BUILDING HIGH LEVELS OF COMPREHENSION AND MOTIVATION
THROUGH AUTHENTIC LITERACY PRACTICES

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
Moravian College
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
2012
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Abstract

This qualitative research study examined the effects of using authentic literacy to build high levels of comprehension and motivation with adolescent readers. The participants were fourth grade general education students who were pulled from their reading classroom. The students met five out of six days in the cycle for twenty to thirty minutes. During that time students learned reading strategies to aid in their comprehension, as well as had opportunities for choice in texts and literacy activities to enhance motivation. The students were also engaged in peer and whole-group discussions. During independent reading the teacher conducted one-on-one conferences with the students to check comprehension and strategy use. Students enjoyed having choice in reading materials and benefited from learning reading strategies more in depth.
Acknowledgements

I sit here and ponder all of the people I need to acknowledge and how I begin to thank everyone. I guess I do not have to worry about the music interrupting my acceptance speech or the director giving me the hand signal to wrap it up. So I will begin at the beginning.

The first person I need to thank is Dr. Zales. The process of writing my thesis would not have happened without her guidance. She took the time to sit with me on a weekly basis to edit, edit, edit. She calmed my frustrations and wiped my tears during the stressful times. Her professional wisdom has made this document what it is, and for that, my appreciation for her is unending.

I need to say a huge thank you to the five members of my thesis class. You have all provided guidance and wisdom when I needed advice. It was a pleasure working with each of you throughout this incredible journey.

The next person I would like to thank is my husband. Through all of this, he was my biggest cheerleader. When others told me I was crazy for writing my thesis in the middle of being a brand-new mommy, he supported me the entire time. He gave me the opportunity to work, type, edit, cry, and stress, and in the process he managed the household and took care of the baby. He was nothing short of encouraging from the beginning to the end of this process.

There are a lot of people at my school that deserve a thank you. First, thank you to my principal for allowing me to carry out my study and giving me
special time during the day to meet with my participants. Thank you to the fourth grade teacher who gave up six of her students everyday for a half hour to meet with me. And finally, a huge, huge thank you to my six participants. It was such a pleasure to work with you. You all brought such joy to my heart everyday. It was because of you that I could tell my story the way I did. Your participation in this study has paved the way for me to carry out the procedures with my future students.

So many people contributed to carrying out my research study and writing this thesis. Thank you to everyone who believed in me. Thank you to my family and friends for your continued support. I look forward to completing this part of my educational journey, and look ahead to creating new opportunities.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................... iii  
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iv  
List of Tables ...................................................................................................................... xii  
List of Figures .................................................................................................................... xiii  
Researcher Stance ........................................................................................................... 1  
Literature Review ............................................................................................................ 5  
  
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 5  
  
Reading Comprehension ................................................................................................. 6  
  
Basic Reading Skills ........................................................................................................ 7  
  
Strategies .......................................................................................................................... 8  
  
Motivation .......................................................................................................................... 11  
  
Literature-Rich Environment ......................................................................................... 13  
  
Choice ............................................................................................................................... 15  
  
Personal Relevance .......................................................................................................... 17  
  
Meaningful Discussions ................................................................................................. 19  
  
Summary ............................................................................................................................ 21  
  
Research Design and Methodology .................................................................................. 22  
  
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 22  
  
Setting ............................................................................................................................... 22  
  
Participants ....................................................................................................................... 23
The Home Stretch .................................................................88
Would Someone Please Pass the Book?  ..............................................88
And the Winner Is ........................................................................90
Bridging the Strategies Together ..........................................................90
  Chapter One ........................................................................90
  Chapter Two .......................................................................92
  Chapter Three .....................................................................93
  Chapter Four .......................................................................93
  Chapter Five .......................................................................94
  Chapter Six .......................................................................97
The End Comes Too Soon ..............................................................98
Data Analysis ................................................................................106
  Introduction .........................................................................106
  Student Survey Analysis ..............................................................107
  Student Interview Analysis .........................................................107
  Qualitative Reading Inventory Analysis ......................................108
  Literacy Activity Analysis ............................................................109
  Journal Entry Analysis ...............................................................109
  Observational Data Analysis .......................................................109
  Codes, Bins, and Theme Statements .............................................110
Findings .....................................................................................113
K – Post-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory ..................................................161
L – Main Idea “Hand” Poster ...........................................................................165
M – Visualizing Poster .....................................................................................166
N – “Tuning” by Gary Paulsen ..........................................................................167
O – Sensory Impressions – Form 1 ....................................................................168
P – Sensory Impressions – Form 2 .................................................................169
Q – Ice Cream Sodas .......................................................................................170
R – Book Pass Handout ....................................................................................171
List of Tables

Table 1. Pre-Study Reading Survey-Questions 10-15 ..................................................40
Table 2. Pre-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory Results ...........................................44
Table 3. Individual Conferences For Comprehension ....................................................58
Table 4. Individual Conferences For Comprehension and Visualizing .....................84
Table 5. Visualizations and Questions From Chapter Two .........................................92
Table 6. Post-Study Reading Survey-Questions 10-15 ...............................................101
Table 7. Post-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory Results .....................................105
List of Figures

Figure 1. Participants and Associated Fonts ..........................................................24

Figure 2. Pre-Study Reading Survey-Questions 1-9 ..............................................39

Figure 3a. Pre-Study Interview Questions and Responses .................................42

Figure 3b. Pre-Study Interview Questions and Responses ..................................43

Figure 3c. Pre-Study Interview Questions and Responses ..................................44

Figure 4. Student Responses to Previewing Independent Books ......................50

Figure 5. Student Predictions During Individual Conferences .........................52

Figure 6. Additional Student Predictions During Individual Conferences ..........55

Figure 7. Brainstorming the Questioning Strategy ..............................................56

Figure 8. Naming the Cat Predictions and Questions .........................................59

Figure 9a. Literacy Activities .............................................................................61

Figure 9b. Literacy Activities .............................................................................62

Figure 9c. Literacy Activities .............................................................................63

Figure 10a. Visualizing the Wool Pooh ...............................................................66

Figure 10b. Visualizing the Wool Pooh ...............................................................67

Figure 11a. Mid-Study Reading Interview Responses .......................................70

Figure 11b. Mid-Study Reading Interview Responses .......................................71

Figure 11c. Mid-Study Reading Interview Responses .......................................72

Figure 12. Peer Conference Observations .........................................................74
| Figure 13a. | Poem Visualizations Using the Five Senses .............................. 78 |
| Figure 13b. | Poem Visualizations Using the Five Senses .............................. 79 |
| Figure 14.  | Picture Book Visualizations .......................................................... 81 |
| Figure 15.  | Previous Knowledge of the Summarizing Strategy ............................. 83 |
| Figure 16.  | Ice Cream Soda Summaries .............................................................. 86 |
| Figure 17.  | Scuffy Summaries .......................................................... 87 |
| Figure 18.  | Using the Reading Strategies in Chapter One ................................. 91 |
| Figure 19.  | Chapter Five Predictions .............................................................. 95 |
| Figure 20.  | Chapter Five Summaries ............................................................. 96 |
| Figure 21.  | Chapter Six Reading Strategies ..................................................... 97 |
| Figure 22.  | Post-Study Reading Survey-Questions 1-9 ......................................... 99 |
| Figure 23a. | Post-Study Reading Interview Responses ....................................... 102 |
| Figure 23b. | Post-Study Reading Interview Responses ....................................... 103 |
| Figure 23c. | Post-Study Reading Interview Responses ....................................... 104 |
| Figure 24.  | Codes and Bins ........................................................................ 111 |
| Figure 25.  | Theme Statements ........................................................................ 112 |
| Figure 26.  | Mid-Study Interview Question #1 ..................................................... 117 |
| Figure 27.  | Pre-Study Interview Question #3 ..................................................... 119 |
| Figure 28.  | End-interview student responses about strategies .......................... 120 |
Researcher Stance

You may not know who Cliff Hillegass is, but his “notes” got me through a lot of difficult times in high school. When it came to reading, Cliff’s Notes were my best friend. I had absolutely no desire to read the books that my English teacher assigned. Cliff’s Notes were good enough for me to answer the comprehension questions or write the paper. Reading novels in school was torture for me, and it is a shame that I had that negative attitude towards reading, because it used to be something I enjoyed a great deal. At a young age, I loved reading. My parents gave me the opportunity to be surrounded by books. I loved picking up stories of my choosing, stories that were about kids just like me. I found myself getting lost in books dealing with subject matter that connected with the things I was going through in life at that time. When my teachers would hand out the book club papers or announce the book fair at school, it was like Christmas morning for me. I would quickly begin my list of must-have books.

Once I entered middle school, my love of reading began to diminish. I remember having to choose books from a huge list and read them only to pass the computer-based test. Book after book and computer test after computer test were what reading was like in my 6th grade class. The only thing the teacher cared about was if we could answer the questions about the
books correctly, and then she would document our progress on a giant board. What we were reading was not important; it was a race to see who could get the most points. The thicker the book, the more points it was worth. Reading became a job and was no longer enjoyable, and because it was not enjoyable, it affected the way I comprehended the story. It was a vicious cycle.

This trend continued throughout my time in middle and high school. The teacher would hand us books and assign chapters and questions to answer. The in-class discussions were bland because the content of the books were usually very boring and irrelevant to what I liked and believed in. The books were old and the content did not connect with me. Because of this, I was turned off to reading altogether. It became too much work and was almost like a punishment for me. My mother and sister would read book after book from the library and try to pass them on to me, but I had no desire to read for pleasure.

When I began my teaching career, it was ironic that I was assigned as the 6th grade reading/language arts teacher. I had to teach the very subject that brought me so much frustration in the past. I decided to tell my students the story about my reading experiences in school, and I vowed that I would never teach reading the way it was taught to me. There would be no
computer tests and packets of questions. I wanted to make reading fun. I wanted my students to have choices in what they read independently. I wanted to choose books for read alouds that connected with my students and carry out meaningful discussions while modeling strategies they could use while reading on their own. But who was I kidding? Due to time crunches, jammed-packed pacing guides and curriculum, and state-testing preparations, the reading classroom of my dreams was next to impossible to achieve. I was determined not to give up. I stole minutes wherever I could find them during reading or language arts to sneak in a couple pages here and a couple pages there of a read aloud. I took a few minutes whenever I could to engage in discussions. The students enjoyed this. They loved listening to stories and talking about them, even if it was for a random five or ten minutes. Feeling their excitement about the stories brought back my love of reading. I found myself just as captured by the story as they were, and from that moment on I was on a mission to make a difference in the way reading was presented in classrooms.

Going through graduate school, I decided to pursue a Reading Specialist certification along with my curriculum degree because I wanted to make even more of a difference in the approach to literacy. I truly wanted to bring the enjoyment of reading back into the classroom. I want my students
to be conscious of the world around them in order to open up meaningful learning experiences, to know that everything is built from the foundation of literacy, and to make connections with learning that impacts them as individuals. Implementing authentic literacy activities will not only embrace my core educational beliefs, but it will give me hope in seeing an increase in reading comprehension, an understanding of the use of strategies, an increase in motivation, and improved discussions.

My overall goal is to bring back the passion for reading that my students had before it became packets of questions. I want the moans and groans from my students to be replaced with smiles of excitement when it is time for reading in the classroom. And I do not ever want my students to have negative feelings about reading the way I had in middle school that could turn them off to reading altogether. Because of my passion for lifelong learning, basic literacy, and personal relevance, my research question is: What are the observed and reported experiences of fourth grade language arts students when implementing authentic literacy activities?
Literature Review

Introduction

Reading is at the heart of everything we do, both in and out of school. Students are expected to read in every content area, and all people are expected to read in order to function in an operating society. Reading comprehension in school has been getting a bad rap because students are just not motivated to read. The influx of technology has made it a struggle to get students interested in reading. If students are motivated to read, then reading comprehension has the opportunity to increase.

Authentic reading, now, more than ever, needs to be the focus on how teachers can instill the love of reading back into their students. Rather than bland and boring texts, students should have various opportunities for reading. This includes the kinds of reading we, as adults, do in newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites (Gallagher, 2009). If students have a choice in the classroom based around high-interest, authentic texts, motivation to read can increase. In addition, the teaching of basic reading skills and strategies can be incorporated into any type of text, even texts that are personally relevant to the students. Schmoker (2007) states that authentic reading, writing, and discussion promote higher scores, intellectual development, and a narrowing of the achievement gap. Using authentic
reading can aid in the quest for increasing reading comprehension and motivation.

**Reading Comprehension**

There comes a point in education, roughly around third grade, when students transition from learning to read, to reading to learn. In order to read and learn, students must be able to comprehend the information that the text is presenting to them. Reading comprehension is a vital component to lifelong learning. One of the main purposes for reading is to comprehend the ideas in the reading material. Without comprehension, reading would be empty and meaningless (Casper, Catton, & Westfall, as cited in Gehring, McGuire, Parr, & Wiles, 2003). Reading comprehension is the basis of all other learning. Bondanza, Kelly, and Treewater (1998) point out that the purpose of reading is to comprehend and gain meaning. It is an important skill that every student needs to be successful.

Today, teachers are focusing, more than ever on reading comprehension. It is at the heart of everything being taught, and it is a vital piece to prepare students for the future, both in and out of school. Providing students with the ability to read and understand is generally equated with American education. If it is the job of our educational system to ensure this goal, comprehension must be a priority (Brandt & Isaacson, 1998).
When classrooms are filled with students of varying interests and abilities, teachers must look at their practices to develop a classroom curriculum that suites all the needs of the students. An emphasis on basic reading skills and strategies are just two ways that teachers can increase reading comprehension in the classroom. Without the skills needed for reading comprehension, a student’s academic progress is limited (Alvermann & Eakle, 2003).

**Basic reading skills.** Reading is a lifelong skill. No matter where life takes you, reading is essential for functioning in society. Having the ability to read and understand is essential to each citizen’s informed and full participation in a democratic society (NEAP Reading Assessment, as cited in Brandt & Isaacson, 1998). The education that students are receiving today must emphasize the importance of basic reading skills. If basic reading skills are not in place, then students cannot be expected to thrive in comprehension and higher order thinking. Langer and the National Council of Teachers of English (1992) emphasize that a lack of basic reading skills can prevent students from comprehending and make higher-level skills unattainable. A lack of comprehension can undermine a student’s confidence and cause their personal expectations to be low.
There needs to be a focus on teaching basic reading skills for the good of all students. A lack of these skills can be detrimental to a student’s future. When literacy skills are under-developed, this tends to be a major reason why students are retained, why they are assigned to special education, why they are given long-term remedial services, and why they fail to graduate from high school (Schmoker, 2007).

It is an important task to ensure that these basic reading skills are in place before taking on the issues with higher order thinking through the use of strategies. Alden, Lindquist, and Lubkeman (2003) continue by saying that if students have the necessary basic skills to comprehend what they read, they perceive their learning as relevant.

**Strategies.** Having basic literacy skills as a firm foundation, students can now be immersed into reading strategies. Strategy-based reading instruction can be used with all levels of readers and in mixed ability classrooms (Gibson, 2009). Gibson goes on to say that strategy based instruction is an effective way to improve reading comprehension. It also promotes and fosters critical thinking of students. These strategies require students to dig deeper in order to expand their understanding of the text.

Ellery (2009) emphasizes that comprehension is the essence of reading, and teachers should be weaving strategies, like previewing,
predicting, questioning, visualizing, and summarizing, into their everyday instruction. When teaching cognitive strategies to students, it enables them to acquire reading comprehension skills. Reading is a strategic process that requires students to actively construct meaning from text (Anino, as cited in Bondanza et al., 1998). The National Reading Panel states that strategy training can increase students’ competence in using the strategy, awareness of the strategy, and comprehension of the text for which the strategy was intended (as cited in Guthrie et al., 2004). Strategy instruction also includes knowing when to use appropriate strategies. Reading strategies are usually the focus during a reading or language arts lesson, but the strategies can be taught in any content area that is accompanied by the text. Strategies should be taught at all points during the reading process (Alden et al., 2003). Good readers are skilled, active, and self-regulated before, during, and after reading using the repertoire of their skills and strategies that have been taught to them (Dermitzaki, Andreou, & Paraskeva, 2008). Gibson (2009) says that students who are using higher level thinking skills are also using specific strategies. Teaching those strategies to students, and scaffolding them through the process, results in stronger reading comprehension.

