked during this read aloud time, and it was seen in multiple occasions that when there was very little discussion throughout the book that students scored lower on comprehension quizzes, and summaries lack many key details.

Through this research study and data collected, it was very evident that comprehension of a read aloud was one main area that was greatly impacted as a result from participating through an extension activity or classroom discussion. I observed that extension activities and discussions helped create a deeper understanding of the read aloud text. Participants were able to interact verbally with the text and discuss it with others, correctly answer questions on comprehension quizzes, and record written summaries for multiple text read alouds; these activities help build a deeper understanding of the book.

**Reading Strategies were Strengthened as a Result of Read Aloud Sessions**

A second finding I concluded from my data collection was that read alouds strengthened specific reading strategies. "Read alouds contribute to children's understanding of literary
elements” (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 465). Wiseman (2011) explains that read alouds can be used to scaffold reading strategies. Teachers of literacy use many strategies in their classrooms. I observed my students practicing specific reading strategies independently and in pairs through discussions. I also observed a few times that students were aware they were practicing these strategies. I noted in my observation that students saw they were incorporating both reading skills along with building specific reading strategies through read alouds.

**Visualizing.** Visualizing is when a mental picture is created in the mind of a reader. This strategy can be used to instill comprehension of the text. I read aloud the text *The Three Snow Bears* without showing participants the illustrations. I had the students visualize the text, or picture it in their heads as I read. Each participant had a lined sheet of paper in front of them to draw a favorite scene from the text. The visualizing practice helped students comprehend the book as they needed to be thoughtful in picturing a scene and filling it with multiple details from our text.

Most participants were able to write a short summary of a favorite scene that included a paragraph of detail. Below are a few samples of student visualizing images and paragraphs where participants described the scenes very accurately. Much detail about characters, objects, and personal feelings were described. Also, many of the pictures the students drew were near matches with images from the picture book. The participants were very receptive to this activity because of the choice to select their favorite scene and write what they wanted. Also, the participants were excited to combine written text with illustrations as they portrayed the scene.

This visualizing strategy helped build student comprehension and understanding of the text. It also helped participants engage with the book and gave them freedom of choice on what to draw and how to describe the scene as they pictured it.
Sequencing. On multiple occasions during the six week study I asked the participants to write down the order of events in the read aloud text. *Pancakes, Pancakes* and *Dear Mr. Henshaw* were two examples of times when participants were asked to write a summary of the text post read aloud session. Students could either bullet point or write a paragraph reflection of the order of main events for that book or chapter. I observed that some students had trouble organizing or recalling key details, while other students quickly produced a lengthy paragraph or extended list. Sequencing serves as a comprehension reading strategy as students are thoughtfully recalling ideas as they rewrite them in their own words.

Inferring and predicting. Predictions during a read aloud allow the students to engage with a text by discussing their thoughts about what they notice from the text or the images (Wiseman, 2011). Inferences and predictions are another reading strategy that can be incorporated or strengthened by a read aloud. On February 1st I read aloud the story of Noah and his ark from an online passage. As I read the text, I allowed students to color a picture of Noah. When the story was done being read, students were asked to flip the page around and write down character traits.
that Noah displayed throughout our text. As no specific character traits were listed or mentioned in the text, students had to infer using pieces of text and their own schema.

I observed some students were able to make extensive lists where they inferred as many as eighteen different traits that believed Noah displayed. This shows participants' comprehension of the text as they were able to piece together bits of information to conclude and support their listed character traits. "Dedicated, diligent, hard-working, obedient, and brave" were among the most written answers participants produced. Participants were asked in a classroom discussion that followed for reasons or evidence on how they made each character trait. I noted how students were able to create and backup their inferred claims.

Participants also used predictions during almost every read aloud. Students would make predictions about what would happen next in our text by sharing their thoughts with a partner, the whole class, or writing it down in a journal reflection. I observed through many different read alouds and classroom discussions how many participants made predictions on the different texts. I observed participants discuss Geoffrey Groundhog and what he would do next in *Geoffrey Groundhog Predicts the Weather*. "I think he will never come out and say the weather." one student predicted. Also, in *Henry's Freedom Box* students made predictions. "I think Henry will make it freedom." was a response noted from a small group's turn and talk time. Lastly, in a reflection summary I observed students write sentences in their reflections such as "George will continue to build his wheel even if others do not think it is a good idea". This was a prediction from the book *George Ferris: What a Wheel*.

