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Reading Aloud and Student Achievement

by

Rebecka R. Spencer

November 2011

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

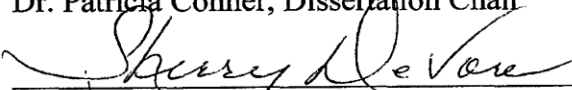
Doctor of Education

Lindenwood University, School of Education



Dr. Patricia Conner, Dissertation Chair

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Date



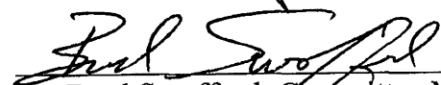
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Acknowledgements

There are not enough words to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported me during this endeavor. My Savior Jesus Christ gets all the glory for this accomplishment, for though I am weak, He is strong, and I could not have achieved this without Him.

To my committee and the Lindenwood faculty who gave me guidance and mentored me through this process, I thank you. Thank you to Dr. Patricia Conner and Dr. Sherry DeVore for all of your guidance and assistance along the way, and to Dr. Reid and Dr. Swofford for your guidance and committee service.

I would like to thank the administrators, teachers, and students who participated in the study and allowed me to visit their school districts so I could interview and survey teachers and students. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated, and I look forward to our continued quest to seek best practices for our students.

Finally I wish to thank my family and friends for your support and confidence throughout the dissertation process. To my husband Scott, and my sons, Seth and Ben, thank you for your encouraging words, patience, and above all, your unconditional love. To my mom and mother-in-law, thank you for babysitting so I could have some quiet time to work through this project. Thank you to all of my family for your continued prayers and for believing in me to achieve this goal.

Abstract

Although numerous studies have been conducted on reading aloud to elementary students, there is a need for additional research in reading aloud to middle school students. The main question is: are the benefits of reading aloud to elementary students comparable to middle school students? Reading aloud has proven to increase elementary students' comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, motivation, and encourage students' understanding of content matter. While reading aloud is a common practice among elementary teachers and students, the practice all but diminishes by middle school (Delo, 2008; Trelease, 2006). This mixed method study was conducted in three public school districts in Missouri to examine why teachers read-aloud to students and why students do or do not read independently. Seventh grade students were identified by Reading or Language Arts teachers as either enjoying independent reading or not enjoying independent reading. Then, students' reading scores were compared to interview responses regarding perceptions of reading aloud. Two teachers from each school district were interviewed regarding reasons for reading aloud and interview responses were analyzed. Teacher surveys were distributed among school districts, which provided quantitative data for the study. Qualitative results indicated when teachers read-aloud to students, comprehension and motivation were increased. Students reported enjoying reading more when teachers read-aloud to them, thus providing insights and recommendations for reading aloud and reasons for implementing practice. Quantitative data did not show a significant difference between students who enjoy reading and those same students' reading achievement scores; however, the mean of the two scores were worth noting as students who enjoy reading tended to score higher academically.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

The act of reading aloud to students evokes a mental picture of small children sitting on a carpeted area in the classroom listening attentively as the teacher reads *Charlotte's Web* (Zehr, 2010). However, reading aloud to adolescents is a method receiving more attention from educators as those in the profession have realized literacy is a concern for all grade levels, not just elementary (Zehr, 2010). A changing society demands that educational practices are continually reviewed (Trelease, 2006). The implementation of new programs and federal mandates are placing pressures on educational systems where adequate funding is not provided (Routman, 1991; Trelease, 2006).

Educational issues, such as reading achievement and successful strategies, have been studied for years and will continue to be studied as government officials work to close the achievement gap between students across the nation (Routman, 1991; Trelease, 2006). Time is a critical factor as government mandates require evidence of yearly increases in student achievement (Routman, 1991; Trelease, 2006). Unfortunately, teaching to obtain high test scores preoccupy large portions of time in the classroom instead of imparting strategies to enable students to become lifelong readers (Routman, 1991). Routman (1991) concluded:

Based on 180 school days and one hour a day allocated to reading, at least ninety instructional hours were being devoted to passing a fragmented test that would do little to inform the teacher or students of meaningful progress in reading.

As long as we continue to equate reading progress with high test scores, we have little hope of raising a generation of readers: students who are able to read and reason, who are able to relate and apply ideas to their lives and different situations, and who choose to read for pleasure. (p. 296)

Reading aloud to students gives meaning to students and gives reason for students reading independently, hence enabling students to achieve to his or her highest potential (Routman, 1991).

Educators must know what strategies are effective to improve students' knowledge and understanding of the importance of reading (Reading is Fundamental [RIF], 2004; Trelease, 2006). According to research reported by RIF (2004), "reading aloud is the best way to give children the tools they'll need to become good readers, listeners, and students" (para 2). Boyd and Devennie (2009) agreed reading aloud was "more important than flashcards, dittos, homework, assessments, and book reports, and [was] far less expensive than scripted programs, which often require substantial investments for materials and support staff" (p. 148). Routman (1991) concurred, "Reading aloud is seen as the single most influential factor in young children's success in learning to read" (p. 32). Making the most out of reading aloud just for a few minutes each day helps to improve children's abilities to read and learn (RIF, 2004).

Based on findings of Trelease, Guignon (2005) postulated teachers have read-aloud to young children for centuries. Guignon (2005) asserted, "... time spent reading aloud is valuable to [children]" (para. 3). Additionally, Guignon (2005) acknowledged, "reading aloud in school ... often stops, or is greatly cut back, once a child learns to read on his own" (para 5). According to Riley (2010), literacy advocates proclaim the adage

“magic happens when a young child is read to regularly” (para. 4). Furthermore, Riley (2010) asserted, “the love of reading at an early age is key to success in school and later in life” (para. 8).

The benefits of young children enjoying reading are countered by the consequences for “children who have not developed some basic literacy skills by the time they enter school...[They] are 3-4 times more likely to drop out in later years” (Riley, 2010, para. 8). Even though most educators believe the value of reading aloud to students is great, it is necessary to examine why teachers discontinue reading aloud when children learn to read independently. Trelease’s (2006) premise may provide an appropriate lens in which to view the issue of continual improvement in reading achievement. The overarching question becomes: Is reading aloud to middle age students a strategy with merit?

Statement of the Problem

A plethora of concerns and discussions have dominated the field of education as reading achievement levels continue to decline. A study conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) determined reading equivalency in different countries (Trelease, 2006). Students in 32 countries were involved, (210,000 nine-year-olds, and 210,000 fourteen-year-olds), and significant findings were reported (Trelease, 2006). Finland was ranked at the top while the United States was second; however, the United States dropped to eighth when fourteen-year-olds were evaluated. This is an illustration of how the reading scores of young American children are superior to other countries, although fall short as children are promoted to upper grades (Trelease, 2006).

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, more than two billion dollars are spent each year on students who have been retained due to reading problems (Riley, 2010). The National Adult Literacy survey revealed that 44 million adults in the United States “can’t read well enough to read a story to a child” (Riley, 2010, p. A.2). The National Council on Teachers of English Standards for the English Language Arts reported citizens must attain extreme literacy abilities to completely participate in society by the year 2020, and those abilities have only been accomplished by a small amount of the population thus far (Riley, 2010).

Limited research has been conducted on reading aloud to middle school students. One study, conducted by Ariail and Albright (2006), revealed even though benefits of reading aloud to middle school students have been proven, read-aloud practices in middle school classrooms are far and few between. Unfortunately, students have graduated from schools where they were taught to read enough to graduate; however, many students do not continue to read into their adult lives and become lifelong readers (Trelease, 2006). This problem has prompted government officials to consider penalizing schools and students for low test scores on assessment programs (Trelease, 2006). Unfortunately, reprimands will not fix the problem as the problem is attitude; students do not want to read (Trelease, 2006). Children who read more tend to be stronger readers than those who read infrequently, and research has indicated a positive relationship between students who read for enjoyment and students’ reading achievement (Ariail & Albright, 2006).

A recent report conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) concluded the number of students reading for pleasure among 13 and 17-year-olds had not significantly changed since 1971 (Trelease, 2006). Trelease (2006)

concluded, “that’s thirty years, half of it devoted to national and state curriculum reform and higher standards yet no improvement” (p. 2). Additional evidence was presented by the 2007 National Assessment for Educational Progress in which “only 40% of fourth-grade students reported reading on a daily basis, and nearly 20% read never or hardly never” (as cited in Rasinski, & Padak, 2011, p. 553). Furthermore, by the time students reached eighth grade, fewer than 20% “reported reading daily, and a third of students never or hardly ever read” (Rasinski, & Padak, 2011, p. 553). Clearly, there is a literacy crisis in the United States (Rasinski, & Padak, 2011; Smith, 1978; Trelease, 2006).

In a study conducted by Ivey (2003), 62% of students who were interviewed clearly indicated the best reading experiences in school were when the teacher read-aloud to the class. When students were read to aloud by the teacher, students gained an understanding of the subject matter and enhanced the students’ inclination to read independently (Ivey, 2003). Additional conclusions based on research conducted by Ivey and Broaddus revealed students viewed read-alouds as “scaffolds to understanding because the teacher helped make the text more comprehensible and interesting...” (as cited in Albright & Ariail, 2006, p. 583). Tompkins (2006) concluded, “when students reach the middle grades, their motivation diminishes and struggling students demonstrate less enthusiasm for reading than other students” (p. 234).

In 2000, according to the National Reading Panel (as cited in Duncan, 2010), students were given less time in school to read for mere pleasure; therefore, somewhere between the elementary level and middle grades, reading aloud to students had all but vanished (Delo, 2008; Duncan, 2010). Pertinent research indicated fewer students read for enjoyment as they proceeded into the upper grades (Albright & Ariail, 2005;

Tompkins, 2006; Zehr, 2010). According to Trelease (2006), 100% of kindergarten students display a high interest in reading, but by the time they enter senior year of high school, 78% of potential lifetime readers are lost.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons middle school teachers read-aloud to students, how reading aloud directly relates to seventh grade students reading independently, and, as a result, how reading achievement is influenced.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What factors motivate teachers to read-aloud to seventh grade students?
2. Does the practice of reading aloud to seventh grade students cause those students to be independent readers?
3. What factors cause seventh grade students to lose interest in reading independently?
4. What is the relationship between reading scores of seventh grade students who read independently and seventh grade students who do not read independently?

Conceptual Framework

The work of Trelease (2006), a recognized author and lecturer, was utilized to provide the conceptual framework for this study. Routman (1991), Smith (1978), and Tompkins (2006), who have strongly advocated reading initiatives, were referenced to further support the perspectives of Trelease. According to Trelease (2006), the number one objective for schools across the country should be that of creating lifetime readers, students who “continue to read and educate themselves throughout their adult lives” (p.

2). As millions of taxpayer dollars are spent on searching, adapting, and implementing the latest trends to enhance student achievement, one of the “cheapest, simplest, and oldest tools of teaching is that of reading aloud to students” (Trelease, 2006, p. 3).

Reading to children is something so simple, a high school diploma is not even needed (Trelease, 2006). A simple, two-part formula was offered by Trelease (2006):

1. The more you read, the better you get at it; the better you get at it, the more you like it; and the more you like it, the more you do it.
2. The more you read, the more you know, and the more you know, the smarter you grow. (p. 3)

Rasinski and Padak (2011), agreed, “Reading is a competency learned not only through instruction but also through practice...the more reading a person does, the better he or she becomes” (p. 553).

Why could something as simple as reading aloud be so effective? Experts in the field of reading have suggested the practice of reading aloud in upper grades promoted an engaging way to develop reading skills, literature appreciation, and reading for enjoyment (Fox, 2008; Routman, 1991; Tompkins, 2006). The benefits of reading aloud are not exclusive to elementary level students as limited research has shown middle school students gain listening, comprehension, vocabulary, and decoding skills as well as positive attitudes and motivation to read independently (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Ivey, 2003; Moss et al., 1999; Routman, 1991; Smith 1978).

To understand the complexities of reading, one must realize the way a child receives information (Smith 1978; Trelease, 2006). The only two ways words can enter the brain are through the eyes and the ears (Trelease, 2006). Young children do not have

the ability to use the eye to read; therefore, the ear is the means to transfer information to the brain (Trelease, 2006). When children are read-aloud to, assurance, entertainment, bonding, curiosity, and inspiration takes place (Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Additionally, children become informed and connections about concepts are made (Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Trelease, 2006). According to Trelease (2006), reading aloud also:

- conditions the child's brain to associate reading with pleasure,
- creates background knowledge,
- builds vocabulary, and
- provides a reading role model. (p. 4)

Trelease (2006) described how reading aloud must be advertised much like a commercial, where parents, teachers, and administrators demonstrate the act of reading aloud and encourage students to read independently. Very rarely does anyone read-aloud to middle school students, reported Trelease (2006); moreover, "if each book read-aloud is supposed to be a commercial for reading for pleasure, then a decline in advertising would be reflected in the decline in students' recreational reading" (p. 4). Two facts were recognized by Trelease (2006); "human beings are pleasure centered and reading is an accrued skill" (p. 4). When humans like to do something, they will continue to do it; hence, when students enjoy reading, they will do it repeatedly.

When students do not associate pleasure with reading, they will withdraw or abstain from reading; this is known as *aliteracy* (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Trelease, 2006). That is not to say students cannot read, but do not read for enjoyment, which essentially, results in lower achievement scores (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Trelease,

2006). Ivey (2003) concluded, the reality was, students enjoyed being read-aloud to even in the upper grades and research has concluded students' understanding and inclination to read independently are derived from teachers reading aloud. Thirty years of research, according to Trelease (2006), has determined, "regardless of sex, race, nationality, or socioeconomic background, students who read the most, read the best, achieve the most, and stay in school the longest... Conversely, those who don't read much cannot get better at it" (p. 5).

Significance of the Study

Krashen (as cited in Duncan, 2010) found, "People who read frequently possess stronger literacy skills overall – larger vocabularies, improved spelling, and better awareness of grammar and punctuation rules" (p. 91). Furthermore, individuals who read for pleasure are healthier and helpful because they exercise, volunteer, and donate time to community services (Duncan, 2010). Significant research conducted by Albright and Ariail (2005) validated how vital it is for teachers to read-aloud to students, especially in the elementary grades. Since limited studies have been conducted on reading aloud to middle and upper grade level students (Zehr, 2010), a significant question emerges: What is the value of reading aloud to students in the middle grades?

According to Tompkins (2006), when teachers read-aloud to students, cognitive resources are available for students to focus on comprehension. Tompkins (2006) indicated when teachers read books aloud to students, when comprehension strategies are introduced, or when students make inferences so procedures can be modeled, a strategy known as scaffolding is used. Scaffolding is any instructional activity applied before, during, or after reading that is intended to provide support for immature, poor, or

struggling readers. Theoretically...these strategies are designed to be gradually withdrawn as students develop independent reading skills” (Combs, 2004, p. 13).

Students who enjoy reading independently may achieve at higher levels than students who do not enjoy reading independently. Routman (1991) asserted, “reading aloud improves listening skills, builds vocabulary, aids comprehension, and has a positive impact on students’ attitudes toward reading” (p. 32). Considering the budgetary issues experienced by many school districts, reading aloud is simple and inexpensive; therefore, no additional cost is necessary to enhance student achievement (Routman 1991; Trelease, 2006).

The findings from this study will add to the body of knowledge regarding reading in the middle school grades. This study will reveal the instructional value of teachers, parents, and volunteers reading aloud to seventh grade students. Additionally, pre-service teachers pursuing an education degree may have more information about the benefits and concerns of reading aloud to students in this age group.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following definitions are offered to comprehend the various elements and components associated with reading aloud.

Independent reading. Students choose and read self-selected books independently. Teachers conference with students to monitor their progress (Tompkins, 2006).

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). A research-based, computer adaptive reading assessment program for students in Grades K-12 that measures reading comprehension on the Lexile Framework® for Reading. The most powerful feature of the

SRI is its ability to administer fast and reliable low-stakes assessment to inform instruction and make accurate placement recommendations. Aligned to state tests, SRI helps educators forecast student achievement to those important goals (SRI, 2010).

Shared reading. Teacher and students read together and take turns reading. The teacher helps students read fluently and with expression (Tompkins, 2006).

Sustained silent reading (SSR). A natural partner to reading aloud. Reading independently for enjoyment with no interruptions for questions, assessments, or reports; just reading for pleasure (Trelease, 2006).

Limitations of the Study

Factors outside the scope of the study. Existing biases and preconceived ideas of participants during interviews were limitations for this study. Participants knew they would be participating in the study when letters of informed consent were distributed. The Hawthorne effect was defined by Bluman (2008) as “an effect on an outcome variable caused by the fact that subjects of the study know that they are participating in the study” (p. 653). Student migration was another limitation of the study since students may have moved into one of the districts in the study without knowing the SRI test was being given on a certain day. The level of the students’ maturation may have affected the study as seventh grade students were the primary focus; students change and can be influenced in numerous ways (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Instrumentation. The method for data collection for this study consisted of a teacher survey for the quantitative portion and teacher and student interview questions for the qualitative portion. The SRI test was a limitation because it is multiple choice and students may have guessed the answers to the questions. According to Bluman (2008),

respondents can remain anonymous; however, some participants may have difficulty understanding posed questions. An advantage of personal interviews provide the ability to gain deeper responses to questions (Bluman, 2008). Greater understanding is gained as respondents have time to thoughtfully discuss answers. The attitude participants have towards an idea or study directly influences participation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003); therefore, student and teacher attitudes towards reading aloud may have affected the results. Interview and survey accuracy depended on the honesty of the participants. It was assumed all participants answered honestly.

Sample. Participants in this study were individually chosen for interviews and randomly selected for surveys. The sample for this study was limited to 16 seventh grade students. Eight students were male and eight students were female. Sometimes participants chosen for the study are “unwilling or unable to participate in the survey” (StatTrek, 2011). Some participants were unwilling or unable to participate in the surveys or interviews; therefore, the study had nonresponsive bias. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), 20% of participants typically do not return surveys or questionnaires.

Summary

Students enter school with ambition to learn how to read and teachers read-aloud to students during the early years; however, when students actually learn how to read independently, reading aloud to children all but diminishes (Delo, 2008; Guignon, 2005; Zehr, 2010). Tompkins (2006) and Trelease (2006) reported students are more willing to read independently if they have had the opportunity to listen to the teacher read-aloud from a variety of genres; thereby continuously creating new learning based on prior knowledge.

Reading aloud to elementary students has been proven repeatedly to positively influence students in their perceptions of reading as well as encouraging them to read independently more frequently (Riley, 2010; Routman 1991; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Perhaps schools should acknowledge this method as it is cost effective and generates results (Riley, 2010; Trelease, 2006). While significant research has been conducted on reading aloud and how it positively impacts student achievement in the elementary grades, it is paramount teachers understand strategies and methods of reading to increase student achievement in the middle grades. State and government mandates increase the stakes for students to perform well on standard tests or schools risk losing funding. This research was designed to determine what factors contributed to seventh grade students enjoying reading independently and essentially becoming lifelong readers and learners.