When students are aware of how to use and apply their repertoire of strategies when reading, the act of reading is more engaging and motivating.
Studies have consistently shown that students’ application of various categories of strategies facilitates engaged, self-regulated learning, and this is directly related to their academic performance (Gourgey & Pressley, as cited in Dermitzaki et al., 2008). Gourgey and Pressley go on to say that:

Engaged, self-regulated readers are those who set realistic goals, select effective reading strategies, monitor their understanding of the text, evaluate progress toward their goals, and are highly motivated to read and learn; in other words, they actively use their own skills to build understanding. (p. 471)

Engaged readers are intrinsically motivated, build knowledge, use cognitive strategies, and interact socially to learn from text (Guthrie et al., 2004). In addition, Bandura, Schunk and Zimmerman, as cited in Guthrie et al. (2004) continue to say that with respect to motivation, strategy training may affect students’ self-efficacy because providing students with cognitive tools that help them perform better has been shown to increase students’ self-efficacy in reading and other achievement areas. Schunk and Pajares (2002) continue this by saying that students’ self-efficacy for reading in enhanced when they learn reading strategies and have opportunities for success in reading.
Overall, reading strategy instruction is a way to promote motivation. Research indicates that reading strategy instruction creates a more positive attitude about reading and can improve achievement (Guthrie & Wigfield, Oka & Paris, Stevens, as cited in McCrudden, Perkins, & Putney, 2005). With respect to comprehension, Sigmon (as cited in Gehring et al., 2003) maintains that instructional goals should be put in place to prepare students to comprehend texts of all lengths and all genres through the skillful application of appropriate skills and strategies.

**Motivation**

Teaching students how to read and comprehend what they are reading is a task in itself. Motivation plays a key role in this equation for learning. If students are not motivated, it is a struggle to get them to do anything, let alone thinking deeper about text. A student’s academic progress is limited without the skills of reading comprehension and the motivation for reading to learn (Alvermann & Eakle, 2003). There are many factors that are causing the decrease in motivation. The increasing use of technology, time commitments, and the appropriate modeling of reading at home are just to name a few. Applegate and Applegate (2010) state that motivation to read has evolved into one of the most intensely studied of the factors contributing to overall success or failures in elementary schools.
Students cannot be expected to think deeper about text and use higher order thinking if they have a complete lack of motivation to just sit and read, and teachers are acknowledging this absence of motivation and the connection with many of the academic problems (Gambrell, 1996).

Now, more than ever, teachers need to be models of motivation. It is important for educators to view themselves as motivators because motivation is important in keeping students active members of the classroom reading community (Towell, 2001). In classrooms today, a major goal of teachers is to find ways to get students motivated to read and learn. Motivation needs to occur before students can fully immerse themselves into content. With little or no motivation to master the content and skills necessary for reading instruction, the production of engagement is limited, eroding the possibility of success, and exacerbating reading problems (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). In reading, there are numerous ways for teachers to create a motivating environment.

A motivating educator is one who exposes students to a variety of literacy genres and encourages them to share what they read with others. A motivating educator includes students in the decision making about what they read and provide them with literature related activities. (Gambrell, 1996, p. 21)
Examples of motivational techniques that can be applied in the classroom are creating a literature-rich environment, offering student choice in selecting reading materials, conducting interest inventories so that reading can be personally relevant for each individual, and engaging students in meaningful discussions about text to promote deeper understanding and higher-order thinking.

**Literature-rich environment.** Creating a literature-rich environment in the classroom is a great motivator for students. Roser, Hoffman, and Farest (1990) point out:

- The challenge of motivating students to read goes beyond the teacher/parent partnership. It also involves creating a literate environment by infusing quality literature and related instructional strategies with a traditional reading and language arts program. A literate environment is a place where a variety of books are offered that reflect the interest of the students. It is a place where students are challenged to make life/literature connections and are given the opportunity to respond to literature in a variety of ways. (p. 554)

Roser et al. (1990) go on to say that the objective in classrooms should be the sharing of literature with children in a relaxed and open way. This type of sharing should include offering a sundry of books, encouraging volunteer
reading, and helping children to discover their own connections. Children want to be surrounded by books that connect with them, either by their abilities or interests. A vast collection of excellent literature in the classroom will facilitate this freedom while insuring that quality literature is being read (Brandt & Isaacson, 1998). Gallagher (2009) says that they should be immersed in a pool of high-interest reading materials.

This type of environment is a huge motivator to get students to pick up books and read. Creating environments that stimulate interest is one way for schools to motivate students and help them make cognitive gains in areas that initially hold little interest for them (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). If students are motivated to read in a literature-rich environment, then teaching comprehension strategies will be an easier task for teachers. A literature-rich environment, and access to such, is important to the student’s development of language arts skills (Gehring et al., 2003).

Teachers need to be aware of how to effectively create this environment to ensure complete success in motivation, while not compromising the reading needs of each student. Reading materials should accommodate various reading ability levels and interest levels of the classroom population. Materials should be practical and relevant to the students (Cramer, as cited in Smith, Tracy, & Weber, 1998). Smith et al.
(1998) go on to say that providing students with a variety of materials, while respecting their choice, is important because reasons other than literary merit seemed to be associated with the desire to read.

This type of environment is motivating for students, and it is very beneficial for the teacher as well.

Teachers in print rich environments are more likely to engage in reading aloud, to link reading and writing activities, to promote books and reading, to provide high interest reading, and to plan trips to the library, all of which contribute to reading achievement and motivation. (Haycock, as cited in Gehring et al., 2003, p. 27)

**Choice.** Creating a literature-rich environment is just one piece of the motivational puzzle. Now that the classroom is filled with a variety of reading materials, it is important to offer students choices in the things they are reading. Too often teachers are focusing on materials of their choosing, and often the materials have no connection with the students. A typical classroom focuses on teacher-directed reading and offers little opportunity to read or discuss materials of the students’ own choosing (Worthy, 2002).

Smith et al. (1998) add to this thought by stating:

Too often teachers have selected the reading material for students to read either through using a basal reading series or restricting reading
to a particular genre or list of titles. Although there are values to both methods, using either method in excess fails to recognize the students’ need to choose. (p. 31)

Students have opinions about what they like to read (Ivey & Broaddus, 2000). They should be afforded the freedom of choice in their classroom. This freedom to choose is both motivational and encouraging toward being a lifelong reader. If we want our students to become lifelong readers, it is critical they are given time for reading and choices about what to read (Virgil, 1994).

Offering choice in reading materials has other benefits as well. “Affording student choices in the classroom is a well-supported motivational practice. When students can choose (a) the texts they read, (b) the tasks they perform with the texts, or (c) their partners during instruction, their intrinsic motivation for reading increases” (Reynolds & Symons, 2001, p. 21). When students are motivated through choice, they are more eager to read for deeper understanding. McCrudden et al. (2005) maintain that higher levels of interest encourage students to read for comprehension. To add to this point, students who are provided choices of texts performed higher on several reading tasks than students with no choice (Reynolds & Symons, 2001).
Student choice in reading materials has many benefits in the classroom, for both comprehension and motivation.

**Personal relevance.** “According to Paulo Freire, ‘Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather it is preceded by, and intertwined with knowledge of the world’” (Shelton, as cited in Gehring et al., 2003, p. 22). Students come to the classroom with their schema. Their schema is their background knowledge, and it is different for everyone. Everyone brings his or her schema to reading. It is our schema that allows us to connect with text and understand texts in different ways. If students have no prior knowledge or experience to hook new information to, it is pretty hard to construct meaning. Connecting what readers know to new information is the core of learning and understanding (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Teachers need to be aware that making connections is a key component to reading comprehension. Piaget recognized the importance of making connections. The strategy allows students to become actively involved as they respond to literature. This involvement allows students to construct their own meaning, which in turn leads to deeper comprehension (Kelly, 1990). Noden and Moss (1994) discuss the importance of making connections between literature and life.
They see this form of response as one that will ensure unique and meaningful discussions, as well as create focused readers.

The bottom line is, students are motivated to read when they have materials that are personally relevant. When materials are personally relevant, it opens up numerous opportunities for making connections. When students are able to connect with text, an increase in comprehension is more within reach. Using what they already know gives readers confidence in approaching new reading material (Anino, as cited in Bondanza et al., 1998). Students are motivated when they connect with what they are reading. Kelly (1990) emphasizes that the opportunity to connect with literature personalizes reading as each student’s interpretation is individualized due to the different life experiences they bring with them.

The experiences that students bring into the classroom are so important. And classrooms need to provide materials that the students find personally relevant so that making connections is a reachable goal. When students have the experience of connecting to a book, they begin to exhibit curiosity and become open to further exploration. Their motivation becomes intrinsic and their learning becomes meaningful (Miller, 1998). Through making connections, students can think deeper about the story and characters. When students have experiences similar to characters in a story,
they are more likely to understand the character’s motives, thoughts, and feelings (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Teachers need to make students aware of personally relevant reading materials and the effect that making connections will have on their reading comprehension. Alden et al. (2003) state that, “Comprehension is essentially a mental construction of what is on the page and how it relates to what is already known. Teachers must show students that what they read can be connected to self, friends, community, and world issues” (p. 31).

**Meaningful discussions.** Engaging students in meaningful discussions about text is another piece to increase comprehension and motivation. Brandt and Isaacson (1998) point out that current research shows that discussing literature improves comprehension and motivation. There are so many benefits to engaging students in literature discussions. These discussions offer students an opportunity to be exposed to multiple perspectives, enhance their literary thinking, and increase their comprehension (Lehman & Scharer, 1996; Noden & Moss, 1994).

Students often are not motivated by paper and pencil comprehension questions. Alden et al. (2003) support this by saying that observations from researchers found that students’ levels of responsibility for learning increased when conversation and genuine dialogue replaced the traditional
comprehension questions. Applegate and Applegate (2010) add to this thought by saying that children with high inclination to respond thoughtfully to text were significantly more motivated to read than children who excelled only in text-based comprehension. Students often do not want to sit and answer questions on paper.

In addition to providing opportunities for higher order thinking, deeper understanding of a text, and analysis of the text, meaningful discussions about text has many other benefits in the classroom. Social interaction provided by literature discussions creates more eager readers (Au & Scheu, 1989). Gunning (1996) also adds that class discussions are an invaluable tool to further a student's retention of a story. Discussion topics should include those that allow the students to identify/discuss the main idea of the story and what they saw as important. Discussion is an effective way for the teacher to monitor the class' comprehension abilities. Bondanza et al. (1998) continue to say that talking over their [students'] reactions to the reading or their answers to the questions helps to clarify their thinking process.

Teachers need to create this environment in their classroom to promote discussions about text. When students can sit and have a
conversation about what they are reading, it is highly motivating and learning is taking place.

**Summary**

The emphasis on reading comprehension is essential in classrooms today. Teachers should be focusing on basic literacy skills and strategy instruction to see increases in comprehension among students. Motivation is a huge factor in reading comprehension. When students are not motivated to read, it is a task to get them to understand what they are reading. Creating a literature rich environment, where choice in reading materials is an option, is just one way to get students motivated to read. Reading materials that are personally relevant and make connections with the students is another way to ensure motivation. Students should also be engaged in meaningful class discussions about books. These discussions allow for opportunities to think deeper about text. When students are immersed in authentic opportunities, such as these, reading comprehension and motivation can soar.
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

I conducted a 12-week study on the effects of using authentic literacy to build high levels of comprehension and motivation. During that time students learned reading strategies to aid in their comprehension, as well as having opportunities for choice in texts and literacy activities to enhance motivation. The students were also engaged in peer and whole-group discussions about strategy use.

Setting

The school where my study took place is located in a suburb in Eastern Pennsylvania. Our district consists of three elementary schools, one intermediate school, one middle school, and one high school. The intermediate school, middle school, and high school are on one campus separated by sports fields. The three elementary schools are dispersed around the district. The intermediate school, which opened in 2009, is considered to be a state-of-the-art facility. Classrooms are equipped with laptop carts, Smart Boards, and document cameras, as well as projection units for connectivity to laptops, flat-screen TVs, and data projectors. In addition, each classroom utilizes Light Speed Units, which are classroom audio systems. Other technology in the intermediate school includes iPad
and iPod carts, computer labs, technology classrooms, and a full-time technology facilitator to address all on-the-spot needs.

Currently, the intermediate school population is approximately 750 students. Fourth grade consists of four teams (with two teachers per team), fifth grade consists of three teams (with three teachers per team), and sixth grade consists of two teams (with four to five teachers per team). Six fourth grade students participated in my study. Each student was pulled from the same regular education reading class in one of the fourth grade teams. The students met in my classroom for 20 to 30 minutes a day. In their regular reading classroom this was guided reading time.

The area of the classroom where I met the students had a small classroom library for student choice in reading materials. There was a grouping of desks in front of a large white board where the students sat for strategy lessons and whole-group discussions. Because there were no other teachers or students using the room during this time, the rest of the classroom was open for independent reading and literacy activities.

Participants

The participants in the study were fourth grade intermediate school students from a regular education reading class. The six participants consisted of four females and two males (see Figure 1). They were chosen
based on their beginning-of-the-year reading assessment. All six students’ scores were mid-range in reading comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alison – very happy and bubbly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy – quiet and shy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kayla – very outgoing and expressive**

- *Alan – happy and easy-going*
- *Jennifer – outgoing and inquisitive*

| Jason – quiet and shy |

*Figure 1. Participants and Associated Fonts*

**Procedures**

The purpose of my study was to increase reading comprehension and motivation through the use of authentic literacy. My first step in the research process was to submit my application to Moravian College’s Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB). The HSIRB reviewed my application to ensure that the study was to be conducted in an ethical manner that protected human subjects. The research proposal was accepted before the study began (see Appendix A). The next step was to inform my building principal about my study and gain her written consent (see Appendix B). Finally, parental consent needed to be obtained from all of my participants (see Appendix C).
During the study, the students learned, discussed, and practiced five reading strategies during whole-group activities and independent reading. Those strategies were previewing, predicting, questioning, visualizing, and summarizing. In addition to strategy mini-lessons and activities, the students had the opportunity to sit with me one-on-one to conference about strategy use and comprehension of their independent books. The following is a timeline of how the study was laid out.

**Week 1:**

- Handed out parent consent forms
- Returned parent consent forms
- Completed pre-study survey (see Appendix D)
- Conducted pre-study interviews (see Appendix E) to gain additional information from individual students
- Administered Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4) to get a baseline for reading comprehension (see Appendix F)

**Week 2:**

- Created reading bins with the students. These bins will be used for the students to store their independent reading books, as well as their journals, folders, sticky notes, and pencils.
• Explained daily agenda and how each set of thirty minutes will be laid out each day

• Visited the book room to choose independent books for strategy practice. This was in addition to choosing books from the small classroom library.

• Introduced the previewing strategy during a whole-group lesson

• Independently read to practice using the previewing strategy

• Wrote notes about the previewing strategy in journals during independent reading

**Week 3:**

• Reviewed previewing strategy with the students

• Introduced the predicting strategy during a whole-group lesson

• Conferenced with individual students about the use of previewing and predicting in their independent books

• Independently read to practice using the predicting strategy

• Wrote notes about the predicting strategy in journals during independent reading

**Week 4:**

• Completed individual conferences with the students about the use of the previewing and predicting strategy during independent reading
• Reviewed the predicting strategy with the students
• Introduced the questioning strategy during a whole-group lesson
• Independently read to practice using the questioning strategy
• Wrote notes about the questioning strategy in journals during independent reading

**Week 5:**

• Students completed literacy activities to accompany their independent books (see Appendix G.1-8)
• Independently read to practice using the predicting and questioning strategy
• Wrote notes about the predicting and questioning strategies in journals during independent reading

**Week 6:**

• Reviewed the questioning strategy with the students
• Introduced the visualizing strategy during a whole-group lesson
• Conducted mid-study interviews (see Appendix H) to check in with individual students about their reading progress and strategy use
• Students completed literacy activities to accompany their independent books
• Independently read to practice using the visualizing strategy
Wrote notes about the visualizing strategy in journals during independent reading

**Week 7:**

- Completed mid-study interviews to check in with individual students about their reading progress and strategy use
- Continued the visualizing strategy during whole-group and independent reading
- Students engaged in peer conferences to discuss the visualizing strategy with their classmates
- Students completed literacy activities to accompany their independent books
- Independently read to practice using the visualizing strategy

**Week 8:**

- Practiced using the visualizing strategy during numerous whole-group activities

**Week 9:**

- Reviewed the visualizing strategy with the students
- Conferenced with individual students about the use of visualizing in their independent books
• Students completed literacy activities to accompany their independent books
• Independently read to practice using the visualizing strategy
• Wrote notes about the visualizing strategy in journals during independent reading

**Week 10:**
• Completed individual conferences with students about the use of visualizing in their independent books
• Introduced the summarizing strategy during a whole-group lesson
• Students completed literacy activities to accompany their independent books
• Independently read to practice using the summarizing strategy
• Wrote notes about the summarizing strategy in journals during independent reading

**Week 11:**
• Lead a book pass with the students using six different books to choose a read aloud book
• Reviewed all five strategies during a whole-group lesson
• Previewed the book *Bridge to Terabithia*
• Read aloud *Bridge to Terabithia*
• Conducted whole-group discussions on the book’s content and the use of strategies for comprehension

• Wrote notes in journals about using strategies during the read aloud

**Week 12:**

• Conducted post-study surveys (see Appendix I)

• Conducted post-study interviews (see Appendix J) to gain additional information from individual students about their strategy use and motivation in reading

• Administered the QRI-4 (see Appendix K) to get an outcome for reading comprehension

**Data Sources**

**Student work.** I gathered data for the students from several sources.

**Strategy lesson activities.** During whole-group strategy mini-lessons, students completed activities to practice using the strategy before transferring their learning into their independent books.