**Note Taking.** I asked the participants to take notes during a few different read alouds. Some note session activities were accompanied by a note take page while other times
participants were asked to jot down a few notes on a lined sheet of paper as they listened at their desks. The appendix below shows the notes taking page for our read aloud *Cactus Hotel*.

During this read aloud, students were asked to take notes on the various animals and plants that were discussed in the text. These note sheets helped keep participants attentive to the story line as they were required to listen for specific elements. When the book was finished, students were asked to write a continuation of the story and were asked to tie in elements from the original text. The participants loved this activity as they were allowed to be creative with their responses. The engagement level was high for multiple reasons, including being engaged as the text was being read as notes needed to be taken, and also engagement was high during the culminating activity as students had a choice on what they wanted to write about, using the original text as a starting point. Below is an example of the notes participants took as they listened to the text and also a continuation story based on our book.

![Note taking sheet](image)

*Figure 4.5* - Note taking sheet where students jotted down key information before continuing to write an inferential story.
I found that my students were able to practice the specific reading strategies of visualizing, sequencing, inferring, predicting, and note taking independently throughout this study. I found that my students' ability to complete these reading strategies strengthened as a result of practicing these both independently and in small groups or pairs. This was seen through discussions and writing assignments where students were, or were not necessarily instructed but still incorporated these reading concepts.

**Students Were More Engaged in the Read Aloud or Extension Activity When They Were Given a Choice**

I observed through classroom discussions and written journal responses that when students were involved and given options they were more engaged with the text or the extension activities. "The most effective forms of teacher read alouds happen when students are involved in asking and answering questions, making predictions, and making inferences instead of just passively listening" (Clark & Andreasen, 2014, p. 165). Knowing this, it is important to ensure students are engaged and participating during the read aloud session. Throughout my study one finding I concluded from my data collection was that when participants had a choice in the book selection or writing journal piece they were more engaged in that activity than times when they were not give a choice. Choice is important because it enhances academic engagement as students are empowered and more in control of their own learning (Bang-Jensen, 2010).

*Groundhog Gets a Say* was a book that one of my students checked out of the school library. A few of her friends noticed her reading it and soon they were talking and laughing about some of the pages. Multiple friends asked the girl to borrow the book afterwards and were arguing about who would get to read it next when another student suggested that I read it to them all. This book was brought to me and many students were interested and excited to hear the
content as they had chosen the book. Throughout this study I gave a few different opportunities for students to suggest or vote on the book for our read aloud time. The data from the observational notes that were taken throughout the read alouds displayed that when students had an opportunity to choose the book they were more engaged in the discussions.

Discussion interaction increased when students were given a choice on the text and students were more engaged in extension activities when they were given a choice. *What do You do with a Kangaroo* and *Almost to Freedom* were two examples of multiple different opportunities where students had a choice on the extension activity. During the read aloud of *What do You do with a Kangaroo*, participants were given a piece of paper and told they could complete any activity they wanted relating to the book. Students were very excited about this freedom of choice and produced many different writing pieces including summaries, pictures with captions, funny riddles, or reflections relating to the book. All the students were engaged in the class discussion, and many asked for time after the book to finish up their work. Some were so pleased with what they had produced they asked to share it with the class. When I gave students this choice in the activity I had all students engaged and responding well to the text.

*Almost to Freedom* was a read aloud book that told the story of a family's escape on the Underground Railroad. The participants enjoyed this book because the story was told from the point of view of the little girl's doll. When I dismissed the students to return to their seats I asked them to write me a story from a stuffed animal or pet's point of view. I left the question very open and explained to the students that they could write about anything relating to this topic. Soon I had all my participants writing and through my observational notes and collected samples I found that this writing journal was one where students showed a very high level of engagement
compared to times when students were asked to answer a very specific question or write a summary of our text because participants were given a choice.

Below are two figures that display the varying level of engagement on two different writing pieces. The ones on the left display the writing piece where students had a choice in what to write, and on the right shows a paper of when I asked the students to write a summary of the text. It was noted that on almost every occasion where students were given a choice that their engagement level was higher in the discussion or the extension activity than compared to when there was no student choice.

Figure 4.6- Displays two students’ work on various assignments. The assignment on the left provided students with a choice on what they wanted to write about and the piece of the right was a required summary. Engagement is shown to be higher for the extension activity on the left.
Participants' Perceptions about Read Alouds Shifted Throughout the Course of this Study

A fourth theme I saw displayed in my data was how students' perceptions of read alouds shifted as the study took place. Clark and Andreasen (2014) report in their study that "not all students are experiencing teacher read alouds in the same way" (p. 171). This can cause perceptions and levels of enjoyment to vary among students. The shift of this study was displayed in how students responded and interacted with a read aloud book and was observed through our classroom discussions and the reading survey that was given at both the beginning and the end of the study.