In this chapter, the main components of this study were presented: background, problem and purpose, conceptual framework, and significance. A review of relevant literature and research pertaining to the benefits of reading aloud were discussed in Chapter Two. The discussion included the main components of reading (vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and motivation) and how to incorporate reading aloud in specific content areas. In Chapter Three, the methods and procedures applied in the study were explained. An analysis of findings was detailed in Chapter Four, and in Chapter Five, the conclusions, recommendations, and implications of this study were addressed.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Reading Aloud

Educators have become well aware elementary students look forward to the part of the day when they are asked to sit quietly on the carpet and listen intensely as the teacher reads aloud an exciting and eventful story to the class. The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the work of Trelease as reading aloud is found to be an essential part of middle school students' learning (2006). Additional experts include Routman (1991), Smith (1978), and Tompkins (2006) as they affirm Trelease's findings. While a variety of reading instruction and time spent reading aloud occurs in the elementary grades, middle school students receive little to no reading instruction or time listening to reading (Routman, 1991; Smith 1978; Tompkins, 2006).

There is a paramount problem when elementary students find excitement in reading, but when students reach middle school, the epicenter for comprehension and overall academic achievement is lost (Ariail & Albright; Boyd & Devennie, 2009; Trelease, 2006). Middle school teachers must understand middle school students enjoy being read-aloud to as much as elementary students (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Duncan 2010; Ivey, 2003; Trelease, 2006). Despite efforts to increase the percentage of proficient readers and ensure overall growth gains from year to year, students continue to receive primary instruction on reading skills and less on equipping students with skills for appropriate book selection (Ariail & Albright, 2006). Independent reading or Self Selected Reading (SSR) has been "associated with growth in word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, language syntax, comprehension, and motivation for reading" (Rasinski & Padak, 2011, p. 553).

The National Commission on Reading concluded, “reading aloud was the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading” (as cited in Trelease, 2006 p. 3). Routman (1991) agreed, reading aloud was the most important factor in children’s success in reading. The National Commission on Reading also concluded reading aloud is “a practice that should continue throughout the grades” (Trelease, 2006, p. 3). According to Trelease (2006), only 27% of high school students continue into their sophomore year of college. Astoundingly, 78% read less than three hours each week including 68% of the college preparatory students (Trelease, 2006). Perhaps educators should begin with the advice of Horace Mann, who founded compulsory education in the 1930’s as cited in Trelease (2006):

Men are cast iron; but children are wax. So we begin with the “wax”—children—and we use the findings of the Commission on Reading to shape them: we read-aloud to them throughout the grades. Simple. Unlike most reforms, it will not increase the tax rate 1 percent, ... no one can fail it. (p. 4)

The benefits of reading aloud are astounding. According to Routman (1991), reading aloud not only improves comprehension levels, but also strengthens vocabulary, listening skills, as well as creates positive attitudes towards reading. Boyd and Devennie (2009) concurred, “exuberant read-alouds breathe new life into a text introducing characters and unveiling worlds without boundaries and rich with detail” (p. 149). Ficklen and Brooks (2011) explained reading aloud helps to develop “listening comprehension, vocabulary, and literary appreciation, as well as hearing an adult model reading with expression, ... simply focus on and experience the reading” (p. 78). In

addition, reading aloud is easy, inexpensive, requires little preparation, and results in few discipline problems (Routman, 1991).

Fox (2008) determined the impact and educational benefits would be increased if parents and teachers would read-aloud to children of all ages. Fox (2008) explained, “if every parent and adult caring for a child would read-aloud at least three stories each day, illiteracy could be overcome within one generation” (p. 12). Fox (2008) explained how preventing reading difficulties in formative preschool years is possible. Learning to read begins when a child hears sounds, rhythms, rhymes, stories, and talking. Specifically “reading aloud to children early in life develops speaking skills; they don’t learn to talk unless they are spoken to” (Fox, 2008, p. 15). When parents and children share stories together, sharpening of the brain occurs (Fox, 2008). Kotaman (2008) recognized reading aloud as “one of the most important skills in academic achievement” (p. 55). Morrison and Wlodarczyk (2009) surmised the benefits of reading aloud impacts oral language development, listening and speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension and fluency growth, and increased motivation to read independently.

Vygotsky’s theory of sociolinguistics provides merit as reading scaffolding other learning experiences (Tompkins, 2006). Sociolinguistics is characterized by students using social interactions as a learning tool; scaffolds are provided by teachers for students, and language and thoughts are related (Tompkins, 2006). According to Vygotsky, language enables students to organize thoughts, and language is used to communicate and share experiences as well as learn (Tompkins, 2006). Vygotsky revealed when students participated in engaging social interactions, meaning was made, hence comprehension levels increased (Zucker, Ward, & Justice, 2009). Teachers “apply

sociolinguistics when they read-aloud to children” (Tompkins, 2006, p. 13). When children worked collaboratively with adults, scaffolding was provided, and sociolinguistics was being applied (Tompkins, 2006).

Ivey (2003) indicated there are differences between elementary and middle school settings. Primary students are generally in a self-contained classroom where instruction for all subjects is provided by the teacher, while secondary students usually have different teachers for specific content areas (Ivey, 2003). Ivey (2003) indicated most middle school students are engaged in reading activities solely in Language Arts classes; however, student read-aloud surveys concluded students enjoy having the teacher read-aloud to them; it helped expand their own reading skills, understand new concepts, and consider texts more thoughtfully.

Unfortunately, reading aloud to students decreases tremendously by sixth grade (Ariail & Albright, 2006). As students move into middle grades, they lose their passion for reading. The National Reading Report Card indicated 54% of fourth graders read for pleasure every day, 30 % of eighth graders read for pleasure, and only 29% of students read for pleasure by the time they are in twelfth grade (Trelease, 2006). Bankruptcy would be inevitable if businesses decreased their customer base by this percent from year to year (Trelease, 2006). However, effective reading strategies, specifically reading aloud to students, enhanced their passion as well abilities. Yet somewhere in transition between elementary school and upper grades, reading aloud to students diminishes (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Delo, 2008; Duncan, 2010; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Daly, Bonfiglio, Michael, Persampieri and Foreman-Yates (2006) agreed reading aloud fluently is a “legitimate instructional target...because it serves as a necessary prerequisite to

independent reading comprehension” (p. 323). Fluency while reading aloud was described as being the most accurate means to ensure competence in reading (Daly et al., 2006).

According to Duchein and Mealey, “a study of secondary teachers indicated more than two thirds of those interviewed were read to before starting school and more than half were read to by primary teachers, but the practice had ceased for most by third grade” (as cited in Giorgis, 1999, p. 51). The study also indicated teachers who read-aloud to students in fourth through sixth grade and into middle and high school, made positive and significant impressions on their students (Giorgis, 1999). Seventh grade students reported a lasting impression was made and enjoyed the teacher reading aloud to them (Giorgis, 1999). Findings supported a positive correlation between students being read to and his or her own achievement in reading and writing (Giorgis, 1999).

Picture books can also be used as an effective teaching tool even in the upper grades (Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Seventh grade students described feeling somewhat awkward at first because they had not been presented with a picture book since elementary school; however, the impression was long lasting and made them more eager to learn, willing to listen, and anticipate the next days of class (Giorgis, 1999). Picture books have been published on topics of all kinds which can successfully be integrated into the classroom even at the middle school level (Giorgis, 1999). Delo (2008) agreed reading aloud to students creates a positive example of reading behavior and introduces them to books and different genres they may not have read before. Braxton (2006) indicated reading aloud to children is a key component to their education

as comprehension, excitement, and vocabulary are gained. Reading to students should be more than just a time filler, and it is a critical element of learning (Braxton, 2006).

Reading aloud to students continues to prove advantageous (Ariail & Albright 2006; Trelease, 2006). Smith (1978) concluded authors give students everything they need to know for reading, as well as writing. Routman (1991) explained reading aloud is a “powerful technique for promoting story enjoyment and literature appreciation and noting what authors do in the writing process so that students can make similar choices for themselves” (p. 33). In a reading aloud study where students were interviewed, students continually stated how much they enjoyed being read-aloud to, as well as increasing comprehension and interest levels (Ivey, 2003). When students understand and enjoy the material being presented, greater comprehension is gained; hence, higher academic achievement (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). The results of the Ivey (2003) study confirmed, “reading diverse texts, developing conceptual and content knowledge, and reading critically are vital in learning new subjects” (p. 814).

According to Serafini (2004), mental images during reading are identified as affecting the reader in a positive way when students are engaged with the text. Serafini (2004) examined the relationship of how books were discussed when teachers read to students. Images students make while listening to reading may affect the way they actually perceive reading, as well as becoming a successful reader. The results of the study conveyed readers were not actually making meaning or connections with the books, but were simply reading with oral fluency, expression, and pronouncing words perfectly (Serafini, 2004). Conveying to educators the importance of reading aloud, as well as

helping students attain the ability to understand what was being read, is what will lead to eventual success in reading for youngsters today (Serafini, 2004). According to Hurst, Scales, Frecks and Lewis (2011), successful reading is more than just reading fluently and pronunciation, but also about making connections with the text and understanding meaning.

Reading aloud encourages students to become independent readers (Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Wu and Anderson (2007) emphasized the importance of metalinguistic awareness:

Children's independent reading, in which they rely on different sources of information and integrate different strategies for word identification, requires metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistic awareness enables one to employ 'control processes' to extract meaning from print and to reflect on and manipulate the properties of language structure. (p. 51)

Researchers further stated, when students are made aware of metalinguistics, they are able to control the method of decoding and authenticate decoding with "morphological, syntactic, and contextual information" (Wu & Anderson, 2007, p. 67).

Ivey (2003) agreed reading aloud to students is an engaging reason to perform the strategy. In this study, students reported they were more inclined to read the same story the teacher was reading aloud to the class because they were excited and wanted to read ahead to find out what would happen next (Ivey, 2003). Routman (1991) also found when teachers read-aloud a particular book and then placed the same book in the classroom library, students often chose the read-aloud book. Other students indicated they had difficulty concentrating while following along in the book; however, they enjoyed the

teacher reading aloud to them, and would more than likely read the book independently when the teacher finished the book (Ivey, 2003).

Ficklen and Brooks (2011) concurred middle grade students enjoy read-alouds even if it is just for a few minutes each day. Morgan (2009) identified several advantages of using read-alouds in the classroom. Some of the benefits included in the research were students became better readers (Morgan, 2009). According to Morgan (2009), prior to reading aloud, teachers engaged students to predict, hypothesize, analyze, and make connections, which made reading aloud more meaningful to students (Morgan, 2009). Other advantages of reading aloud were identified as increased comprehension, vocabulary, listening skills, and positive attitudes toward reading independently (Routman, 1991; Smith 1978).

Reading aloud increases comprehension. Comprehension was described by Smith (1978) as an invisible process that takes place in the mind, which makes it complicated to teach. He concluded “the basis of comprehension is prediction and prediction is achieved by making use of what we already know about the world, by making use of the theory of the world in the head” (p. 87). Smith (1978) stated:

The very notion that comprehension is relative, that it depends on the questions that an individual happens to ask, is not one that all teachers leave unchallenged.

They want to argue that you may not have understood the book however little uncertainty you are left with at the end. (p. 86)

Testing for comprehension has become the core for determining if students understand material; however, comprehension was described by Smith (1978) as being relative. Just because students and teachers view literature differently or ask different questions does

not necessarily determine comprehension (Smith, 1978). However, the fundamental goal of reading is to make sense of what is read, hence comprehension; therefore, it is significant to comprehend and make meaning or reading becomes a wasted effort (Hollenbeck, 2006)

Various theories of comprehension have been studied at great depths and offer latitudes as to what comprehension is and entails (McTavish, 2008; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006). The constructivism theory implies, “the reading process is one in which a reader constructs his or her own meaning while reading” (McTavish, 2008, p. 407). McTavish (2008) and Smith (1978) agreed prior knowledge definitely influences comprehension as it is relative to everyone as individuals. Metacognitive theory expands on prior research explaining how proficient readers make meaning and mentally engage with the book while reading (McTavish, 2008). According to these theories, comprehension is “viewed as an active process of hypothesis testing or schema building” (McTavish, 2008, p. 407). Additional research by Albright and Ariail (2005) concluded when teachers read-aloud various forms of texts, students’ comprehension of subject matter could increase significantly.

However, according to Tompkins (2006), comprehension can be taught through explicit instruction. Tompkins (2006) asserted that instruction involves teaching comprehension strategies and having students practice the strategies learned in their own reading. Tompkins (2006) continued, “teachers teach students how to activate background knowledge, set purposes, use comprehension strategies, and make inferences, and then students practice what they are learning as they read and write” (p. 240). Teachers should explain what comprehension is and why it is important, model how to

comprehend, and think aloud while reading a text aloud (Tompkins, 2006). In addition, students should be encouraged to think during guided reading, as well as reading independently or [SSR] (Tompkins, 2006).

Additionally, phonological awareness and syntax were described by Mokhtari and Thompson (2006) as significant factors of comprehension. Mokhtari and Thompson (2006) declared phonological awareness and syntax are expressed during oral reading. Students are able to recognize syntactical patterns and have a better understanding of what the author is implying when oral reading transpires (2006). Often, when students showed difficulties in reading, it was due to the fact they were unable to recognize the author's syntax, which was a direct deficit of vocabulary and comprehension (Mokhtari & Thompson, 2006). As compared to struggling readers, proficient readers employ a variety of comprehension strategies when reading independently or orally (McTavish, 2008).

When teachers instruct or model strategies for students to use, understanding and meaning can be made even when a text may be difficult (McTavish, 2008; Smith, 1978). McTavish (2008) stated, "Proficient readers, aware of whether or not they understand what they are reading, will use 'fix-up' strategies when comprehension fails, such as rereading, slowing down, or looking up word definitions" (p. 407). Readers may also assist their comprehension by making connections, predictions, or accessing prior knowledge by asking questions relevant to the text (McTavish, 2008).

Ivey (2003), Tompkins (2006), Trelease (2006) concluded when students actually enjoy reading, comprehension is achieved and academic success prevails. According to Trelease (2006), reading aloud to children increases achievement scores because listening

comprehension is attained before reading comprehension. Additional research by Tam, Heward, and Heng (2006) delineated comprehension is directly dependent on vocabulary and knowledge. The importance of reading aloud to children for the mere fact of enjoyment, even if the text is too difficult for them to read independently, has been proven essential (Trelease, 2006). Tompkins (2006) asserted teachers should read books aloud to struggling, as well as proficient readers. Also noted is the importance of reading aloud to students, so the cognitive resources are available for students to focus on comprehension of the book (Tompkins, 2006).

Researchers have repeatedly found techniques teachers and students use to develop and become proficient readers, and they include:

- Effectively use metacognitive strategies (McTavish, 2008; Routman, 1991).
- Explicit comprehension teaching techniques are critical for readers to learn to make meaning of text and enjoy reading independently (Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006).
- Modeling and discussing texts aloud should be applied when reading aloud no matter the age or grade level (McTavish, 2008; Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006).
- When teachers use “think-alouds” during reading, they model for students how they are thinking, asking questions, making predictions, and connections with the text (McTavish, 2008).

Reading aloud increases fluency. Fluency was defined by Hollenbeck (2006) as “the mark of a proficient reader” (p. 5). Fluency is directly associated with the comprehension levels of students (Tam et al., 2006), and reading aloud to children

repeatedly increases fluency (Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Like most other skills, fluency sharpens with experience (Hollenbeck, 2006). The National Institute for Literacy stated:

Fluent readers read-aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word. Their oral reading is choppy and plodding. (as cited in Hollenbeck, 2006, p. 5.)

The connection between oral reading and fluency was validated by Rutherford-Becker and Vandersood (2009) as significant when measuring reading comprehension. Reading aloud provides necessary scaffolding and modeling which enables struggling readers with tools to use for independent reading (Kuhn & Schwanenflugel, 2006). Smith (1978) surmised teachers should “ensure children often have the opportunity to read – or to hear – stories that have an intrinsic appeal, to which they will voluntarily give attention” (p. 146).

Tompkins (2006) identified the best approach to improve students’ fluency is by implementing repeated readings. Young and Rasinski (2009) concurred repeated readings involves “reading of one text until a level of fluency is achieved” (p. 4). Reading texts multiple times improves fluency and demonstrates “significant gains in overall reading achievement” (Young & Rasinski, 2009, p. 4). However, Young and Rasinski (2009) indicated caution should be taken when differentiating reading fluency with reading speed. Often times, students identify quick reading as proficient reading; however comprehension is lost, and proficiency is not actually attained (Young & Rasinski, 2009). Young and Rasinski (2009) reported:

We feel that this approach to fluency may lead to the development of a generation of readers who may read quickly but have little understanding of what they read and get little enjoyment or satisfaction from their reading. (p. 5)

Repeated readings were described by Tompkins (2006) to “enhance students’ ability to chunk words into meaningful phrases and read with more expression” (p. 175). Tompkins (2006) reported passages were often read-aloud to students while students followed along, and sometimes, teachers had students echo or repeat the phrase with the same expression and fluency. Young and Rasinski (2009) indicated reading aloud repeated readings is a confirmed specific method of increasing fluency. Additionally, Poe (2010) concluded Readers Theatre is an “effective means for increasing reading fluency as students practice reading aloud with others for the sake of a performance” (p. 29).

Hurst et al. (2011) expanded on a study by Tompkins (2006) finding when students signed to read-aloud to the class, fluency was increased. Rereading gave students a reason to read orally during class making reading meaningful to students (Hurst et al., 2011). When teachers modeled fluency and expression while reading aloud, students understood how to practice reading, which increased fluency (Hurst et al., 2011). Reading aloud enhanced fluency among students when students actively engaged in reading aloud to the class (Hurst et al., 2011).

Additional studies conducted by O’Shea, Sindelar, and O’Shea determined a significant amount of rereading had a positive influence on students (as cited in Tam et al., 2006). It was determined “seven readings resulted in higher reading fluency than three readings, which were significantly better than a single reading” (as cited in Tam et al., 2006, p. 81). The difference between three readings and seven readings were not as

significant in regards to retelling (stating important points of the beginning, middle, and end); however, fluency ratings increased (Tam et al., 2006).

Word recognition was identified by Tompkins (2006) as important when considering fluency because students must be able to recognize high-frequency words, as well as phonetically regular words. For this to occur, students require opportunities to hear and practice words they are learning in every day reading (Tompkins, 2006). The ability to chunk parts of sentences, making them meaningful, is an essential element of fluency as well (Tompkins, 2006). Tompkins (2006) concluded fluent readers have the ability to understand the chunking process “because they have been read to or have had many reading experiences themselves, but struggling readers do not have this ability” (p. 175).