**Literacy activities.** During independent reading, students completed literacy activities of their choosing, out of a bank of teacher chosen activities. A number of literacy activities corresponded to the reading strategies, while others were general activities to get a glimpse into the student’s comprehension of his/her independent book.
Journal entries. The students each had journals to use during independent reading. The journals could be used for notes or questions before, during, or after reading. Journals were also used during whole-group strategy mini-lessons for notes or activities.

Surveys. Students completed a reading survey before the study began and at the conclusion of the study. They were asked to share their views and experiences of reading and reading techniques.

Interviews. Students were interviewed before the study began, in the middle of the study, and at the conclusion of the study. Each student was asked the same set of questions at the beginning, another set of questions in the middle, and a different set of questions at the end. Questions ranged from reading interests to strategy use, as well as preferences in choices and literacy activities. I took field notes during each of the interviews. Immediately after the interview concluded, I expanded my notes into full text.

Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4). The students’ comprehension was assessed using the QRI-4 at the beginning of the study and at the end of the study. The QRI-4 is an individually administered, informal reading assessment designed to provide information on identifying reading levels, as well as areas of difficulty in reading comprehension. The
same story and set of questions were used in the beginning of the study for each student. Another story, on the same level, and set of questions was used at the end of the study.

**Observational data.** During the study I kept a double-entry field log where I recorded all of my observations and insights. This log was used to record observations during strategy mini-lessons and while the students were independently reading. I also used the log to record conversations with students during individual conferences about independent books and strategy use. At the end of my time each day with the students I used the field log to record insights and reflections about the students and activities.

**Summary**

The purpose of my study was to increase reading comprehension and motivation through the use of authentic literacy. In achieving the goal of increasing comprehension, strategies were taught to the whole-group, and then the students practiced using the strategies in their independent reading books. Additionally, literacy activities were used as a tool for comprehension. In achieving the goal of increasing motivation, a literature-rich classroom was created where choice was available for students' independent books. We also engaged in whole-group discussions about strategies and books we were reading.
Trustworthiness Statement

There were several steps I took before conducting my research study to ensure trustworthiness. I followed ethical guidelines, as suggested by Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2005). Before my study began, I submitted my research proposal and obtained approval from the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) at Moravian College. Once approved, I needed to meet with my principal and participants to obtain written consent. The participants were selected based on beginning of the year reading benchmark data. In the consent letters, it was made very clear that the anonymity of my study’s participants would be protected by the use of pseudonyms. All collected data was securely stored and locked in my place of residence, and all contents were destroyed at the completion of the study.

Reliability and validity of the research study were heightened based on the types of data, how the data was collected, and how that data was analyzed and triangulated. I used a variety of data sources that included pre- and post surveys for motivation, the Qualitative Reading Inventory as a measurement for reading comprehension, a field log of all data, a double-entry journal to record notes and observations, individual interviews, and a collection of student work. To look for reliability in my study, I examined commonalities and themes that emerged from my data. As stated in
Hendricks (2009), the process of triangulating my data allowed me to examine themes in my surveys, interviews, observations, and results of the QRI-4 assessment to understand particular situations and predict outcomes. It also allowed me to fill in the gaps among each of my data sources. For data sources like my double-entry journal, I used low inference descriptors in the form of codes to record accounts in the classroom with the participants.

The duration of the study was another factor when considering trustworthiness. The study was approximately three months long and allowed me ample time to find commonalities in my data.

Validity is the degree in which the research study is honest and true to its intent, context, and reporting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). According to Hendricks (2009), different types of validity are appropriate for qualitative studies. As outlined by Johnson (1997), three types of validity were used to analyze the data in my study. My double-entry journal was an example of descriptive validity in that I recorded my observations and thoughts of the events going on in my classroom. Surveys and interviews were an example of interpretive validity in that the viewpoints of the participants of my study were understood and analyzed. Finally, my literature review was an example of theoretical validity in that I examined research that aligns with my study for the purposes of making my study credible and defensible.
The validity of my study was also supported by reporting my personal and professional biases that I had about the outcomes of my teacher action research (Hendricks, 2009). I love reading materials that are personally relevant to me. When I am reading, I like to make connections with texts that are interesting to me. When reading materials are relevant, I feel as though I can better understand the text. I believe that when students are reading texts that are of interest to them, an increase in reading comprehension and motivation will occur. I am aware that comprehension and motivation can increase for a number of reasons and that my study may be a coincidental piece of the puzzle. I needed to provide the appropriate data to support my findings as it concerns my study. I also needed to remain open-minded to the fact that I may not get the results that I am hoping for, and I needed to make adjustments, when necessary, based on my observations and reflections that redirected my study.
My Story

All Good Things Come To An End

“I don’t want to go back to reading in our regular classroom,” Jennifer complained. “Yeah,” Kayla exclaimed, “Can we stay here and read for the rest of the school year?” Alan joined in, “It’s much more fun when we read here.” “Why?” I asked. Jennifer answered, “Because we can read what we want, and we don’t have to answer a bunch of questions.”

Those words rang through my head, and I could hear the disappointment in their voices knowing they would not be coming up to my classroom every day at 1:30 to read. I could not believe that this study had come to an end. It felt like just yesterday when I introduced myself to these students and explained the next twelve weeks of their lives.

Now, Let Me Explain

Thoughts in my head were racing as I approached the classroom door. What if they do not want to be pulled from their classroom and read with me everyday? What if they do not like what the study is all about? What if they do not like me? I swallowed hard as I turned the handle and opened the classroom door. All eyes turned to look at the adult entering the room. The teacher gave me a nod, knowing why I was there, and said, “Boys and girls, will the following students please go with Mrs. Butz out into the hallway?” It
was funny because none of the students knew exactly why they were being called out into the hallway, but they each let out a little cheer as they heard their name.

I nervously walked the students up the stairs to my classroom. When we walked in, I had them sit at the grouping of desks closest to the bookshelf near my desk. “Hello everyone, I’m Mrs. Butz, and you are probably wondering why I pulled you all out of class.” “Are we in trouble?” asked Kayla. “No, of course not, no one is in trouble.” I began to explain the study to the students, and I told them that I had chosen them as participants. I explained that for the next twelve weeks I would be pulling them out of class every day to read. “But I am not going to tell you what to read, you are going to choose everything you read,” I said. I went on to tell them that they would be learning strategies to use before and during reading to better understand what they read. I also told them that there would be no comprehension questions to answer. We would engage in group discussions and individual conferences. “You will also be doing literacy activities of your choice. Each of the activities corresponds with the strategies that we will be learning.” “Wait, can we use the books we read here toward our book goal in our regular classroom?” Kayla asked. “Of course,” I said. They all cheered! “Will we have homework or grades?” Jennifer eagerly wanted to know. “No, no
grades and no homework. Everything that you do for this study will be written down in my journal. You will see me writing in my journal every day. What I am doing is taking notes about what we are doing so that I can remember everything at the end of the study.” We talked for a few more minutes, and then I told the students that in order for them to participate in the study I needed their parents’ permission before we could start our reading activities. I gave them each a consent form for their parents to read and sign, and sent them back to class. The very next day I had six signed forms in my hand.

**The Journey Begins**

I had six very excited students sitting in front of me. Their anxious smiles and vibrant chattering told me that they were just as eager as I was to get this study underway. “The first thing we need to do is complete a reading survey. Please read each of the sentences carefully and be completely honest with your answers.” I handed out the surveys and let the students work on them. The first few questions gave me an idea of how the students felt overall about reading (see Figure 2).

The next six questions on the pre-study reading survey dealt with random aspects of reading, talking about books, and choice in reading materials (see Table 1).
Students responded to the following nine statements by marking always, sometimes, or never.

1. Reading a book is something I like to do.
2. Reading a book on a rainy Saturday afternoon is something I like to do.
3. Reading a book during free time at school is something I like to do.
4. Reading for fun at home is something I like to do.
5. Getting a book for a present is something I like.
7. Reading during summer vacation is something I like to do.
8. Reading instead of playing is something I like to do.
9. Going to the bookstore is something I like to do.

*Figure 2. Pre-Study Reading Survey-Questions 1-9*
Table 1

*Pre-Study Reading Survey Questions 10-15*

**Question 10:** *How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?*

- Excited and Confident – 2
- Nervous and Scared – 4
- Wish I Was Absent – 0

**Question 11:** *How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?*

- Excited and Confident – 3
- Nervous and Scared – 2
- Wish I Was Absent – 1

**Question 12:** *When I am reading by myself, I understand:*

- Almost Everything – 6
- Some Things – 0
- None of What I Read – 0

**Question 13:** *When I am in a group talking about stories, I:*

- Almost Never Talk – 0
- Sometimes Talk – 4
- Always Talk – 2

**Question 14:** *I like when my teacher reads books out loud to the class.*

- Everyday – 4
- Almost Everyday – 2
- Never – 0

**Question 15:** *I would read more if I had better choices of materials in the classroom.*

- Definitely – 2
- Maybe – 4
- Probably Not – 0
The next step in getting the study started was conducting individual interviews. I told the students that their interviews would give me a more individualized picture of each of them as readers (see Figure 3a-c). I was definitely able to gain some valuable information from the interviews. It was interesting how different the students were with their reading turn-offs and the types of things they liked to read. One thing that really struck me was when they do not understand something they are reading they reread or ask someone. Not one of the students mentioned using strategies. I am already hoping that those answers change by the end of the study, especially since I will be teaching them five strategies to use before and during reading.
What turns you off to reading?

⇒ I’d rather read to people than to myself. Sometimes when I read to myself I don’t get all of the information.
⇒ I don’t like reading out loud a lot.
⇒ Sometimes I don’t like reading when the books are way too long. I don’t like long books like Harry Potter.
⇒ A bunch of facts and not much excitement.
⇒ Doing the comprehension part and writing out all the details.
⇒ I don’t like books that aren’t my type. I like to read what I want to.

If you had a choice to read anything, what types of things would you like to read?

⇒ I sort of like American Doll books or Clementine books. I like books about girls that do good deeds or historical books. If I would read non-fiction it would be a book about history.
⇒ I like reading funny books.
⇒ I would pick easy chapter books – like 20 pages to a chapter. I like fiction and non-fiction and sometimes poetry. I like a chapter book with a superhero or a mystery or something spooky.
⇒ Something fiction with adventure.
⇒ A lot of fiction. Probably about dogs and pet books.
⇒ I like to read about sports, mainly football, and comedy books.

Figure 3a. Pre-Study Interview Questions and Responses
What do you do when you do not understand something you are reading?

⇒ I usually look back to see what was happening. Then I would ask someone to help me figure out what was going on.
⇒ I read it over again.
⇒ I **usually just read it over again and maybe ask my neighbor and then my teacher.**
⇒ I usually read the sentence a couple more times then I ask someone near me.
⇒ Normally I reread it in my head and if I can't figure it out I whisper it to myself and I can figure it out.
⇒ I **usually just read it and think about what the author is talking about and then ask someone about it.**

Would you rather answer comprehension questions on worksheets or have group discussions about what you are reading?

⇒ **Probably talk about it.**
⇒ On a worksheet.
⇒ **I kind of like sitting with my friends and talking with them about the book.**
⇒ **Group discussion**
⇒ Either/or - if we had to do it in a group I wouldn’t care, but if we had to do it on our own it would be more challenging.
⇒ I **would rather have a discussion. Sometimes it’s hard to write everything down.**

*Figure 3b. Pre-Study Interview Questions and Responses*
Do you like to do activities that follow up on things that you are reading about?

⇒ Yeah, probably
⇒ Yeah
⇒ Yeah
⇒ Yeah
⇒ Yeah
⇒ I do like those because I like to try things when I read at home - like a book review.
⇒ Sometimes, yeah

Figure 3c. Pre-Study Interview Question and Responses

The final step was to administer the Qualitative Reading Inventory. The QRI allowed me to gauge how well the students comprehended what they read, as well as gave me a baseline of data for individual reading comprehension (see Table 2).

Table 2

Pre-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Concept Questions</th>
<th>Retell</th>
<th>Questions Without Look-Backs*</th>
<th>Questions With Look-Backs*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td>27 ideas/47</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>6/12</td>
<td>20 ideas/47</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td>24 ideas/47</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>7/12</td>
<td>16 ideas/47</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>23 ideas/47</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>8/12</td>
<td>23 ideas/47</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Out of 8 questions – Independent (8 correct), Instructional (6-7 correct), Frustration (0-5 correct)
Choose Me, Choose Me

The book room: a mecah of novels, biographies, non-fiction texts, and resources. Since the students needed to create individual book bins for independent reading materials, I decided to take the students to the book room to choose books that interested them. The looks on their faces were priceless as we walked into the room with shelves from floor to ceiling containing class sets of books for fourth through sixth grade reading. I could almost hear the books shouting, “Choose me, choose me,” when the kids walked past! But before the students dove into the shelves, I wanted to point out the fourth and fifth grade shelves and talk with them about how to choose books. “There are a few things you want to look at when deciding on a book. Look at the title. Does it hook you? Read the blurb on the back of the book. This will give you an idea about what the story will be about. Flip through the pages. Are there too many words on the pages or not enough words? And think about the five-finger rule. Does anyone know what that is?” Alan raised his hand, “When you look at the first page and see if there are five words you don’t know.” It was encouraging to know that the students knew this rule for choosing a book.

After our brief conversation about choosing books, the students were off. Since I knew their reading interests from their interviews, I was able to
go through the shelves and offer suggestions. Jennifer asked if she had to choose a book that she was interested in from her interview. I told her she could choose any book she wanted, and she was very happy about that. After a few minutes their piles of books were getting bigger and bigger. We finally finished up and carried the stacks of books back to the classroom. The students put their books in their reading bins, and then I gave them an opportunity to go through my classroom library to choose additional books. With a huge smile, Kayla spotted the Roald Dahl Treasury. She was so excited that she grabbed the book and hugged it. All of the students were happy. I was so pleased to witness their excitement as they filled their bins full of their choices in books.

Next stop, the library. I walked the students down to the library to look at magazines. They seemed surprised. “You can read a magazine during independent reading and still use strategies for comprehension,” I explained. They each began to pull magazines off the shelves and chose the one they were most interested in reading. Their book bins were ready to go, mission accomplished!

**Wait! You Are Not Telling Us What To Do?**

When we returned from the library we began talking about the literacy activities that the students would complete when independently
reading. I told the students that the literacy activities would replace packets of comprehension questions. Jennifer asked, “So, you tell us which activity to do?” “No,” I said, “You can do whatever you want. One of the purposes of this study is for you to have choices.” From their looks and happy noises, the students seemed pleased with this answer. Then Jennifer, with disappointment in her voice, said, “But, then we have to go back to regular reading class.” I knew from that comment that I was ready to get this study underway, and the students were ready for some reading freedom.

**Previewing a Great Book**

Independent reading materials were chosen, book bins were full, and literacy activities were copied and ready to go, so it was now time to introduce the first reading strategy, previewing. I had chosen a book from the book room called, *The Story of Walt Disney, Maker of Magical Worlds*, by Bernice Sheldon. I used this book to model the previewing strategy. “Yesterday, in the book room, you all used the previewing strategy when choosing books for your book bin,” I began to explain. “Well, I used the previewing strategy to choose this book,” and I held up the Disney book. I began to do a think-aloud to talk about how I previewed and chose the book. “First, I noticed the title. Now, I am a huge fan of Walt Disney World, and so I thought it would be interesting to learn more about the man who created it
all. Then I flipped through the pages. I also peeked at the chapter titles and found many of them interesting. So I knew this would be a good choice for me.” We had a few minutes left, so I decided to begin reading aloud the first few pages of the book. The students were very interested in hearing about Walt Disney. Amy asked, “When will we start reading?” I said, “Tomorrow.” They all cheered. Jason asked if they could take their books home with them to read. I said, “Yes, as long as you remember to bring the books back.” Jennifer wanted to know if the books could count toward their Accelerated Reader (AR) points in their regular classroom, and I told them to check with their teacher. Our time for the day was up, and, from the looks on their faces and their body language, I could tell that the students were not ready to leave.

