Reading Workshop: Inspiring Readers and Not Just Students Who Read

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Chapter One: Introduction

In the field of education, reading is a crucial element that helps ensure the future success of a child in his or her educational journey. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) argue, "Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and, indeed, throughout life," (p. 1). The 2003 U.S. Department of Education's (USDE) report, *No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers,* stated,

> Reading opens the door to learning about math, history, science, literature, geography, and much more. Thus, young capable readers can take advantage of other opportunities (such as reading for pleasure) and develop confidence in their own abilities. On the other hand, those students who cannot read well are much more likely to drop out of school and be limited to low-paying jobs throughout their lives. Reading is undeniably critical to success in today's society. (p. 28)

Despite its importance, educators often struggle to develop skillful readers, much less instill a love of reading within their students. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) analyzed the educational condition in the United States and found "23 million adults are functionally illiterate by the simplest tests of everyday reading, writing, and comprehension," (1983). The NCEE (1983) further concluded, "about 13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate . . . and among minority youth it may run as high as 40 percent" (p. 3). Instead of developing strong and avid readers, a large majority of students are exiting school without attaining the reading and writing skills necessary to function in life. Educators and parents cite a variety of reasons for this trend. However, the literacy curriculum teachers are required to use proves to be a major factor in developing discouraged and disinterested readers.

Nature of the Problem

Research has documented that intermediate students are often at-risk in their literacy development. Therefore, it is crucial that students begin receiving quality instruction in the primary years. Without research-based instructional methods and/or interventions in the primary years of schooling, intermediate students who have not mastered the basic concepts of reading attainment may be doomed to a lifetime of functional illiteracy. In many elementary schools throughout the United States, children's literacy programs consist of reading materials suited for a particular grade level. Many individuals would argue having level appropriate material is crucial for any successful literacy program. However, few programs actually address each student's specific literacy needs, much less their personal reading interests. This often results in children who have little confidence in their own reading abilities when "grade appropriate" reading material presents too many challenges, as noted in the USDE report *No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers* of 2003. Standardized test scores and stagnant reading growth are evidence of this and highlight the absence skillful reading abilities.

Rationale of the Study

Regardless of the challenges, it is important to develop strong readers and foster a love of reading within children because reading is an essential, everyday task required of all individuals. In order to accomplish this goal, however, educators must examine programs and practices so they can develop a reading curriculum that not only brings about mastery of reading skills but enjoyment of reading. Teachers must crucially scrutinize their literacy programs to determine which components require students to read more frequently. They must also reflect on their own classroom literacy practices to

uncover if and how their actions are encouraging the children to read independently.

Beyond that, educators must consider how such components can work together to

transition students from reading to fulfill a school requirement to reading for pleasure.

They must also take into account the actions, attitudes, and thought processes of students

in order to determine factors preventing the children from becoming avid readers.

Thesis Statement

In order to foster crucial reading skills and interest, several literacy components

have to align in the classroom to create an environment promoting active, independent

reading. One such element would be the literacy program itself. Programs such as

Reading Workshop (RW) utilizes a wide array of reading material and combines explicit

lessons in reading strategies with opportunities for students to practice and reflect upon

these skills independently, with a peer, in small groups, and as a class using a text of their

choice. RW emphasizes the importance of student engagement and interaction with the

literature and identifies seven important concepts individuals must be able to apply to

their reading in order to become strong readers. These literacy strategies include, but are

not limited to: creating mental images, asking questions, making inferences, drawing

conclusions, making connections, synthesizing texts, and monitoring comprehension and

meaning. RW allows educators to focus on teaching such skills while providing them

with an opportunity to differentiate the curriculum for their students using a variety of

settings and reading materials. Also built into the RW program is an opportunity for

educators to confer with the students about their reading, writing, and overall literacy

progress. Additionally, one of the primary objectives of this method of instruction is to

cultivate independent readers. For these reasons, Reading Workshop, when coupled with

specific classroom practices, has the potential to strengthen students' current reading skills while cultivating a love of reading.

Procedures

In order to determine if RW can improve students' reading performance and pique their interest, I must first inquire more about the literacy program itself. I will review different RW curriculums and examine the various components of this literacy model. This element of the research will allow me to identify key authors, topics, and terms related to RW. I will then consider the suggestions of RW proponents about how educators can implement the RW model into their classroom. Education and curriculum books as well as scholarly articles will aid me in further evaluating the literacy program and its classroom implementation. With the help of this research, I will be able to identify crucial curriculum components and classroom practices essential for a successful RW and student literacy gains.

Key terms and definitions. The following are key terms and definitions of words and topics that are relevant to this research. I cite and discuss these key terms and topics in greater depth throughout Chapter Two.

- Reading Workshop: balanced literacy approach to reading instruction characterized by explicit skill instruction and the use of authentic texts that includes components such as a mini-lesson, conferring, responding, and independent reading time.
- Mini-Lesson: a lesson introducing specific reading process skills and strategies to the students by presenting a teaching point, modeling it clearly,

providing opportunity for students to practice the skill, and remodeling for and reminding the students of the teaching point.

- Shared Reading: an instructional approach in which a teacher or adult reads a book to a child or group of children and engages them in the text using interactive techniques before, during, and after reading the text while demonstrating a literacy skill or strategy.

- Guided Reading: an instructional approach in which a teacher brings together a small group of students who are similar enough in reading ability and development and are in need of the same targeted literacy instruction.

- Reading Conference: a component of RW in which the teacher moves around the classroom conferring with individual readers, informally assessing students by observing their reading behaviors and usage of different reading and comprehension strategies.

- Responding: a component of RW in which students debrief, share-out, and synthesize what they learned during the mini-lesson, share successful skills and strategies used, demonstrate successful use of a strategy, share new discoveries or questions, and set goals for future reading.

- Read Aloud: a time when the teacher chooses a book and he or she reads it to the whole class to demonstrate fluency, build students' interest in reading, and to build their vocabulary.

- Independent Reading: a time for students to read texts at their independent level for enjoyment, information gathering, to practice literacy skills and strategies, and to practice fluency.

- Instructional level text: a text in which the student can read with 90 to 95 percent accuracy and 75 percent comprehension; the student is able to read fairly fluently and comprehends fairly well.

- Independent level text: a text in which the student can read with 95 to 100 percent accuracy and 90 percent comprehension; the student is able to read fluently and fully comprehends what he or she is reading.

- Frustration level text: a text in which the student reads below 90 percent accuracy with less than 50 percent comprehension; the student reads with difficulty and comprehends poorly.

The review of the literature will also allow me to establish a research plan I can implement in a local elementary school. I will first identify ways to monitor and track students' reading progress, habits, and attitudes towards reading over the course of three quarters. I will develop methods for collecting pertinent data at the beginning and end of each quarter and identify how I would use the information to guide and revise my own RW instructional practices.

Delimitations

I will limit the study to fourth grade elementary students participating in a RW literacy program for the first time. I will establish research parameters that restrict data collection of student information to reading abilities and levels, goal setting, independent reading practices, and attitudes towards reading. Teaching strategies, classroom practices, and academic expectations of the students will comprise the data I collect on the classroom teacher. I will begin my research by observing both the teacher's practices and the children's reading abilities and routines during the first quarter. Over the course of

my teaching internship, based upon previous findings, I will modify and adapt the general

and individual literacy curriculum to strengthen student skills and help move them

towards independent, avid reading habits.

Organization of Master's Research Paper

In Chapter Two, I will present a literature review that will serve as a launching

point for classroom research on the RW curriculum. The review and analysis will help

me to develop a research plan that can myself and other educators can implement in the

near future. I will detail this plan and ways to apply the RW research to my own

classroom in Chapter Three. I will describe the setting in which I will apply my research

including information about school demographics, class size, and special needs

populations and follow that up with a plan for research implementation. I will provide

examples of lessons and strategies used under the RW model that should, in theory, aid

students' reading progress and heighten their interest in the subject. Chapter Four will

consist of my research summary and recommendations. This chapter will report findings

and confirm or refute my thesis. I will also make suggestions for future implementation

of this project and further research on this topic.

Chapter Two: Review and Analysis of the Literature

The literature review and analysis will provide an overview of the RW model. Chapter Two will present the four main components of RW in the order in which teachers typically present them in the classroom. The review will also highlight research validated literacy practices educators embed into the main component of RW. In this chapter, I will further discuss in detail the key definitions and topics previously noted.

Reading Workshop: Structure of the Workshop Model

RW is a balanced literacy approach to reading instruction characterized by explicit skill instruction and the use of authentic texts. The RW model provides children with time to read, opportunities to talk and write about reading, and explicit instruction in the skills and strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of any classroom (Calkins, 2011; Mounla, Bahous, & Nabhani, 2011; Oszakiewski & Spelman 2011). By establishing routines and expectations early on, educators implement a literacy program that reflects a gradual release of control where teachers shift responsibility away from themselves to the students (Oszakiewski & Spelman, 2011). The four-part structured workshop model includes a mini-lesson, conferring, responding, and independent reading time; when combined, these components allow teachers to provide reading instruction and practice designed to help students improve their reading abilities (Overmeyer, 2012; Mounla et al., 2011; Oszakiewski & Spelman, 2011; Tovani, 2011; Buhrke & Pitman, 2008; Williams, 2001). While these facets are unique to RW, embedded in them are various research-validated approaches to teaching literacy that contribute to the success of this literacy program.