Fluency has many components and several instructional practices have been studied to determine effective strategies to equip students with necessary tools to become proficient readers (Hurst et al., 2011; Tam et al., 2006; Tompkins, 2006). When students read more fluently, they have a higher self-esteem and associate reading with pleasure; therefore, are more apt to read more frequently, which essentially increases achievement scores (Hurst et al., 2011; Smith, 1978; Trelease, 2006).

Reading aloud increases vocabulary. The connection between vocabulary and comprehension has been extensively documented, and reading aloud to children has been “proven to be an effective vehicle for vocabulary instruction” (Kindle, 2009, p. 202). Teachers can read-aloud and discuss new vocabulary with children before they have acquired abilities to read the terms independently (Santoro et al., 2008). Vocabulary development is enhanced when read-alouds are conducted in the classroom (Santoro et

al., 2008). Neugenbauer and Currie-Rubin (2009) reiterated the importance of reading aloud particularly to improve vocabulary and comprehension abilities. Senechal and Cornell stated “reading a book aloud just once can increase students’ receptive vocabulary” (as cited in Neugenbauer & Currie-Rubin, 2009, p. 396). Tam et al., (2006) declared “effective vocabulary instruction provides both definitional and contextual information about the meaning of new words” (p. 80). Students involved in active learning of new vocabulary words provide a manifold of opportunities for students to make meaning of new words (Tam et al., 2006).

Trelease (2006) postulated reading picture books at least three times or more to children increases their vocabulary acquisition between 15% and 40% and learning is everlasting. Trelease (2006) reported when children in the primary grades were read-aloud three different picture books each day, vocabulary acquisition increased significantly and the learning was permanent. Riley (2010) suggested the vocabulary in picture books has five to nine atypical words and are extremely expressive. An example provided by Riley (2010) was: “an author might use ‘slumber’ instead of the more common ‘sleep’ but children understand what the new word means because they’re hearing it in the context of the story” (p. A.1).

According to Kindle (2009), “effective teachers weave in questions and comments as they read, creating a conversation between children, text, and teacher” (p. 203). When teachers pause, review difficult words with students, and think aloud during shared reading, connections are made and understanding is accomplished (Morgan, 2009). Morgan (2009) described using read-alouds to ensure students remain focused and

engaged by asking questions during the read-aloud. When picture books are read-aloud to students multiple times, vocabulary increases (Morgan, 2009).

Vocabulary acquisition is supported when words are heard several times and from many sources (Braun, 2010). According to Braun (2010), “the more places students see the vocabulary, and the more times they hear the vocabulary, the better they understand the vocabulary” (p. 46). Heisley and Kucan (2010) also reported “teacher-led read-alouds can provide the necessary support as children encounter potentially difficult content, text features, and challenging vocabulary often found in informational trade books” (p. 667).

Reading aloud and student motivation. Motivation and attention are important elements of reading aloud (Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Muller (2005) acknowledged reading aloud as the “single most effective way to build their own motivation to read” (p. 23). Muller (2005) also found when students, even struggling readers, were given a reason to read-aloud to younger students, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation all improved. Eagley and Chaiken (1993) concurred, when attitudes were positive, reading motivation increased. Furthermore, Tompkins (2006) revealed motivation is intrinsic and “the innate curiosity with each of us that makes us want to figure things out” (p. 234). Students must have self-confidence, believe they will succeed, and relate the activity, such as reading, with pleasure (Tompkins, 2006). Confidence and motivation are gained when teachers provide opportunity for students to read-aloud to classmates (Hurst et al., 2011). Hurst et al. (2011) asserted students enjoy reading aloud to the class and implement fluency and expression as previously modeled by the teacher.

Gambrell (2011) agreed how opportunities for reluctant readers to read-aloud clearly increased those student's motivation to read because it gave them a reason to read. Additionally, those students chose books they enjoyed reading which gave them a reason to read-aloud to other students and provided opportunities for the students to explain why they chose a particular book (Gambrell, 2011). Tompkins (2006) believed motivation is social because students want to share ideas and participate in groups or different activities. Braun (2010) concluded students become excited about subject areas and content when they see their teachers become excited. Braun (2010) also indicated students' attitudes can be affected when teachers read-aloud.

Attitude was described as being an important factor of motivation (Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006). Tompkins (2006) described four teacher factors and four student factors affecting student motivation. Teachers' factors were described as conveying a positive attitude, building community in the classroom, clear and relevant instruction, and implementing rewards (Tompkins, 2006). Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) noted the importance teachers have in motivating students, and respect was a significant factor. According to Tompkins (2006), "everything teachers do affects their students' interest and engagement with literacy, but four of the most important factors are teachers' attitude or excitement, the community created in their classrooms, the instructional approaches teachers use, and the reward systems they use" (p. 235). Morrison and Wlodarczyk (2009) concurred and explained motivation is a "top predictor of whether students will engage with texts in meaningful ways (p. 111).

Student factors were described as expectations, collaboration, reading and writing competence, and choices (Tompkins, 2006). Hurst et al. (2011) agreed a literary

environment and a sense of community is built as reading aloud occurred not only by teachers, but also by students because insight was gained toward interests, likes, and dislikes of peers. Tompkins (2006) stated, “intrinsic motivation was not something that teachers or parents can force on students; rather, it is an innate desire that students must develop themselves” (p. 236). Students “are more likely to become engaged with reading when they expect to be successful, when they work collaboratively with classmates, when they are capable readers, and then they have opportunities to make choices and develop ownership of their work” (Tompkins, 2006, p. 236).

Parental involvement has been proven effective in increasing student motivation becoming independent and proficient readers (Kotaman, 2008; Smith, 1978; Trelease, 2006; Young & Rasinski, 2009). When parents read-aloud to children and students, the love of reading transpires (Kotaman, 2008; Smith, 1978; Trelease, 2006). Parental involvement was the premise for a study by Kotaman (2008) where it was found reading attitudes were positive among students whose parents read to aloud. Similarly, Coffey (2010) proclaimed, “by reading to their children, parents better prepare them to become better readers and enable current readers to make more progress” (p. 60). He went on to state, “many families stop reading aloud once their children can read to themselves” (p. 60). According to Gambrell (2011), children with positive attitudes about reading are better readers because they spend time reading. Conclusions revealed parents should read-aloud to students in the early years to foster positive attitudes, which essentially motivate students to become lifelong readers (Coffey, 2010; Kotaman, 2008).

Giorgis and Johnson (2003) suggested every time a book is read-aloud by teachers, parents, or students, and is discussed afterwards, students make connections,

which enhanced comprehension and lead to students reading more independently. They asserted when books are read-aloud to students, it allows teachers and students to enjoy the book together (Giorgis & Johnson, 2003). Moreover, Ariail and Albright (2006) indicated when teachers read-aloud to alliterate students (students who could read but choose not to), the students come more motivated to read independently. In the study, three types of alliterate students were identified: dormant (students who like reading independently but do not make time for it), uncommitted (students who do not enjoy independently reading but say they may later), and unmotivated (students who do not enjoy reading independently and do not ever plan to do so) (Ariail & Albright, 2006). Additionally, when all three types of alliterate students participated in a read-aloud setting, positive attitudes towards reading in general were created (Ariail & Albright, 2006).

In concordance with this study, Morgan (2009) surmised children become more motivated to read independently when teachers read-aloud and make the book appealing. Duncan (2010) asserted when teachers read-aloud during class, literature comes to life. According to Duncan (2010), “for readers who are reluctant to pick up a book or unable to understand one on their own, the practice provides an avenue into a love of reading by exposing students to excitement of a story” (p. 92). Findings of students actually participating in reading aloud have been reported to motivate students to read independently (Young & Rasinski, 2009).

The practice of Readers Theatre has been documented as improving reading performance, as well as being an “engaging and motivational activity for students (Young & Rasinski, 2009, p. 5). According to Hollenbeck (2006):

Readers Theatre is a fun, interactive way to build fluency. By reading, rehearsing, and performing scripts at their independent reading levels, children learn to navigate and use the written word in exciting, amusing, and purposeful ways. It motivates children to experiment with language, working with expression, pacing, tone, inflection, meaning, and interpretation. As they take part in Reader's Theatre, children step out of the basal and into a world of language and meaning brought to life. (p. 16)

According to Trelease (2006), reading aloud is the catalyst for children acquiring motivation to want to read independently. Trelease (2006) compared his study of reading aloud to research results of an international study of 150,000 fourth grade students and researchers concluded students who were read to frequently at home scored 30 points higher than students who were read to aloud less frequently. Findings revealed when students were read to, they heard more words and were more equipped to comprehend; therefore, students who were read-aloud to were more motivated to read for pleasure (Trelease, 2006).

Positive correlations have been reported in studies in which teachers and parents read-aloud to students, increasing students' motivation to read independently, and increasing students' overall academic achievement (Coffey, 2010; Duncan, 2010; Kotaman, 2008; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Duncan (2010) explained reading aloud to students proves to be a strong motivational tool directly impacting students' interests at all ages. Researchers have agreed middle school and high school students are motivated by simply listening to the teacher read-aloud during class for pleasure (Braun, 2010; Duncan 2010; Morrison & Włodarczyk, 2009; Tompkins, 2006).

Reading aloud in the content areas. Justification and support for using trade books to teach the core content areas in all grade levels are abundant. McCormick and McTigue (2011) asserted when teachers read-aloud texts, students' understanding of content is scaffolded. Teachers must know how to use reading aloud at its best for students to gain understanding of content (McCormick & McTigue, 2011). When informational texts are read-aloud to students, meaningful connections are made, thus providing a "new lens with which to view the world" (Cummins & Stallmeyer-Gerard, 2011, p. 394). Planning, implementing, and discussion of the read-aloud were discussed by McCormick and McTigue (2011):

Planning the read-aloud.

- Carefully choose book appropriate for students and instructional goals.
- Preview and practice reading text prior to reading aloud to students.
- Plan and prompt student discussion before, during, and after the read-aloud.

Implementing the read-aloud.

- Communicate the purpose for reading aloud.
- Use animation and expression when reading and have fun while doing so.
- Stop at important points and ask planned questions to help students focus on important concepts. Encourage students to make connections between the text and their own experiences.

After the read-aloud.

- Provide opportunities for students to respond to the read-aloud (small-group discussion, drawing, or writing).

- Help students make connections between science concepts and the real world (p. 48).

Educators should explore the many different ways to incorporate reading aloud into content areas (Delo, 2008; McCormick & McTigue, 2011). McCormick and McTigue (2011) stated, “the discussion, questions, and new learning connections are well worth both the planning and classroom time spent on teacher read-alouds” (p. 48).

Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) stated, “using literature is one of the most inviting ways to get children involved in mathematical thinking” (p. 40). According to Hunsader (2004), literature should be used in mathematics classrooms to engage students, especially those who struggle with the subject. Benefits of using trade books have been identified when teachers incorporate literature into the math lesson (Hunsader, 2004). The content of English and mathematics requires several of the same skills, such as pattern recognition, word classification, relationship examination, organized thoughts, and problem solving (Hunsader, 2004). Rutherford-Becker and Vanderwood (2009) reported reading competency is directly correlated with math competency and found significance when comparing higher reading achievement with mathematics skills.

Additionally, Hunsader (2004) indicated how literature breaks down the barriers of students who suffer from math anxiety. Cumins and Stallmeyer-Gerard (2011) agreed content can be difficult to understand in different subject areas, but when an informational read-aloud is used, learning transpires. Furthermore, it is important to read books completely for pleasure so motivation is gained and students become engaged before focusing on the math lesson (Hunsader, 2004). The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) recognized the central role of communication to assist children

in understanding mathematical ideas and making connections (Hunsader, 2004). Furthermore, Hunsader (2004) noted, “many children’s books present interesting problems and illustrate how other children solve them” and “through these books students see mathematics in a different context while they use reading as a form of communication” (p. 618). Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) explained, “when mathematical concepts are contextualized in stories, the meaning of those concepts is naturally carried by the medium of the story” (p. 40). The NCTM previously focused on covering as much curriculum as possible; however, more recently, the NCTM revised standards to develop a deeper understanding of concepts instead of hurrying through curriculum (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006). Hunsader (2004) indicated literature provided “a means for mathematics and language skills to develop simultaneously as children listen, read, write, and talk about mathematics” (p. 619). Thus, it is plausible that meaningful conversations and investigations derived from literature should be used in the mathematics classroom. Conclusions from Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) and Hunsader (2004) conclude literature integrated with content areas and an established real world setting, expresses real meaning to students and enhances learning.

Studies have revealed even when middle school teachers engaged in reading aloud to students in content areas students became more interested in the materials (Delo, 2008; Hunsader, 2004; Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006). Delo (2008) also proposed when science teachers read literature connecting science and students’ lives, material becomes more interesting and relevant. Delo (2008) indicated that students are able to make connections, understand the subject matter, and make meaning from the text. When even

one carefully selected book each semester is shared with students on subject matter being studied, students will better understand material being presented (Delo, 2008).

Similarly, McCormick and McTigue (2011) indicated there are a variety of meaningful texts connected to science concepts which can enhance understanding and application of those particular concepts. Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) recommended reading books to youngsters that entertain the brain with new information and encourage the imagination of learners. Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) encouraged educators to collect and read books to students based on a specific topic being discussed in class.

Throughout history, storytelling has been one of the basic ways to pass on information and important facts from one generation to the next (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006). Books should be used in classrooms to teach social studies and history because the “curriculum is rich with opportunities to mine the treasures in literature; story is therefore a natural vehicle in this rich and robust curriculum” (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006, p. 139). Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) acknowledged:

Story has helped us develop a sense of who we are and where we come from.
Story has helped us come to know ourselves in relation to others. It has been through story that we begin to understand times past and begin to shape our hopes for the future. (p. 139)

Within the social studies realm, lies a wide array of books assisting educators with significant lessons and making learning more meaningful, as students apply real stories to themselves, family members, or individuals they may know. The collection of books is endless and teachers should take advantage of unlimited resources available using the

titles for an enjoyable and meaningful read-aloud (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006). When students hear about people, places, and events in history through meaningful readings, students are more willing and able to pause and reflect (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006). Additionally, when students hear meaningful stories in the social studies curriculum, students may be more willing to take action themselves and model themselves after a specific person in history who made a difference and become an individual who makes differences for the future (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006).

Literature has the “potential for bringing together ideas, images, content, vocabulary, language, and art in the minds of any learner” (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006, p. 208). Each subject matter can be bridged with literature and each subject connected to the next through the method of reading books aloud to children (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006). When books are read to students, connections are made which “makes it possible for both teaching and learning to travel freely in the territory of ideas and information (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006, p. 208). Significant learning transpires in content areas when teacher read-alouds are implemented effectively (Delo, 2008; Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006; McCormick & McTigue, 2011).

Effective techniques of reading aloud. Many different techniques including shared reading, choral reading, Readers Theatre, and rereading have been successful for all ages of children. Readers Theatre has provided the premise for all other techniques including shared reading, rereading, and choral reading, as they can easily be incorporated into Readers Theatre; however, they may serve as individual techniques as well. Shared reading was described by Routman (1991) as a way to immerse students in “rich, literary-level language without worrying about grade level or reading performance”

(p. 33). Additionally, Routman (1991) defined shared reading as “any rewarding reading situation in which a learner, or group of learners, sees the text, observes an expert (usually the teacher) reading with fluency and expression, and is invited to read along” (p. 33). Furthermore, shared reading is described as being appropriate for all age levels and encouraged for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and recommended throughout high school (Routman, 1991).

Tompkins (2006) defined shared reading as students and teachers sharing a book together. According to the What Works Clearing House Intervention Report, shared reading is a “general practice aimed at enhancing young children’s language and literacy skills and their appreciation of books” (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2006, p. 1). Modeling what good readers do while reading, including questions asked during reading, predictions, summaries, and conclusions proves to enhance literacy instruction. When teachers read-aloud to their students, they exemplify modeling comprehension, vocabulary, text structures, and text features (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008; Tompkins, 2006). Modeling has been described as being the centerpiece for both teacher and parent service workshops (Arnold & Colburn, 2009). When individuals observe, retention rates are higher (Arnold & Colburn, 2009).

Profound discussions often occur after students have participated in a shared reading, and discussions broaden students’ understanding and comprehension of texts, as well as genres available to students (Shagoury, 2010). Additionally, prior knowledge must be accessed in order to make connections with the text being read and for meaning to transpire (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005). During shared reading, the learner receives support and encouragement from the teacher (Routman, 1991). Routman (1991) stated,

“each reading situation is a relaxed, social one, with emphasis on enjoyment and appreciation of the stories, songs, rhymes, chants, raps, and poems (p. 33). After shared reading, students should have an opportunity for SSR or independent reading of the previously read text (Routman, 1991). Providing students the time to read during school hours is vital as students in upper grades typically become more busy and have a wide array of extracurricular activities where reading often times comes last (Gambrell, 2011; Smith, 1978).

Tompkins (2006) indicated teachers may use shared reading to read-aloud a big book where the pictures and text is enlarged to engage primary aged students. Tompkins (2006) explained, the teacher reads most of the text while children “join in the reading of familiar and repeated words and phrases” (p. 27). Upper grade teachers may also use shared reading effectively while reading aloud to students (Tompkins, 2006). Tompkins (2006) described the setting as somewhat different since students have a copy of the book and follow along while the teacher reads aloud. During shared reading, vocabulary words are discussed and questions are answered along the way (Tompkins, 2006). Sophisticated and meaningful conversations develop from reading aloud and shared reading (Pentimonti & Justice, 2009; Shagoury, 2010). Profound discussions often occur after students have participated in a shared reading, and discussions broaden students’ understanding and comprehension of texts as well as genres available to students (Pentimonti & Justice, 2009; Shagoury, 2010). Furthermore:

Reading aloud 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 (as cited in Pentimonti & Justice, 2009, p. 242).

The read-aloud provides avenues for adults to experience literature and meaningful conversation with children (Pentimonti & Justice, 2010). Success of reading aloud is pivotal as students reflect upon shared reading, discuss concepts with peers, and extend the ideas within the text (Shagoury, 2010). Shared reading has been described and defined in a variety of ways; however, one common denominator remains consistent, it is effective with older readers and should not just be used with beginners (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008).

Smith (1978) surmised, while it was important to read-aloud to students, it is even of greater importance to read with students. While students may not know or recognize all of the vocabulary words or phrases within the text, motivation is gained due to the fact students are provided the opportunity to be confronted with unfamiliar vocabulary when shared reading transpires. Tompkins (2006) declared two specific ways teachers can provide daily opportunities for students to benefit from reading aloud. First, middle grade students are often able to read at least some texts independently without assistance (Tompkins, 2006). To increase fluency, teachers read-aloud a familiar book to students while they follow along and read or reread the text (Tompkins, 2006).