The next afternoon, six very happy students flew into my classroom. We began with a quick review of the previewing strategy. “What is previewing?” Amy answered, “It helps you pick a book, and sometimes it makes a connection.” “Great,” I said, “Today you are going to have the opportunity to use the previewing strategy. I want you to go through your book bins and choose the book that you want to begin independently reading.” I told the students that they would begin independent reading, but
they needed to come back, as a group, for the last few minutes to discuss how they used the previewing strategy to choose their book.

Kayla grabbed her journal and began writing about previewing. Everyone else dove into their books to read. After a few minutes, Amy and Jennifer also began writing in their journals. Alison approached me, “Can I write things on my sticky notes? This part in my book is really funny and I want to write it down.” I said, “You can use your sticky notes to write anything you wish.”

When our time for the day was coming to an end, I rounded up the students for a quick group discussion about the previewing strategy. “Let’s talk about how we used the previewing strategy today” (see Figure 4).

I was so happy to hear the students’ responses about how they used the previewing strategy. It was such a proud moment for me to watch my study develop right before my eyes. The students were so excited to be reading and talking about books of their choosing. And they had so many wonderful ways to add to the conversation about the previewing strategy. I really felt like they took what they learned from the mini-lesson to preview their independent books. I had good feelings about working with this group of students.
I picked this book because the cover looked funny. I also read the first few pages and they seemed funny, especially that the letters of the words were all mixed up. I also love poetry. I don’t like reading the same book all the time and this was one that I have never read.

I like Henry and Ribsy books. The picture on the front of the book was funny, and there are some pictures in the book. I like when there are pictures in a book. I also like it because it isn’t too long.

**I really like Roald Dahl, and some of the stories in this book I have never read.**

I've already read the entire series and I am rereading this book because I liked it so much.

The reason I picked this book is because I have read other books by Judy Blume, and I liked them. I also read the back of the book and it seemed funny and interesting.

*I read other books by the same author and they were funny. I wanted to continue the series.*

*Figure 4. Student Responses to Previewing Their Independent Books*

**I Predict Good Things**

“What do you know about predictions?” I asked. All of the students’ hands went up. *This is great, they came with background knowledge about the strategy.* Some of their responses were, “a guess,” and “it can’t be silly.” I explained that a prediction should be accurate and not something completely off topic. I continued this explanation using the Walt Disney book: “I wouldn’t look at the pictures and the title and predict that the story will be
about turtles in the ocean. I look at the title, the pictures, and the back of the book, and then I read the first few pages.” Then I began reading the first chapter of the book. The chapter was called, “Hog Rider.” I asked the students to make predictions based on the title of the chapter. Some of the students agreed that Walt Disney was going to ride a pig because a hog is a pig. Others agreed that Walt Disney wanted to hog things all to himself and not share. I added, “When you make predictions you should write them down so you can check them as you read.” I began reading and got to a point in the story where Walt was living on a farm and was in charge of tending to the pigs. “Sometimes we have to adjust our predictions as we read based on new information that pops up. Do any of you want to change your prediction?” Jennifer and Alison, who originally thought that Walt was not going to share, decided to change their predictions. At this point, I wrapped up the mini-lesson so the students could have a few minutes to read their independent books. “As you read, you should be making predictions about your story.”

The next day was a reading day. The students had the entire 30 minutes to read their independent books. I decided to walk around and conference with a few of the students about the predictions they were making about their books (see Figure 5).
“I made my prediction based on the title of the poem, and I used the picture clues.”

“I made a prediction about what the book was going to be about using the picture on the cover and reading the first few pages.”

“I made my predictions based on the title. I also tried looking at the pictures.”

“I made predictions about the book based on the title and what I already knew about Harry Houdini.”

*Figure 5. Student Predictions During Individual Conferences*

Before the students wrapped up their independent reading, I reminded them that predictions are never final. “Sometimes we are very accurate with our predictions, but sometimes we are off on how we predict. So as you read you should be adjusting what you think is happening based on new information in the story.”

**A Stinky Prediction**

We did a group activity using the predicting strategy. I read the students a story called, *Dog Breath* by Dav Pilkey.
MRS BUTZ: Before we begin reading, I would like you to look at the cover of the book and make a prediction.

JENNIFER: It’s about a dog with bad breath and they keep trying to make it better.

MRS. BUTZ: Ok, good.

ALAN: The dog has really bad breath and when he yawns he stinks up the house.

MRS. BUTZ: Oh, that sounds yucky!

AMY: No one wants to play with him because of his bad breath.

MRS. BUTZ: Poor dog, I guess I wouldn’t want to play with him either.

ALISON: It’s a dog with really bad breath.

JASON: Well he has really bad breath and no one wants him.

MRS. BUTZ: Kayla, do you have a prediction?

KAYLA: The dog has very bad breath and the owners don’t know what to do.

MRS. BUTZ: Great predictions based on the cover of the book.

I wrote all of the predictions on the whiteboard. I told the students that as I begin reading the story, they could raise their hands and change their predictions. Jason changed his prediction after only two pages. He said that everyone would avoid the dog because of his breath. The students
thought this book was so silly, and they had fun looking at the illustrations and adjusting their predictions. They did a wonderful job using picture clues to make predictions, and the book’s illustrations gave a lot of clues about the outcome of the story. We all had a wonderful time with this book, and we discussed how fun it is to make and adjust our predictions as we read.

We had so much fun reading this story that we ran out of time for independent reading. Jennifer was bummed, “Man, I really wanted to read more of my Harry Houdini book.” I told her I was sorry and that tomorrow she would have the chance to read for the entire time.

**A Prediction Day**

Today was a day that the students could read their independent books the entire time. While they were reading, they were using the predicting strategy. I advised them to use their journals and sticky notes to record predictions. During this time, I conferenced with a few students individually about their predictions (see Figure 6).
“To predict what the first chapter was about I used the blurb on the back of the book, plus the picture on the front of the book, and the chapter title.”

“So far my predictions are accurate. I keep adding more information to my prediction based on what I am reading.”

“I used what I read in prior books. I also used the picture on the cover and the title of the chapters.”

“I used the artwork on the inside cover of the book and the prior books in the series to make predictions.”

Figure 6. Additional Student Predictions During Individual Conferences

Ask Questions, Ask Lots of Questions

I began the group today by reviewing the previewing and predicting strategies. The students were able to give me a lot of information about the two strategies. At this point, I thought it was time to add another piece to the reading strategies puzzle, questioning. “You probably already use the questioning strategy when you read, but we are going to expand on that.” I posted three questions on the board, and the students brainstormed ideas under each (see Figure 7).
**What do we know about asking questions?**
- We ask, why?
- We wonder about stuff
- We can question before, during, and at the end
- Our questions can be based on previewing

**How does asking questions help the reader?**
- To find out something new
- To understand something better
- To solve a problem
- When we wonder about something
- To clarify a word or response (teacher prompted)

**How do readers figure out the answers to their questions?**
- You should keep on reading
- Previewing the book
- Making connections
- Pictures (teacher prompted)
- Using your background knowledge (teacher prompted)

*Figure 7. Brainstorming the Questioning Strategy*
“Boys and girls, I am so proud of you for sharing so many wonderful ideas about questioning.” I showed them the “hand” poster (see Appendix L) I made with the main idea questions posted on it. I told them that they could start with the Who? What? When? Where? and Why? questions until they were more comfortable formulating their own questions. I pulled out the Walt Disney book and did a think aloud to read the remainder of chapter one. I asked questions as I read and modeled ways to find the answers to my questions.

**Question What You Are Reading**

Today was a reading day for the students. They were to be asking questions as they read and using the main idea questions if they got stuck. “Listen to your inner voice as you read. Don’t ask a question for no reason just to have something written down to show me. Really listen to how your inner voice is questioning as you read your story.” While the students were reading independently I conferenced with them individually. I wanted to check in with the students to talk about their independent books and check their comprehension (see Table 3).

**Predicting and Questioning a Cat**

I wanted to do a whole-group activity using the predicting and questioning strategies together. It was important that the students knew
Table 3

*Individual Conferences For Comprehension*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comprehension Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>She was able to tell me what was going on in her story by using details as she read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>He was somewhat able to recall general details about the story as he read, but he could not give many specifics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>She had just begun reading her book so I did not do a comprehension check. She did ask me to clarify two words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>She had great understanding of her story and was able to tell me every detail as she read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>She was able to tell me general details about the story. She could not get too specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>He could generally recall what the story was about, but he lacked in providing specific details.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

how to use the strategies together when reading, because when we read for pleasure, we use the strategies simultaneously and not in isolation.

I pulled out a book called, *Naming the Cat* by Lawrence Pringle. This was a book that I used from the Soar to Success reading program. Two of the strategies used in the Soar to Success program are predicting and questioning, so I knew that this book would be appropriate to practice those strategies with the students. We listed predictions before and during reading. We also asked questions as we read (see Figure 8).
The students were very excited to read this book. They love doing whole-group activities with books. They made excellent predictions as we read together. I, unfortunately, ended up prompting a lot of the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREDICTIONS</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They get a cat and have to name it.</td>
<td>What are they going to name the cat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cat will do something and name itself.</td>
<td>What is a saucer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They name the cat Lucky.</td>
<td>I wonder if any of the names listed will be the name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does agile mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wonder if the cat gets hurt?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8. Naming the Cat Predictions and Questions*

We discussed again about using our inner voice when forming questions. “What questions naturally come to mind as you are reading a story?”

To conclude the lesson, I asked the students to remind me of why we ask questions when we read. They said:

- To clarify
- To wonder
- Why?
- Where?

Alan asked, “Where did the author come up with his ideas for the book?”

While I tried to answer Alan’s question, I also praised him for asking a great
question, and I told the students that his question was an example of the things we ask ourselves when reading.

**Do Not Forget To Do Your Activities**

At this point in the study, I took notice that the students were very much into their independent books, but they were not completing literacy activities. “Today we are going to go through the literacy activities,” and I went through each activity and the appropriate strategy that each activity focuses on. “Remember, the literacy activities take the place of answering comprehension questions about the book. These activities, along with our one-on-one conferences, will give me an idea as to how well you are comprehending and using strategies as you read.”

After going through each of the activities, the students had the rest of the time for independent reading. They each grabbed a literacy activity to complete (see Figure 9a-c) and got busy with their independent books. Jason did not grab a literacy activity and decided to just read.

**Happy Halloween To Me**

I did not see the students today because they had Halloween parties. I decided to go to their party to say hello and Happy Halloween. The kids were very happy to see me. Jennifer yelled out, “Mrs. Butz, are we learning a new strategy on Monday?” with a huge smile on her face. “Why yes we are!” I
**BOOK NEWS**

**First Daughter Going to School**

Liberty Porter is going to school.

Liberty is in fourth grade. Liberty is going to a school really close by. I wonder how it is going to go. We will update you tomorrow morning with what she did during her school hours and if she liked her school.

---

**Follow the Clues**

Can you predict what will happen next? Write the clues on the footsteps. Then write your prediction on the door.

Clue 1: Henry said he wants to go to a friend's house on the way there. I think Henry will do something bad like ruin the neighbor's yard.

Clue 2: Roberts house is in the same neighborhood. Maybe he does something on the rice yard.

Clue 3: Henry is leaving their house now!

**Figure 9a. Literacy Activities**
BOOK NEWS

Book Title: Frankie Pickle and the Closet of Doom

Author: Eric Wight

Frankie Pickle's Breathtakingly Most Outrageous

Yesterday evening, the most famous kid with the most outragously imagination, fought the Closet of Doom!

Lee monster bugs, other bugs, and other bugs.

The smell of Frank's socks filled the closet about 6:50 PM. He almost died out there. What will this kid do next?

Until next time, in the Book News.

Letter to the Author

Book Title: Henry and Ribsy

Dear Beverly Cleary,

How do you come up with such funny writing pieces? Did you have experiences like that when you were little? Did you live on a street called Klickitat Street? I love all of your books.

From,
Figure 9c. Literacy Activities
yelled back. I was so happy and overjoyed that even during their fun time and classroom party they were thinking about the study and excited about new strategies.

**Can You See It?**

Today, during a whole-group activity, I added another piece to the strategy puzzle: visualizing. “What do you know about visualizing as you read?” The students came up with the following list:

- Making pictures
- Thinking about reading
- Imagine the picture
- Movie in your head
- Brain T.V.

Then I showed the students a poster I found on visualizing (see Appendix M). I proceeded to tell them that when we visualize we have our own interpretations, because we all visualize differently. There is no right or wrong way to visualize.

I asked the students to share a time when they read a book and then saw the movie about the book. Jennifer blurted out *Marley and Me*, and Kayla added *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. “Did the movie in your head match the actual movie you saw?” They both agreed that some things were definitely not as
they pictured them. I reiterated that we all visualize differently and see different pictures in our head. To prove this point, we moved into a group activity.

**Do You See the Wool Pooh?**

I showed the students one of my favorite books, *The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis. I gave the students a brief summary of the book and a short back-story to set up the section of the chapter I was going to read aloud to them. I handed out blank paper and asked the students to close their eyes and listen as I read.

*That’s when he came swimming real slow out of the deep, and even though my head was underneath the dark water I could see him coming right at me. He didn’t look like he was related to Winnie-the-Pooh at all, he was big and gray with hard square-looking fingers. Where he should have had a face there was nothing but dark gray. Where he should have had eyes there was nothing but a darker colder-looking color. He grabbed my leg and started pulling me down.*

*I kicked and scratched at him but he was just too strong, it seemed like he didn’t even feel my punches! My head felt like it was going to explode; I didn’t think I could hold my breath for another second. I was feeling real, real scared and dizzy from holding my breath this long. Then suddenly I could see that there was someone else in the water and the Wool Pooh was pulling me right toward them.*

When I finished reading, I had them draw what they saw in their heads as I read the section of the chapter. They began their drawings and were very
eager to sketch their visualizations. We looked at all of the sketches together so the students could see how each of them visualized the Wool Pooh (see Figure 10a-b).

Figure 10a. Visualizing the Wool Pooh
Figure 10b. Visualizing the Wool Pooh
It was interesting. Even though the students all heard the same part of the story, and heard the same characteristics of the Wool Pooh, they each had their own picture in their mind of this creature. Yes, all of their sketches together had a common element, but each contained a different twist on the Wool Pooh.

**Do You Sense Something?**

Before the students sat to read independently, we had a quick group discussion to review previous strategies. “Remember, good readers make predictions as they read, and good readers ask themselves questions as they read. Listen to your inner voice. Good readers also visualize when they read. There should be a movie playing in your head. How are you picturing the characters? Does one of the characters remind you of someone you know? Sometimes when we read, a character reminds us of someone, so we constantly see that person in our head as we read.” Alan chimed in, “Sometimes I picture myself.” “Great Alan!” I said. “Also, what does the setting look like to you. Does it remind you of your school, your town, or your house? When I read *The Watson’s Go To Birmingham-1963*, I kept picturing Birmingham as a small country town, but when I researched the town I saw it was a pretty big city. I was surprised because it was not what I pictured.” Alison asked, “Did you like picturing the small town or the city
better?” “It’s funny,” I said, “because even though I know it’s a big city, whenever I read the book, I continue to picture a small rural town. It’s like my brain reverts to its original thinking of what I thought the town looked like.” I went on to talk about the five senses. “What are your senses telling you as you read? What do you feel, see, hear, smell, and taste? Kayla is reading *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. She may hear the sounds of the chocolate river. She probably smells and tastes the candy as Roald Dahl describes it. So think about your senses as you read.”

**We Are Halfway There**

Time flew by, and it was hard to believe that we were at the middle of the study already. That being said, it was time to conduct the mid-study interviews (see Figure 11a-c). By conducting these interviews, it gave me the pleasure to see that giving the students choice in reading materials really made the act of reading authentic to each of them. It was also incredibly encouraging to hear them speak so positively about learning and practicing the reading strategies. Because the motivation piece was definitely present with these students based on observing them and talking with them, I hoped that the remainder of the study would lead to even more positive experiences with the strategies and a growth in comprehension,
How do you feel about having a lot of choices in reading materials?