Mini-Lesson. The mini-lesson is an opportunity to address both curriculum requirements and student needs through short and specific demonstrations delivered in a manner that is meaningful to the readers' needs (Oszakiewski & Spelman, 2011). During the mini-lesson, the teacher introduces specific reading process skills and strategies to the students using authentic texts. Often times, mini-lessons will focus on topics such as reading strategy usage, genre characteristics, introducing reader response activities, character analysis, recognizing story elements, and author studies, just to name a few (Overmeyer, 2012). The collection of strategies and skills taught during mini-lessons empower students with an advanced repertoire they can use while striving to reach higher-level texts (Mounla et al., 2011). The lessons typically include ten to fifteen minutes of whole group instruction where the teacher presents a teaching point, models it clearly, provides opportunity for students to practice the skill in instructional or independent level text, and again models and reminds students of the teaching point (Williams, 2001).

The opening of a mini-lesson gives attention to the repeating of previous teaching points with intent to connect them to current and future learning (Mounla et al., 2011; Tovani, 2011). Possibilities of previous learning points include the repeating of the teaching point from a prior day's lesson, earlier learning, earlier units, or the sharing of student thinking to illuminate and recall student understanding. When repeating the teaching point, the teacher may say, "Yesterday, we learned…", "So far in this study we have learned…", "When we studied…", or "Let's learn from what Ashley shared yesterday." Tovani (2011) refers to this segment of the lesson as the point in which teachers review previous learning and introduce the learning goal for the day. Here,

according to Tovani, educators build the "need to know" for the lesson and focus on helping students "connect one day to the next while sharing specifics of what and why students are learning" (2011, p. 40).

   Shared reading. Once the teaching points have been established and connected, the teacher demonstrates the skill or strategy using shared reading, also known as an interactive read aloud. According to the Institute of Education Sciences and the What Works Clearinghouse (2007), shared reading occurs when a teacher or adult reads a book to a child or group of children and engages them in the text using interactive techniques before, during and after reading the text. In a RW approach to literacy, Overmeyer (2012) suggests educators use shared reading to demonstrate a literacy strategy or skill by reading a specific text aloud. Here, the students may or may not share in the actual reading of the text, however they do share in practicing the strategy after the teacher demonstration. The text is often unfamiliar or not read in full during one mini-lesson.

   During the mini-lesson, the students have the opportunity to learn a new literacy strategy in shared or interactive format, briefly practice the strategy or skill in an instructional level text with teacher guidance, and join in during a shared reading experience (Overmeyer, 2012). Shared reading is an important literacy strategy and part of the mini-lesson because it engages the students in their learning, but it also models for students proficient reading and its related strategies and skills. This modeling is an important component of literacy instruction. According to Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2008), modeling is the primary way through which teachers can demonstrate for their students how readers can interact with texts. One of the most common forms of modeling used by teachers to demonstrate literacy skills and strategies are interactive and shared reading.

Shared reading strengthens students' comprehension, vocabulary, and understanding of text structures and text features (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008). Fisher et al. (2008) describe shared and guided reading as allowing the teacher to "model and support the use of cues and self-monitoring reading strategies, which may include the use of pictures to help construct meaning, making predictions, rereading, segmenting and blending phonemes, and finding familiar word chunks to de- code words," to name a few (p. 548). The focus of shared reading is to model by thinking aloud, allowing the students to be silent observers at first and later encourage them to talk with a partner, write a reflection, indicate agreement through unison responses, ask questions and so forth to help strengthen their literacy skills. Fisher et al. (2008) cite the daily occurrence of shared reading and modeling as having a positive impact on comprehension, vocabulary, and understanding of text structures and text features. Teachers must always follow daily shared reading with opportunities to practice and apply the learned literacy skills and strategies. Educators refer to this practice and application as guided reading.

Guided reading. Guided reading is a teaching approach used with all readers, struggling or independent, intended to meet the varying instructional needs of all students, to teach students to read increasingly difficult texts with understanding and fluency, and to construct meaning while using problem solving strategies (Overmeyer, 2012; Oszakiewski & Spelman, 2011; Iaquinta, 2006). According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), "Guided reading is an instructional approach in which you bring together a small group of students who are similar enough in their reading development that they can be taught together for a period of time," (p. 373). Continually observing students and using systematic assessment enables teachers to draw together groups of students who fit a

particular instructional profile. Small-group instruction is effective because teaching is focused precisely on what the students need to learn next to move forward (Iaquinta, 2006).

During the mini-lesson, the teacher utilizes guided reading after he or she explicitly models the literacy skill or strategy for the students. The structure of the mini-lesson already provides opportunity for students to practice the skill in instructional or independent level text; however guided reading allows students to do so with extra support. The role of the teacher is necessary and crucial to the success of guided reading. In fact, the success of guided reading depends on the teacher's understanding of students' individual strengths and challenges and knowing when to introduce strategies and skills that best address them (Iaquinta, 2006). For this reason, every guided reading lesson is different. Nonetheless, the framework for guided reading lessons and each of its components work together to create a solid base from which to build comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) further discuss this point stating:

The purpose of guided reading instruction is to help readers develop systems of strategic actions for processing increasingly challenging texts . . . Most students require systematic small-group reading instruction. They need to learn how to read with comprehension and fluency, across a gradient of texts that makes ever-increasing demands. (p. 373).

Furthermore, Fountas and Pinnell believe small groups used in guided reading practices increase engagement and provide a critical role in supporting learner development. This is accomplished through focusing on individual needs, explicit teaching, teacher

scaffolding, offering strategic support in materials that might be too difficult for

independent reading, and social interaction (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). The teacher

encourages students to think critically about the text and apply strategies that he or she

has modeled and demonstrated in shared reading. Educators use guided reading

instruction to provide an opportunity for students to develop and practice reading

strategies necessary to read independently; it allows teachers to observe students as they

read unfamiliar text and ensures that students read the new, often challenging text,

successfully. Once students have had the opportunity to practice the skills and strategies

the teacher introduces, the class comes back together as a whole to restate and clarify the

teaching point. At this point, the teacher releases the students allowing them to continue

working with the strategy during independent reading time in a text at their independent

level. While the students read, the teacher begins to confer with students individually.

      Reading Conferences. After the mini-lesson, the students transition into

independent reading time where they quietly read books that correspond to their reading

levels. During this portion of the RW, the teacher moves around the classroom conferring

with individual readers. Reading conferences help educators informally assess students

by observing their reading behaviors and usage of different reading and comprehension

strategies. During the teacher-student conferences, teachers observe students reading, re-

explain or model strategies, and give direct feedback to strengthen use of a reading

strategy –setting it as a goal for students to practice during independent reading time

(Mounla et al., 2011). Towle (2000) cites three main objectives for teachers when they

confer with students: research to uncover information about the reader, form a theory

about the reader and his or her skills and needs, teaching one essential thing to the reader

about reading. A clear objective during every conference gives the teacher and the

student a base to monitor reading growth during the next conference and increases the

chances that the techniques being shared during that conference would improve the

student's reading ability (Mounla et al., 2011).

    No two conferences are alike, however common elements appear in each meeting.

According to Buhrke and Pittman (2008), reading conferences include elements such as:

- Listening to a student read aloud in his or her independent level text

- Evaluating the student's reading accuracy and fluency

- Asking questions regarding what the student is reading to determine

     comprehension level and skills used

- Conversing with the student about any problems the student or teacher has

     identified

- Demonstrating the strategies of proficient readers

- Reinforcing direct instruction done in whole-class settings by repeating a

     learning point

- Making recommendations regarding texts the student might enjoy or benefit

     from reading based on the student's interests

- Guiding students to new genres they might not choose on their own

- Discussing reading habits

Conferences do not include all of these elements at once. However, these elements help

the teacher to develop a theory about the reader's strengths and weaknesses which guides

planning of possible mini-lessons and equips students with the necessary tools to move

forward (Mounla et al., 2011; Tovani, 2011; Buhrke & Pittman, 2008).

Conferences allow educators to learn more about the student as a reader, uncover his or her interests, pinpoint reading strengths and areas of improvement, offer guidance and support, and match the student with new books (Mounla et al., 2011). Tovani (2011) argues conferring is an optimal time for teachers to evaluate the student's reading skills and strategies including comprehension strategies, reading and decoding fluency, strategies used when facing difficult words, and the like to better address the students' needs and interests during future mini-lessons. By focusing on the students and the strategies he or she is using during a reading conference, teachers are able to instruct the reader – not direct the reading – by encouraging students to use reading and comprehension strategies previously applied to other texts (Mounla et al., 2011, Tovani, 2011).