Second, Tompkins (2006) suggested choral reading as a method where students participate in read-arounds. During this activity, students take turns reading a favorite passage from a previously read book (Tompkins, 2006). Students also take turns reading passages in any order instead of the typical round robin reading where students take turns reading consecutively (Tompkins, 2006). Kirkland and Patterson (2005) concurred,

“shared reading is a way of recreating the lap-reading experience for children, as well as enhancing the development of oral language” (p. 394). When stories are repeated and reread, confidence is built as students become more familiar with the text (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005). When teachers model during shared reading, students understand and gain meaning from the text (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008). Rereading has been identified as effective to enhance students’ vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, confidence, and build community within the class (Hurst, et al., 2011; Kabilan & Kamaruddin, 2010; Routman, 1991). Students practice reading the same text until fluency is achieved and performance for an audience is possible (Young & Rasinski, 2009). Rereading encourages students to read “like natural speech” (Young & Rasinski, 2009, p. 4). Rereading can be incorporated into Readers Theatre where students practice fluency, expression, and reading for an audience (Hurst, et al., 2011; Tompkins, 2006; Young & Rasinski 2009).

One of the practices teachers could incorporate into classes to encourage students to reread, practice and advocate meaning for students is Readers Theatre (Hurst et al. 2011; Kabilan & Kamaruddin, 2010). Readers Theatre was defined as “pedagogical purposes as a staged presentation of a piece of literature or selected pieces of literature that are thematically linked” (Kaliban & Kamaruddin, 2010, p. 133), and went on to say, “the stated presentation or performance can be read individually or chorally by ensembles as a way to focus on the meaning of literature (Kaliban & Kamaruddin, 2010, p. 133). According to Young and Rasinski (2009), “Readers Theatre creates an academic avenue that leads to increased reading fluency, regardless of whether students are striving or

thriving” (p. 4). Readers Theatre has proven to positively impact students’ attitudes about reading which in turn increased student’s fluency (Kaliban & Kamaruddin, 2010).

Tompkins (2006) explained the purpose of Readers Theatre is to enhance students to read more fluently. Poe (2010) confirmed Readers Theatre as a “staged reading of literature that emphasizes the importance of text by using limited action, suggested characterization, no costumes, and no props” (p.29). Teachers share the story as a shared reading with the class and read it aloud together, then students practice reading scripts to increase fluency before performing the script for an audience (Tompkins, 2006). Kirkland and Patterson (2005) affirmed Readers Theatre is “an effective venue for children to connect with literature” (p. 394). According to Manning fluency is built by Readers Theatre “for children who are low language learners or who are attempting to learn a new language” (as cited in Kirkland & Patterson, 2005, p. 394).

When upper level students were given a reason to practice reading aloud to younger students during a community wide event where upper level students read-aloud to younger students, motivation among both ages groups were attained (Muller, 2005). Furthermore, the event gave older students reasons to practice reading aloud, which essentially increased literacy elements including fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Muller, 2005). When students have a reason for reading; gains are made because students read more, and when students read more, vocabulary and fluency increase, which in turn, increases comprehension and motivation (Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Albright (2006), delineated how “seventh-grade students who participated in an interactive read-aloud of picture books during social studies were engaged in learning and demonstrated higher-level thinking skills” (p. 70).

Students made connections, made meaning and responded aesthetically and efferently (Ariail & Albright, 2006). (Kirkland & Patterson 2005) surmised reading aloud was such an important part of students' success, it is critical to read-aloud anytime an opportunity presents itself. Educators can "no longer afford to squeeze a read-aloud book between lunchtime and bathroom break...important to language development, we must systematically and explicitly plan for it use in the daily routine" (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005, p. 303).

Summary

The benefits of reading aloud are pronounced as the evidence from studies have significant measures of reliability (Hunsader, 2004; Kindle, 2009; Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006; Morgan, 2009; Tompkins 2006; Trelease, 2006). Officials work to improve student success and increase achievement scores (Tompkins, 2006, Trelease, 2006). Numerous studies have revealed time spent reading aloud to children increases positive attitudes about reading, and increases achievement scores (Kindle, 2009, Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006; Morgan, 2009; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006).

Reading aloud increases comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. When students feel successful, motivation increases. When reading aloud is included in the content areas, students gain a better understanding of subject matter presented and gains are made in vocabulary and fluency as well. (Giorgis & Johnson, 2003; Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006; Tompkins, 2006). When students make connections, meaning is made; therefore, subject matter is understood in greater depth. There are a variety of effective techniques teachers can use in the classroom for middle school students. Reading aloud can be modeled in a lesson. Additionally, shared reading and Readers Theatre can be utilized in

all content areas. Reading aloud is one of the oldest and cost effective practices used in educational history and has been proven to be successful in elementary grades (Routman, 1991; Trelease, 2006).

As previously discussed, the benefits of reading aloud are numerous. Reading has been reported as essential for all other learning to transpire (Smith, 1978). Additionally, reading aloud is as an important motivator for students to become independent readers (Morrsion & Wlodarczyk, 2009). When teachers actively engage students with text, not only do students become more motivated to read independently, but learning actually transpires (Boyd & Devennie, 2009). The effectiveness of reading aloud is astounding and increases comprehension, decoding, vocabulary, and listening skills as well as promotes healthy reading attitudes and motivation to read (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Fox, 2008; Ivey, 2003; Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006).

In Chapter Three, the methods and procedures that were used for the study were explained. In Chapter Four, descriptive statistics were presented and analysis of students and teachers as well as qualitative analysis of students who enjoy reading aloud and attitudes about reading aloud. In Chapter Five, conclusions recommendations and implications of this study have been addressed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Perspective

The application for International Review Board was submitted to Lindenwood University. After receiving the disposition letter (see Appendix A) from the University, research was then conducted in the three Missouri school districts. In this mixed design study, interviews were conducted face-to-face or via telephone. Hunt (2007) asserted numbers and text are included in a mixed design study. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) concluded mixed design research includes the combination of quantitative and qualitative procedures into one study. Surveys were distributed and respondents could anonymously make a selection of given choices. Questions were designed and dispersed to teachers throughout three school districts in Missouri.

Although researchers agree the effectiveness of reading aloud in elementary grades is paramount and the impact it has on overall student achievement, minimal research on reading aloud has been reported in middle grades (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Trelease, 2006). As the stakes grow higher, now is clearly the time to discover and implement effective reading techniques that are truly productive and overall student growth is gained. This study examined reasons teachers read-aloud to middle school students and how the strategy of reading aloud impacts middle school students' independent reading and achievement scores.

Reading teachers from three school districts in Missouri were contacted and asked to participate in the study. These same reading teachers were asked to select six seventh grade students to be interviewed. Students were categorized by those who enjoyed reading independently and those who did not enjoy reading independently. Students were

identified according to number the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) score on each student was included to allow for axial coding during the study.

Interview questions were created and asked of students who had a signed parent consent form (see Appendix B). Teacher interview questions were given to teachers from the three different school districts in Missouri who had agreed to participate. The results from qualitative and quantitative questions were examined and identified.

Research Questions

1. What factors motivate teachers to read-aloud to seventh grade students?
2. Does the practice of reading aloud to students cause those students to be independent readers?
3. What factors cause seventh grade students to lose interest in reading independently?
4. What is the relationship between reading scores of seventh grade students who read independently and seventh grade students who do not read independently?

Context and Access

The study was conducted in three different school districts in Missouri in three different regions. Data were collected through a survey distributed to three school districts in the spring of 2011 and collected within two weeks. Teacher and student interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011 in the same three school districts.

Participants in the Study

Eighteen seventh grade students were expected to participate in the interview; however, only sixteen students were actually interviewed including six students from northeast Missouri, six students from central Missouri, and four students from southwest

Missouri. According to Gay (1996), “there are no guidelines for sample size in a qualitative study” (p. 216). As a result, this sample size was chosen to assure a “representativeness of the data...[and, yet] accurately reflect the situation under study” (Gay, 1996, p. 215).

A random sampling method was utilized to select the three school districts for the study. According to Bluman (2008), random samples are chosen by chance. From a list of public school districts in Missouri, the districts were organized by geographical area (northeast, central, southwest) and student population (less than 1500, 1500-3000, more than 3,000). Then, three school districts were selected from the disaggregated list by geographic regions. This process of selection allowed for the results to be generalized to other representative samples (Frenkel & Wallen, 2003). A permission letter to conduct research in the district was presented, in person, to each superintendent in the randomly selected districts (see Appendix C).

Two middle teachers, one of whom was a Reading and/or Language Arts teacher, from each district (a total of six) were contacted via telephone after the building administrator advised who to contact. Administrators provided teachers' e-mail addresses who were then contacted and asked to participate in a face-to-face interview. The Reading and/or Language Arts teachers were asked to identify 18 seventh grade students (six from each school) who were potential interviewees for this study. In addition, teachers were asked to select three students who they knew enjoyed reading independently and three students who they knew did not enjoy reading independently. The students' parents were contacted initially by the Reading and/or Language Arts teacher.

An additional 20 middle school teachers from each of the three school districts were randomly selected by the building administrator to participate in a survey. The building administrator was given a packet with surveys enclosed, as well as letters of informed consent and was asked to collect as many surveys as possible. Teachers and students (parents) were given a letter of informed consent to participate (see Appendices D & E) as well as letters of participation (see Appendices F & G). Informed consent forms were distributed personally and signed by the teachers and students' parents/legal guardians before interviews were conducted.

Informed consent forms were presented to each teacher choosing to participate in the survey. Permission to conduct research was obtained from each superintendent. The permission was requested in a face-to-face meeting with each superintendent. Included in the informed consent and permission to conduct research was a concise explanation of assurance of confidentiality.

A meeting was held in which the Reading and/or Language Arts teachers were informed about the research procedures and their role in the study. Once the reading achievement scores were collected, information was collated by the Reading and/or Language Arts teachers and data codes or pseudonyms were developed to protect confidentiality and assure anonymity of the students. Students were identified by a number, gender, district, and whether or not he or she enjoyed independent reading. Teachers were identified by number, gender, district, and subject and/or grade level taught. At no time was there access to any student's personal information by any outside entity. Informed consent and permission forms were secured in a locked file cabinet. After a period of five years, all forms will be destroyed.

Methods and Instruments Used to Collect Data

Research questions guided the study and data were evaluated from teacher and student interviews (qualitative), teacher surveys (quantitative), and seventh grade student reading achievement scores (quantitative). Questions used in the surveys were viewed by committee members in 2010, which allowed for “comments and suggestions concerning directions, recording procedures, and specific items” (Gay, 1996, p. 259), which served to identify the deficiencies and revise if needed. Interview questions were revised based on advice from committee members to provide more latitude for open ended responses. Three additional questions were added to both teacher and student interview questions to gain an understanding of books recently read and why those specific books were read. The IRB was then submitted and disposition letter was granted in December 2010.

Interview. According to Bluman (2008), personal interviews provide the advantage of gaining deeper reflection and responses. In this study, middle school Reading and/or Language Arts teachers from each school district were contacted and asked to select six students in seventh grade to interview. Reading teachers collated the data into groups of seventh grade students who enjoy reading independently and students who do not enjoy reading independently. Those same students’ achievement score on the SRI were also collected by the teachers.

The SRI is a “research-based, computer adaptive reading comprehension assessment, developed in partnership with MetaMetric, Inc., creators of the Lexile Framework® (see Appendix H) for Reading, the proven measure of reading ability and text difficulty” (Scholastic Guide for Educators, 2008). Numerical codes were assigned to students to assure anonymity. The design of the student interview (see Appendix I)

instrument was guided by the primary research questions. Seventh grade students were asked if a family member reads aloud to them at home and for how many hours. Then students were asked if they were read-aloud to by a teacher and what subject area the teacher taught. Questions regarding enjoyment of reading were asked and the students' preferred genre.

Survey. Mailed questionnaire surveys are advantageous due to that they “can cover a wider geographic area...and they are less expensive” (Bluman, 2008, p. 10). The design of this particular teacher survey (see Appendix J) instrument was guided by the primary research questions. Questions used in the surveys were viewed by committee members in 2010, which allowed for “comments and suggestions concerning directions, recording procedures, and specific items” (Gay, 1996, p. 259), which served to identify the deficiencies and revise if needed. Interview questions were revised based on advice from committee members to provide more latitude for open ended responses. Three additional questions were added to both teacher and student interview questions to gain an understanding of books recently read and why those specific books were read. The IRB was then submitted and disposition letter was granted in December 2010.

The first part of the survey solicited demographic and characteristic data on the respondents. Middle schools are configured in several different ways, so a question was designed to determine the configuration of each specific school district. For example, the predominant grade configuration is 6-8, but some middle schools may include 5, 6, 7, and 8, and some may only be two grade levels. Middle school teachers may also teach multiple subjects or grades, so a question was designed to determine which subject and/or grades the teachers being interviewed and surveyed taught.

The survey asked participants about their read-aloud practices. Teachers who were interviewed were asked if they read-aloud to their students, why, or why not. The definition of read-aloud was defined in the survey. This was to prevent teachers from indicating they read-aloud to students if they only read-aloud directions or portions from textbooks.

Data Analysis

Qualitative. Teacher interviews questions (see Appendix K), and student interviews questions were designed for the qualitative portion of the study. Qualitative studies are designed to acknowledge the range of realities participants will bring to the research and the factors that motivate or constrain them (Patton, 2002). Participants in qualitative studies are encouraged to freely express opinions and ideas that may exist individually or shared by a community (Morgan, 1997). Participants may or may not answer truthfully, due to nuisance variables such as peers listening or outside noises. Qualitative research seeks to describe the reality that exists for a population who share some unifying elements (Wellington, 2000).

Interviews were conducted and recorded using video, audio, and written notes. This was done to ensure dependability and to prepare a transcript for analysis, since transcripts alone cannot capture the nuances of conversation or interactions (Duggleby, 2005). Video and audio taping were used with permission from the participant before each recording. The interview probed ideas of the interviewees about the significance of reading aloud to seventh grade students and student achievement. The interview responses were analyzed using open and axial coding while looking for emerging ideas, common words and phrases, and themes. Axial coding was defined by Merriam (2009) as

“the process of relating categories and properties to each other, refining the category scheme” (p. 200).

Information from interviews was then formulated into charts and graphs, including descriptions of the information and how it related to the study. Data were reviewed using a step-by-step process while looking for emerging ideas or topics. The data sets were systematically analyzed for themes and patterns that could be verifiable and interpreted (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2009; Morgan, 1997, Vaughn et al., 1996).

After participants were interviewed, transcribing was conducted. Each question was highlighted in a different color which helped to reveal the different themes and patterns. Attention was given to the frequency of comments, specific details, emotional responses, and when comments return to a particular topic (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggested the criteria to assess the results of qualitative research occur through credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Quantitative. The data instrument used in this study was a teacher survey (see Appendix J). Data from the surveys were entered and coded using the statistical analysis software program Excel. Questions were explored through descriptive statistics, collection, organization, summarization, and presentation of data (Bluman, 2008). According to Bluman (2008), means to collect data relevant to a given situation must be organized and set up to collect, organize, and summarize the results.

A t-test was used to determine the degree of relationship between the reading achievement scores of seventh grade students who enjoy reading independently and seventh grade students who do not enjoy reading independently (scores provided by the Reading and/or Language Arts teacher). This measurement was conducted to determine

attitudes based on the data scores of the SRI test collected and conducted by the Reading and/or Language Arts teacher. The t-test was a one-tailed independent test where the significance level was $p = < .05$. According to Bluman (2008), “a t test is used to test the difference between means when the two samples are independent and when the samples are taken from two normally or approximately normally distributed populations” (p. 481).

Internal Reliability and Credibility

Data in this study were collected through surveys and interviews. Participants were asked the same questions in different ways. Data were triangulated through multiple sources of data collection and systematic analyses of data. Patton (2002) recommended to increase the thoroughness of qualitative studies, triangulation should be used. This included collecting different kinds of data on the same question and using more than one data collector (Patton, 2002). This was conducted to assure trustworthiness of the study results.

Consistent methods of data collection were used with each participant, which strengthened the credibility of the findings. The credibility of the researcher was confirmed by position and previous experiences in education. Prior to the study, seminars and conferences were attended on the basis of the topic for this document.

Transferability

Research findings were generalized across all populations and results should be useful as the three school districts in the state of Missouri were from three different regions. Brown (2005) described transferability as one of the characteristics of sound qualitative research. By providing thick description through detail to enable readers to decide upon results for themselves, enhances transferability (Brown, 2005).

Transferability was established by the selection of the school districts and how they relate to one another. The population of teachers enabled the transferability of the study as teachers were selected for their expertise and experience. Complete and thorough descriptions of the research and the assumptions that were essential to the research enhanced transferability.

Dependability

In qualitative research establishing dependability is challenging as life is not static and observing the same event at a different time yields a new outcome. To strengthen the dependability and the possibility of duplication of methods in another setting, methods must be well documented and results believable (Kruegar & Casey 2000). Guda and Lincoln (2005) concluded when this is done, it adds to the qualitative and interpretive studies trustworthiness and authenticity of data. Once all of the quantitative data and qualitative data had been evaluated, recommendations were addressed.

Conformability

Information reported by participants must be documented and reported as close to participants meaning as possible. Clarification of biases and triangulation of data sources were performed. Triangulation of data sources was essential to establishing a systematic and authentic analysis of findings. Triangulation was defined by Merriam (2009) as, “using multiple investigators, sources of data, or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings” (p. 229). Interviews were both transcribed and video and audio taped. Using a consistent system of analysis for each data source simplified the findings of emerging themes and patterns in the responses. The practice of questioning and analyzing

what is learned throughout the study aided in clarifying responses, reactions, and questions through the study.

Ethical Considerations

Included in the informed consent letters and permission to conduct research were concise explanations of assurance of confidentiality. All reading achievement scores and information was collated by the Reading and/or Language Arts teachers and data codes or pseudonyms were developed to protect confidentiality and assured anonymity of the students. At no time was there access to any student's personal information. Informed consent and permission forms were locked in a file cabinet and will continue to be for five years and then destroyed.

Summary

This chapter established the design for the research and data gathering. For the purpose of this study, a mixed design method was used. Teacher and student interviews and teacher surveys were used to determine if there was a relationship between seventh grade students' perceptions of reading and teachers reading aloud to seventh grade students. Research questions guided the study. Comparisons of attitudes of seventh grade students who read for enjoyment were compared with seventh grade students who did not read for enjoyment. Comparisons evaluated differences between achievement scores of seventh grade students who read for enjoyment and scores of seventh grade students who do not read for enjoyment.