It was observed through students' speech and conversation in classroom discussions on how read alouds were perceived. At the beginning of my six week study participants were asked what read alouds were used for and what their thoughts were regarding listening to a book. About half that of those who participated in the discussions reported that read alouds are fun and enjoyable, while the second half of the participants stated that read alouds are boring and that they would rather read to themselves.

As the study continued, I noticed that students' perceptions were beginning to change. Some participants were making comments about how they can use read alouds in more ways than they originally thought. On February 12th, after listening and participating in the read aloud Math Curse, I asked the participants what they thought of that read aloud. One student responded by stating, "I thought it was neat that we could do math using that book". This statement showed me that my students were beginning to see that read aloud texts could be used for more than just a reading lesson.

The conversations and attitudes regarding read alouds changed slightly for some students, but not all participants. While some even at the end of the study stated that listening to a read
aloud is not that enjoyable for them, I had many students admit their feelings towards read
alouds have changed and they actually do enjoy listening to someone else read and feel peaceful
and relaxed during the activity. I noted that students were more excited when I announced there
would be a read aloud that day than they were at the beginning of the study.

I administered a read aloud survey to the participants as a beginning point to see how
students felt and thought about being read to aloud. Five out of seventeen participants (the largest
group) rated their enjoyment of listening to a read aloud at a 10. Six participants recorded a 6-9
scale rating for enjoyment. Four participants said they would rate read aloud enjoyment as a 2-4,
and two people gave read alouds a zero. The survey went on ask students to describe a recent
read aloud they had listened to, what their favorite and least favorite parts of listening to a book
are, how often they are read aloud to, and what kinds of books they enjoy listening to the most.

The participants recorded many different answers on their written surveys. Some students
really enjoy read alouds and wrote they are relaxing, while other participants wrote read alouds
can be boring and that they don't enjoy them because they want to do the reading, and it’s hard to
understand when someone else is reading to them. At the end of the study I gave students the
survey again to see how student responses might be different after six weeks of read aloud
packed activities. I wanted to see if perceptions of read alouds changed over the course of the
past six weeks. I was surprised to see right away that participants ranked their level of enjoyment
of read alouds much higher. Nine of eighteen participants rated their enjoyment of listening to a
read alouds at a ten! Three more participants ranked them at a nine, and zero participants
recorded a rating of two or under. This showed me that the activities over the past six weeks did
change the participants’ outlooks on read alouds. Overall, participants recorded a more positive
sense of read alouds and wrote more about relaxation and happy feelings when they are
participating in a classroom read aloud as according to the second survey. The figure below shows the students' responses from both the first and second survey on how participants ranked their enjoyment of listening to a read aloud.

![Bar chart showing read aloud survey results comparing the initial and post survey question on ranking read aloud enjoyment on a ten point scale.]

**Figure 4.7**- Read aloud survey results comparing the initial and post survey question on ranking read aloud enjoyment on a ten point scale.

According to my observations and notes of classroom discussions with the gathered data via surveys, I found that the perceptions' of how my students viewed read alouds shifted over the course of this study. I noted that participants rated their enjoyment higher and saw a greater value in read alouds once they had participated in the study and activities that corresponded with the books.
Discussion

Summary

The purpose of this study was to research read alouds and students' literacy development. The data collected produced four findings. The findings included comprehension, reading strategies, engagement, and student perceptions. I observed through the collected data that understanding or comprehension of a read aloud text was enhanced when students participated in an extension activity or classroom discussion. The data also revealed that through read alouds participants were able to practice and strengthen reading strategies that were previously taught in the classroom. My third finding showed that student engagement was higher when the participants had a choice in the text or the extension activity. Lastly, my data displayed that students' perceptions regarding listening to a read aloud shifted throughout the course of this study. These findings show a read aloud can have a positive impact on students' literacy development. These findings parallel with Clark and Andreasen's (2014) suggestion that read alouds can improve listening skills, reading comprehension, and impact students' attitudes towards reading.