The conferences benefit the teacher and learner in three ways: "When the child talks, we learn… when the child talks, the child learns…and when the child talks, the teacher can help," (Akmal, 2002, p. 154). By adapting this one-on-one approach, educators are able to hear directly from the students about their reading and help them make decisions that will improve their reading abilities. Regular conferences also help teachers record observations as part of the ongoing assessment that monitors student improvement or challenges in reading. Akmal (2002) argues this customized educational experience acknowledges the uniqueness of each student and provides teachers with the opportunity to focus on the individual learner. Mounla et al. (2011) offers the same sentiment saying, "The student-teacher conferences help in strengthening communication, allowing the teacher to learn about the thinking of the students as strategic readers, and to encourage them where they need help," (p. 287).

Responding. After the teacher has completed the needed conferences, the class enters yet another phase of RW: responding to their work as readers. This debriefing includes a share-out and a synthesis of learning where students share what they learned during the mini-lesson, share successful skills and strategies used in their independent reading time, demonstrate successful use of a strategy with a partner or group, share new discoveries or questions, and set goals for future reading (Overmeyer, 2012; Mounla et al., 2011; Tovani, 2011). Students' share their response to the day's literacy work with the whole class, in smaller groups, or in pairs. This daily reading share operates almost as a separate and shorter mini-lesson, which enables students to hear what strategies work well for their classmates and learn from one another (Mounla et al., 2011).

Buhrke and Pittman (2008) argue reading is much more interesting when surrounded by talk. "Sharing is an important aspect of RW and is one that demonstrates our belief that a literacy community is built as the act of reading becomes social," state Buhrke and Pittman (2008, p. 18). This sharing out is not limited to use of skills addressed in the mini-lesson. During this time students may read sections of their books aloud to the class, verbally summarize a story they finished, share projects and responses to readings, recommend books to peers, or explain why they chose to abandon a book. Connolly and Smith (2002) argue, "Students remind us that we can never forget that discussion is as much a social activity as it is an intellectual one…the discussions go far beyond learning about a poem or preparing for a paper or a test," (p.25).

The Reading Workshop's use of shared discussion, which requires reflection and reflexivity, creates a classroom culture of inquiry and helps teachers and students to significantly improve the quality of the RW experience. Students that practice the

inquiry-based processes typically display and utilize dynamic dialogue, multidisciplinary perspectives, attentive, probing, and thoughtful questions, and reflection and reflexivity of thought (Mills & Jennings, 2011). Shared discussion enhances valuable inquiry skills, which in turn enhances reading comprehension, synthesis, and speaking abilities, just to name a few (Buhrke & Pittman, 2008). Reading shares provide students with the opportunity to link the lesson to the day's work, to previous lessons or work, or to practical applications. Discussions help them to crystallize and cement literacy skills, strategies, or thoughts, generalize to a larger body of knowledge or literature, and transfer current work to other areas. This leads to significant growth and change as students reflect on their own learning and actions and deepen their understanding of the content and processes under exploration (Mills & Jennings, 2011).

Read Aloud. On occasion, after the conclusion of the mini-lesson, conferring, and responding, the teacher may elect to incorporate the read aloud literacy strategy. A read aloud occurs when the teacher chooses a book and reads it to the whole class to demonstrate fluency, build interest in reading, and to build vocabulary (Overmeyer, 2012; Calkins, 2011). The reader intertwines the story with talk about the content of the text and the pictures in hopes of creating a mutual understanding of the text. The teacher's advanced literacy skills help to ensure the read aloud results in meaningful comprehension (Lane & Wright, 2007; Beck & McKeown, 2001; Wood & Salvetti, 2001). Often, educators use a read aloud separately from the mini-lesson where the teacher uses a specific text to introduce a learning point.

This practice is a widely accepted and successful in elementary school classrooms. In fact, Lane and Wright (2007), as well as Wood and Salvetti (2001), note several

elements that contribute to the success of a read aloud program including: the use of

high-quality, age appropriate children's literature, frequent and consistent read aloud

sessions, an interactive reading that includes pauses for clarification and conversation

about the story and pictures, and a reading followed by scaffolded discussion and

retelling of the story. Beck and McKeown (2001) note similar features of this teaching

method and argue, "texts that are effective for developing language and comprehension

ability need to be conceptually challenging enough to require grappling with ideas…and

constructing meaning," (p. 10). The read aloud activity must also provide children with

the opportunity to encounter decontextualized language, requiring them to make sense of

new ideas (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

When implemented correctly, a read aloud promotes a variety of skills and abilities

related to literacy. Research has demonstrated that reading aloud to children can increase

their vocabulary ability to recognize words and improve their listening comprehension

skills (Overmeyer, 2012; Lane & Wright, 2007, Beck & McKeown, 2001, Wood &

Salvetti, 2011). A read aloud also provides wonderful opportunities to promote children's

love a literature (Overmeyer, 2012; Lane & Wright, 2007). Lane and Wright (2007) and

Williams (2001) suggest teachers read in a lively, engaging way, using voices, gestures,

and expressions. By using expression educators can "enhance understanding and heighten

student interest in the text," state Lane and Wright (2007, p. 669). In fact, socially and

emotionally rewarding literacy interactions can lead to a positive attitude toward reading

and can serve to motivate children to engage in other literacy activities on their own

(Lane & Wright, 2007). Williams (2001) believes the shared experiences with reading

aloud have the ability to help students feel a sense of belonging to a community of

readers.

Independent Reading. A focal point of RW is independent reading. Independent reading occurs throughout the RW framework with teachers utilizing the independent reading time to confer with students. Independent reading generally follows the discussion portion of RW. Overmeyer (2012) describes independent reading as time for students to read texts at their independent level for enjoyment, information gathering, to practice literacy skills and strategies, and to practice fluency. Students need time to read text at their independent level in order to improve as readers and should be encouraged to read independent texts both at home and at school (Overmeyer, 2012; Williams, 2001).

Leveled Text. During independent reading, teachers and students work together to match readers to books in their independent reading zone (Overmeyer, 2012; Buhrke & Pittman, 2008). An independent level text, according in Ogle and Beers (2012), is a text in which the student can read with 95 to 100 percent accuracy and 90 percent comprehension. Here, the student is able to read fluently and fully comprehends what he or she is reading. An instructional level text is one in which the student can read with 90 to 95 percent accuracy and 75 percent comprehension. The student is able to read fairly fluently and comprehends fairly well (Ogle & Beers, 2012). When a student reads a text with difficulty and comprehends poorly, the student is reading a frustration level text. At the frustration level, he or she reads below 90 percent accuracy with less than 50 percent comprehension (Ogle & Beers, 2012). Each text requires a different level of support. Educators avoid offering frustration level texts to students because the level of difficult and lack of comprehension could discourage the readers. However, at the instructional level, teachers are able to provide guidance by demonstrating skills and strategies that

may help the student address the challenges presented in the text. Often the texts used during mini-lessons and read aloud are instructional level readings. At the independent level, the student is able to read texts that are comprehensible but still pose a fruitful challenge (Overmeyer, 2012; Lause, 2004).

   Choice in text. When choosing independent reading books, students are limited only in terms of picking books within their appropriate independent level. RW provides them with a variety of choice. Lause (2004) argues that allowing students to discuss what they like and do not like in a book helps develop skills of choice and validates the student's reading experience. The enthusiasm generated by allowing students to read books of their choice drives the curriculum forward.

Synthesis

   Based on this research, I will implement a study that operates within the four main components of RW and the corresponding research validated literacy practices. I will choose to focus on ways to instill independent reading practices and provide ample opportunity for choice of literature. Identifying ways in which educators can incorporate these two elements into the everyday classroom will be a focal point of my study. Given independent reading practices and choice in text are foundational elements of RW, they hold the potential to strengthen students' current reading abilities and cultivate a love reading. The following chapter will detail the study, the setting in which an educator may implement it, and how he or she can execute the study.

Chapter Three: Application

In order to research ways to instill independent reading practices and provide opportunities for choice in reading material, in hopes of strengthening reading skills and fostering a love of reading, educators must first determine the current independent reading practices of their students. They can best gather this information using an inquiry survey to determine the reading habits of students on a daily basis. Appendix A contains a sample survey that teachers may use to help uncover the students' reading practices before and after the implementation of specific lessons and literacy practices.

The survey administered in the fall will serve as the baseline measure of independent reading practices. Teachers can extrapolate information from the survey about students' attitudes towards reading, their frequency of reading, what they find to be easy and difficult about the subject, reading interests and dislikes, and a variety of other information depending on the questions included. This information can then help a teacher tailor their literacy instruction to the needs and interests of the students in hopes to strengthen their skills and eventually develop a love of reading.

At the conclusion of the study at the end of the academic year, educators can re-administer the inquiry survey to determine if the students' independent reading practices and attitudes toward reading have changed. Reevaluating the students' reading habits after the implementation of a series of lessons and practices designed to increase interest in reading while providing ample choice in reading material will help educators determine whether these specific practices influence students' habits and attitudes.

The lessons and practices implemented during this study will focus on holding students accountable for their own reading habits and providing them with specific skills

and strategies for increasing their reading abilities in hopes of making reading a more enjoyable task, thus increasing the frequency of reading habits.