Chapter Four presents descriptive statistics and analysis of students and teachers as well as qualitative analysis of students who enjoy reading aloud and attitudes about

reading aloud. Chapter Five addresses the conclusions, recommendations and implications of this study.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons middle school teachers read-aloud to students, how reading aloud directly relates to seventh grade students reading independently, and, as a result, how reading achievement is influenced. Teachers and seventh grade students from three different schools in Missouri were interviewed face-to-face to determine attitudes and perceptions of reading aloud. Surveys from twenty teachers in three different school districts in Missouri were compared to the interview responses to further understand methods and rationale as to why teachers do or do not read-aloud to his or her students. The following research questions guided the study and were regarded during the entire analysis process:

1. What factors motivate teachers to read-aloud to seventh grade students?
2. Does the practice of reading aloud to seventh grade students cause those students to be independent readers?
3. What factors cause seventh grade students to lose interest in reading independently?
4. What is the relationship between reading scores of seventh grade students who read independently and seventh grade students who do not read independently?

Participants were interviewed from three different school districts in Missouri, one in southwest Missouri, one in central Missouri, and one in northeast Missouri. Interviews were video and audio taped and reviewed and transcribed. Transcripts from interviews were highlighted and coded to determine relationships and any emerging themes or patterns. According to Merriam, (2009), similar phrases, words, sentences,

beliefs, and perceptions were identified using colored highlights or open coding. Responses were coded accordingly using marginal comments noting similarities of answers as well as colored highlighting. Responses were continually compared to one another to determine main themes and emerging ideas. Axial coding was used to comprehend any relationships between ideas and themes, and patterns. Strauss & Corbin (1998) characterized axial coding as taking notes or drawing diagrams to cipher the information and determine the common patterns and emerging themes.

Participants

Participants were recruited from three different school districts in Missouri. Sixteen seventh grade students were interviewed (six from northeast Missouri, six from central Missouri, and four from southwest Missouri). Three students who enjoy reading independently and three students who do not enjoy reading independently were selected by the Reading and/or Language Arts teacher and interviewed by the researcher. Participants' SRI scores were reported by students' reading teachers. An additional sixty teachers (twenty teachers from each of the three school districts) completed a survey.

Protocol

A permission letter stating the purpose and significance of the study was hand delivered to the principal and superintendent of each school district. The principal of each school district was also sent a letter of informed consent, letter of participation for teachers and students, and a copy of the interview and survey questions. Phone calls and email messages were sent to verify all forms had been received and reviewed prior to scheduling dates to conduct interviews. The principal chose a lead teacher to

communicate with the researcher and schedule interviews with students during study hall or advisory times.

Presentation and Analysis of the Findings

Surveys. Data instruments used in this study were a teacher survey, teacher interview, and student interview. All of the questions used in the surveys and interviews were reviewed by committee members prior to distribution. This process allowed for “comments and suggestions concerning directions, recording procedures, and specific items” (Gay, 1996, p. 259), which served to identify the deficiencies and revise if needed.

Data from the surveys were entered and coded using the statistical analysis software program Excel. Questions were explored through descriptive statistics, collection, organization, summarization, and presentation of data as was suggested in Bluman (2008). The first question regarded gender. Sixty teachers participated in the survey. Twenty teachers were male and 40 were female.

Survey question 2: Years of teaching experience.

Majority of teachers had between six and 10 years of teaching experience while 25% had five years of experience or less. (see Figure 1).

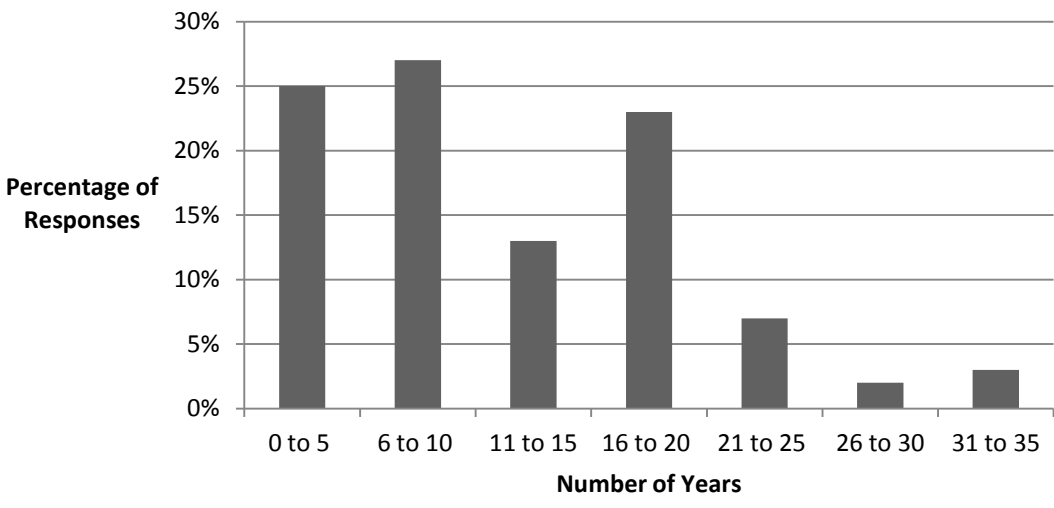


Figure 1

Years of Teaching Experience

Survey question 3: Highest education level completed.

A teacher who held a master’s degree with his or her first teaching certification was 40% while only 1% of teachers held a specialist degree. No teachers reported having a doctorate degree (see Figure 2).

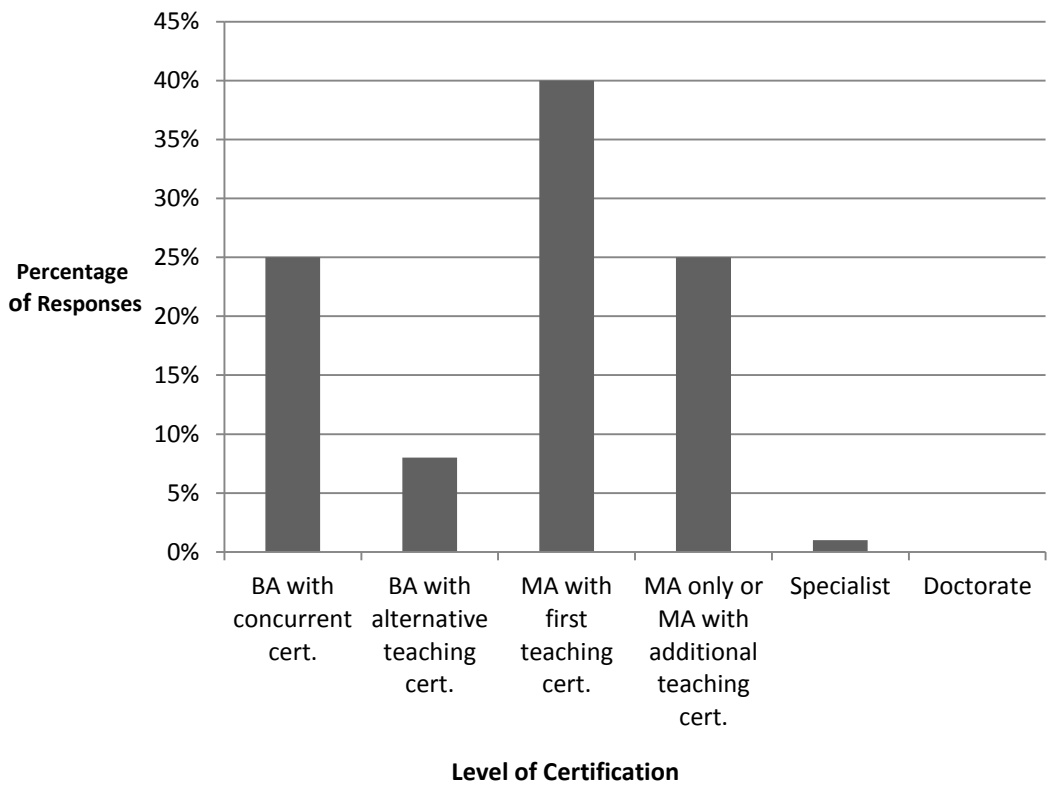


Figure 2

Highest education level completed.

Survey question 4: Student population of school district.

The results were evenly dispersed with 20 teachers being from an urban, suburban, and rural district respectively (see Figure 3).

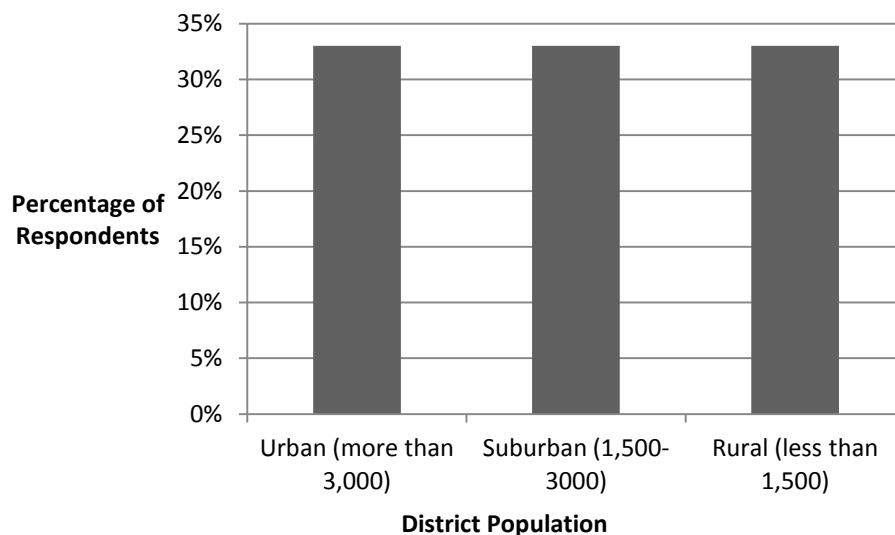


Figure 3

Student population of school district.

Survey question 5: Grade level taught.

According to Table 1, all teachers surveyed taught in a grade configuration of sixth through eighth. Most teachers surveyed taught seventh grade or some combination of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth. Only 3% of teachers surveyed taught sixth grade (see Table 1).

Table 1

Grade Level Taught

Grade Level Taught	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
6 th	3	16%
7 th	20	33%
8 th	17	28%
Combination	20	33%

Survey question 6: Subject taught.

Most of the teachers surveyed taught English, Language Arts, or Reading with 35% of respondents teaching one or more of these content areas. Eighteen percent surveyed taught something other including computers, life skills, family and consumer science, band, or physical education. (see Figure 4.)

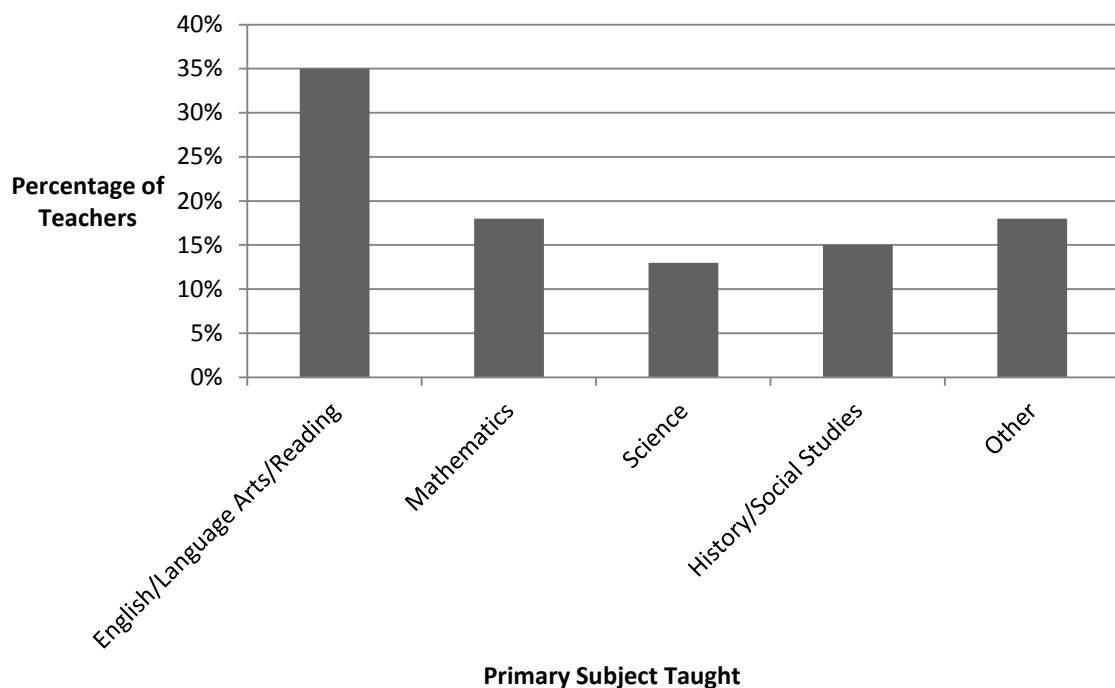


Figure 4

Subject Taught

Survey question 7: Students considered to be “at-risk”.

Only 18% of teachers indicated they taught students considered to be at risk including remedial and/or special education. Eighty-two percent of teachers surveyed did not teach “at-risk” students.

Survey question 8: Read-aloud to students (other than selections from textbooks, directions, or announcements).

In response to question 8 regarding if teachers read-aloud to students or do not read-aloud to students, 63% reported they do read-aloud to students texts such as fiction and nonfiction books, poetry, magazines, and/or newspapers. Only 37% indicated they did not read-aloud to students other than textbook selections, directions and/or announcements.

Survey question 9: Reasons why teachers do not read-aloud to students.

When teachers were asked to select one reason as to why they do not read-aloud to students, the majority of respondents believed reading aloud was not appropriate for the subject. Of the respondents, 14% did not think there was enough time in the day for reading aloud and 9% did not think that reading aloud was an important instructional practice (see Table 2)

Table 2

Teachers' Reasons for Not Reading Aloud to Students during Class

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
Reading aloud is not appropriate for the subject I teach	9	41%
Reading aloud is not appropriate for the age level I teach	0	0%
I do not think that reading aloud is an important instructional practice	2	9%
I never think about including read-alouds as part of my curriculum	4	18%
There is not enough time in the day	3	14%
I am uncomfortable reading aloud, or I do not know how to read-aloud effectively	0	0%
Other	4	18%

Survey question 10: Reasons for reading aloud to students.

There was an indifferent response to the question regarding reasons why teachers read-aloud to students (see Table 3). It was found that 71% believed reading aloud enhanced understanding and comprehension, and 50% of teachers read-aloud to model word and vocabulary pronunciation.

Table 3

Teachers' Reasons for Reading Aloud to Students during Class

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
My students enjoy it	15	39%
To build interest in a topic or to introduce a topic	16	42%
To enhance understanding/comprehension	27	71%
To increase/improve vocabulary	10	26%
To model word/vocabulary pronunciation	19	50%
To model fluent reading	14	36%
To promote a love of literature	13	34%
To expose students to texts they may not read otherwise	17	45%
To improve listening skills	12	34%
To increase general knowledge	16	42%
To manage the student/class	3	7%
To reinforce/emphasize content	15	39%

Survey question 11: Type of texts teachers read-aloud to students.

A variety of texts allows opportunities for teachers to incorporate reading aloud to students during the day. Often, teachers assume children's literature is the only genre to read-aloud; however, Smith (1978) concluded otherwise. He indicated poetry, plays, references, articles, newspapers, headlines, news, picture captions, sports, weather forecasts, market summaries, advertisements, and many more were ideal for reading aloud to students (1978). When asked about the type of texts teachers read-aloud to students, the overwhelming majority of teachers surveyed reported they read-aloud novel/chapter books, including historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy. Sasson (2008) concluded reading aloud could include books teachers connected with as students and still do, short nonfiction books, drama or plays, and pictures books. Twenty-nine percent of teachers surveyed read-aloud information/nonfiction books, including biographies and 22% read something "other". Table 4 indicates only 5% of teachers read-aloud picture books.

Table 4

Types of Texts Teachers Most Frequently Read-aloud to Students

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
Picture Books	2	5%
Poetry	4	10%
Information/nonfiction books, including biographies	11	29%
Literature anthologies	4	10%
Magazines	7	18%
Newspapers	5	13%
Novel/Chapter books, including historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy	23	60%
Other	8	21%

Survey question 12: Main type of opportunity teachers provide for students to respond to the text before, during, and/or after the read-aloud.

Routman (1991) concluded individuals were affected differently by texts based on prior knowledge and experiences. Discussion gives “every student an opportunity to speak and be heard...reflective questioning and responding encourages the highest levels of critical thinking and evaluation” (Routman, 1991, p. 123). Discussion of text was deemed as important to gain insights as to what others are thinking as well as build community among students (Hurst et al., 2011; Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978). There was a strong agreement regarding class discussion as the main opportunity teachers provide

for students' response to text. While 68% of the respondents provided the opportunity for whole-class discussion, 29% provided small-group discussion. Only 2% either gave art/music/drama activities or other (see Figure 5).

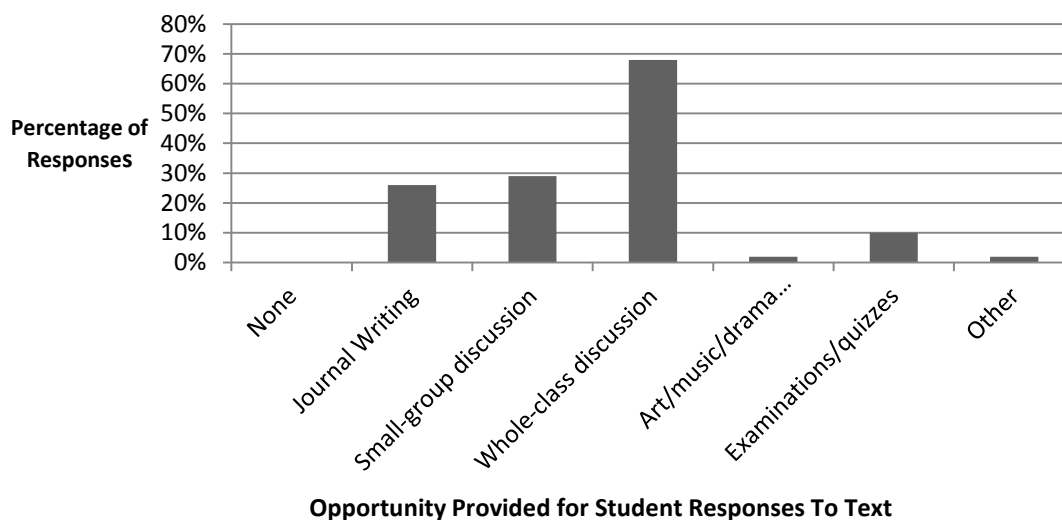


Figure 5

Opportunities for Student Responses

Interviews. Teachers participating in the interviews were asked to sign informed consent forms prior to interviewing or responding to the survey. The Reading or Language Arts teacher in each of the three school districts was asked to distribute and collect the selected students' parent consent forms prior to scheduling interviews. Students and teachers were informed they could withdraw from the interview or survey at any time. Each interview started with discussion about the study and how many questions would be asked. Teachers and students were informed they could also ask questions or add a thought during the interview process.