⇒ I like that you can pick materials instead of someone saying, “You have to do this.”
⇒ I like it better because I understand my reading better because of the books I’ve chosen.
⇒ I think it’s really fun and not like guided reading groups. You get to read what you want and you’re not forced to do something you don’t want to do.
⇒ It’s good. I like having a better variety of books I can read.
⇒ I like it a lot. You don’t have just one book. If we all had the same book it might be frustrating because some people read slow. I like the choice because you can read at your own pace.
⇒ I like it a lot better than having to read something I don’t like at all.

Do you like learning new strategies to help with reading?

⇒ Yes, because it helps me with other things at home, and I’m using strategies when I’m reading other books.
⇒ Yeah, because I can understand better.
⇒ Yeah, because it helps me understand the stories that I read better.
⇒ Yep, you learn new things when you are reading and it makes the book seem better.
⇒ Yes, because it helps me a lot more.
⇒ Yeah, sometimes they help me to understand what I’m reading.

Figure 11a. Mid-Study Reading Interview Responses
What strategies are you using more now than you did before?

⇒ Questioning – I didn’t use that much before. It doesn’t change my understanding, but I like to question the author about things that are happening.
⇒ Questioning
⇒ Questioning, because there are a lot of characters and I wonder how the author came up with those characters.
⇒ Questioning because I understand the story more.
⇒ All of them
⇒ Questioning, it helps me understand more.

Do you feel more comfortable reading now?

⇒ I am reading a new book that I can’t put down and I use the strategies in that book. I use visualizing A LOT.
⇒ Yeah
⇒ Yes, because the strategies are really useful and help you more to understand.
⇒ Yes
⇒ Yes, because the strategies help me understand more.
⇒ Yea

Figure 11b. Mid-Study Reading Interview Responses
What things do you like here in this study that you do not do in your regular reading classroom?

⇒ I like that after we learn strategies we talk about them rather than take tests. I think talking helps. I also like the reading activities.
⇒ I like it better because we aren’t just filling out worksheets.
⇒ **I like that we get to choose our books and sit around the room and switch books whenever we want to.**
⇒ We get to read different books that we choose and we have options for the worksheets we do.
⇒ We get to do sheets and read books that we choose, not what the teacher chooses or for AR tests.
⇒ **I like how we get to choose our books and learn new strategies instead of doing comprehension questions.**

*Figure 11c. Mid-Study Reading Interview Responses*

**Conferencing With Peers is Harder Than I Thought**

So far during the study, the students were working very well together. I was pleased to see them getting along and working collaboratively during whole-group activities. Because of this, I was curious to observe how they would work cooperatively with the visualizing strategy. I decided to introduce a sub-question into my study: What are the observed and reported experiences when students engage in peer conferences to discuss the visualizing strategy in their independent books?
I thought that visualizing would be a great strategy to use as a discussion point among the students. The idea was to pair them up and have them conference about how they were visualizing in their independent books.

Before peer conferences happened, I needed to give the students my expectations. I provided examples of questions that they could be asking their partner about visualizing:

- What do you see in your head?
- What does the character look like? Does the character remind you of someone?
- What does the setting look like to you?
- Are there any other objects or situations that you can see in your head as you read?

On the day of peer conferencing, Jennifer was absent, so my idea of partnering the students needed to be adjusted. Naturally, the two boys, Jason and Alan, decided to work together, and the three remaining girls, Kayla, Alison, and Amy, worked together. I gave them each paper to take notes about how the members of their group were using the visualizing strategy in their independent book. So with a pretty good foundation of the visualizing strategy, examples of questions to ask during the peer conference, and
materials to record responses, what could go wrong? I stood back and observed the groups (see Figure 12).

The boys are having a hard time questioning each other. They are very silly. I told them to relax and act as if they are having an informal conversation about their books. John begins to write what Alex is telling him.

The girls switched papers with each other. Brianne is describing her visualizations and Claire is drawing pictures. Claudia is asking questions.

The boys are very quiet. There is not much of a conversation going on. John is drawing what the horse’s head looks like. Alex is describing how the character in the story makes him feel. John is writing this down. Alex sees himself as the football player in his story.

Now the girls are working on Claudia and Claire’s pictures. They are getting silly as they are drawing on each other’s papers.

They boys seem to be staring out the window a lot. They do not seem to know what to do. John looks like he is drawing something on Alex’s sheet, but there is no conversation going on.

Now the girls are all drawing on Claudia’s sheet.

*Figure 12. Peer Conference Observations*

When I said, “Start finishing up,” Claire said, ”What? That time went fast.” I was happy that they were so involved with their peers that the time flew, but I was frustrated that the peer conferences were not as productive as I had hoped.
A Frustrated Reflection

So today I am frustrated. The students have been doing such a great job with each other, and I really thought adding peer conferencing to the mix would work well. I think I was wrong. I guess it was my fault because I assumed they would know what to do during this time since they had seen me conference so many times. I wanted them to have a conversation with their peers about their books and how they use the visualizing strategy when they are reading. Maybe it was a mistake having the boys work together because they were very silly at first, and it took them a while to get started. The girls seemed to jump right into the task, but when I observed them closer I realized that they were also being silly with the pictures they were drawing. As I went back and forth between the two groups I was feeling frustrated that the conferences were not going as I planned. It was more silliness than anything. Do they not know how to conference with one another, or do they really not understand visualizing? Do I need to re-teach the visualizing strategy? Do I need to model a peer conference? I am also afraid to do this again tomorrow because I fear more silliness. I think tomorrow I will teach another lesson on visualizing.

Rewind, Do Over

I decided to devote more time to visualizing. I think I was depending on the students to visualize too much at one time. I needed to back up and reteach the strategy. We needed to start small and work our way up to visualize larger chunks of information.

I had the students close their eyes and listen to a short reading by Gary Paulsen called, “Tuning” from The Winter Room (see Appendix N). This short reading talked about books not having smells and books not having sound. It went on to say that books need us to bring them to life. I really
wanted the students to understand how using our senses and making movies in our heads through visualizing brings books to life.

**Activity one.** I decided to do a whole-group activity using Sensory Impressions – Form 1 (see Appendix O). For this activity, I gave the students one word and had them describe what it looks like, sounds like, smells like, tastes like, and feels like. The first word I chose was, Thanksgiving. I modeled all the different senses that came to mind when I visualized Thanksgiving. Then I had the students independently do the same thing using a different word, Christmas. “When you think of Christmas, what do you picture, what does it look like, do you hear anything, what do you smell, do you taste any of the yummy cookies, how does the holiday make you feel?” The students did a wonderful job engaging their five senses when thinking about Christmas.

**Activity two.** For the next whole-group activity I used the same form from the last activity. I created stations around the classroom with index cards that contained the following:

- A baseball game
- A carnival or fair
- The cafeteria
- An amusement park
- Autumn or fall
- A picnic or pool party
Using a timer, the students had one minute at each station to look at the phrase on the index card and write down what they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. After one minute the students rotated until they were at every station.

As soon as I started the timer, the students were writing. Their senses were immediately ignited, and they had so much to write about. I was so happy to see this, especially with how they struggled during peer conferences. I asked, “Was it easy to just instantly think about, and visualize the phrase on the index card?” “YES,” they all blurted out. So my idea of starting small and working my way to larger chunks of information was starting off well.

**Activity three.** I was excited to do another visualizing activity with the students. I gave them *Sensory Impressions – Form 2* (see Appendix P). For this activity I read the poem, *Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out*, by Shel Silverstein. I reminded the students to listen to the poem and think about what they see, smell, hear, feel, and taste.

From the looks on their faces, I could tell the students were enjoying the poem and really getting into it. As soon as I read further into the very descriptive poem, the students began writing quickly on their handout. When I finished the poem, I saw that each student had all five senses
described (see Figure 13a-b). “Doesn’t the smell of the garbage just hit you right in the face?” I asked. The kids all made “yuck” noises. Alison said, “I love visualizing.” I was so happy to hear that.

*Figure 13a.*
Poem Visualizations Using the Five Senses
Figure 13b. Poem Visualizations Using the Five Senses
**Activity four.** I praised the students for the wonderful job they were doing with the visualizing strategy. "Today, we will use our senses to visualize in a picture book," I explained. I decided to use the same handout from the last activity.

I read *Splat the Cat* by Rob Scotton. This was a very silly book, and the students really enjoyed it. Once again they immediately started writing as soon as I began reading the story. I was so curious about their ideas and what they were visualizing (see Figure 14), but I wanted to keep reading straight through to the end of the book.

**Activity five.** We continued working on activating our senses when visualizing. We started with a word, then a phrase, then a poem, then a picture book, and now a novel. For this activity, the students did not have a pre-made graphic organizer, just a plain piece of paper for visualizing notes. I used the chapter, “Nazi Parachutes Attack America and Get Shot Down Over the Flint River by Captain Byron Watson and his Flamethrower of Death” from *The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963*. The students were amused by the name of the chapter. Before I began reading, I gave the students a brief back-story about the characters and plot in the book. When I started reading, some of the students began writing immediately, and others listened to the story for awhile. In addition to writing, I noticed as I was reading,
Figure 14. Picture Book Visualizations
that some of them were drawing pictures. Their little “oooos” and “ahhhs” along with their facial expressions told me that they were really enjoying the story. When I finished reading the chapter, they were all busy writing and drawing pictures. “Are you feeling more comfortable with the visualizing strategy?” They all shook their heads, yes.

**Now, Can You Picture It On Your Own?**

Now that we completed numerous activities on the visualizing strategy, the students had no problem using the strategy with their independent books. I explained, “While you are independently reading, you should be writing in your journals. What is going on in your head as you read? What are your senses telling you? What connections are you making from the book to something familiar to you?” Alison asked, “Can we list the senses and fill them in as we read?” “Of course,” I exclaimed, “You can re-create the graphic organizers, free write, or use sticky notes.”

When reading time began, Alison had the five senses listed and was writing in her journal. Amy was writing and also listing the five senses. Kayla was writing in paragraph form, and Jason was drawing a picture in his journal. Alan was just reading, no writing yet. I think all of the activities we did really helped because the students were working hard and mostly using everything we did in our whole-group activities. “Can I describe a lot about
one thing and then a bunch of other things?” Alison asked. “Yes, you can describe a lot about one thing. Whatever comes to your mind.” Kayla added, “Are we allowed to draw sketches and stuff?” “Absolutely!” I said.

After the students had the opportunity to read on their own for a while, I wanted to sit individually with them to conference about how they are using the visualizing strategy during independent reading, as well as to conduct a comprehension check (see Table 4).

All I Need Is the Gist

The strategy puzzle needed its final piece, summarizing. “Students tend to think that summarizing is so easy, but it is actually one of the harder strategies,” I began. I wanted to find out what the students already knew about summarizing (see Figure 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main problem and solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There’s no detail, just the main idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basically retelling the story in your own words.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Just list the main events and no details</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who, what, when, where, and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>TELLING THE MAIN THING AND NOT ALL THE TINY DETAILS.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 15. Previous Knowledge of the Summarizing Strategy*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Visualization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>She was able to tell me about the chapter and gave me specific details.</td>
<td>“I see the family sitting at the dinner table with the garbage smell. I can hear the flies buzzing and smell the bad garbage.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>She was able to recall all the details about the story.</td>
<td>“I was thinking of a giant room with pots and pans, and there was gooey stuff everywhere.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>He was very general in providing details about the story.</td>
<td>“I’m thinking about the fair and picturing being outside with all the games.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>She was able to tell me all about the book and gave me great details.</td>
<td>“It’s hard to visualize because the book gives so many pictures, but I can relate it all to the movie.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>She was great at understanding the story and was able to recall many details.</td>
<td>“I’m using my senses to visualize. I imagine the looks on the character’s faces and how they look dancing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>He was able to tell me all about the story using details.</td>
<td>“I see a bunch of mysterious things that couldn’t happen, and I also picture a giant person with red eyes.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Good,” I said, “We’ve activated previous knowledge and it seems like you know how to define summarizing, but now I need to know how the strategy is used when reading.”

First, we looked at Kayla’s response, and I reminded the students that summarizing is not retelling. “A retell has all the details in your own words, but a summary is just the ‘gist’.” Jennifer interrupted, “Mrs. Butz, what does ‘gist’ mean?” “Oh,” I answered, “It means the idea or main point.” They laughed and thought I made the word up, but they liked it. I went on to tell the students that they should be able to summarize in two or three sentences. To model, I pulled out *The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963* and gave a one-sentence summary of the entire book. “This book is about a wild and crazy family who travels from Michigan to Alabama in 1963 only to realize the struggles and devastation that African Americans faced during that time.” They were impressed that one sentence could sum up the entire book.

I gave the students a story called “Ice Cream Sodas” (see Appendix Q) from the Read Naturally reading intervention program. I chose a story from this program because it uses summarizing and because the stories are short. “I want you to read this story and give me a one-sentence summary. Don’t give me too many details, I only need the ‘gist’.” The students read the story
and quickly began writing. When they were finished, everyone shared their summary with the group (see Figure 16).

There was a guy that made soda pops. He ran out of an ingredient and used ice cream to make the soda pop and got a new drink called ice cream sodas.

A man sold drinks that used cream and he ran out of it. So he used ice cream to replace the cream and people loved the idea and called it the ice cream soda.

A man sold sodas but ran out of cream. So he got ice cream instead, and invented ice cream sodas.

When Robert M. Green ran out of sweet cream he sold the soda with ice cream and he made $600.

A man used to make soda pops but ran out of cream so he used ice cream. He put in the ice cream so he made the ice cream soda.

A man made sodas with sweet cream and he ran out of sweet cream. He had to use ice cream instead and he invented ice cream soda.

**Figure 16.** Ice Cream Soda Summaries
Summarizing a Tugboat

“Before we begin another whole-group activity, remind me what summarizing means.” Alison blurted out, “Using your own words,” and Alan added, “Listing the main events with no detail.”

I read the story, *Scuffy the Tugboat* by Gertrude Crampton. When I finished, I said, “Imagine you have to tell a classmate, who has never read this story before, about this book. Without giving away too much of the story, can you summarize Scuffy in one or two sentences?” I gave the students time to write their summaries in their journals (see Figure 17). When they finished they shared their summaries with the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scuffy is about a tugboat who wants to have adventures and be free, but when he is free, Scuffy runs into dangers and ends up with his original owner and stays in the bathtub.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A tugboat was not meant for a toy store, so he sailed across rivers and lakes but got lost. When they found him, he decided to stay in the bathtub.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scuffy is in a toy shop and wants to do more. Then he goes on a dangerous trip in the river and decides to float in the bathtub instead.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scuffy is in a store and a man puts him in the bathtub, then there is a stream. His journey does not stop until the man got him in the bathtub because Scuffy was scared.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Scuffy goes down the river and then something happens. Scuffy wished he had the man with the polka-dot tie. |

*Figure 17. Scuffy Summaries*
The Home Stretch

It was hard to believe how fast time flew during this study, and now we were down to the last few days of our time together. The students did an excellent job with the strategies during whole-group activities, as well as practicing the strategies in their independent books. At this point, we had accomplished what I had set out to accomplish, and that was learning how to preview, predict, question, visualize, and summarize in books of their choice. Now I wanted to see how the students used all five strategies together for comprehension. I gave them the option to continue practicing the five strategies in their independent books or to choose a book for the whole group to read together and practice the strategies. They wanted to read a book together as a group.

Would Someone Please Pass the Book?

Having choice in reading materials was one of the major components of this study, and it was something that the students really enjoyed. When they told me that they wanted to spend the last few days reading a book together, I knew choice needed to be incorporated. I decided to take my own trip to the book room to preview some books that I knew, based on interviews and conferences, would be interesting to the students. I chose six books:
With these books I did a book pass with the students. “Today we are going to use the previewing strategy to do a book pass.” I explained to the students that the book pass would help them choose a book to read together. I gave each student a book pass handout (see Appendix R) and one of the books.

Then I explained the procedures:

**Book Pass Procedures**

1. (2 minutes) - Preview the book. Look at the cover and the blurb on the back. Page through the book. Read a few paragraphs from the first chapter.
2. (1 minute) – Use your handout to make a few notes about the book. Be honest. What do you like about the book? What turns you off to this book?
4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until you have previewed and taken notes on all six books.

After all six books were passed, I had the students rate the books. They gave their first choice a “1” and so on. I collected the papers and tallied up their choices. From this, I determined which book we would be reading together to practice the reading strategies.
And the Winner Is . . .