Context

The application of this study is suited for intermediate elementary grades. At this developmental level, most students possess the ability to develop independent reading practices and are capable of thinking critically about and making beneficial reading choices. While students may not have internalized these habits yet, they have the ability to recognize the importance of such actions and work towards mastery of them. Because RW relies heavily on differentiated instruction, this study is suited for students of all ability levels. This model allows educators to adapt and accommodate students with special needs in a wide variety of ways. While the lessons typically remain the same, the products and outcomes of each will vary based on students' needs and capabilities. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and Individualized Literacy Plans (ILP), legal documents that describe exactly what special services a child will receive and why, will benefit from the differentiated curriculum; educators should not have difficulty adapting the curriculum to fit the students' needs and abilities.

Socioeconomically, this study is better suited for a school that is able to provide students with a large variety of books spanning many topics and levels. Books are essential to the RW model; if the students do not have access to books both in and out of school, they will not be able to fully participate in RW and therefore will not receive the same benefits or have the same opportunities. On a similar note, a school that has moderate to high parental involvement and support is ideal but not needed in order to have a successful RW and study. Reading outside of school is required and encouraged in

RW. Students with parents who stay abreast of classroom happenings and monitor

educational experiences outside of school typically make use of the opportunity to model

and encourage reading outside of the classroom. In contrast, students who have less

parental support and involvement may not have the same encouragement and reading

model outside of school for various reasons.

Implementation

In order to effectively develop independent reading practices and encourage

beneficial book choice, a series of ten lessons and classroom procedures can be

implemented to help students reflect on their own literacy progress as part of continuing

literacy growth.

Lesson One: My History as a Reader. In this lesson, students will reflect on their

formative reading experiences and discuss, as a group, highlights and lowlights they have

encountered as readers. As part of the Common Core State Standards for English

Language Arts (CCSS:ELA), the introduction of this lesson addresses the Speaking and

Listening standard. The CCSS: ELA.SL4.1 standard indicates that a clear communication

plan is necessary to effectively deliver and receive information and requires students to

engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and

teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics and texts, building on others' ideas and

expressing their own clearly. In addition to this, a discussion about the students' reading

histories addresses CCSS.ELA.SL.4.4 standard where students report on a topic or text,

tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and

relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes while speaking clearly at an

understandable pace.

This discussion serves as a springboard for the students to trace their reading lives by creating timelines to reflect past and present experiences. Students will create a timeline on which they plot as many experiences they have had as a reader, being read to, or seeing someone read. The teacher will guide the students through this reflection process starting from the earliest memory and continuing on into the present. By recording memorable experiences, both positive and negative, students will begin to uncover what they like and dislike about reading. The unpleasant experiences will help the reader to create a reading path that steers away from those particular encounters, while pleasant experiences will help draw readers into more productive reading habits.

By reflecting out loud and on paper, the teacher will be able to identify students who already view themselves as readers and those who merely participate in required reading. Past reading experiences will help tell the teacher about reading interests and will allow him or her to make more informed decisions about future RW lessons. This information will also help the teacher develop reading connections (based on interest and the like) with and among the students. This is a crucial first step and insight into connecting with students in order to build interest in reading and move them towards independent reading habits. Appendix B offers a possible format for "My History as Reader" timeline.

Lesson Two: Reading Goal Setting. Using their "History as a Reader" timeline, students will be able to identify the quantity of books they have read and the types of books that have made an impact on their reading lives. This information will set the foundation for the students' first reading goal. One of the many purposes of a reading goal is to create a reasonable personal challenge that will compel students to read in order

to accomplish their stated goal. This increase in time spent reading increases the potential for students to find a "touchstone text" that ignites an interest in reading and fuels independent reading practices. While reading goals can take on many forms, this particular study will focus on reading goals that both student and teacher can quantitatively measure using a progress-monitoring literacy program such as Accelerated Reader (AR). With careful teacher guidance, students will be required to set a point goal and reach the specified goal within a certain period of time, typically by the end of an academic quarter. Teachers will explain this system to the class and then hold individual conferences with students to discuss an appropriate goal. Direction in this matter is crucial if the students are to remain challenged without reaching the frustration level described in Chapter Two by Ogle and Beers (2012).

Students who analyze their reading timelines and discover they have only read a handful of memorable books will be encouraged to set a lower point goal. This will allow those who have not yet developed independent reading habits to set an obtainable goal that will propel them forward, at the very least, in the volume of material read. In contrast, students who examine their timeline and recognize they read more frequently can set a higher point goal. This will encourage them to continue their reading habits and will enhance their reading stamina. Not only do point goals encourage students to read more frequently, the goals also have the potential to help students view themselves as readers upon attainment of the goal. This shift in viewing the self as a reader is a shift away from extrinsic motivation (i.e. earning points) to internal motivation that lends itself to independent reading practices.

Students will earn points by reading a book and taking the corresponding computerized AR comprehension quiz. For each question answered correctly, students earn a specific amount of points. The AR program bases the point value of a book and point value of the quiz questions on the text difficulty and book length. The literature standard CCSS.ELA.RL.4.1 requires students to read closely to determine what the text says, to make logical inferences from it, cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. A similar literature standard, CCSS.ELA.RL4.2, asks students to determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development. This summarization of the key supporting details and ideas is a skill required of students when they take comprehensive reading tests. The AR program records the points students earn so the teacher can review them regularly with students. The students' performance on the comprehensive tests and progress, or lack of, towards their individual goals will illuminate reading strengths, challenges, habits, and possibly attitudes towards reading. Appendix C contains an example of what a Reading Goal Setting form may look like.

Lesson Three: Just Right Books. In order for students to progress as readers, they need to be reading more frequently and reading material that is appropriate for their personal instructional level. This prompts several lessons on how to choose "just right books". Once again, this lesson will begin as a whole class discussion about the difference between instructional, independent, and frustration level texts. It will be important for the students to understand that reading texts that are too difficult or too easy will inhibit reading progress. If the text is too difficult, or at the frustration level, students may not be able to fully comprehend the material and may become discouraged and even

stop reading. Texts that are too easy will not challenge the students to develop or

strengthen reading skills and therefore will not bring about academic growth. However,

texts at the independent level will provide students with a fruitful challenge and will push

them to strengthen their skills and strategies. By doing so, their reading abilities increase

and open them up to an even larger variety of reading material.

After the initial discussion, the teacher must continue to reiterate the focal points

and make known to the student his or her own independent reading level. Once the

students know their independent reading level, a variety of appropriate texts become

available to them. However, it is not enough to simply familiarize the students with the

correct level of text. Educators must also spend time helping students preview books. By

looking at the front and back covers, taking a picture walk, reading small excerpts from

the beginning, middle, and end of a book students have the opportunity to gauge their

level of interest in and difficulty of a particular piece of reading material.

In fact, previewing books addresses research and reasoning standards such as

CCSS.ELA.W.4.7 in which students pose short research questions that build knowledge

through an investigation of different aspects of a topic. This requires that students

identify a topic, in this case a text of interest, and formulate open-ended questions to

further inquiry and learning. Considering this information beforehand allows the students

to choose a text that will be interesting and appropriate for them. This choice has the

potential to bring about ownership of the task and, as a result, increase the time students

spend reading independently.

Lesson Four: Daily Reading Logs. Independent reading is a task that all students

must continuously work towards and work on in order to develop this interest in reading.

While setting personal reading goals and choosing books of interests propels students

towards daily independent reading habits, there often must be a measure of accountability

to ensure students are genuinely developing such skills. One way of establishing this

accountability is with daily reading logs. These reading logs are a paper record of the

reading work students are doing. After each independent reading session, students record

the details of their reading practice on their reading log. They must indicate the title and

genre of the book, the book level, and the date, time, and location in which the reading

took place. In addition to this, students must also record the number of pages read during

the reading session. Appendix D contains an example of a daily reading log.

Teachers, or possibly classmates and peers, can check reading logs on a daily,

weekly, or even a monthly basis. The information contained on them will indicate to the

teacher which students are developing independent reading habits and which students are

still having trouble prompting themselves to read. Teachers and students alike can also

analyze the reading logs to detect personal reading habits and practices. For example, if a

student's records show a higher volume of reading occurs while reading mystery novels,

this may indicate a higher interest in that genre. Similarly, the number of pages read in a

given time period can signal to the reader that he or she is reading too slowly or too fast

and may consider adjusting his or her speed to improve comprehension and fluency.

Teachers and students can uncover several other insights using the information recorded

on the daily reading log.

Today, the Common Core State Standards in conjunction with many 21st century

skills require students to have self-direction. The standards indicate that students who

read, write, and communicate independently portray self-direction and use metacognition

skills. According to CCSS, these important skills are a learner's automatic awareness of knowledge and ability to understand, control, and manipulate cognitive processes. While reading logs do not directly require metacognition, the act of recording the information helps students to become more aware of their independent practices and move towards more self-directed learning. If analyzed carefully for patterns and trends, daily reading logs can help students better understand and control their personal reading habits and experiences.