Interviews were video-taped and audio-taped, with permission from participants and participants' parents, to guarantee the responses were correctly transcribed. Field notes were taken during the interview process. All teacher and student interviews were

transcribed verbatim and responses were coded to assist in identifying emerging themes, patterns, similarities, and differences.

Sixteen students were interviewed from three different school districts in Missouri. Eight students were identified by the Reading or Language Arts teachers as students who enjoyed independent reading or Self Selected Reading and eight students were identified as not enjoying independent reading or SSR. The Lexile® Grade Level Conversion Chart. Table 5 represents data collected and coding of students. Six seventh grade teachers from the three different school districts were interviewed. The teachers' subject area taught, perception of reading aloud, and gender was examined as shown in Table 6.

Table 5

Coding of Middle School Seventh Grade Students

Student	Enjoys Reading Independently	Gender	School District	SRI Score
1(MNA)	No	Male	A	1,140
2(MYA)	Yes	Male	A	1,111
3(FNA)	No	Female	A	763
4(MYA)	Yes	Male	A	659
5(MYB)	Yes	Male	B	1,316
6(FYB)	Yes	Female	B	1,298
7(FYB)	Yes	Female	B	1,074
8(FNB)	No	Female	B	1,057
9(MNB)	No	Male	B	976
10(FNB)	No	Female	B	826
11(FNC)	No	Female	C	1,085
12(MYC)	Yes	Male	C	947
13(FYC)	Yes	Female	C	905
14(FYC)	Yes	Female	C	800
15(MNC)	No	Male	C	767
16(MNC)	No	Male	C	864

Note. Example: 16(MNC) represents Student 16, a male who does not enjoy reading independently from school district C with an SRI score of 864.

Table 6

Coding of Middle School Teachers

Teacher	Subject Area	Reads Aloud	Gender to Students	School District
1(RYFQ)	Reading	Yes	Female	Q
2(EYFQ)	English	Yes	Female	Q
3(RCAYFX)	Reading & Computer Applications	Yes	Female	X
4(LAYFX)	Language Arts	Yes	Female	X
5(CAYFZ)	Communication Arts	Yes	Female	Z
6(LSYFZ)	Life Skills	Yes	Female	Z

Note. Example 6(LSYFZ) represents Life Skills Teacher 6 who reads aloud to students, Female at Z School District.

Data Analysis

The open and axial coding processes were used when analyzing transcripts. According to Creswell (2009), coding organizes content into sections so meaning can be made from findings. Creswell (2009) went on to indicate coding was using text, images, and sections or phrases and tagging groups or themes with language participants actually used. Responses were examined for common words, phrases, and emerging themes. Responses were examined once again for perceptions and beliefs to refine the themes. Percentages were determined based on similarities and differences of the number of responses examined. Similarities and differences in words and phrases of the interview responses were examined for common themes and patterns, and relationships were displayed.

Data results, interview responses, and field notes helped to achieve a triangulation of the study. After data from interviews and surveys were analyzed, specific themes emerged. Student enjoyment is the primary reason teachers read-aloud to students, reading aloud is primarily done in Reading and or Language Arts classes and not in other content areas, most students enjoy being read to aloud, and most students believe they would enjoy reading more and comprehend subject matter more if teachers would read-aloud to them in subject areas. Reading must be meaningful to students for comprehension to transpire (Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006)

Teacher Interview Responses

Interview question 1 and 2: What grade and what subject area do you teach?

Six teachers were interviewed and of the six interviewed, three teachers taught seventh grade while one of those teachers taught seventh grade English, one taught Reading and computer applications, and one taught Language Arts. One teacher taught seventh and eighth grade Reading, one taught sixth, seventh, and eighth grade Communication Arts, and one teacher taught 4th-12th life skills.

Interview question 3: How would you define reading aloud?

Half of teachers interviewed believed reading aloud was a method of modeling for students. Proficient readers and learners with disabilities both benefit from reading aloud as it models what good readers do and it positively impacts students' attitudes about reading, enhances vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency (Ariail, & Albright, 2006; Ivey, 2003; Kabilan, & Kamaruddin, 2010; Routman, 1991; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Teacher 1(RYFQ) said,

Reading aloud is way more than just pronouncing the words correctly which of course I do, but it's also letting them hear orally how it should sound. Then it's also modeling the thinking process of what's going on in my head as I'm reading, so stopping and asking questions and doing all of those things that come naturally for me, but doing it out loud for them.

Teacher 3(RCAYFX) agreed she wanted to engage students “so that they can listen because sometimes it is an escape for them so that they can get to listen and kind of go to that world and it is also modeling.”

A few teachers expressed reading aloud could be defined in various ways including, students reading along with the teacher while they have their own copies, partner reading (students have a partner and take turns reading aloud), or where the teacher reads aloud while students listen. According to Teacher 2(EYFQ),

Reading aloud would have a couple of different definitions, it varies. It could be where I am reading a chapter book out loud and the kids are just listening, it could be where they all have their own copy and they follow along as I am reading aloud, or they could read with partners.

Teacher 4(LAYFX) concurred she reads aloud to keep her students all on the same page, and she also has students read with partners. “It just keeps us all together and we can stop and talk about it and have group discussions.”

Interview question 4: Do you read-aloud to your students? Why or why not?

All teachers interviewed indicated they read-aloud to their students. Teachers indicated modeling as an extremely important reason for reading aloud. Modeling was described as being important for various reasons, including modeling fluency,

vocabulary, comprehension, thinking aloud while reading, and introducing a variety of genres.

Students reiterated the importance of teachers reading aloud to them during class as 81% of students interviewed stated they enjoyed or liked it when teachers read-aloud to them during class. Four out of the six teachers interviewed reported they read-aloud because they know students enjoy it. Teacher 2(EYFQ) said,

Even the toughest kids that act like they don't, I know they do, they enjoy it. I think it is also good to model fluency and I think it's good for kids for word recognition and just to hear larger vocabulary read-aloud to them and also, I think kids end up liking books they may not have chosen for themselves.

Teachers 1(RYFQ), 3(RCAYFX), and 6(LSYFZ) agreed they read-aloud in class partially because students enjoy it. Teachers 3(RCAYFX), 4(LAYFX), and 5(CAYFZ) indicated they read-aloud because it also encourages deep and meaningful discussions even for students who may not be reading on grade level. Teacher 4(LAYFX), had a variety of reading levels in her classroom so she suggested it was best to just keep everyone together so students stay on topic and, "we just have really good discussions in class when I read-aloud and they like it."

Four out of the 16 students interviewed suggested they understand the text better when the teacher reads aloud. Students also suggested they enjoy it when teachers read-aloud to them during class because it shows they care and it matters to them. Student 6(FYB) explained,

I would enjoy reading more if teachers read-aloud because it kind of shows their dedication to you. Like being able to read-aloud to you to help you understand it

more. It kind of shows they're taking their class time to make sure you understand the book they're reading aloud to you and explaining it along the way. And it kind of shows that they're there to help. It makes you more confident on reading independently if you can understand it when they read-aloud to you.

Teachers 1(RYFQ), 2(EYFQ), 6(LSYFZ) all agreed they read-aloud to students partially because they believe when students see and hear teachers reading aloud to students, it shows students teachers value reading and it is important. Reading aloud to students is an important practice that should be incorporated at all ages including middle school and high school (Ficklen & Brooks, 2011; Giorgis, 1999; Ivey, 2003; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Ivey (2003) added middle school students were unlikely to self select an unfamiliar text without knowing something interesting about the book or author.

Interview question 5: Were you read-aloud to in school? If yes, what grades were you in when your teacher read-aloud to you?

All teachers interviewed said they were read to aloud by a teacher in school. All six teachers interviewed remembered a teacher reading aloud to them at least until 5th grade. Only two teachers indicated they were read to aloud by a teacher in middle school. Teacher 3(RCAYFX) and 4(LAYFX) agreed they enjoyed being read to aloud by a teacher but did not remember it occurring as much in middle school. Implications were made as to why stronger readers possibly do not enjoy teachers reading aloud to them as much. According to teacher 4(LAYFX),

I've always been a strong reader though, so to be perfectly honest, even if I was read to in middle school I do not remember it. I would honestly read more on my

own. If the teacher was reading to us, I was probably reading ahead. But I do remember it more in elementary school than in middle school.

Teacher 3(RCAYFX) agreed, “if we were read to in middle school or high school, I really don’t remember it at all. And maybe it is because the subject matter wasn’t interesting to me or I just did not pay attention and read on my own.” Giorgis (1999) surmised when teachers were interviewed, most indicated they were read to aloud in primary grades; however, when those teachers progressed into upper and middles grades, the practice or reading aloud all but ceased.

Interview question 6: Did you and/or do you enjoy being read-aloud to?

Five out of the six teachers interviewed agreed they enjoyed it when their own teachers or parents would read-aloud to them. Visualization was expressed as a specific reason why one teacher enjoyed being read-aloud to in school. According to Teacher 3(RCAYFX), “I don’t need everything read-aloud to me per say, but maybe part of it, so I can visualize and see it. I am just such a visual person and I know everyone learns differently. When I teach, I model so my students can see it.”

Only one teacher disagreed as she indicated she just enjoyed reading more independently Teacher 4(LAYFX) surmised,

I guess it depends, when I’m really into a book on my own, not so much. But I have children of my own and I love hearing them read to me. And you know my students, when they really get into a book, I love listening to them read.

Teachers agreed they enjoyed being read to aloud even when in upper grades for those respondents who were read to aloud in upper grades.

Interview question 7: What benefits do you believe there are to reading aloud, if any?

Comprehension, visualization, vocabulary, fluency, and enjoyment were all common themes that emerged from the above question. Meaningful discussions among students were another emerging trend in teacher responses. Teachers 1(RYFQ), 4(LAYFX), and 6(LSYFZ) agreed reading aloud had a number of benefits including, increasing students' abilities to comprehend, visualize, understand greater vocabulary, become more fluent readers, and enjoy reading independently. Teacher 1(RYFQ) noted "if you do it enough, they get better fluency from it and I will see them mimicking me as they read." Teacher 4(LAYFX) added, "they get the concepts and they comprehend it better...they start doing the things we do in class by themselves." Teacher 6(LSYFZ) established, "I think it helps them understand what is happening in the story and visualize because sometimes when kids read for themselves especially if they are having trouble with a certain words, a lot of what is happening in the story is lost, so I think they just understand it better."

Teacher 2(EYRQ) thought it was calming for students and they could relax and enjoy the story. Visual images can be made in students' minds when there are no pictures in the book, the teacher reads aloud, and they can "make whatever pictures they want in their mind." Teachers 1(RYFQ), and 5(CAYFZ) agreed students enjoy it and it is good to model reading aloud for students to hear correct pronunciation of vocabulary.

Teachers agreed confidence is gained when teachers read-aloud to students. When students hear pronunciation of vocabulary, they are more likely to attempt reading more challenging books for themselves. Teacher 2(EYRQ) deduced, "I really do think it helps

them become more confident, especially kids who read slowly or stutter. If a teacher models it for them often enough, it's going to sink in, then they won't be afraid to try it for themselves."

Discussion was also indicated as a benefit from several of the teachers interviewed. Routman (1991) reported students react to literature differently based on points of view of prior knowledge or experiences, so discussion of text was an important practice for teachers to institute to ensure meaning for all students. Teacher 3(RCAYFX) asserted she used different methods of discussion when reading aloud in her class such as think alouds or think/pair/share models. "It helps them monitor their thinking. It doesn't allow them to check out as much. I may read a paragraph or two then I say, okay tell me what you think or tell your neighbor what you think." Trelease (2006) agreed discussion was a critical component of reading aloud. He affirmed when students participate in a book discussion higher achievement scores are attained (Trelease, 2006). According to Meyer (2010), when teachers think aloud when reading aloud, students can understand what the teacher is thinking, predict, ask questions, and make meaning for themselves.

Interview question 8: Why do you believe students enjoy being read to aloud?

Teachers agreed students really do enjoy it when they are read to aloud. It was indicated teachers believed students could relax and just have some quiet and calm time while listening to the story. Teacher 3(RCAYFX) concluded,

I think it takes the pressure off of them. They don't have to worry about mispronouncing a word, if they were to read it out loud or if they did choral reading. It just kind of, takes the pressure off and they can listen to you, they can

relax. They can take a back seat for a little bit and their job is only to think, not have to read and to think.

Teachers 1(RYFQ), 2(EYFQ), 3(RCAYFX), 5(CAYFZ), and 6(LSYFZ) believed students enjoyed being read-aloud to because it is relaxing, comfortable, and it takes the pressure off of them. Students can just sit back and listen to someone else read while they listen, relax, and visualize. According to Teacher 5(CAYFZ) it is “soothing to the ear, a continuous flow.” Teacher 6(LSYFZ) reiterated students “can picture it in their mind. They are just kind of relaxed, sitting back and listening. I can hear them when something funny is going on, they giggle, so I know they are listening and paying attention.” According to Coiro (2000), when students experienced the practice of reading aloud by a caring individual, the importance of reading was recognized in addition to the message students were valuable. Additionally, a sense of self-awareness and confidence levels increased when students were read to aloud (Coiro, 2000). According to Trelease (2006), even reluctant students want to hear teachers read-aloud. One report explained how a teacher read-aloud to her unenthusiastic students the first few minutes of every class period to encourage students’ prompt arrival and even had students asking what was missed if they missed a day of school (Trelease, 2006).

Interview question 9: What type of relationship if any, do you believe exists between students who read for pleasure and students who do not read independently for pleasure?

There was a strong consensus among teachers who believed students who read independently for pleasure were better students in general due to increased reading skills and abilities including vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Teachers 1(RYFQ),

2(EYFQ), 3(RCAYFX), 4(LAYFX), and 6(LSYFZ) all agreed students who enjoy reading for pleasure are better students because they have better reading skills. “I definitely think students who read independently for pleasure are going to score higher ...and it also seems like school is easier for them...they are already reading independently on their own, so it just comes more naturally for them” stated Teacher 1(RYFQ). Teacher 3(RCAYFX) agreed when students read independently for pleasure, “their vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency goes up.” As stated by Teacher 4(LAYFX), “even if you’re reading a comic book or a magazine it is just going to improve your reading anyway...it still helps develop reading skills and reading abilities.” Teacher 6(LSYFZ) concluded, “there are always exceptions, but students who like to read and do well in reading overall, I think are better students because they comprehend the material more than someone who doesn’t or has trouble with reading.”

Interview question 10: What type of text do you read-aloud?

Five out of the six teachers interviewed indicated they read fiction chapter books aloud to students. Four teachers stated they read news articles or magazines to students and two teachers also read-aloud poetry. Boyd and Devennie (2009) recognized the importance of reading a variety of texts to students, however, typically read-alouds should meet “at or above the students’ independent reading level” (p. 148). A plethora of texts can serve as read-alouds within the classroom as the range of reading extends anywhere from newspaper articles, market summaries, weather forecasts, fiction and nonfiction, picture and chapter books (Smith, 1978). Ivey (2003) reinforced the importance of reading aloud an assortment of literature to make all kinds of texts appealing to middle school students.

Interview question 11: What are some recent titles you have read-aloud to your students?

Variances among book titles were vast as teachers have different interests and teach a variety of classes. Two teachers said they read-aloud *The Cay*, while three teachers said they read a number of the Truman Nominees to students. Two teachers read-aloud titles that are of interests to the students. Teachers 2(EYFQ) and 3(RCAYFX) responded they incorporate other subjects into their class for some nonfiction reading such as social studies or science. Five teachers reported reading excerpts or from magazines, online articles, or newspapers. Other titles read-aloud by teachers were *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *Surviving the Apple Whites*, *Touching Spirit Bear*, *Summer of the Monkeys*, and *Walk Two Moons*.

Student Interview Responses

Interview question 1: Do you enjoy being read-aloud to?

A majority of the students agreed they enjoyed being read to aloud, three students indicated they did not enjoy being read to aloud simply because they enjoy reading more independently and gain a better understanding while doing SSR. Thirteen students responded they enjoy being read to aloud while only three students reported they did not enjoy being read-aloud to. Emerging patterns such as comprehension, visualization, relaxation, and vocabulary developed as reasons why students enjoy being read-aloud to.

Four students answered they enjoy it because it helps them understand the content better. Students 1(MNA), 5(MYB), 8(FNB), and 14(FYC) implied they like it when teachers read-aloud to them because they understand the text better. “I just understand it better when I hear it, it’s like when I read, someone tells you if you mess up a word or

something” stated Student 1(MNA). “I’m the type of person that hears things better, so I understand more than just reading it and then I don’t understand as good” agreed Student 8(FNB).

Students 2(MYA), 4(MYA), 6(FYB), and 9(MNB) concurred as they enjoy being read-aloud to because they can relax. “You can just sit back and relax” stated Student 2(MYA). Student 4(MYA) agreed, “I enjoy being read-aloud to because I don’t have to do the reading myself and I can just relax.” “It comforts me when they read-aloud, it kind of gives me more time to think about what they are saying” replied Student (6FYB).

Additionally, Students 5(MYB), 6(FYB), 13(FYC), and 16(MNC) consented they can visualize and imagine better when someone reads aloud to them. “I am very visual with what I read and so it helps me also to visualize it a little better by the way they express the words they are saying” stated Student 6(FYB). “I get to imagine more than whenever I’m reading, it’s like timed or something when I have to read and you don’t really get to see the vision in your head” asserted Student 16(MNC).

Two students reported they enjoyed being read-aloud to because they did not have to be concerned about vocabulary and could just listen to the person reading aloud. “You don’t have to go to the trouble if there are words you don’t know, you can just have someone else figure them out for you” responded Student 12(MYC).

A few students indicated they did not enjoy being read-aloud to because it distracts them and they enjoy reading more independently. Student 7(FYB) explained she did not being read-aloud to, “it’s just harder to comprehend and follow than reading to myself.” Student 10(FNB) expressed, “I don’t like it because I think I get distracted too

easy when someone's reading to me, and I kind of look somewhere else, so not really." "I don't pay attention and I lose my concentration," agreed Student 11(FNC).

Hale, et. al (2007) validated this trend as they acknowledged the differences among readers, some readers have better silent-reading comprehension skills than others.

Trelease (2006) indicated students can listen and comprehend more complex material when it is read-aloud to them until eighth grade. Once students reach eighth grade; they can generally read and comprehend material no higher than grade level (Trelease, 2006).

Interview question 2: What is your favorite subject? Why?