Conclusions

Read alouds can enhance or develop a student's literary knowledge. It was established throughout my study that students were able to practice different literary elements through read aloud lessons. I observed, noted, and collected journal samples where participants had made inferences, predications, or connections to the book. Sequencing, visualizing, and note taking were other literary elements that students implemented. Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) suggest that many different literary elements can be enhanced using a classroom read aloud.
Giving participants a choice in literacy results in higher engagement. As stated in the findings, I observed throughout my study that whenever students were given a choice about book selection or writing activity there was higher interest. Participants were more engaged in the actual read aloud text and were more involved in written responses when they had the opportunity to vote or select what they wanted. Bang-Jensen (2010) suggests that choice is important and student options give authority to students over their own learning.

Implications

After examining the findings of the data collected for this study, I saw the impact that read alouds had on students. I believe that read alouds can have positive outcomes for students' literacy development. As stated in the findings, read alouds have multiple benefits for students of not only younger elementary classrooms Strachan (2015); Brabham & Lynch-Brown (2002); and Smolkin & Donovan (2001), but this study also showed an impact on students in the upper elementary grades.

The implications I suggest for teachers are to involve student interest and choice in book selection and to attempt to tie in classroom topics and target strategies to the read aloud text.

Teachers should attempt to involve student interest and choice in book selections for increased engagement. It was found throughout the data collected in this study that students were more engaged when they had a choice of the activity or book during a read aloud. Clark and Andreasen (2014) state the most effective read alouds occur when students are engaged. Bang-Jensen (2010) suggests that "choice seems to enhance academic engagement" (p. 169). Choice is important and relates to control of learning (Bang-Jensen, 2010). Choice allows students to take ownership, and usually choice is accompanied by a higher level of student engagement because generally students are more engaged when they have a part in their own
learning or have an interest in the content. I found that when I gave the participants in this study a choice on the extension activity or writing piece that my participants were more involved and produced extended writing with deeper critical thinking than when I assigned a specific prompt.

I also found throughout this study that when I gave students an opportunity to vote on the day's read aloud text, or when a student specifically brought me a book and asked me to read it that those sessions had an increased amount of student attentiveness and discussion. Student choice can lead to higher engagement and interaction with a text (Bang-Jensen, 2010). Teachers should explore their students' areas of interest and chose books with accompanying topics. Also, when possible, they should allow students to have a choice in the extension or assessment activity or the actual book selection.

**Teachers can use read aloud books to tie in classroom curriculum and target specific strategies.** Picture books can be a successful way to teach new concepts or topics in the classroom (Strachan, 2015). Throughout my study I attempted to tie current core subject topics to my read alouds. *Almost to Freedom* and *Henry's Freedom Box* were two such read aloud books. These texts were chosen because the class was studying Black History Month. I was able to read these books and use them as a teaching time to introduce The Underground Railroad and the topic of slavery. These books are just one example of how any subject area can be incorporated into a read aloud. Another example for Math or Grammar was books such as *Math Curse* or *Punctuation Takes a Vacation*. These titles were two books I used during this study to connect core content with read aloud material.

Specific reading strategies such as predictions, inferences, or sequencing can be taught or practiced using a read aloud. These reading strategies were all evident in this study. Clark and Andreasen (2014) state in their article that multiple reading strategies can be intertwined into a
read aloud including pulling from a student's schema, questioning, and connecting to a text. When subject areas or specific strategies are incorporated into the read aloud session, students have a greater connection with the text because they can see the relationship with other subjects. Read aloud topics resonate more when they can be related to other strategies or content that can be found or used throughout the rest of their academic day.

**Limitations**

The findings in my research study and students' responses to read alouds in the classroom should not be generalized for all intermediate elementary students since my study has limitations. One limitation would be the amount of participants. There were only eighteen students who participated in this current study. The data collected can give us valuable information, but should not be taken as final results as the number of student participants was very low.

A second limitation of this study is the location. This study takes place in my own classroom in a small private school. This study was not tested in multiple locations, at various grade levels, or with alternating facilitators of the read aloud text. Lastly, time frame would be a limitation as well. This study took place over the course of six short weeks. More information collected over a longer period of time would display more data that could differ from my initial findings. Participant population size, containment to one classroom, and a short time frame could all be considered as limitations in this study.

**Recommendations**

There are still gaps in the research field relating to reading aloud to intermediate or upper elementary students. The findings from this current study displayed the impact of read alouds on older students, but still I was left with areas that could have been studied further. I have two
questions that arose from my findings that I would suggest as recommendations for future research.