Lesson Five: Reading Response Notebooks. While the act of students setting personal goals and reading appropriate texts lends itself to more self-regulated reading practices, educators can incorporate extra measures of accountability into the RW curriculum to ensure that students make progress towards independent reading habits. In this case, requiring students to keep a Reading Response Notebook ensures that students continue reading, pay close attention to the text, and think critically about the material they have chosen. Assignments such as these fulfill writing standard CCSS.ELA.W.4.1 in which students gain practice in writing opinion pieces on topics or texts and support a point of view with reasons and information. It also addresses standard CCSS.ELA.W.4.2 by presenting students with the opportunity to write informative or explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

However, in order to have meaningful response entries, the teacher must demonstrate critical thinking while reading. RW embeds this practice into the various components of the program including the mini-lesson, conferring, and responding portions of the model. Each component of the RW model provides the teacher with opportunities to "think aloud" and demonstrate for students the types of thinking strong

readers engage in during the reading process. There are also occasions in which a teacher

can ask students thought provoking questions that guide their thinking or introduce them

to skills and strategies that will allow for critical reflection.

Often teachers "think aloud" and demonstrate critical thinking for students during

a shared reading or interactive read aloud. As the teacher reads aloud, he or she pauses to

question, examine, or notice a particular aspect of the story or the author's stylistic

choices. One such method of demonstrating this type of reading reflection is to use

"thinkmarks". Thinkmarks are small sticky notes left in the pages of the book that help

both teachers and students record their thinking in a fast and convenient way. Appendix E

demonstrates possible shorthand thinkmarks students can use while reading. These

annotations help students keep track of questions, important story aspects, favorite parts

of the text, surprising or funny story elements, or instances where craft and structure

catch the reader's attention.

After the teacher demonstrates how to effectively use thinkmarks, the students

have the opportunity to practice this reading strategy in their own books. The students

then take this critical thinking process one step further when they respond, in writing, to

the thinkmarks they have left behind. They place the notes that spark deeper thinking

about the book, that offer burning questions, clues, or developing theories about the book

in their reading response notebooks. Here, they have the opportunity to revisit and reflect

on their thinking connected to that note and particular reading.

A task such as this addresses writing standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.10 that

requires students to write routinely over extended time frames (time for research,

reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a

range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences. Each reading response entry can have a different purpose and be composed in a variety of ways over a variety of time frames. In some cases, reading response entries will shed light on reading challenges students are facing and provide the teacher with the opportunity to address them in mini-lessons or when conferring with individual students or small groups. By addressing these struggles, students have the opportunity to improve as readers. With these strengthened skills and strategies, they could develop a heightened interest in reading because they encounter fewer challenges during the process. This deeper knowledge also has the potential to heighten interest in reading as a result of unpacking and fully understanding the text.

Lesson Six: Conferring with Students. In this continuous classroom practice the teacher confers with students individually to assess their personal reading progress or challenges. Conferring with the teacher is a time where students can demonstrate and discuss particular reading strategies they have been using, detail any challenges or successes they may have encountered, or simply share about the book they are reading. In fact, RW conferences address the CCSS college and career readiness anchor standards for reading. The CCSS suggest students should be able to examine key ideas and details as well as craft and structure to demonstrate comprehension of a variety of informational, literary, and persuasive texts. Students have the opportunity while conferring with the teacher to share their inferences, cite textual evidence, determine central themes and ideas, summarize key supporting details, and analyze characters, events, ideas, structure of texts, and point of view in effort to demonstrate their understanding.

Developing and demonstrating this understanding is crucial to building an interest in reading. The act of reading becomes more enjoyable for readers when they fully understand the text. In some cases, conferences can serve as an opportunity for teachers to pinpoint struggling and lack luster readers. They may work individually with students who are having reading difficulties and are not progressing to provide them with both targeted instruction and encouragement. Conferring can also serve as an opportunity for teachers to recommend books specifically to one student. In some cases, book recommendations and the increase in the volume of material read can raise the likelihood of students uncovering a touchstone, or turning point, text. Touchstone texts often ignite and fuel interest in reading; once students are excited about reading they are better able and more inclined to develop independent reading habits.

Conferring with the teacher is also an accountability measure for the students. In order to have a positive conference, they must continue to read and think about their reading. Because the conference is one on one, a student's lack of reading is less likely to go unnoticed. Students can be, in a sense, motivated to read because they are aware of the need to demonstrate that they have not only been reading but thinking critically about it during their conference.

At this time the teacher records the focus of the discussion often including the title and author of the work being read and whether the text is at the instructional, independent, or frustration level. The teacher may also include notes on the reader's strength and reading strategies that may have been discussed including: fluency, inferring, retelling, connections, comprehension, and visualizing, to name a few. He or

she may also record possible future teaching points for the particular student. Appendix F

includes an example of a simple conference form.

   Lesson Seven: Book Talks. The organization of RW provides ample time for

students to respond to their work as readers. This is typically a sharing out and synthesis

of learning, discussion of successful use of skills and strategies, or an offering of new

discoveries or questions. In some cases, this response to work as readers could take the

form of a book talk. During a book talk the teacher or student briefly shares information

about setting, plot, and characters of a recently finished book. The intent of a book talk is

to catch the interest of a peer by providing a glimpse of what the book has to offer

without giving away the major conflict or resolution. Both teachers and students should

view book talks as an advertisement or sales pitch for the book. The purpose of the book

talk is to motivate students to read the book. The presentations should be only about 3 to

5 minutes in length to keep the students' attention. This allows the presenter time to talk

about multiple books in a short amount of class time. Teachers and students giving book

talks should try and connect to previous books the class has enjoyed and present a variety

of different books, including different genres, to engage more students. Most important,

book talks should be on quality books that are interesting and will help spark students'

curiosity in reading.

   Book talks hold this potential if teachers actively recommend books to other

students. Students notice teachers' excitement about books, and if teachers are excited

about a book, the students will be too. Students want to hear about high-quality books

from teachers and will often read books they recommend. Book talks provide a great

opportunity for teachers to recommend and talk about books with which students are not

familiar. Teachers can select from a variety of different titles but should take into

consideration their students' needs and interests.

Book talks are a useful way to introduce students to new books they have not read

before. Book talks help match students to the right books and stimulate interest in

different books. However, in order for book talks to be effective, the teacher should

model ways to create and present engaging book talks for the students. The teacher may

model book talks on several occasions before providing students with the opportunity to

plan and rehearse their own book talks. When students are ready to tackle the task of a

book talk, they may use book talk forms to help prepare their presentation. The form

requires students to identify and prepare information about the author, title, overview of

the book, an exciting part of the story, connections as a reader, and recommendations.

The forms are included in their entirety in Appendix G.

The act of presenting book talks addresses standards CCSS.ELA.SL.4.1 by

engaging students effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners

building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. Planning for book talks

addresses speaking and listening standard CCSS.ELA.SL.4.1a by requiring students to

come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material, and to explicitly

draw on that preparation to foster discussion. This discussion around great texts holds

great potential to increase students' interest in reading and, in effect, help them to

develop strong, life-long, independent reading habits.

Lesson Eight: Book Clubs. Another way to foster discussion and potentially

create independent reading habits is to organize students into book clubs. Book clubs

offer a way to engage, motivate, and deepen students' understanding of a text. During a

book club meeting, the students are actively engaged in the selected text and the

conversation surrounding it. Students prompt each other with questions, wonderings and

thoughts that evoke a critical discussion and spark lively conversation. The ultimate goal

of a book club is to provide students with the opportunity to take control of their reading

and thinking, think critically, and share thoughts and ideas around a text. Teachers give

students choices: they may choose their books, the questions they ask, and the direction

in which the conversation moves within the group. Having this control heightens

students' interest in reading and its thought processes because they become the

facilitators of their own learning.

　　　　Book clubs provide students with the opportunity to participate in a structured

conversation around a common text. The element of choice embedded in book clubs

provides an excellent avenue to foster interest in and excitement about reading. As a

matter of fact, students form groups around personal choice and several students' desires

to read the text. In this way, students choose their own reading material and form

temporary groups based on this choice. Typically book clubs each focus on different

reading material but all groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule to discuss their

reading selection. Book club meetings are open, natural conversations about books, so

members welcome personal connections and open-ended questions. Students generate

discussion topics and teachers encourage students to use notes to guide both their reading

and their conversations. Often times, the teacher serves as a facilitator and not as a group

member or instructor. The teacher merely evaluates the group discussions and helps

students to identify the direction in which the conversation can go.

These powerful conversations between book club members lead to enthusiasm and engagement in reading. However, fruitful conversations do not always happen naturally. When using book clubs, it is important for students to understand their role as active participants in the group. Book club members should demonstrate active listening and respond to others in a focused manner. In fact, book club members should establish conversation and meeting norms so that off-task behaviors and conversation does not hinder discussion. The most successful book clubs allow students to invent ideas about what the clubs should look like for the group and for the class. Students should have the opportunity to name their club, decide upon meeting places and times, establish rules regarding respect, set-up meeting routines, and the like. The goal of book club contracts is to ensure the club and its members are supporting and appropriately challenging one and other. Appendix H provides an example of a book club contract.