Mathematics was the subject most students expressed as their favorite. Five students, 3(FNA), 9(MNB), 11(FNC), 13(FYC), and 14(FYC) agreed mathematics was their favorite subject. Reading and/or Language Arts was viewed as four students' favorite subject while three students reported physical education as being their favorite subject, and two students said social studies/history or science. Rationale students gave as to why mathematics was their favorite subject was confirmed by all five students being good at solving mathematical problems. Two of the five students who reported mathematics as being their favorite subject were two of the same students who reported they did not enjoy being read to aloud.

Having a passion for reading was expressed by students who stated Reading and/or Language Arts as being their favorite subject. "I love to read, it just kind of gives me an out and I just love being lost in that world of make believe and I like being lost in the stories" conveyed Student 6(FYB). Student 7(FYB) supposed, "I like reading because it helps me with life situations, with more reading and writing and comprehension and just being able to talk with a higher vocabulary." Language Arts was identified by

Student 9(FNB) as being her favorite subject because, “I like writing stories and I like to write poems and learn about literature.” One student 7(FYB), was the only one of the four students who deduced Reading and/or Language Arts as being her favorite subject who also indicated she did not enjoy being read to aloud.

Interview question 3: When teachers read-aloud to you, describe how you feel.

Students discussed diverse feelings when they are read to aloud by teachers. Most students revealed they are relaxed which directly relates as to why students enjoy being read to aloud. Table 7 summarizes students’ responses.

Table 7

Feelings of Students When Teachers Read-aloud

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Lost in imagination	1	6%
Relaxed	5	31%
Understand and comprehend better	2	12%
Tired	1	6%
Ignore it	2	12%
Same as when I read by myself	1	6%
No feeling	3	18%
Like a kid	1	6%

Interview question 4: When someone at home reads aloud to you, describe how you feel.

Kotaman (2008) revealed parents' pivotal role in reading aloud and the rippling affect it has on students and his or her attitudes towards reading in upper grades. "Parents should foster the development of positive attitudes toward reading in their children" (Kotaman, 2008, p. 55). For the most part students alluded to feeling comfortable/relaxed or the same as when teachers read-aloud to them. Some students even admitted they were not read-aloud to at home. Table 8 reveals students' responses.

Table 8

Feelings of Students When Someone At Home Reads Aloud

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Understand/ comprehend better because they explain	3	18%
Relaxed	4	25%
Ignore it	1	6%
Same	4	25%
Intense and Really into it	1	6%
Bonding with parents	1	6%
Lose interest	1	6%
Blank	1	6%

Interview question 5: Why do you or why do you not read independently?

Young and Rasinski, (2009) delineated students who read expressively aloud were more likely to have increased comprehension when reading independently. Students who did not demonstrate expression when reading aloud had lower comprehension levels when reading independently (Young & Rasinski, 2009). The majority of students indicated they read independently while only seven students concluded they did not SSR or read independently. Responses varied among students as they expressed reasons for reading independently. Some students gave multiple responses which are included in Table 9. Table 9 explains reasons why students read independently or do not read independently.

Table 9

Reasons Students Read Independently or Do Not Read Independently

Responses	Number of Students who Do Read Independently	Number of Students Who Do Not Read Independently
For an assignment Or grade	3	2
Understand/ Comprehend better When reading by Myself	3	2
To get away and/or Lost in the world in Which I am reading	3	0
In the middle of a good series	1	0
It is boring	1	3

Interview question 6: What kinds of books do you enjoy reading?

Students were asked about the kinds of books they enjoy reading whether they indicated they read independently or not. Mystery, action/adventure, and romance books were the three main genres students conveyed they enjoyed reading. According to Table 10, six students liked to read mystery books, four students reported reading romance and/or action/adventure, while only one student responded reading historical books or short stories. Two students delineated they read sports books, scary books, and science fiction books.

Table 10

Types of Books Students Enjoy Reading

Responses	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Action/ Adventure	4	25%
History	1	6%
Mystery	6	37%
Romance	4	25%
Scary	2	12%
Science Fiction	2	12%
Short Stories	1	6%
Sports Books	2	12%

Interview question 7: Do you think you would enjoy reading more if your teachers read-aloud to you?

A plethora of reasons were given as to why students believed they would or would not enjoy reading more if teachers would read-aloud to them. Nine students believed they would enjoy reading more while seven students did not believe they would be affected. Seven of the nine students who indicated they would enjoy reading more if teachers would read-aloud to them were the same students identified as not enjoying reading independently. Only one student, 11(FNC), identified as not enjoying reading independently said, “No, because I just don’t like teachers reading to me.” Student 1(MNA) affirmed, “yes, because I understand it more easily and it is just easier when the

teacher reads aloud.” “Yes, because I am just not the person who likes to read” said Student 3(FNA).

Comprehension was the reason expressed by students as to why they would enjoy reading more if teachers would read-aloud to them. According to Student 9(MNB), “I could just listen and not have to read it myself. I think I would listen better than having to read because sometimes you’re thinking about other things as you’re reading.” “I think it would help me understand the subject more” agreed Student 14(FYC).

Interest and visualization were also reasons expressed by students. “I think it would maybe get me more into reading” stated student 11(FNB). Student 15(MNC) reiterated, “It would keep me interested.” Student 16(MNC) expressed his need for visualization in order to comprehend subject matter. “You can get a visual, like you can actually see what you’re talking about instead of having to like guess in your mind.”

Table 11 summarizes students’ responses.

Table 11

Students' Perceptions About Reading More Independently if Teachers Would Read-aloud During Class

Responses	Students Believe they Would Enjoy Reading More	Students Do Not Believe They would Enjoy Reading More
Comprehend/ understand better	4	
Helps me get more Into reading/keep me interested	4	
Helps me to visualize	1	
I don't like reading myself	1	
Makes me more confident in reading	1	
Would make the subject matter more interesting	1	
I am more distracted when teachers read-aloud to me		2
I just like to read myself		2

Table 12 explains the difference between students' SRI scores who enjoy reading independently and students' SRI scores who do not enjoy reading independently. The one-tailed t-test with equal variances and a p value or significance level of 0.214939 reflected no significance comparing the means. The difference between students who enjoyed SSR and students who did not enjoy SSR was less than 100 points.

Table 12

Seventh Grade Student Data Table

	7 th Grade Students who enjoy SSR	7 th Grade Students who do not enjoy SSR
Mean	1013.75	934.75
Median	1010.5	920
Mode	N/A	N/A
Standard Deviation	230.86	149.197
p value		0.214939

Note. A p-value of < .05 is considered significant.

Interview question 8: What is one of your favorite book titles and why? Did someone read the book aloud to you?

Responses from students ranged from classics such as *Where the Red Fern Grows* to Medieval series books including *Ranger's Apprentice* Book 4. Both students identified as enjoying reading independently and not enjoying reading independently suggested either a teacher or a parent influenced his or her favorite book. Eight of the 16 students interviewed implied teachers and/or parents read the books aloud to them or recommended a good book for them to read independently. Student 2(MYA) said his

favorite book was *Abduction* because it had a lot of suspense in it. He went on to say, “I read it on my own because my fifth grade teacher made us find a book to read, and I found one, read it, and liked it.” “In sixth grade, I was looking for a book and I asked my teacher to help, so she gave me the first one out of a series and it really got me into it” replied Student 4(MYA).

A few students commented their favorite book was one in which a teacher or parent read-aloud to them first, and then they read it independently. Students 3(FNA), 5(MYB) 6(FYB), and 15(MNC) agreed this was the case. Student 3(FNA) commented, “I think I was in fifth or sixth grade in reading class and she read the book aloud to us and now it is my favorite book.” She said she read the book independently after her teacher read it aloud to her in class. “*Ghost of Fossil Glenn* was one of the first chapter books my mom read-aloud to me.” “And it was the first book I think that actually made me feel what the characters in the book were feeling when she read it out loud” recited Student 6(FYB)”. When students read for assignments, positive ramifications can take effect as Student 8 (FNB) described how she read the book independently, but it was only for an assignment. It then became her favorite book.

My favorite book would probably have to be *Boost* and it’s a new story that actually came out this year. It’s a basketball book about a girl, and she didn’t really do very good on the team and she thought if she took steroids it would make her look better as a player, so I thought it was cool. I read it for an assignment.

Trelease (2006) stated “in multiple studies of children’s reading habits in SSR, or independent reading, their first choice is for books that have been previously read-aloud

to the class or are associated with movies they have seen (p. 39). Half of the students interviewed described how they either read or became interested in a book because someone read the book aloud to them first.

Summary

Presented in Chapter Four were findings from interview responses and survey results. According to these findings, reading aloud to seventh grade students increases students' interest in reading more independently. However, seventh grade students identified as enjoying reading independently for pleasure was not necessarily a predictor of student success according to SRI scores. The results illustrate the overarching patterns and themes including comprehension, vocabulary, visualization, relaxation and teacher involvement, which were discussed in this chapter and will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore reasons middle school teachers read-aloud to students, how reading aloud directly relates to seventh grade students reading independently, and, as a result, how reading achievement is influenced.

The primary research questions for this study were:

1. What factors motivate teachers to read-aloud to seventh grade students?
2. Does the practice of reading aloud to students cause those students to be independent readers?
3. What factors cause seventh grade students to lose interest in reading independently?
4. What is the relationship between reading scores of seventh grade students who read independently and seventh grade students who do not read independently?

In the review of literature, various studies were cited recognizing the positive effects of reading aloud to students in upper grades. However, the conclusions were reading aloud was not practiced routinely by the time students entered middle school; furthermore reading aloud was scarce (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Delo, 2008; Duncan, 2010; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Delo (2008) concluded when teachers read-aloud to students, they are introduced to a variety of books and genres they may not have been exposed to prior to being read to aloud by a teacher. Teachers have a tremendous amount of influence on students. Even as students became independent readers, students appreciated teachers reading aloud to them during class as it exposed them to different

texts, increased confidence in reading, and demonstrated the importance of reading.

Teacher 1 (RYFQ) summarized reading aloud as:

Super important, but then getting them to talk about their reading. Some parents ask, how they can get their student to raise his or her reading score. I tell them to make sure they are reading at home with them, but not to stop there, you've got to talk to them. You could sum my class up with reading and discussion, that's what we do.

The impact teachers have in motivating students to read is worth acknowledging.

According to Giorgis (1999), "Reading aloud to middle school and high school students demonstrates a teacher's enthusiasm for reading, an attitude that can be contagious" (p. 3). Even when students may not be interested in reading, interest can be attained when reading aloud occurs as students become active listeners, engaged in the story, and then interest is sparked (Giorgis, 1999). Student 6 (FYB) expressed her thoughts of teachers reading aloud:

I would enjoy it (reading) more because it shows their (teachers) dedication to you. Reading aloud to you helps you understand it (subject) more. It shows they are taking their class time to make sure you understand the book they are reading aloud to you and explaining it along the way. It shows that they are there to help. It makes you more confident in reading independently if you can understand it when they read-aloud to you.

Reading-aloud programs enable students' reading skills including, comprehension, vocabulary, interest in reading, positive attitudes, and motivation to read independently (Moss et al., 1999).

For this study, three middle schools located in southwest Missouri, central Missouri, and northeast Missouri were selected as the research sites. Seventh grade Reading and/or Language Arts teachers were selected as well as another teacher randomly selected by the school administrator for face-to-face interviews. Seventh grade Reading and/or Language Arts teachers selected six students to be interviewed. Three students were identified as enjoying reading independently and three students were identified as not enjoying reading independently. The southwest school district only allowed four students to participate as funding for tests were eliminated and only four students met criteria for this study. An additional 20 teachers from each of the three school districts were surveyed.

The selection of teachers was a random sample provided by the school administrator. Participants were selected based on availability and willingness to take the survey or the face-to-face interview. All participants signed an informed consent and parents of students signed an informed consent. Data was triangulated by using responses from teacher surveys, face-to face interviews with teachers and students, videotaped and recorded interviews, and field notes.

Summary of the Findings

After analyzing the data and the interviews with teachers and students, the following conclusions were determined:

Research Question 1: What factors motivate teachers to read-aloud to seventh grade students?

The most common response teachers gave as a reason for reading aloud to students was to enhance comprehension. When teachers were surveyed, 71% suggested

this as a reason while vocabulary and word pronunciation was the second highest reason given at 50%. Additional results concluded 45% of teachers read-aloud to students to expose them to different texts. There were many factors motivating teachers to read-aloud to seventh grade students. Most teachers described reading aloud to students because students enjoyed it. Others indicated they read-aloud to make subject matter more interesting or to spark meaningful discussion.

As stated by Smith (1978), “the basis of comprehension is prediction and prediction is achieved by making use of what we already know about the world, by making use of the theory of the world in the head” (p. 87). According to Trelease (2006), reading aloud increases students’ vocabulary, fluency, grammar, pronunciation, comprehension, spelling, and motivation. When students actually look at the words in a book and see the sentences, paragraphs, and punctuation and how they all fit together, the likelihood of those students not only comprehending the text, but understanding the mechanics of reading as well as writing increases (Trelease, 2006).

Research Question 2: Does the practice of reading aloud to students cause those students to be independent readers?

It was thought the actual practice of reading aloud to students would cause those same students to become motivated to read independently or for Self Selected Reading (SSR). Reportedly, reading aloud to students identified as being independent readers did in fact contribute to those students reading independently. Four out of the six students interviewed and identified as enjoying SSR surmised a teacher read-aloud to them which in turn, motivated them to read the same book the teacher read during class or encouraged them to read a different book by the same author or another book in the series.

The practice of reading aloud to students did cause some students to read more independently. Students 2(MYA), 4(MYA), and 5(MYB) were identified by the Reading or Language Arts teachers as independent readers, however, when interviewed all three students responded they did not read much independently. All three students agreed when a teacher read a book aloud to them, they read that same book independently or chose another book to read independently with some guidance or assistance of a teacher. Students 2(MYA), 4(MYA), 5(MYB), and 6(FYB) agreed one of his or her favorite book titles was one of which a former teacher read-aloud to the class either this year or in a previous year of school. Student 4(MYA) reported his favorite series of books was all due because “I was looking for a book and I told my teacher what kind of book I was looking for, so she gave me the first one out of the series and it just got me into it.”

Based on the conceptual framework of Trelease (2006), the results of this study were comparable to his findings. Trelease (2006) asserted when students are allowed independent reading time or SSR during class, the typical first choice of books are the ones teachers have already read-aloud to the class. In other instances, students choose the same books teachers in previous grades read or parents have read-aloud because students were familiar with the text. When students become interested in the book they are more apt to want to read independently, and the way to interest students is to read-aloud to them (Trelease, 2006).

Research Question 3: What factors cause seventh grade students to lose interest in reading independently?

Several factors caused seventh grade students to lose interest in reading

independently. Within the categories of interview statements, distinct patterns emerged. The predominate pattern was students from both groups indicated enjoying teachers reading aloud during class for various reasons including, increased comprehension, not having to be concerned with vocabulary and/or pronunciation, being able to visualize during the read-aloud, and increased interest in the content areas. Students 1(MNA), 3(FNA), 5(MYB), 6(FYB), 8(FNB), 9(FNB), 10(FNB), and 14(FNB) all agreed they would find reading more interesting and read more independently if teachers would read-aloud to them in class. Student 14(FYC) concluded he would understand subject matter more and want to investigate the content more in depth. Student 10(FNB) reported she would get “more into reading and would help me like different types of books.” Student 8(FNB) agreed if teachers would read-aloud during class, comprehension would be gained and interest would be sparked. When teachers read-aloud during class, students felt more confident as content matter was better understood and value was placed on reading. According to Student 6(FYB), when teachers expressed reading as being valuable to them as individuals, her interest in reading transpired and comprehension was gained. When comprehension was increased, confidence levels increased, therefore, motivating students to read more independently.

Three out of the eight students identified as not enjoying SSR, agreed reading became boring. According to Smith (1978), students want to escape boredom. Smith concluded the two reasons students become bored were because they either already knew the material, or because they were unable to make meaning of what was being taught. Teachers may find necessity in students reading independently, but if the students do not understand the purpose for SSR and if it is not made meaningful to them, they will not

read for pleasure (Smith, 1978). Additional research by Giorgis (1999), claimed teachers who “did read-aloud during grades four to six and into middle and high school, however, made significant, positive, and long-lasting impressions on their students” (p. 1). Three out of the eight students identified as not enjoying SSR responded they did not enjoy SSR because they found it to be boring. This may be directly associated due to the fact those students had lower SRI scores and therefore did not comprehend the material; therefore, it had to significant meaning to them. However, according to Hale, Skinner, Williams, Hawkins, Neddenriep, and Dizer, (2007) some students comprehend better if they read silently opposed to someone reading aloud to them.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between reading scores of seventh grade students who read independently and seventh grade students who do not read independently?

According to Ivey (2003), students reported their enjoyment of being read to aloud and expressed how it enhanced comprehension as well as intrigued interest. She went on to say even upper grade students enjoy being read to aloud and even the struggling reader was more inclined to read a book independently if was previously read by a teacher. Table 3 illustrates survey affirmative responses as they relate to reasons teachers read-aloud to students. While this study did not necessarily prove students who enjoy reading independently tend to score higher academically, according to Smith (1978), this is not a significant problem.

He considered:

Teachers often regard comprehension as the result of learning rather than the basis for making sense of anything. So-called comprehension tests are usually

given after a book has been read, and as a consequence are more like tests of long-term memory. The fact that teachers frequently ask how to measure comprehension indicates that it is confused with learning. Comprehension is not a quantity, it is a state—a state of not having any unanswered questions.

(p. 86)

Comprehension has been directly associated with learning and achievement and some of the obvious clues as to whether students really comprehend materials read or not have been nullified (Smith, 1978). A valid point was posed by Smith (1978), “The best way of determining whether children can make sense of a book or a lesson is from their own point of view is not give them a test, but simply ask, ‘Did you understand?’” (p. 86). The reality is, each individual is different and understands or comprehends in different ways. Meaning is made when it is significant to individuals and therefore, comprehension can only be measured by the specific questions each individual asks while reading and this may be different for everyone (Smith, 1973).

There was no significant relationship between reading scores of seventh grade students who were read to aloud and seventh grade students who were not read to aloud as represented by Table 12. The failure to find a significant relationship between the two groups of students was puzzling given the plethora of previous research documenting positive relationships between students enjoying independent reading and achievement scores; however, the small sample size should be noted. Table 12 explains the differences between students’ SRI scores who enjoy reading independently and students’ SRI scores who do not enjoy independent reading or SSR.

There was not enough evidence to support the claim that students who enjoy SSR had higher reading achievement scores versus students who did not enjoy SSR. However, the average of the two groups is worth noting. This is significant because on average, students who enjoy SSR typically have higher academic achievement levels in reading than students who do not enjoy SSR.