I decided to wrap the set of chosen books individually like little presents, and I placed them on the students’ desks, so when they came in they saw the surprise waiting for them. They were very excited to find out what book was chosen for the group. I let them rip open the paper, and they were so happy to see *Bridge to Terabithia* in their hands.

Bridging the Strategies Together

The students grabbed their journals and we listed the reading strategies on the board:

- Previewing
- Predicting
- Questioning
- Visualizing
- Summarizing

“Remember,” I began, “You used the previewing strategy when you chose this book. You looked at the cover, the back-of-the-book blurb, and the first few pages. While we read, we will be using the other strategies. We spent a lot of time learning each of the strategies and practicing them in our independent books. Now we will practice the strategies simultaneously as we read this book together, just like we do when we read for pleasure.”

**Chapter one.** For this chapter, I read out loud to the students as we all practiced using the strategies (see Figure 18).
Chapter One Reading Strategies

Predictions
“I’m glad to see that each chapter is titled because that will really help us when we make predictions. So the first chapter is called ‘Jesse Oliver Aarons, Jr.’, who do you think that is?”
Jennifer – “I think it is the boy on the front cover.”
Kayla – “Because it seems like a boy’s name.”

Visualizing
I explained that Brenda and Ellie were his older sisters, and May Belle and Joyce Ann were his younger sisters. “Are you picturing Brenda and Ellie to be snotty?”
All – “Yes!”
“Can you picture the older sisters pinching their noses when Jesse smelled?” The students all pinched their noses to imitate the older sisters. “How do you see this family based on the author's description?”
All – “They are poor.”
Alison – “Mom has a ripped vinyl purse.”
Jennifer – “They have wrinkled up money.”
Alan – “And they live in an old house.”

Questioning
“What does it mean that Miss Bessie’s (the cow) bag is dragging?”
Kayla – “Probably because it has to be milked.”

Summarizing
The students wrote summaries in their journals.
Alison – There’s a boy named Jesse who has 4 sisters and he likes to run.
Amy – Jesse wants to be the fastest runner in fifth grade but he has to do many chores with no time to practice.
Kayla – Jesse is the only boy in his family other than his dad and has 2 whiney sisters, one sister who always obeys him, and a baby. Jesse really likes to run.
Alan – Jesse is a boy who goes out to run in the morning for a race at school and he has 4 sisters and no brothers.
Jennifer – Jesse’s sisters are snots, and he wants to be the fastest runner in the 5th grade.

Figure 18. Using the Reading Strategies in Chapter One
Chapter two. The students were late arriving because they were with their class in the library. We only had ten minutes for reading, and this was not enough time to read and discuss an entire chapter. The students were really disappointed. Jennifer asked, “ Couldn’t we just take the book home and read?” “Well,” I said, “ I don’t want it to seem like homework.” “No, we want to,” added Kayla, and the others agreed. “Ok, you can read Chapter 2 tonight. Take your journals home with you, too. Write down one question and one visualization as you read.” When the students came back the next day, only four of the students remembered their questions and visualizations (see Table 5).

Table 5

Visualizations and Questions From Chapter Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Visualizations</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>I see Jesse drawing in his room and hear the pencil on his paper. Everything else is silent.</td>
<td>Why does it go straight from laying in bed to him running?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Visualize: Leslie" /></td>
<td>Why is Jesse’s dad not proud that his son wanted to be an artist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>I can hear his dad’s truck.</td>
<td>I wonder why the chapter is not about Leslie when the title is about her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>I hear mom from the screen door and see May Belle running for dad. I can taste the milk from the cow and smell supper from mom.</td>
<td>Why does Jesse always say “Lord”, like, “Lord could they ever make a racket”?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter three. Amy asked to read chapter three, and the other students agreed that she could. I stopped during the chapter to ask questions.

MRS. BUTZ: Why does the teacher keep mumbling thirty-one?

JENNIFER: Because all the other teachers have less kids.

Amy continued reading. We stopped so I could clarify what it meant to carve into the desks. I explained the old wooden desks that used to be in classrooms, and how students would write and carve all over them.

MRS. BUTZ: Why does the author write some words in different scripts?

KAYLA: It’s what Jesse is thinking in his head.

Continuing on, John commented about how the students ate lunch at their desks in the classroom and could not talk.

MRS. BUTZ: So who ends up being the fastest kid in fifth grade?

ALAN: Leslie!

Chapter four. I decided to pick up with the reading because the chapter was long and I could read faster. “Can you picture the kids all sitting on the floor in the music class, singing songs?” Alison and Kayla agreed, “That would be cool.” Alison continued, “I wish that in music we could sit on the floor and sing.” “What do we know about Leslie?” “She’s rich,” Kayla answered. “But how do we know that?” Jennifer added, “She said money
isn’t a problem for her family.” Then I asked, “Can you picture the classroom when Leslie announced that she didn’t have a television?” Amy said, “I picture Leslie looking down at her desk with her face all red and everybody laughing.” “Well I see the playground. I can sort of see the playground and Leslie crying,” Jennifer continued. “What about the bus? Can you visualize what is going on when Jesse and Leslie are on the bus?” Jason started, “I can see Leslie on the bus and I picture my bus.” Kayla added, “I can see Leslie being pulled to the front by Jesse.” After we finished reading the chapter, I asked for a summary. Alison started, “Leslie and Jess made up a secret place that they called Terabithia.” Kayla raised her hand, “Leslie and Jesse are becoming very good friends and are planning to have a great time playing in their ‘secret country’ Terabithia.” Then Amy added, “Jesse and Leslie made up a magical place in the forest and become best friends.” Jennifer continued, “Jesse and Leslie built a new place named Terabithia and Leslie and Jesse are becoming very good friends.” Jason finished up by adding, “Leslie and Jesse made Terabithia and they are becoming more of friends.”

Chapter five. Before we began reading, I asked the students to write a prediction based on the title of this chapter, “The Giant Killers” (see Figure 19). Then we began reading the chapter, during which we stopped for questions and visualizations.
I think Leslie and Jesse are going to make up creatures because of the sounds they hear.

I think this chapter will be about Leslie and Jesse being able to use their magic to kill evil giants in Terabithia.

I think they find a giant in Terabithia.

I think this chapter will be about imaginary bullies in Terabithia, and they will try to kill Leslie and Jesse.

I think that they are going to imagine that monsters are in Terabithia.

Figure 19. Chapter Five Predictions

We got to the point in the chapter where May Belle was waving her Twinkies around the bus.

ALAN: What are Twinkies?

KAYLA: You don’t know what Twinkies are?

I explained what Twinkies are.

MRS. BUTZ: What do you think is going to happen to May Belle’s Twinkies?

ALL: Janice Avery steals them.

We read further.

ALAN: Girls can smoke in school?
I explained to the students about sneaking into the bathrooms at school and smoking.

*MRS. BUTZ:* So what are Jesse and Leslie doing?

*ALISON:* Writing a letter to make Janice Avery think someone likes her.

*MRS. BUTZ:* Are you picturing Jesse running from desk to desk trying to find where to put Janice’s note?

*ALL:* Yea!

I read until we reached the end of the chapter. I asked the students to give a one-sentence summary of this chapter (see Figure 20).

*Leslie and Jesse wanted to get the Twinkies back that Janice stole so they wrote a love note from someone.*

Jesse and Leslie wrote a fake love note to Janice Avery so Janice had to walk all the way home.

*Jesse and Leslie find a way to get back at Janice Avery for stealing May Belle’s Twinkies.*

Janice steals May Belle’s Twinkies and Jesse and Leslie get back at her by sending a fake love note.

Leslie and Jess wrote a fake note to Janice Avery hoping to get May Belle’s Twinkies back.

*Figures 20. Chapter Five Summaries*
Chapter six. This was the last chapter of *Bridge to Terabithia* we read together because time for the study was ending. We worked through a few more strategies (see Figure 21).

**Predicting**
“Who do you think Prince Terrien is?”
Jennifer – “Maybe they invite a classmate to Terabithia.”

**Visualizing**
“Are you picturing this little puppy running around and jumping?”

**Questioning**
Jennifer – “What are pantyhose?”
I spent a little bit of time trying to explain pantyhose to the students.
Alan – “And what are bobby socks?”
So we talked about them as well.
“At the end of the story, Jesse says that it felt like Christmas again when he met up with Leslie. What did he mean by this?”
Jennifer – “He means that he was proud and he was grateful again.”
Amy – “Because he liked to be with Leslie and Prince Terrien.”
Kayla – “He was having fun with Leslie and inside everybody was mad and cursing.”
Alison – “He was tired of hearing his older sisters complaining so when he saw Leslie and Prince Terrien it made him happy.”

*Figure 21. Chapter Six Reading Strategies*
The End Comes Too Soon

The end of the study had arrived, and the unfortunate thing was that we did not have time to finish reading *Bridge to Terabithia*. This disappointed us, but I needed a few days to conduct end-of-study surveys and interviews before the start of winter break.

It seemed like yesterday when we were making our introductions, and now our time together was ending. “I don’t want to go back to reading in our regular classroom,” Jennifer stated. “Yeah,” Kayla exclaimed, “Can we stay here and read for the rest of the school year?” Alan joined in, “It’s much more fun when we read here.” “Why?” I asked. Jennifer answered, “Because we can read what we want, and we don’t have to answer a bunch of questions.” Before I even handed out the surveys and conducted end-of-the-study interviews, I knew from their disappointed expressions that, in twelve weeks, I had made a difference in these students’ lives. They were excited about reading and did not want to return to the reality of school reading that their classroom possessed.

It was time for me to put the finishing touches on this study. Just as we started, I handed them the same survey they had filled out just a short twelve weeks earlier. I reminded them to be honest with their responses.
Again, the first few questions gave me an idea of how the students felt overall about reading (see Figure 22).

**Students responded to the following nine statements by marking always, sometimes, or never.**

1. Reading a book is something I like to do.
2. Reading a book on a rainy Saturday afternoon is something I like to do.
3. Reading a book during free time at school is something I like to do.
4. Reading for fun at home is something I like to do.
5. Getting a book for a present is something I like.
7. Reading during summer vacation is something I like to do.
8. Reading instead of playing is something I like to do.
9. Going to the bookstore is something I like to do.

*Figure 22. Post-Study Reading Survey-Questions 1-9*
The proceeding six questions on the post-study reading survey dealt with random aspects of reading, talking about books, and choice in reading materials (see Table 6).

The next step in finalizing the study was to conduct individual interviews. I told the students that the interview would give me a final individualized picture of them as readers (see Figure 23a-c).

The final interviews gave me the closure I was hoping for. The students enjoyed reading more now than when they began the study. They enjoyed learning about the reading strategies, as well as other aspects of the study. I felt proud listening to their answers to my questions.
Table 6

Post-Study Reading Survey Questions 10-15

Question 10: How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?

- Excited and Confident – 4
- Nervous and Scared – 2
- Wish I Was Absent – 0

Question 11: How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?

- Excited and Confident – 3
- Nervous and Scared – 1
- Wish I Was Absent – 2

Question 12: When I am reading by myself, I understand:

- Almost Everything – 6
- Some Things – 0
- None of What I Read – 0

Question 13: When I am in a group talking about stories, I:

- Almost Never Talk – 0
- Sometimes Talk – 3
- Always Talk – 3

Question 14: I like when my teacher reads books out loud to the class.

- Everyday – 4
- Almost Everyday – 1
- Never – 1

Question 15: I would read more if I had better choices of materials in the classroom.

- Definitely – 5
- Maybe – 1
- Probably Not – 0
How do you feel about reading now at the end of the study?

⇒ I feel like I want to read more than I used to and the strategies help a lot, too.
⇒ I feel better about it because I learned more strategies.
⇒ I think it’s fun and the strategies will be useful when I go to high school or middle school.
⇒ I like it better because of choosing what you read.
⇒ I like it a lot better than I did in the beginning of the year because I learned the strategies and how to use them in our own books, and I like it a lot.
⇒ I like reading more than I used to because during the study made reading more fun to do.

Did you find yourself reading interesting things and learning anything new?

⇒ Yes, I learned a lot by using strategies.
⇒ Yeah, I learned new strategies.
⇒ I kind of learned that if you use the questioning strategy you can use it anywhere like in movies or when you’re watching television.
⇒ Yeah, I found new books that I like.
⇒ Yeah, how strategies help me read.
⇒ Yeah, learning the strategies for reading.

Figure 23a. Post-Study Reading Interview Responses
What strategies will you continue to use for reading?

⇒ **Visualizing and questioning**
⇒ **Visualizing**
⇒ **I think I’ll really use visualizing and summarizing. And definitely questioning. And previewing.**
⇒ **All of them**
⇒ **All of them because they help a lot**
⇒ **Questioning and summarizing**

Do you find reading more enjoyable now, or is it still a chore?

⇒ **If depends on what I am reading.**
⇒ **I find it more enjoyable.**
⇒ **I like reading here because we get to pick what we want to read and we even get to pick when we read a book together.**
⇒ **I like it better.**
⇒ **Yes I like it better, but I still like playing outside and not being forced to read.**
⇒ **More enjoyable.**

*Figure 23b. Post-Study Reading Interview Responses*
What activities did you do that made reading more fun and motivating?

- I liked visualizing and working in a group and reading together.
- I liked doing the visualizing activities and I liked writing my questions down.
- I like doing the literacy activities because you got to pick what sheet to do and write about what you want. I also like writing in journals.
- Using the different strategies.
- Reading our own books and not a whole group book.
- Reading by ourselves and then the literacy activities and talking about it instead of the comprehension questions.

Figure 23c. Post-Study Reading Interview Responses
The final step of the study was to administer the Qualitative Reading Inventory. The QRI allowed me to examine a growth in comprehension over the twelve-week study (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Post-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Concept Questions</th>
<th>Retell</th>
<th>Questions Without Look-Backs*</th>
<th>Questions With Look-Backs*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>22 ideas/57</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>26 ideas/57</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>28 ideas/57</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>27 ideas/57</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>27 ideas/57</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>17 ideas/57</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Out of 8 questions – Independent (8 correct), Instructional (6-7 correct), Frustration (0-5 correct)*
Data Analysis

Introduction

Dewey (1938) states that teachers’ main purpose is to prepare our students for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquiring organized bodies of information in prepared form, which comprehend the material of instruction. My study was laid out with his words in mind. Throughout the study, I wanted to organize the information in a way that the students would better comprehend what they read, as well as increase their motivation for reading. While doing that, another objective was to prepare them to be successful in the real-world of reading, because as their future unfolds, reading will play a primary role. The analysis of my data allowed me to see whether my objectives were satisfied.

For my study, in addition to working with the students during mini-lessons and conferencing with them one-on-one during independent reading, I needed to collect pieces of data in order to ensure validity. It was important to collect data from a variety of sources in order for triangulation to occur. Johnson (2008) says that triangulation ensures that you are seeing many sides of a situation. The data included in my analysis consists of surveys and interviews, the Qualitative Reading Inventory, literacy activities, journal entries, and observational data in my field log.
Student Survey Analysis

The beginning of my study consisted of a reading survey. The purpose of giving the students a survey was to learn how the students felt overall about reading, and the first few questions on the survey accomplished that. The second half of the survey consisted of random questions about reading. I wanted to know how the students felt about discussing books with their teacher and filling out worksheets. I also wanted to understand their feelings about having choices in reading materials. Once the study concluded, I gave the students the same reading survey. The purpose of giving another survey at the end of the study was to see if the procedures of the study led to changes in the way they felt about reading.

Student Interview Analysis

The students were interviewed at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. While the surveys were very general, interviews allowed me to gain a more individualized picture of the participants. The beginning-of-the-study interview consisted of five questions, which I asked all six participants. The information gained from the beginning interview guided how the study began. This included the types of books that the students liked and how they were using reading strategies in their regular classroom. At the halfway point of the study, the students were given a middle-of-the-study interview.
Again, the interview consisted of five questions. The purpose of the mid-
study interview was to speak with individual students about the on-going
procedures of the study, such as having choice in reading materials and
learning the reading strategies more in depth. The final piece of the study
was the final interview. These five questions gave the study closure. It
allowed me to see how, after 12 weeks together, their attitudes toward
reading and using strategies for comprehension had evolved.

**Qualitative Reading Inventory Analysis**

The Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) was used at the beginning
and end of the study. The purpose for this diagnostic reading test was two-
fold. First, in the beginning of the study it gave me a baseline of data for
individual reading comprehension. The students were tested individually
with the same story and procedures, which included pre-reading questions, a
retelling of the story, and answering comprehension questions. Second, at
the end of the study, it allowed me to examine growth in comprehension over
the 12-week study. The students were, again, tested individually with a
different story on the same level, and followed the same procedure as the
beginning story.
Literacy Activity Analysis

The students completed literacy activities to coincide with their independent reading books. These activities took the place of comprehension-question packets. The students chose from a number of activities that corresponded to the reading strategies, as well as general reading activities. The purpose of the activities were, in addition to one-on-one conferences, to see how the students were using strategies and comprehending their independent books.