Book clubs address the previously mentioned speaking and listening standards. This literacy practice holds students accountable for reading and provides them with yet another opportunity to read more material that could potentially captivate their reading interests. The purpose of book clubs is to create the opportunity to discuss reading material in an in-depth, thorough manner. Students must be able to speak to CCSS skills of identifying key ideas and details, pinpointing the importance of craft and structure, and integrating knowledge and ideas. In other words, book clubs require a deeper understanding of the material which, therefore, has the potential to spark students' interest and develop sustained reading habits.

Lesson Nine: Genre Studies. Yet another way to instill independent reading habits and provide opportunities for choice is to make use of genre studies. The

CCSS:ELA.RL.4.10 suggests by the end of the year, that students are able to read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. Exposing students to multiple genres over the course of the year meets the academic standards while providing students with yet another opportunity to spark reading interests and expand choice in reading material. By requiring students to explore particular genres, students broaden their scope of literature and perhaps uncover more about their preferences as a reader.

A genre study is an ongoing exploration of literature in which students undertake reading a variety of genres at their own pace. While students may focus on a particular genre together as a class (i.e. during read aloud and shared reading), they have the freedom to select any one genre to read at any given time. When introducing a genre study, teachers must provide the students with information about the different genres they will be required to read. This information includes characteristics of the genre and examples of literary works that best exemplify this category of literature. Educators may choose not to introduce all genres at once. In fact, they may gradually introduce genres to students over the course of the year, either individually or as a class, through mini-lessons, RW conferences, book talks, and even book clubs. The teacher may also opt to hold discussions about a particular genre as it relates to specific units of study throughout the year. The approach to each genre study may differ like the genres themselves; however, the goal is to provide students with ample information about a variety of genres so they may explore these specific categories of literature with confidence.

Because students progress through the genre study at various paces, it is crucial for teachers to make genre discussions a part of the regular literature conversation. Doing so allows students to feel comfortable taking on a genre study independently. Teachers can monitor this loosely scaffolded practice by requiring students to keep track of and record the genres they have read over the course of the academic year. Appendix I contains a possible genre list and recording sheets students can use to help them monitor their genre study progress. The genre study unit noted in Appendix I requires students to read at least one book in each of the 17 listed genres over the course of the school year. Once the students have completed a book in a specific genre they record the title, author, and date of completion under the appropriate genre category.

A genre study conducted in this way necessitates literacy exploration and as a result provides students with a multitude of book choices, several of which the students may not choose or even consider on their own accord. Because genre studies expose the students to a wide range of reading material, there is a greater chance that the students stumble upon a new reading interest. Exploration, the exposure to a wider array of book choice, and the development of new reading interests can all potentially bring about more independent reading and eventually help students to develop stronger independent reading habits.

Lesson Ten: Self-Evaluations. Practices such as goal setting, recording personal reading activity, responding critically in writing to various texts, conferring about work as readers, and undertaking genre studies are undoubtedly ways in which students can develop independent reading habits and become exposed to choice in literature. However, every effective practice requires some level of reflection. It is this reflection that allows

students and teachers alike to examine what is working, what is not, and what they can do to ensure forward progress. Self-evaluations not only aid the effectiveness of previously mentioned practices but also contribute equally in their own way to independent reading practice and carve out even more opportunities for choice in reading.

In this particular study, educators will make use of an all-encompassing self-evaluation on a quarterly basis. Appendix J provides a sample of a literacy self-evaluation students can use to track their progress, set new goals, identify reading strengths and weaknesses, and offer insight as to changes they must make or practices they should continue utilize. This self-evaluation and reflection afford students the opportunity to think critically of themselves as readers in order to establish goals that can work towards fostering a love of reading. However, this critical self-analysis is a learned practice and requires guidance if the reflections are to be meaningful.

In order for teachers to effectively use self-evaluations, they must be prepared to provide students with the necessary literacy data. In many cases, teachers collect a portion of this a data using various literacy assessments. In order for students to evaluate themselves effectively, they must know their starting point and where they are now in order to create new goals with the appropriate amount of challenge. Students must also be aware of previously set goals and must be able to identify whether or not they achieved their stated goal. Teachers should provide the students with data that shows their reading goals, growth, and progress, or lack of, and help the class to brainstorm literacy practices and skills students may or may not have used over a given period of time. This brainstorming of practices will allow the students to identify which practices may or may not have contributed to their reading successes or struggles and to the accomplishment of

previously identified goals. Sharing these theories aloud as a class allows every student to develop an idea of how their actions affected their learning. With this information in mind, teachers can then help students to establish new, reasonably challenging goals and a plan of action that will allow students to successfully undertake these goals.

This analysis of one's own learning and thinking, or metacognition, is a skill the CCSS seeks to develop. In fact, educators incorporate the CCSS with 21st Century Skills and require students to have self-direction. The standards indicate that students who read, write, and communicate independently portray self-direction and use metacognition skills. According to CCSS, these important skills are a learner's automatic awareness of knowledge and ability to understand, control, and manipulate cognitive processes. Students who are able to successfully evaluate their reading progress, establish fruitful goals, and continuously work towards accomplishing the goals are successfully displaying self-direction. Self-direction has the potential to lead to more independent reading habits because students are consciously and actively working towards a specific end goal. This awareness also prompts students to read more and establishes a level of accountability for reaching stated goals. This developing metacognition also allows students to identify their literacy strengths and weaknesses, which allows for greater and more strategic choices within a range of texts that fit students' needs.

Together this series of lessons and literacy practices can effectively develop independent reading practices and encourage beneficial book choice. However, with the implementation of these specific lessons and practices, I predict issues may arise. The following chapter will detail these issues and discuss how I might alter my application of this research as a result. I will review my thesis and make recommendations for future

research. I will also detail how this research influences my future instruction and

professional growth development.

Chapter 4: Summary and Recommendations

After researching the RW approach and developing lessons and practices that support this particular model, I maintain that RW, when implemented with focus and fidelity, has the ability to strengthen students' reading skills and, in time, cultivate a love of reading. A RW program that focuses on developing independent reading habits and providing students with choice in reading material is likely to have positive outcomes on students' reading abilities and interest in reading.

However, the RW approach to literacy is not void of complications. In fact, a few of the recommendations for application can be misinterpreted by students and bring about a focus that does not seek to foster a love of reading. For example, there may be instances in which students view their reading goals as a competition among peers rather than a personal challenge that seeks to ignite an interest in reading. Students begin the process by establishing a reasonable goal, however, they become more invested in earning the greatest amount of reading points than they do in the actual process of reading. While students can only accumulate a high value of points by reading a fair amount of material, the process for them becomes less about the enjoyment and skill of reading. Students begin to race through reading simply to earn points, and they find more enjoyment in the competition than in the act of reading. This can be remedied, however, through discussion and the establishment of alternative personal reading contracts. In some cases, these alternative contracts no longer require points but perhaps require a final project of some sort based on a text of the students' choosing.

In other instances, a teacher's packed agenda may make implementation of RW practices and components difficult. Conferring with students is one hallmark of RW that

educators often place low on the priority list. Devoting a specific period of time to individual students on a daily basis is not an easy task. Teachers must be diligent about carving out time to confer without interruption. They must also teach students to be respectful of this process, and they themselves must execute a certain amount of discipline and restraint in order to ensure they hold successful conferences. Teachers must be mindful that they do not devote their attention to other tasks (i.e. grading, planning, testing, etc.) during independent reading time. Rather, they must focus their attention on students' strengths and weaknesses, so they can use the information to better implement needed and effective literacy instruction.

Not only must teachers ensure that they are holding conferences on a regular basis, they must make certain they are providing students with time to read independently on a daily basis. All too often, it is easy for educators to diminish or even replace independent reading time with other classroom instruction. Administrators often require teachers to cover a broad range of material in a short amount of time. This demand reduces the time available for independent reading and, in a sense, reduces the effectiveness of the RW approach to literacy. Literacy experts base the program (and its success) on the premise that students have the opportunity to practice literary skills and strategies, information gathering, fluency, and reading for enjoyment on a continual basis both in school and at home. Without this time to read, students are less likely to improve as readers.

Reflection

Based upon my research, the likelihood of RW, when coupled with specific classroom practices, strengthening students' reading skills while cultivating a love of

reading is high. Research on RW provides anecdotal classroom encounters that detail both teacher and student experiences and relay student successes. These successful accounts note students' drastic change in attitude toward reading. Typically, students transitioned from unresponsive readers to readers that found themselves excited about literature and unable to put down a book. Teachers acknowledged an increase in enthusiasm and development of foundational reading skills and strategies as a result of the RW approach. While these experiences may be isolated classroom encounters, the sheer volume of them available for study lend to the belief that RW when implemented with focus and fidelity is capable of cultivating a love of reading. Many of the experiences noted in the research range across multiple grade levels and occur in a variety of different classroom settings, which again lends itself to the successful nature of RW in heightening interest in reading.

The practices that RW incorporates into the classroom, when examined alone (i.e. out of the context of the workshop model) also have great success. Studies that examine singular approaches to teaching literacy such as shared reading, goal setting, book talks (practices utilized by RW but not specific to this approach) find that these practices also have success in increasing student interest in reading. Similarly, these studies offer personal, successful accounts in a variety of classroom settings across a wide range of grade levels.