First, many of the current research studies that involve read alouds center around student comprehension and vocabulary development. Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker (2008); Brabham & Brown (2002); and Silverman et al. (2013) are just a few of the current studies that have focused on how vocabulary can be enhanced or expanded through a classroom read aloud. In my research, I did not specifically study vocabulary, and it did not emerge as a pattern or theme in my collected data. I would recommend a study be done that involves vocabulary and upper elementary students. This research could investigate the ways that read alouds impact upper elementary students' vocabulary development.

A second study continuation recommendation I have involves length of the read aloud text. Although I did read aloud a few larger texts, the majority of my study consisted of short picture book type texts that could be read fully in one sitting. I am interested to know if the length of the book might have an effect on the findings. How might the length of the text, perhaps a read aloud chapter book, differ from the findings of a read aloud picture text?

More research needs to be conducted on reading aloud to students of all grade levels. Older students listening to a read aloud where vocabulary development is a focus, as well as the length of the read aloud text are two suggestions for another study to continue to fill this research gap.

Closing

I found this study to be very beneficial and applicable to my own teaching strategies. Read alouds were always important for me to incorporate into my classroom, but after analyzing the collected data and reporting findings of this study, it is even more evident to me now that
there are many beneficial results of reading aloud to intermediate students. As I continue my teaching career, I am motivated to find ways to continue to weave read alouds into my current classroom curriculum and use them for multiple lessons and opportunities to practice literacy skills.

Read alouds are a part of many classroom itineraries, but are the benefits being utilized? Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) state that a survey of teachers found that 76% of teachers claim they use a read aloud daily, and 90% of those responded that they use read alouds for enjoyment and entertain only. This study focused on providing teachers with insight into how a read aloud can have an impact on students' literacy development. Benefits were seen as many areas of literacy were strengthened including reading perceptions, comprehension, reading strategies, and engagement with a text. Read alouds are a tool that can and should be used by teachers at all grade levels. Lennox (2013) states that read alouds can be an enjoyable and engaging experience and "are positivity linked to children's overall academic achievement, reading skills and interest in reading and writing" (p. 382). Students are never too old to enjoy or benefit academically from an engaging teacher read aloud.
References


Appendix A

Note Taking Sheet for Cactus Hotel

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Write a story or reflection based on our read aloud *Cactus Hotel* by Brenda Z. Guiberson. Be sure to include information and detail from the text! 😊
Appendix B

Almost to Freedom Comprehension Quiz

Sally didn’t mind how Lindy ---.

A. wiped tears on her dress  
B. endlessly talked and sang  
C. left her alone in the cabin

Miz Rachel and Lindy cried when Papa ---.

A. left them alone in the Underground  
B. didn’t return from town  
C. was sold down the river  
D. was tied to a tree and whipped
Almost to Freedom

Why was Lindy whipped by the overseer?

A. She asked to see her papa.

B. She refused to work without Sally.

C. She was not working fast enough.

D. She asked how to spell her name.

Almost to Freedom

Sally knew something important was happening by the ---.

A. sound of Miz Rachel's voice

B. way Lindy's heart was beating

C. hour that she and Lindy were awakened

D. clothes that Lindy wore
Almost to Freedom

A white man stepped out in the dark after Papa ---.

A. called out like a hooty owl
B. whistled softly near the cabin
C. put out his lantern
D. tapped on the barn door

Reading Practice

Almost to Freedom

What did Sally say she had never seen?

A. a pillow
B. nightclothes
C. a bed
D. blankets

Reading Practice
What did Papa say was too dangerous?

A. comfort

B. the lantern

C. sleep

D. the privy

The silver-haired woman explained that Sally was left behind because ---.

A. "Papa said so"

B. "There just wasn't time"

C. "Another girl needed her"

D. "Lindy was so sleepy"
Almost to Freedom

Sally was glad to have the company of a ----.

A. spider  
B. bat  
C. mouse  
D. mole

Almost to Freedom

What name did Willa give to Sally?

A. Laurie  
B. Ruthie  
C. Karin  
D. Belinda
Appendix C

Read Aloud Survey

Date: __________

1. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), rate how much you enjoy listening to a read aloud book.

2. How do you feel when someone is reading a book aloud to you?

3. How often does someone read a book aloud to you?

4. What was the last read aloud book you heard? Tell me about that experience.
5. What do you enjoy most about listening to someone else read to you?

6. What is your least favorite part about listening to someone else read to you?

7. What kinds of stories do you enjoy listening to the most?

8. What do you do to stay focused while someone is reading aloud?