Journal Entry Analysis

The students had journals to use during independent reading. Their journals were used to write predictions about their books, questions about the story, visualizations they had during reading, and summarization of what they read. During one-on-one conferences, the students and I referred to their journals to discuss strategy use.

Observational Data Analysis

During the study, I kept a field log where I recorded all observational data. The log served a number of purposes. First, I used this log to plan my week-to-week objectives, as well objectives for my mini-lessons. Second, I used this log to record conversations with the students during interviews, mini-lessons, and individual conferences. Finally, this log was used to record
observations of the students, insights, and reflections about the students and activities.

**Codes, Bins, and Theme Statements**

Approximately halfway into the study, I began coding student work and my field log to look for commonalities in my data. This was a very tedious task, but extremely beneficial in seeing how my study was progressing and how the data was aligning. Once coding was completed, I was able to categorize my codes into bins (see Figure 24). The bins allowed me to see similarities in my data. From here, I determined common themes (see Figure 25) on which my findings would be based.
What are the observed and reported experiences of fourth grade language arts students when implementing authentic literacy activities to increase comprehension and motivation?

**Student Engagement**
- Group Activity
- Group Discussion
- Peer Interaction
- Journal Entry
- Student Work
- Literacy Activity
- Student Focus
- Questions
- Student Choice

**Reading Strategies**
- Previewing
- Predicting
- Questioning
- Visualizing
- Summarizing

**Reading Comprehension Techniques**
- Clarifying
- Reading Independently
- Making Connections
- Modeling
- Activating Previous Knowledge
- Reading Aloud
- Scaffolding
- Thinking Aloud

**Student/Teacher Emotions**
- Teacher Enlightenment
- Student Excitement
- Student Frustrations
- Teacher Frustrations

**Individual Conversations**
- Conferencing
- Comprehension Check
- Strategy Check

*Figure 24. Codes and Bins*
Preliminary Theme Statements

Research Question: What are the observed and reported experiences of fourth grade language arts students when implementing authentic literacy activities to increase comprehension and motivation?

1. **Student Engagement:** When students are engaged and focused during activities and discussions, their level of motivation to complete a task improves.

2. **Reading Strategies:** Students need to learn a variety of strategies to aid in their understanding of a text.

3. **Reading Comprehension Techniques:** In order to teach reading strategies effectively, a number of reading comprehension techniques need to be incorporated to provide students with a firm reading foundation.

4. **Student/Teacher Emotions:** Both the teacher and the students experience a variety of positive and negative emotions throughout the study.

5. **Individual Conversations:** The students benefit from one-on-one time with the teacher to discuss their books and the strategies they use for comprehension.

*Figure 25. Theme Statements*
Findings

The purpose of my study was to use authentic reading in order to enhance and embellish what my students already obtained as readers to motivate them further to read and use strategies to better understand what they are reading. This study was designed because, in my teaching experience, students are being forced to read text that is uninteresting and not personally relevant. From there, they are made to answer packets of comprehension questions. We, as educators, encourage our students to celebrate uniqueness in one another, yet we fail to take the unique abilities and interests of our students into account in the classroom. Kozol (2005) states, “Thus, ‘authenticity,’ no matter how much it’s promoted to the children by the posters in the halls, is pretty much denied to those who teach them” (72). Unauthenic practices are not motivating to students and therefore cause them to be turned off to reading all together. For this study, I created a literature-rich environment and offered students choices in what they read, and from there I taught them reading strategies to use before and during reading. Having choice in reading materials was motivating to the students because they could choose books that made personal connections to their interests or life situations. Once motivated with their choice in books, I taught them five reading strategies: previewing, predicting, questioning,
visualizing, and summarizing, for the purpose of increasing their comprehension.

The tedious task of going through my data was highly beneficial in seeing the bigger picture of my findings. Through coding my field log and student work, I was able to organize the information into bins, which led to the formation of my theme statements. Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) suggest that we need to come to an essence of the meaning that our findings have, and we need to examine them from different viewpoints in order to establish the overall picture. My theme statements allowed me to see that overall picture.

**Student Engagement:** When students are engaged and focused during activities and discussions, their level of motivation to complete a task improves.

When students are motivated, they are often extremely engaged and focused on the task at hand. At numerous times during the study, the students were observed being engaged and focused on things like mini-lessons, whole-group activities, independent reading, and group discussions.

During strategy mini-lessons, the students participated in activating previous knowledge about the strategies. All of the students had ideas to contribute. They were also involved in formulating ideas about the strategy.
For whole-group activities, I often read a book aloud to the students to model and practice the current reading strategy we were working with at the time. The students were always extremely motivated during this time. I really tried to pick books that I knew the students would enjoy. Their engagement during whole-group activities led to great discussions about the strategy, as well as to students, together, contributing wonderful ideas about the strategy.

For the predicting strategy, we read the book *Dog Breath* by Dav Pilkey. The students worked together to come up with predictions about the story, and adjusted their predictions as I read the book aloud. For questioning, the students brainstormed many excellent ideas about how to use the strategy when reading. Together, we read the book *Naming the Cat* by Lawrence Pringle. The students made predictions before reading, that I listed on the whiteboard, and asked questions during reading. When the visualizing strategy was introduced, we worked on numerous activities as a whole group to practice using our senses to visualize. The students thoroughly enjoyed the activities, and they demonstrated how engaged they can be when motivated to complete a task. For the last strategy, summarizing, we read a short story called, “Ice Cream Sodas.” Using this story, the students wrote summaries. They willingly shared their summaries
with the entire group and remained very positive when receiving constructive criticism from their peers.

The positive peer interaction with this group was extremely evident. During the beginning-of-the-study interview, I asked the students what reading materials they were interested in. I shared this information with the entire group while in the book room choosing books. The next day, the students brought in books from home that they thought the other members of the group would enjoy. Throughout the study, these students were helpful to one another, courteous when listening to others discuss their strategy usage, and respectful of ideas that each other contributed to the group. By the end of the study, they were very cohesive with one another.

When the students made comments like, “Wow, the time just flew,” and, “We don’t want to leave, can we stay here and read,” they showed me how engaged and focused they were with things like group activities and independent reading. This engagement and focus led to the students’ increase in motivation. As my end-of-the-study interview proved, the students expressed that they found reading to be more enjoyable than in the beginning of the school year.

Finally, when the students had choices in what they could read to practice the reading strategies, this caused them to be more focused and
engaged in their books. Students were motivated to read when the content made connections with their interests. Again, the mid-study interview proved this point (see Figure 26).

When students were engaged and focused during whole-group activities, peer interaction, and reading books of their choosing, it was evident that they were more motivated to read and use strategies for comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you feel about having choices in reading materials?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like that you can pick materials instead of someone saying, You have to do this.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like it better because I understand my reading better because of the books I’ve chosen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I think it’s really fun and not like guided reading groups. You get to read what you want and you’re not forced to do something you don’t want to.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s good. I like having a better variety of books I can read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like it a lot. You don’t just have one book. If we all had the same book it might be frustrating because some people read slow. I like the choice because you can read at your own pace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I like it a lot better than having to read something I don’t like at all.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 26. Mid-Study Interview Question #1*
Reading Strategies: Students need to learn a variety of strategies to aid in their understanding of a text.

Results of the pre-study interview showed me that the students were not using strategies for comprehension of text (see Figure 27). I needed to get these students to comprehend by relying on reading strategies and not so much on other people. For this reason, I taught, in depth, five reading strategies for the students to use before and during reading: previewing, predicting, questioning, visualizing, and summarizing. I first began with teaching a mini-lesson on the strategy. This involved activating previous knowledge, modeling the strategy, and practicing the strategy together before the students independently practiced the strategy on their own.

During independent reading time, the students used their journals to record notes about how they were using the strategy before and during reading. In addition, I conferenced with students one-on-one to check in with their comprehension and strategy use. I could easily tell, from these individual conversations, how well the students were using and understanding the strategies.
What do you do when you do not understand something you are reading?

I usually look back to see what was happening. Then I would ask someone to help me figure out what was going on.

I read it over again.

**I usually just read it over again and maybe ask my neighbor and then my teacher.**

I usually read the sentence a couple more times then I ask someone near me.

Normally I reread it in my head and if I can’t figure it out I whisper it to myself and I can figure it out.

**I usually just read it and think about what the author is talking about and then ask someone about it.**

Figure 27. Pre-Study Interview Question #3

One strategy, visualizing, gave the students a bit of a struggle. After attempting peer conferences with the strategy, I found that the students needed additional instruction. So I re-taught the strategy from a different angle, and the students responded better and understood the strategy a whole lot more.

By the end of the study, I could see that the students were thinking more about their reading as they were reading. It was easier for them to discuss strategy use with me during our conferences. In addition, the students were able to use the strategies simultaneously while reading *Bridge*
to Terabithia as a whole-group read aloud. This conclusion was based on our read aloud, whole-group discussions, and journal entries.

During the end-of-the-study interview, all of the students expressed that learning the reading strategies was extremely beneficial (see Figure 28), and that they would continue using the strategies when reading in their regular classroom.

I feel like I want to read more than I used to and the strategies help a lot, too.

I feel better about it [reading] because I learned more strategies.

**I think it’s [reading] fun and the strategies will be useful when I go to high school or middle school.**

I like it [reading] a lot better than I did in the beginning of the year because I learned the strategies and how to use them in our own books, and I like it a lot.

**I learned a lot by using strategies.**

I learned new strategies.

**Strategies help me read.**

*Figure 28. End-interview student responses about strategies*
Reading Comprehension Techniques: In order to teach reading strategies effectively, a number of reading comprehension techniques need to be incorporated to provide students with a firm reading foundation.

The teaching of reading strategies was incredibly beneficial to the students. This was evident in both their individual conversations with me during one-on-one conferences and their interviews. But in order to teach the strategies effectively, a number of reading techniques needed to be incorporated.

Vygotsky (1978) states, “The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state” (p. 86). The students did come to this study with previous knowledge of reading strategies. It was my objective to enhance this knowledge of the strategies through a variety of reading techniques.

Vygotsky goes on to say that, “What is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual developmental level tomorrow - that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (p. 87). By implementing reading techniques to teach reading strategies, the
students had the opportunity to slowly immerse themselves into those strategies before independent use of the strategies was expected.

When introducing a reading strategy, I first activated the students’ previous knowledge about the strategy. This was helpful in knowing exactly where in the zone of proximal development the students existed. This activation of knowledge was laid out in bulleted form using the whiteboard in the classroom, like a K-W-L chart. From there, I gave a more in depth definition of the strategy and modeled how to use the strategy in a book. Sometimes I read a chapter from a book, a picture book, a short story, or a small section of a novel. To model the strategy, I would read and think aloud to the students about how I use the strategy when reading. I then asked the students to be active participants in practicing the use of the strategy during the read aloud. It was at this time that we reviewed how to use the strategy and clarified any questions about it.

Once the students had the strategy modeled, and once they had the chance to practice using the strategy as a whole group, it was time for them to practice the strategy on their own during independent reading. The students went to their choice in books, along with their journal and sticky notes, to a place in the classroom where they read and practiced using the strategy. During this time was when I conducted one-on-one conferences
with the students for comprehension and strategy checks. After I conferenced with all six students, we came back together as a group to engage in a whole-group discussion to share how strategies were used during independent reading. The students all had things to share, while their classmates were very respectful and courteous to the ideas they heard.

From here, the students had more time to independently practice the strategy again before moving on to learn the next strategy. When a new strategy was introduced, the cycle of techniques started again. The students enjoyed the consistency of how the reading techniques were laid out. During independent reading, scaffolding occurred in that the students were expected to practice using the new strategy while still using implementing the old strategies into their reading.

**Student/Teacher Emotions:** Both the teacher and the students experience a variety of positive and negative emotions throughout the study.

It is to be expected that there will be points of both glory and frustration during a twelve-week research study. This study was no exception. There were many points during the study where I was completely enlightened as to how the students were interacting and participating, to their use of strategies and completion of literacy activities during
independent reading. Their excitement to be with me every day was contagious in that it led to my excitement in working daily with them. It was a joy to witness them working with their peers to engage in conversations about their books and strategy use. It was also thrilling to see their enthusiasm outside of the study, whether in their regular classroom or in the hallways, when they would see me and make positive comments about what we were doing during our time together. Of course, it warmed my heart to hear them make comments like, “We have to go back to class already? Time just flew.” or “Can we stay here and read, it’s much more fun!”

With my enlightenment came student enlightenment. The six students eagerly ran into my classroom every day with such positive attitudes. Their happy faces and upbeat comments on a day-to-day basis really showed me how much fun they were having during their peer interactions, whole-group activities, and independent reading time with books of their choice. Their comments like, “We don’t want to leave,” and “Reading is much more fun here,” were encouraging to me, and exemplified their enlightenment with the study.

Unfortunately, with enlightenment comes frustration. I can honestly say that there were only a handful of times when I felt frustrated during this study. At times, the students were not working on the literacy activities as
much as I hoped, or writing in their journals as much as I would have liked. About mid-way through the study, I introduced a sub question into my study about peer conferencing for the visualizing strategy, and the conferences did not go as well as I had envisioned them. It was frustrating to decide whether it was my lack of guidance or a lack of understanding the strategy. I also had a larger moment of frustration at the conclusion of the study when I administered the Qualitative Reading Inventory. The purpose of this diagnostic test was to gain an overall picture of the students’ growth in reading comprehension. But in looking at the results of this assessment, I did not feel it was a valuable measurement of their understanding based on the strategies we worked on. It was almost too standardized for this small group of students. I felt I got a better picture of their reading comprehension through our one-on-one conferences and whole-group discussions.

   Student frustration came in the form of comments about not wanting to go back to their regular classroom for reading. I also sensed frustration from the students on days when we ran short of time and did not have a large enough chunk of time for them to independently read and practice using the strategies.
**Individual Conversations:** Students benefit from one-on-one time with the teacher to discuss their books and the strategies they use for comprehension.

During the study, the students and I spent valuable time in whole-group activities and group discussions. This time was valuable in that it allowed me to model strategy use, as well as encouraged dialogue among the students to activate previous knowledge about the strategies, ask questions about strategy use, and share their personal use of strategies with one another. While this time was beneficial for the students to be engaged in, not only what I was sharing during a strategy mini-lesson, but with what their peers had to offer to the conversations, I wanted to take it a step further.

For this study, I wanted to give my students the individualized attention they deserved and needed. So beyond the group activities and discussion, I met with the students numerous times during the twelve weeks for one-on-one conferences.

One-on-one conferences were extremely beneficial for a number of reasons. First, these conferences gave me the chance to sit with the students and check in with them about their books. During this time I listened to the students read and gave some feedback about fluency. Then I asked the students questions about the book to see how well they were comprehending
what they were reading. Finally, I looked through their journals and/or sticky notes and talked about strategy use. Another benefit to these conferences was they gave the students an opportunity to ask me questions and give me thoughts about the strategies in a private conversational format. Even though these students were very comfortable talking and participating in front of each other, it was still important for me to give them a chance to speak on a more private level with me. Based on questions they asked or clarification they needed, these conversations then gave me feedback into how I would plan the next group activity and mini-lesson. Finally, a benefit to one-on-one conferences was that, numerous times during the study, I was able to give the students my undivided attention. Based on our conversations, the students seemed to really enjoy our one-on-one time together. It allowed us to, in a sense, bond outside of the whole-group setting. It also allowed me, as the teacher, to cater to their specific reading needs, which again, the students need and deserve.
Next Steps

Many wonderful things occurred during this study, and I look forward to moving ahead and continuing some of the practices. In reflecting on conducting the teacher action research study, and writing up my story and findings, I am very excited to move forward from my experiences.

Improving reading comprehension was a major component of this study. Gibson (2009) states that strategy based instruction is an effective way to improve reading comprehension. For this study, teaching the strategies proved beneficial in getting my students to understand what they were reading. Due to time, I was only able to teach five reading strategies, so moving forward I would like to incorporate even more reading strategies into our whole-group mini-lessons. My goal is to teach the strategy as a whole-group lesson, then move into a read aloud to model using the strategy before the students practice the strategy on their own during independent reading.