If given the opportunity to actually implement this research into the classroom, I would be sure to include in my application a focus on building reading stamina. If students are required to select just right books, set reading goals, read daily, and respond critically to the text, I must set them up for success. Students cannot accomplish these

tasks without first developing stamina. They will develop stamina in time with practice, however, I can specifically draw attention to this skill and intentionally help students to improve it. By utilizing stamina building activities such as timed tests, chunking reading, recording class progress, and the like, students will become familiar with reading stamina, understand its importance, and work together as a class to develop it over time.

Conclusion

Based upon the research and study I have conducted, I am able to offer recommendations for future research in this area. My research has concluded the RW format, in conjunction with the lessons and practices implemented in this study, lend themselves to greater independent reading habits and allows for a greater choice in reading material. However, not all students will fully and positively respond to this literacy approach. I recommend educators consider and incorporate research on student motivation as it relates to reading. By uncovering factors that contribute to student motivation or lack of motivation, by researching practices that may increase student motivation, and by exploring ways of maintaining high motivation, teachers can be better prepared to assist each and every student. It is possible for educators and other researchers to closely connect a study of reading motivation to much of the research and literacy practices I present in this study. Incorporating knowledge of motivation and practices that help develop it will only help strengthen the argument for the use of RW and its ability to improve reading skills and develop a love of reading.

As a result of my research, I will undertake the implementation of instruction that closely follows the RW model and will seek professional growth and development that is undoubtedly related to RW. Whether or not my professional teaching career begins in an

environment that utilizes the workshop approach, I hope to incorporate many RW

practices into my daily literacy instruction. I will specifically make use of shared and

guided reading practices to ensure that the students receive explicit instruction in literacy

skills and reading strategies using an engaging text. I intend to incorporate small group,

targeted instruction in areas of need using increasingly difficult text while offering

support to meet varying instructional needs.

   I also hope to include reading conferences into my regular classroom routine.

Conferences allow teachers to work with students individually and make it easier for

them to identify reading strengths and weaknesses. This one-on-one approach will allow

me to hear directly from the students about their reading and help them make decisions

that will improve their reading abilities. By recording these ongoing observations, it

becomes part of my ongoing assessment that monitors students' improvements or

challenges in reading. This information without a doubt informs future instruction,

tailoring it to the specific needs of my students.

   Conferences become more beneficial when students are able to participate in

independent reading. This is a practice that I as a classroom teacher intend to hold fast to

because of its wide array of academic benefits. Students need time to read at their

independent level in order to improve as readers and should be encouraged to read

independent texts both at home and at school. This type of reading allows students to read

for enjoyment, for information gathering, to practice literacy skills and strategies, and to

practice fluency- all components of reading that are crucial to fostering a love of reading.

   While I am familiar with the RW approach, there is always opportunity to

improve my understanding of its process and revise my implementation of the model. I

will center my future professional growth and development on these ideas. Conferring with readers is always an area to improve upon. No two conferences are alike; therefore I must have a toolbox full of strategies and techniques I can use to make the conference beneficial for both the teacher and student. I must also work towards improving my ability to recognize strengths and weaknesses beyond the obvious- not every aspect of reading is explicit. By continuing to grow as an educator and improve my own abilities, I become more capable to helping my students to improve, grow, and ultimately love reading.

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Appendix A: Pre and Post Survey

Name: _____   Date: _____

My Reading Practices – Fall 2012

- How many minutes do you read in one week?

- What are your reasons for reading?

- Do you enjoy reading? Explain.

- What are, if any, the benefits you receive from reading?

- What are your reading strengths?

- What are your reading challenges?

- What reading material do you enjoy reading the most?

- What reading material do you enjoy reading the least?

Name: _____   Date: _____

My reading Practices: Spring 2013

- How many minutes do you read in one week?

- What are your reasons for reading?

- Do you enjoy reading? Explain.

- What are, if any, the benefits you receive from reading?

- What are your reading strengths?

- What are your reading challenges?

- What reading material do you enjoy reading the most?

- What reading material do you enjoy reading the least?

Appendix B: History As a Reader Timeline

My History As a Reader

Books I loved when I was younger:

Books I loved reading in school:

Books I hated reading in school:

Books I have read on my own and enjoyed:

Books I pretended to read or understand:

Books that have captured my imagination:

Characters I connect with:
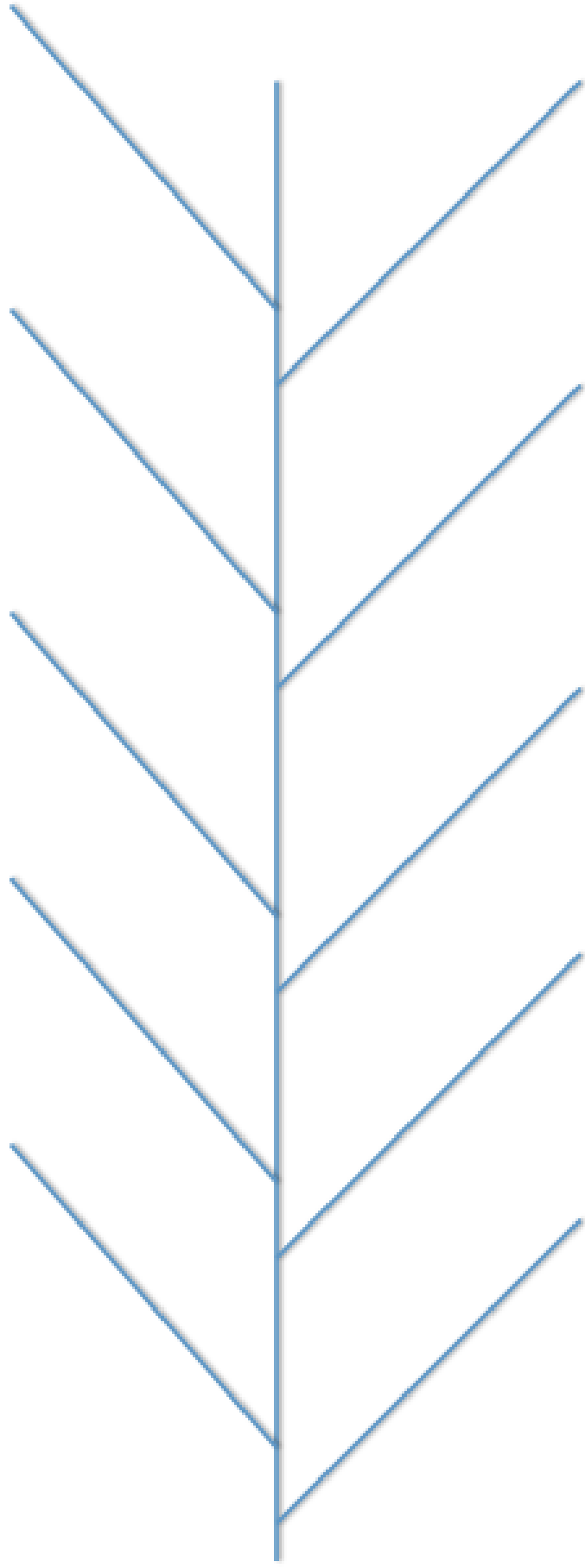
Authors I adore:

Memorable reading experiences:

The Good:

The Bad:

The Ugly:

My History as a Reader

Create a timeline plotting at least 10 experiences you have had as a reader beginning with the earliest memory. Be sure to include your age, grade, titles of books, and authors as best as you can.

Appendix C: Goal Setting Form
My Accelerated Reading Goals for 2012 - 2013

1st Quarter

My AR Goal	My AR Challenge Goal	Actual Points Earned

I set my goal at _____ because _____
To accomplish this goal I will _____

At the end of the quarter review the AR Goal.
I did (or did not) make my goal because _____
_____

2nd Quarter

My AR Goal	My AR Challenge Goal	Actual Points Earned

I set my goal at _____ because _____
To accomplish this goal I will _____

At the end of the quarter review the AR Goal.
I did (or did not) make my goal because _____
_____

3rd Quarter

My AR Goal	My AR Challenge Goal	Actual Points Earned

I set my goal at _____ because _____
To accomplish this goal I will _____

At the end of the quarter review the AR Goal.
I did (or did not) make my goal because _____
_____

4th Quarter

My AR Goal	My AR Challenge Goal	Actual Points Earned

I set my goal at _____ because _____
To accomplish this goal I will _____

At the end of the quarter review the AR Goal.
I did (not) make my goal because _____
_____

Appendix D: Student Reading Log

Name: _____

Student Reading Log

Date	Title of Book	Level	Home or School	Page Started	Page Ended	Minutes Read	Genre

Appendix E: Reading Response Notebooks
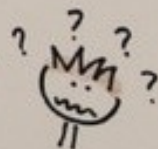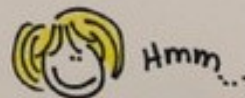
Appendix F: Conferring with Students

Conference Record Sheet

FOCUS:

Student _____	Student _____
Student _____	Student _____
Student _____	Student _____

Appendix G: Book Talk Forms

Book Talk Task

Task	Congratulations! Your teacher has just chosen you to create a book talk for your classmates. Your goal is to get your peers hooked, or interested in reading the book you recommend in your book talk. You have an awesome responsibility. Ready to motivate others to read?
Book Talk	A book talk is a 3-5 minute talk about a book you want to motivate others to read. It is similar to a movie trailer but for books. The purpose of a book talk is to "sell" the book. You want to give enough information about the text to interest the listeners but you are not giving a summary of the book. You don't want to give away the important parts of the book, and you certainly never want to give away the ending. You want to highlight the interesting points. You may want to read certain passages to your listeners. The main purpose of a book talk is to grab the audience's interest and make them want to read the book. It's always a good idea to end the book talk with a cliffhanger. The presenter gives the book talk orally and usually has the book as a visual prop.
Essential Question	How can I get people in my class hooked a good book?