Recommendations

Even though reading aloud to seventh grade students was expected to support positive attitudes of students and higher academic achievement, it was not significant when students (who enjoyed independent reading) and (students who did not enjoy independent reading) had SRI scores compared with a t-test. However, the mean of the two groups of students was worth mentioning as the students identified as enjoying SSR had a greater mean on the SRI than students identified as not enjoying SSR. The qualitative analysis of interviews determined students generally read more independently when teachers read-aloud. Furthermore, students believed they would enjoy subject matter more if the practice of reading aloud was implemented into the classroom.

Future studies may find more significance when a larger sample size of students is utilized. Additional research may be conducted to gain a better understanding of students' attitudes and achievement levels when parents read-aloud to students. Parents play a pivotal role in students' reading success and ability to become lifelong readers (Trelease, 2006). According to Imperato (2009), parental involvement should be a daily routine especially in the elementary grades to promote the love of literature and teachers should provide opportunities for parents and students to read together. Imperato (2009) suggested children and parents could read "daily rhyme[s] that children can read

repeatedly with their parent and that is followed by one or more simple and quick phonics or phonemic awareness activities” (p. 342).

A more accurate method to determine students who are read-aloud to at home and who are not read-aloud to at home would strengthen a similar study. Greater relationships may be found of students who enjoy reading independently and academic achievement scores opposed to students who do not enjoy reading independently and those academic achievement scores. If this type of investigation deems fruitful, recommendations and strategies may be taught in colleges for pre service teachers as well as workshops for teachers in practice.

The study had a few limitations that warrant mention. The small sample size as well as extrinsic factors such as students listening to other student responses may have impacted student responses. Students may or may not have answered interview questions truthfully due to the fact peers were listening at times. Even though students were informed there was no correct answer and to just answer the interview questions as candid as possible, students could have possibly answered questions based on prior knowledge which led to the given responses. Teachers may have not answered honestly as they were informed about the study which may have affected responses.

Summary

Evidence of reading aloud has repeatedly proven to positively affect student achievement and attitudes overall (Arial & Albright, 2006; Duncan, 2010; Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Tompkins, 2006; Trelease, 2006). Reading aloud should be encouraged, not only at school and by teachers reading aloud, but also by encouraging students to read-aloud. When students have a purpose for reading aloud, it gives them

motivation practice and repeat his or her reading. Additionally, when parents take the time to read to students at home at all age levels including elementary, middle, and high school student achievement has prominent growth (Trelease, 2006).

While reports continue to indicate educators teaching solely for high stakes testing and achievement scores progressively declining, the ‘love of learning’ is practically non-existent in today’s schools (Cobb & White, 2006; Trelease, 2006). “While policy makers may embrace the idea of high stakes testing to ‘control’ the educational system, this testing invariably results in a narrowing of the curriculum and a distinct reduction in the variety of instructional methods” (Cobb & White, 2006, p. 32). Researchers have validated the positive significance of reading aloud (Routman, 1991; Smith, 1978; Trelease, 2006). Pre-service teachers entering elementary and secondary education should understand the value of reading aloud to students. Literacy specialists within schools across the nation should encourage *all* teachers to read-aloud to students and provide avenues for them to do so. Modeling reading aloud from various texts while covering essential subject matter should be encouraged in every school. Reading aloud is a simple practice with numerous gains in students’ overall achievement and should be a common and routine practice in every grade in every school across America. When educators understand how to use reading aloud across the curriculum, academic gains and student confidence can be paramount. Perhaps when all educators understand and believe in the importance of reading aloud, the passion for not only reading, but education as a whole will once again be gained.

Appendix A**Lindenwood University****Institutional Review Board Disposition Report****To: Ms. Rebecka Spencer****CC: Dr. Sherry DeVore****IRB Project Number 11-39****Title: *Reading Aloud and Student Achievement***

The IRB has reviewed your application for research according to the terms and conditions below, and it has been approved.

IRB Approval Date:12/15/10

Expiration Date: 12/15/11

Type of Review: Full Review

Research Risk Level: Level 1- Minimal Risk

The Lindenwood IRB complies with Federal regulations 45 CFR 46, 45 CFR 164, 21 CFR 50 and 21 CFR 56, which allows for the use of an expedited review procedure for research which presents no more than minimal risk to human participants and meets the criteria for one or more of the categories of research published in the Federal Register . All actions and recommendations approved under expedited review are reported to a Full Board meeting.

Changes in the conduct of the study, including the consent process or materials, require submission of an amendment application which must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation of the changes.

According to Federal regulations, this project requires IRB continuing review. As such, prior to the project expiration date above, you must submit either a Renewal through the abbreviated application form or a Final Report.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact the Chair.

Ricardo Delgado

12/15/10

Institutional Review Board Chair

Date

Appendix B

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

<Student Interview>
Informed Consent for Parents to Sign for
Student Participation in Research Activities
“Reading Aloud and Student Achievement”

Principal Investigator: Rebecka Spencer

Telephone: 573-692-6928 E-mail: rrs263@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant (Student’s Name) _____

Parent Contact info _____

Dear Parent,

1. Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rebecka Spencer under the guidance of Dr. Sherry DeVore. The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons middle school teachers read-aloud to students, how reading aloud directly relates to seventh grade students reading independently, and, as a result, how reading achievement is influenced.

2. a) Your child’s participation will involve:
 - Verbally answering open-ended questions in a face-to-face interview. The questions will address how reading aloud has affected your child’s motivation to read independently and his or attitudes about reading in general.
 - Your child will be one of 18 student participants who enjoys reading independently or does not enjoy reading independently.
 - Your child’s SRI score will be used in the study.
 - Each student participant will answer the same questions in a face-to-face interview setting. The interviews will be video and audio-taped and take place in your child’s school building during a non-core academic class. The principal, teacher, or counselor will be present during the interview. You are welcome to attend if you wish.

***I give my permission to video and audio-tape the interview with my child.**
[Parent’s initials _____]

Approximately 18 students in seventh grade in three different Missouri school districts may be involved in this research.

b) The amount of time involved in your child’s participation will be approximately

30 minutes in a face-to-face interview with Rebecka Spencer.

3. There are no anticipated risks to your child associated with this research.
3. There are no direct benefits for your child's participation in this study. However, your child's participation will contribute to the knowledge about reading aloud and student achievement.
4. Your child's participation is voluntary and you may choose not to let your child participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent for your child's participation at any time. Your child may choose not to answer any questions that he or she does not want to answer. You and your child will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to let your child participate or to withdraw your child.
5. We will do everything we can to protect your child's privacy. As part of this effort, your child's identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study.
6. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Rebecka Spencer (537-692-6928) or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Sherry DeVore (417-881-0009). You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my child's participation in the research described above.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

Parent's/Guardian's Printed Name

Child's Printed Name

Signature of Investigator

Date

Investigator Printed Name

Appendix C

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

<Permission Letter: School District>

<Date>

Dear Superintendent _____,

I am conducting a research study titled, *Reading Aloud and Student Achievement*, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Lindenwood University.

The research gathered should assist in providing insight into reading aloud to seventh grade students and how it may affect student achievement and reading independently. The findings from this study may provide middle school teachers in all subject areas with research-based practices that when implemented will allow students to be successful. The findings may inform teachers, students, pre-service teachers, college students pursuing an education degree, and parents about the importance of schools having volunteers to read-aloud to students. More information about the benefits and concerns of reading aloud to students and reading achievement may be obtained.

For the study, six (6) seventh grade students, from your school district, who either enjoy reading independently or do not enjoy reading independently, will be interviewed about their perceptions of reading aloud and reading for enjoyment. The students will be selected by their Reading and/or Language Arts teachers. Additionally, those students' reading achievement scores on the SRI will also be reviewed. The scores will be collated by the Reading and/or Language Arts teachers. A data code or pseudonym will be assigned to each student to assure anonymity. The Reading and/or Language Arts teachers of the building will also be interviewed.

I am seeking your permission as Superintendent of the <Name Here> School District to allow the Reading and/or Language Arts teachers of the <Name Here> school building to select six (6) seventh grade students in your district who either enjoy reading independently or do not enjoy reading independently to participate in a face-to-face interview. Parents of the students will be notified first by the teacher, and then I will notify them in writing. Permission must be granted by the parents before the student is interviewed.

Each student will be interviewed separately in the presence of the principal, teacher, counselor, and/or parents (if requested). The students will be asked to respond to eight interview questions. The interviews will be video and audio-taped in order to accurately transcribe the responses. A copy of the interview questions and informed consent letters are attached for your review.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. The participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The identity of the participants and school district will remain confidential and anonymous in the dissertation or any future publications of this study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about participation (phone: 573-692-6928 or e-mail: rrs263@lionmail.lindenwood.edu). You may also contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Sherry DeVore, (phone: 417-881-0009) or e-mail: sdevore@lindenwood.edu). A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference.

Respectfully,

Rebecka Spencer
 Doctoral Candidate
 Lindenwood University

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I understand it is my responsibility to retain a copy of this consent form if I so choose. I consent to participation in the research described above.

Superintendent's Signature

Date

Superintendent's Printed Name

Primary Investigator's Signature

Date

Primary Investigator's Printed Name

Appendix D

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

<Teacher – Survey>

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities “Reading Aloud and Student Achievement”

Principal Investigator: Rebecka Spencer
Telephone: 473-692-6928 E-mail: rrs263@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant _____ Contact info _____

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rebecka Spencer under the guidance of Dr. Sherry DeVore. The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons middle school teachers read-aloud to students, how reading aloud directly relates to seventh grade students reading independently, and, as a result, how reading achievement is influenced.

1. The purpose of the survey is to obtain the opinions middle school teachers have toward reading aloud and effects it may have on student achievement.
A total of sixty (60) middle school teachers, twenty from three different school districts in Missouri, will be invited to participate in this survey.
2. a) Your participation will involve:
 - Completing a brief survey concerning reading aloud and student achievement.
 - Returning the survey to the researcher within 14 days from the time the survey is distributed.
 b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 10 minutes.
7. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
8. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about reading aloud and student achievement.
9. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

10. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location for a period of five years and then destroyed.
11. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Primary Investigator, Rebecka Spencer at 573 692-6928 or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Sherry DeVore at 417-881-0009. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

By completing the survey, you consent to participate in the study

Thank you for your time,

Rebecka Spencer
Doctoral Student
Lindenwood University

Date

Appendix E

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

<Teacher – Interview>

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities “Reading Aloud and Student Achievement”

Principal Investigator: Rebecka Spencer
Telephone: 473-692-6928 E-mail: rrs263@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant _____ Contact info _____

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rebecka Spencer under the guidance of Dr. Sherry DeVore.

1. The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons middle school teachers read-aloud to students, how reading aloud directly relates to seventh grade students reading independently, and, as a result, how reading achievement is influenced.
2. a) Your participation will involve:
 - Verbally answering open-ended questions in a face-to-face interview to obtain your opinion, as a middle school teacher, regarding reading aloud and student achievement.
 - Two teachers from three different school districts in Missouri have been selected to participate in this study. Approximately six (6) teachers will be involved in the interview process.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 60 minutes. The face-to-face interview will be audio-taped and video-taped.

*** I give my permission for the interview to be video and audio-taped (participant’s initials _____).**

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about reading aloud and student achievement.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any

questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location until the research is completed and then destroyed.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Primary Investigator, Rebecka Spencer at 573 692-6928 or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Sherry DeVore at 417-881-0009. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Signature	Date	Participant's Printed Name
_____	_____	_____
Primary Investigator's Signature	Date	Primary Investigator's Printed Name

Appendix F

Letter of Participation <Teacher Interview>

<Date>

<Title> <First Name> <Last Name>

<Position>

<School District>

<Address>

Dear <Title> <First Name> <Last Name>,

Thank you for participating in my research study *Reading Aloud and Student Achievement*. I look forward to talking with you on <date> <time> to gather your perceptions and insights into reading aloud and student achievement among seventh grade students. I have allotted one hour to conduct our interview.

Enclosed are the interview questions to allow time for reflection before our interview. I have also enclosed the Informed Consent Form for your review and signature. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Confidentiality is assured. If you have any questions, please call (573-692-6928) or e-mail (rrs263@lionmail.lindenwood.edu). Once this study has been completed, the results will be available to you by request.

Sincerely,

Rebecka Spencer
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix G

Letter of Participation <Student Interview>

Dear Parent(s);

Thank you for allowing your child to participate in my research study *Reading Aloud and Student Achievement*. I look forward to talking with your child to gather his/her perceptions and insights into reading aloud and student achievement among seventh grade students. I have allotted 30 minutes to conduct our interview.

Enclosed are the interview questions to allow time for reflection before our interview. I have also enclosed the Informed Consent Form for your review and signature. If you agree to allow your child to participate in the study, please sign the consent form.

Your child's participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Confidentiality is assured. If you have any questions, please call (573-692-6928) or e-mail (rrs263@lionmail.lindenwood.edu). Once this study has been completed, the results will be available to you by request.

Sincerely,

Rebecka Spencer
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix H

Lexile Rating	Educational Grade – Level		Lexile Rating	Educational Grade-Level
25	1.1		675	3.9
50	1.1		700	4.1
75	1.2		725	4.3
100	1.2		750	4.5
125	1.3		775	4.7
150	1.3		800	5.0
175	1.4		825	5.2
200	1.5		850	5.5
225	1.6		875	5.8
250	1.6		900	6.0
275	1.7		925	6.4
300	1.8		950	6.7
325	1.9		975	7.0
350	2.0		1000	7.4
375	2.1		1025	7.8
400	2.2		1050	8.2
425	2.3		1075	8.6
450	2.5		1100	9.0
475	2.6		1125	9.5
500	2.7		1150	10.0
525	2.9		1175	10.5
550	3.0		1200	11.0
575	3.2		1225	11.6
600	3.3		1250	12.2
625	3.5		1275	12.8
650	3.7		1300	13.5

“Lexile” and “Lexile Framework” are trademarks of Metametrics, Inc.
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Appendix I

Reading Aloud Student Interview

1. Do you enjoy being read-aloud to? Why or Why not?
2. What is your favorite subject? Why?
3. When teachers read-aloud to you, describe how you feel.
4. When someone at home reads to you aloud, describe how you feel.
5. Why do you or why do you not read independently?
6. What kinds of books do you enjoy reading and why?
7. Do you think you would enjoy reading more if your teachers read-aloud to you?
Why?
8. What is one of your favorite book titles and why? Did someone read the book
aloud to you?

Appendix J**Teacher Read-Aloud Survey**

1. Gender
 - Female
 - Male
2. Years of teaching experience (including the current academic year) _____
3. Highest educational degree
 - Bachelors with concurrent teaching certification
 - Bachelors with alternative teaching certification
 - Masters with first teaching certification
 - Masters only or Masters with additional teaching certification
 - Specialist
 - Doctorate
4. Student population of school district
 - Urban (more than 3000)
 - Suburban (1500-3000)
 - Rural (less than 1500)
5. Grade Configuration
 - 4-8
 - 5-8
 - 6-8
 - 6-7 or 7-8
 - Other: Please specify: _____

6. What subject do you teach? (If you teach more than one subject, please select the subject in which you spend the most time.)

- English/Language Arts/Reading
- Mathematics
- Science
- History/Social Studies
- Other: Please specific: _____

7. In what grade(s) do you teach the subject selected in Question #6?

- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- Some combination of 5, 6, 7, 8 (Please specify) _____

Please answer the remaining questions about the subject area and grade(s) selected in Questions 6 and 7.

8. Are the majority of the students you teach considered to be “at-risk,” “remedial,” or “special education”?

- Yes
- No

9. Do you **read-aloud** to the students in these classes? (*Check **YES** if you read-aloud texts such as fictional and nonfictional literature, poetry, magazines, and/or newspapers, to students. Check **NO** if you only read-aloud selections from textbooks or include reading aloud items such as directions or announcements.*)

- Yes (**Please skip question #11 and proceed to Questions 12-13**)
- No (**Please proceed to Question #10**)

10. If no, select the one (1) item that best describes why you do not read-aloud to your students.

- Reading aloud is not appropriate for the subject I teach.
- Reading aloud is not appropriate for the age level of the students I teach.
- I do not think that reading aloud is an important instructional practice.
- I never think about including read-alouds as a part of my curriculum.
- There is not enough time in the day.
- I am uncomfortable reading aloud, or I do not know how to read-aloud effectively.
- Other: Please specify. _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. YOU ARE FINISHED WITH THE SURVEY.

11. If you selected “yes” for Question #9, check the most important five (5) reasons why you read-aloud to your students.

- My students enjoy it
- To build interest in a topic or to introduce a topic
- To enhance understanding/comprehension
- To increase/improve vocabulary
- To model word/vocabulary pronunciation
- To model fluent reading
- To promote a love of literature and/or reading

- To expose students to texts they may not read otherwise
- To improve listening skills
- To increase general knowledge
- To manage the students/class
- To reinforce/emphasize content

12. Select the type of text you most frequently read-aloud to your students.

- Picture books
- Poetry
- Information/nonfiction books, including biographies
- Literature anthologies
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Novel/Chapter book, including historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy
- Other: Please specify. _____

13. Select the main type of opportunity you provide your students for responding to the text before, during, and/or after the read-aloud.

- None. I just read-aloud the text.
- Journal writing
- Small-group discussion
- Whole-class discussion
- Art/music/drama activities
- Examinations/quizzes
- Other: Please specify. _____

Appendix K

Read-aloud Teacher Interview

1. What grade/grades do you teach?
2. What subject area do you teach?
3. How would you define reading aloud?
4. Do you read-aloud to your students? Yes/No? Why or why not?
5. Were you read-aloud to in school? If yes, what grade or grades were you in when your teacher read-aloud to you?
6. Did you and/or do you enjoy being read to aloud?
7. What benefits do you believe there are to reading aloud, if any?
8. Why do you believe students enjoy being read to aloud?
9. What type of relationship, if any, do you believe exists between students who read independently for pleasure and students who do not read independently for pleasure?
10. What type of text do you read-aloud? (picture books, poetry, informational or nonfiction books, literature anthologies, magazines, newspapers, novels, other)
11. What are some recent titles you have read-aloud to your students?

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Vita

Rebecka Rae Spencer has a bachelors of science in education and masters degree in Educational Administration from Missouri State University. Mrs. Spencer has taught at the elementary level for four years. While living in Ozark, Missouri, Mrs. Spencer was featured in the local 417 magazine as she trained for the 2005 Chicago Marathon and lead her students in participating in daily academic activities centered around the Chicago event. Mrs. Spencer served as a leader in her school district while implementing the Missouri Reading Initiative Program at both Warsaw and Ozark school districts by modeling lessons for colleagues.

Mrs. Spencer is completing her doctorate at Lindenwood University. She founded Cornerstone Academy of the Ozarks, a Christian school for Christian families in the Warsaw area. Mrs. Spencer currently resides in Edwards, Missouri with her husband and two sons and is expecting to complete her Ed.D in education administration from Lindenwood University in November of 2011.