Product	Your mission is to create an exciting book talk!
	
	• First, find a great book to share! Think about what gets you excited about reading. Is it the characters, the setting, an exciting plot, interesting themes, or a personal connection you have with the story?
	
	• Second, prepare the attached book talk form to help you prepare for the talk. Use the notes from your Reading Response Notebook to remind you of the details.
	
	• Third, prepare an exciting script for your book talk by:
	  1. Including an interesting hook.
	  2. Thoroughly and vividly describing the text by using interesting words.
	  3. Explain how the text can be connected to the listeners in the class.
	  4. Retelling an exciting part of the story without giving away too much information to ruin it.
	  5. Using props where appropriate to build interest.
	  6. Restating the title and author at the end of your book talk.
	  7. Leaving your listeners with a compelling reason for checking out the book you recommended.
	
	• Fourth, deliver your book talk to your audience. Remember to:
	  1. Speak loudly and clearly.
	  2. Make frequent eye contact with your audience.
	  3. Speak with enthusiasm. Remember it's your job to hook your reader.

Appendix G: Book Talk Forms

Book Talk Preparation

Title of Book: _____

Author: _____

Genre: _____

I selected this book because...

I know this about the author…

A brief overview of the book…

My connections to the book are ...

An exciting part is…

My recommendation is…

Appendix G: Book Talk Forms

Book Talk Presentation Checklist

Guiding Questions	Yes?	No?
Am I prepared to explain why this book is at my appropriate level?		
Did I remember to include the title, author and genre?		
Did I include several specific details about the book?		
Did I make a connection to share with my peers?		
Have I prepared a hook to begin the talk?		
Am I ready to retell an exciting part of the text?		
Am I prepared to restate the title, author and genre in my conclusion?		
Am I prepared to share a strong reason for the audience to read the book?		
Have I practiced at least 3 times (at least once in front of someone else)?		

Appendix H: Book Club Contract
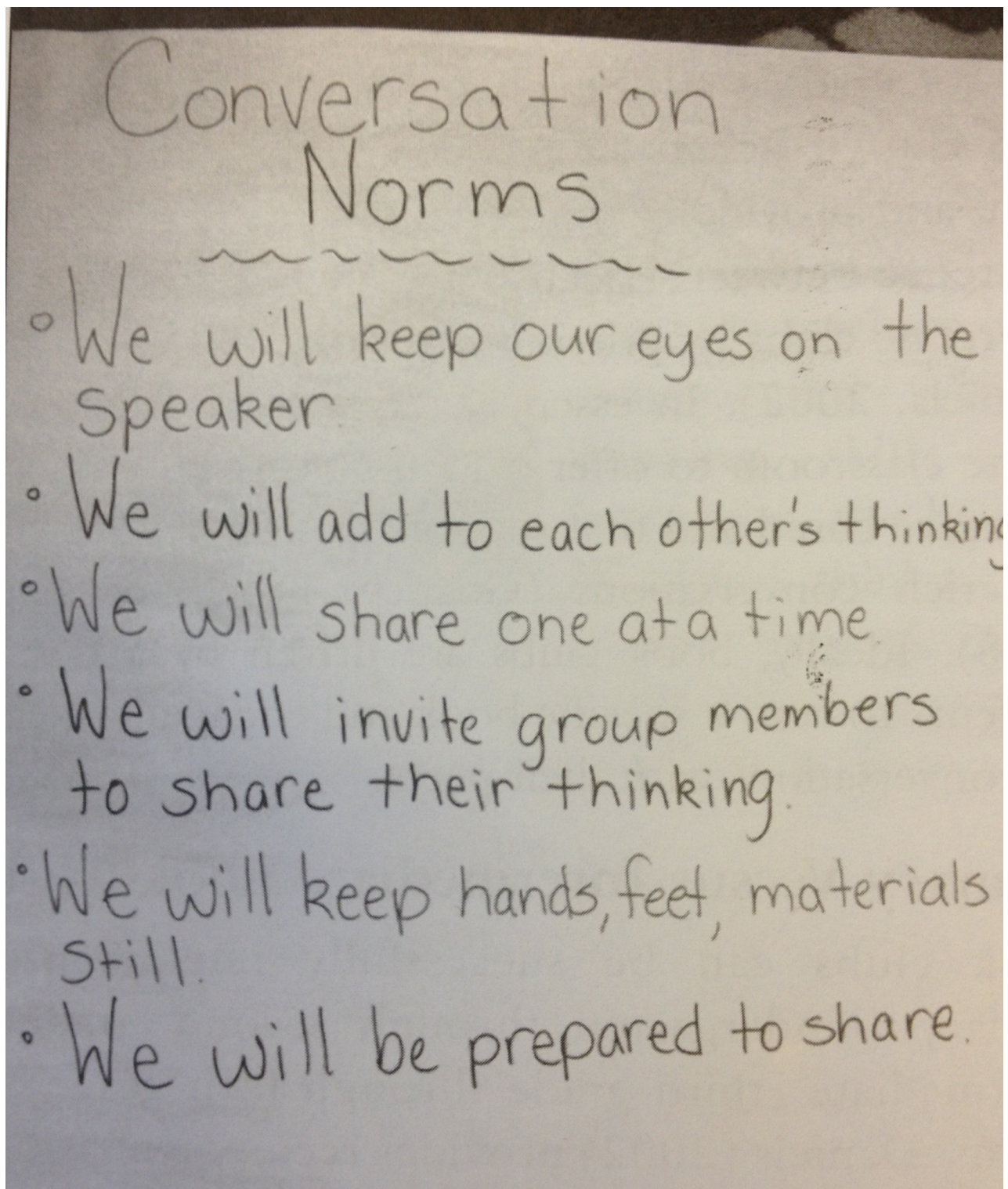
Conversation
Norms
~~~~~~~~~

- We will keep our eyes on the Speaker.
- We will add to each other's thinking
- We will share one at a time.
- We will invite group members to share their thinking.
- We will keep hands, feet, materials Still.
- We will be prepared to share.

Appendix I: Genre Study List

Name_____Date_____

Parent signature:_____

Reading Expectations for Independent Reading This Year 2012-2013:

Your reading requirement for this entire year is reading 20 books. You need to read at least one or more in each genre listed below. As you progress through the year, you will keep track of each book and genre. If you're unsure what genre it falls into, ASK!!

_____Poetry anthology

_____Classics or traditional literature

_____Realistic Fiction or Adventure

_____Historical Fiction

_____Fantasy

_____Fairy Tales, folk tales, tall tales, legends, myths (Read one of each)

_____Science Fiction

_____Mystery

_____Content Area (e.g. Science, Social Studies, Math)

_____Biography or autobiography

_____Memoir

_____Humor

_____Picture book (as approved by teacher)

Poetry Anthology

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Classics or traditional literature

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Realistic Fiction or Adventure

Date Completed book	Title of Book	Author

Historical Fiction

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Fantasy

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Science Fiction

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Mystery

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Informational: Content Area (e.g. Science, Social Studies, Math)

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Biography or autobiography

Date completed book	Title of Book	Author

Memoir

Date Completed book	Title of Book	Genre	Author

Humor

Date Completed book	Title of Book	Genre	Author

Picture book (as approved by teacher)

Date Completed book	Title of Book	Genre	Author

Other

Date Completed book	Title of Book	Genre	Author

Appendix J: Self-Evaluation

My Student-Led Conference

My Reading Data

- STAR data on August 21, 2012: _____
- STAR data on December 17, 2012: _____
- Growth on STAR: _____
- New Reading Zone for 3rd quarter: _____

I think I went up (or down) in my Reading Zone because _____

_____

Show my Accelerated Reader (AR) Goal Graph and AR Test Book Graph.

My AR Point Goal for 2nd quarter was _____ points.

I actually earned _____ points by taking AR tests and _____ points by writing summaries (if there was no AR test).

My AR test score average was _____ percent. My average AR book level was _____.

Show my Reading Response Notebook.

My strength in reading is _____

_____

My challenge in reading is _____

_____

This quarter I will set my AR Point goal at _____ points and my AR Challenge goal at _____ points.

My Genre Study

I have read _____ books in _____ different genres in 1st and 2nd quarters.

By May 2013, I will need to read at least 12 different genres and a total of 20 different books throughout my 4th grade year.

I still need to read books in these genres: _____

_____

My Writing Data

Show my Spelling Score Graph.

My strength in writing is _____

_____

My challenge in writing is _____

_____