Another aspect of the study that proved extremely beneficial was conferencing one-on-one with the students. This is something I will absolutely continue. The conferences allowed me to have individual time with each student to check comprehension and strategy use. The students also enjoyed the one-on-one attention. Another benefit to checking in with
the students is setting individual goals for things like fluency and strategy use.

Whole-group discussions were something the students really enjoyed. After a period of independent reading, the students would come back together to discuss their independent books and strategy use. The students were very courteous when listening to others. These whole-group discussions allowed the students to not only share their own ideas, but to be active listeners and gain ideas from their peers.

There were many things I did during this study to improve the motivation that the students had toward reading. One of the major components of this study was offering choice in reading materials. This is something I will definitely continue to do. The students expressed that they liked having choice in what they read. That way the books were personally relevant and fit their interests. Having a literature-rich environment allowed the students to be surrounded by all different kinds of reading materials. I will continue to keep up on the interests of my students to make sure that my reading environment is appropriate to what they need and want.

Another motivating factor was having choice in literacy activities, instead of completing packets of comprehension questions. The literacy activities coincided with the strategies they were learning and they could
choose what activity worked best for what they were reading. From here, I would like to take the activities further and offer other kinds of book projects that the students can do to show their understanding of what they read. These activities would be explained in advance and even modeled if necessary. Also, rubrics would be available for students to have clear guidance.

I had many wonderful outcomes in conducting this teacher action research, and I look forward to the future of my classroom and continuing these successful teaching practices.
References


Worthy, J. (2002). What makes intermediate-grade students want to read?

*Reading Teacher, 55*(6), 568-569.
Resources


Appendix A: HSIRB Approval Letter

MORAVIAN COLLEGE

June 27, 2011

Victoria Butz
1015 Village Round
Wescosville, PA 18106

HSIRB proposal by Victoria Butz for Richard Grove

Dear Victoria Butz:

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has accepted your proposal: “Building High Levels of Comprehension and Motivation Through Authentic Literacy Practices.” Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into other topics than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be.

Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

This letter has been sent to you through U.S. Mail and e-mail. Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone (610-861-1379) or through e-mail (browerg@moravian.edu) should you have any questions about the committee’s requests.

Sincerely,

George D. Brower
Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board
Moravian College
610-861-1379
Appendix B: Principal Consent Form

Dear [Name],

I am currently working towards earning my Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. As part of the program, Moravian requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. As a result, from the end of September to approximately the middle of December I will be conducting a teacher action research study where I intend to examine the observed and reported experiences of students when I implement authentic literacy activities in the classroom.

The focus of my teacher action research is to increase motivation, engagement, and comprehension in reading. I plan to do this by creating a literature-rich classroom with student choices for books and activities. I will teach effective strategy use for before, during, and after reading. I intend to implement authentic experiences designed to enhance personal relevance. Lastly, I will meet and discuss with students about the effectiveness of authentic activities on their motivation and engagement.

I will be gathering data to support my study through surveys, interviews, reading comprehension measurements, student work, and teacher observations. While all the students will be engaged in the study as part of the reading curriculum, I will only use the information collected from the students who have permission to participate in the study. All student names will be kept confidential, as will teachers and school name. Any work that reveals a student’s identity will be altered for their protection. I am asking for your permission to use the data gathered pertaining to a student’s involvement however; participation in the study is voluntary and will not affect the student’s grade in any way. A student may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and all information pertaining to that child will not be included in my study.

If you have any questions regarding my action research study, please feel free to contact me. My faculty sponsor at Moravian College is [Name]. She can be reached at Moravian [email] or by email at [email].

Please sign and date the form to give your consent to move forward with this study. I would appreciate if the form was returned at your earliest convenience. Thank you very much for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Victoria Butz

[Signature]

[Yes, I give consent to move forward with this action research study]
[No, I do not give consent to move forward with this action research study]

Principal signature: [Signature]
Appendix C: Parent Consent Form

Dear Parents/Guardians:

I am currently working towards earning my Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. As part of the program, Moravian requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. As a result, from the end of September to approximately the middle of December I will be conducting a teacher action research study where I intend to examine the observed and reported experiences of students when I implement authentic literacy activities in the classroom.

The focus of my teacher action research is to increase motivation and comprehension in reading. I plan to do this by creating a literature-rich classroom with student choices for books and activities. I will teach effective strategic use for before, during, and after reading. I intend to implement authentic experiences designed to enhance personal relevance. Lastly, I will meet and discuss with students about the effectiveness of authentic activities on their motivation and engagement.

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If you have any questions regarding my action research study, please feel free to contact me here at school. The principal has approved this study and is also available for questions at [contact info removed]. My faculty sponsor at Moravian College is [contact info removed]. She can be reached at Moravian at [contact info removed] or by email at [contact info removed].

Please check the appropriate response below, then sign and date the form. I would appreciate if the form was returned at your earliest convenience. Thank you very much for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Victoria Butz
[signature]

Please detach and return to Mrs. Butz in [address]

I attest that I am the child’s legal guardian and that I have received a copy, read, and understand this consent form. Please initial the appropriate box below:

[ ] I am willing to have my child participate in this research study.
[ ] I am not willing to have my child participate in this research study.

Parent/Guardian signature: [signature]

Child Name: [name]

Date: [date]
Appendix D: Pre-Study Survey

Student Survey

Circle your most honest response below:

1. Reading a book is something I like to do:
   Never  Sometimes  Always

2. Reading a book on a rainy Saturday afternoon is something I like to do:
   Never  Sometimes  Always

3. Reading a book during free time at school is something I like to do:
   Never  Sometimes  Always

4. Reading for fun at home is something I like to do:
   Never  Sometimes  Always

5. Getting a book for a present is something I like:
   Never  Sometimes  Always

6. Starting a new book is something I like:
   Never  Sometimes  Always

7. Reading during summer vacation is something I like to do:
   Never  Sometimes  Always

8. Reading instead of playing is something I like to do:
   Never  Sometimes  Always
Appendix D continued: Pre-Study Survey

9. Going to the bookstore is something I like to do:

    Never  Sometimes  Always

10. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?

    Excited and Confident  Nervous and Scared  Wish I was absent

11. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?

    Excited and Confident  Nervous and Scared  Wish I was absent

12. When I am reading by myself, I understand:

    Almost everything I read  Some things I read  None of what I read

13. When I am in a group talking about stories, I:

    Almost never talk  Sometimes talk  Always talk

14. I like when my teacher reads books out loud to the class:

    Every day  Almost every day  Never

15. I would read more if I had better choices of materials in the classroom:

    Definitely  Maybe  Probably not
Appendix E: Pre-Study Interview Questions

Pre-Study Student Interview Questions

1. What turns you off to reading?
2. If you had a choice to read anything, what types of things would you like to read?
3. What do you do when you don’t understand what you’re reading?
4. Would you rather answer comprehension questions on worksheets or having group discussions to talk about what you’re reading?
5. Do you like to do activities that follow up on things that you’re reading about?
Appendix F: Pre-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Amelia Earhart

Amelia Earhart was an adventurer and a pioneer in the field of flying. She did things no other woman had ever done before.

During World War I, Earhart worked as a nurse. She cared for pilots who had been hurt in the war. Earhart listened to what they said about flying. She watched planes take off and land. She knew that she, too, must fly.

In 1928, Earhart was the first woman to cross the Atlantic in a plane. But someone else flew the plane. Earhart wanted to be more than just a passenger. She wanted to fly a plane across the ocean herself. For four years, Earhart trained to be a pilot. Then, in 1932, she flew alone across the Atlantic to Ireland. The trip took over fourteen hours.

Flying may seem easy today. However, Earhart faced many dangers. Airplanes had just been invented. They were much smaller than our planes today. Mechanical problems happened quite often. There were also no computers to help her. Flying across the ocean was as frightening as sailing across it had been years before. Earhart knew the dangers she faced. However, she said, "I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be a challenge to others."

Earhart planned to fly around the world. She flew more than twenty thousand miles. Then, her plane disappeared somewhere over the huge Pacific Ocean. People searched for a long time. Finally they gave up. Earhart and her plane were never found.

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Appendix F continued: Pre-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Level: Four

Narrative

Concept Questions:
Who was Amelia Earhart?

(3-2-1-0)

What are the dangers of flying a small plane?

(3-2-1-0)

What is an adventurer?

(3-2-1-0)

What are women's rights?

(3-2-1-0)

Score: /12 = %
FAM UNFAM

Prediction:

“Amelia Earhart”

Amelia Earhart was an adventurer and a pioneer in the field of flying. She did things no other woman had ever done before.

During World War I, Earhart worked as a nurse. She cared for pilots who had been hurt in the war. Earhart listened to what they said about flying. She watched planes take off and land. She knew that she, too, must fly.

In 1928, Earhart was the first woman to cross the Atlantic in a plane. But someone else flew the plane. Earhart wanted to be more than just a passenger. She wanted to fly a plane across the ocean herself. For four years, Earhart trained to be a pilot. Then, in 1932, she flew alone across the Atlantic to Ireland. The trip took over fourteen hours.

Flying may seem easy today. However, Earhart faced many dangers. Airplanes had just been invented. They were much smaller than our planes today. Mechanical problems happened quite often. There were also no computers to help her. Flying across the ocean was as frightening as sailing across it had been years before. Earhart knew the dangers she faced. However, she said, “I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be a challenge to others.”

Earhart planned to fly around the world. She flew more than twenty thousand miles. Then, her plane disappeared somewhere over the huge Pacific Ocean. People searched for a long time. Finally they
Appendix F continued: Pre-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Level: Four

Questions for “Amelia Earhart”

1. What was Amelia Earhart’s main goal?  
   Implicit: to fly; or to do things that were challenging

2. What was Amelia Earhart doing in a plane when she first crossed the Atlantic?  
   Explicit: she was a passenger

3. How long did it take Amelia Earhart when she flew alone across the Atlantic?  
   Explicit: over fourteen hours

4. Why would flying alone across the Atlantic be an especially dangerous thing to do?  
   Implicit: it was a long trip; there was no one to help with problems; or there was no one to help her stay awake or give her a break

5. What was one of the dangers of flying in those early days?  
   Explicit: small planes; mechanical problems; or no computers

6. How do we know Amelia Earhart believed in equal rights for women?  
   Implicit: she said women should try to do things just as men have tried

7. What was Amelia Earhart trying to do when her plane disappeared?  
   Explicit: fly around the world

8. Why do you think her plane was never found?  
   Implicit: probably sank in the ocean; ocean was so big; or plane was very small

Without Look-Backs

Number Correct Explicit: ___
Number Correct Implicit: ___
Total: ___
___ Independent: 8 correct.
___ Instructional: 6-7 correct
___ Frustration: 0-5 correct

With Look-Backs

Number Correct Explicit: ___
Number Correct Implicit: ___
Total: ___
___ Independent: 8 correct.
___ Instructional: 6-7 correct
___ Frustration: 0-5 correct
Appendix F continued: Pre-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Level: Four

gave up. Earhart and her plane were never found.
(263 words)

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Number of Total Misses
(Total Accuracy): ____________

Number of Meaning-Change Misses
(Total Acceptability): ____________

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<th>Acceptability</th>
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<td><em>Independent</em></td>
<td><em>0–6 misses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_7–27 miss</td>
<td><em>Instructional</em></td>
<td><em>7–14 misses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_28+ miss</td>
<td><em>Frustration</em></td>
<td><em>15+ misses</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate: 203 × 60 = 13,780/_________ seconds = ___________ WPM

_________ WPM − ________ errors = ________ CWPM

Retelling Scoring Sheet for
“Amelia Earhart”

Setting/Background
— Earhart was an adventurer.
— During World War I
— she was a nurse.
— She cared for pilots
— who had been hurt.
— Earhart watched planes
— take off
— and land.

Goal
— She knew
— that she must fly
— Earhart was the first woman
— to cross
— the Atlantic

Events
— Earhart trained
— to be a pilot.
— In 1932
— she flew
— alone
— across the Atlantic
— to Ireland.
— Earhart faced dangers.
— Airplanes were smaller.
— Problems happened often.
— There were no computers.
— Earhart said
— women must try
— to do things
— as men have tried.
— Earhart planned
— to fly
— around the world.

Resolution
— Her plane disappeared
— over the ocean
— the Pacific Ocean.
— People searched
— for a long time.
— They gave up.
— Earhart
— and her plane were
— never found.

47 Ideas
Number of ideas recalled ________

Other ideas recalled, including inferences:
Appendix G.1: Literacy Activity: Tampering With Titles

Tampering With Titles

Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Story/Book Title ___________________________

Author ___________________________

Think carefully about your story or book and its title, then complete each section below. Use the back of this sheet if you need more room.

Give several specific reasons why the title of your story/book should or should not be changed.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Create a logical alternative to your story/book’s title. Explain why the new title is appropriate.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Create an illogical or opposite title for your story/book. Explain why the new title is not appropriate.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

25 Fun and Fabulous Literature Response Activities and Rubrics
Scholastic Professional Books
### Appendix G.2: Literacy Activity: K-W-L Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What we know</td>
<td>What we want to find out</td>
<td>What we learned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G.3: Literacy Activity: Story Map
Appendix G.4: Literacy Activity: Postcard
Appendix G.5: Literacy Activity: Character Map
Appendix G.6: Literacy Activity: Letter to the Author

Name __________________________ Date __________________________

Letter to the Author

Book Title: _______________________

Dear __________________________,

______________________________________

______________________________________

______________________________________

______________________________________

______________________________________

______________________________________

______________________________________
Appendix G.7: Literacy Activity: Book News

BOOK NEWS

Book Title: 

Author: 

(article title)

(caption)
Follow the Clues

Can you predict what will happen next? Write the clues on the footsteps. Then write your prediction on the door.
Appendix H: Mid-Study Interview Questions

Mid-Study Student Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about having a lot of choices in reading materials?
2. Do you like learning new strategies to help with reading?
3. What strategies are you using more now than you did before?
4. Do you feel more comfortable reading? Are you understanding what you read now that you know more strategies?
5. What new things in the classroom do you like that have been implemented for this study? Are there any things that you don't like?
Appendix I: Post-Study Survey

Student Survey

Circle your most honest response below:

1. Reading a book is something I like to do:
   Never       Sometimes       Always

2. Reading a book on a rainy Saturday afternoon is something I like to do:
   Never       Sometimes       Always

3. Reading a book during free time at school is something I like to do:
   Never       Sometimes       Always

4. Reading for fun at home is something I like to do:
   Never       Sometimes       Always

5. Getting a book for a present is something I like:
   Never       Sometimes       Always

6. Starting a new book is something I like:
   Never       Sometimes       Always

7. Reading during summer vacation is something I like to do:
   Never       Sometimes       Always

8. Reading instead of playing is something I like to do:
   Never       Sometimes       Always
Appendix I continued: Post-Study Survey

9. Going to the bookstore is something I like to do:

   Never        Sometimes        Always

10. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?

    Excited and Confident   Nervous and Scared   Wish I was absent

11. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?

    Excited and Confident   Nervous and Scared   Wish I was absent

12. When I am reading by myself, I understand:

    Almost everything I read   Some things I read   None of what I read

13. When I am in a group talking about stories, I:

    Almost never talk   Sometimes talk   Always talk

14. I like when my teacher reads books out loud to the class:

    Every day   Almost every day   Never

15. I would read more if I had better choices of materials in the classroom:

    Definitely   Maybe   Probably not
Appendix J: Post-Study Interview Questions

Post-Study Student Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about reading?
2. Did you find yourself reading interesting things and learning anything new?
3. What strategies will you continue to use for reading?
4. Do you find reading more enjoyable now, or is it still a chore?
5. What activities did you do that made reading more fun and motivating?
Appendix K: Post-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Early Railroads

Railroads began as rails laid down in a road. The rails were made of wood topped with iron. Horses pulled carts running along the rails. The rails were smoother than the roads so the horses could pull the carts faster than they could pull wagons over roads.

Then Peter Cooper got a better idea. Why not develop a steam engine, or locomotive, to pull the carts? He believed a steam engine would be able to pull heavier loads faster than horses could.

In 1830, Cooper built a steam-powered engine. It was small and weighed barely a ton. Because of its small size, it became known as the Tom Thumb, who was a tiny hero in old English stories. Cooper wanted to let people know about his new machine so he advertised a race between the Tom Thumb, and a gray horse.

On an August day that year, the locomotive and the gray horse lined up side by side. Cooper stood at the controls of the Tom Thumb. The race began. At first the horse pulled ahead. Then the train picked up speed and soon it was neck and neck with the horse. Then Tom Thumb pulled ahead and a great cheer went up.

But suddenly a safety valve in the engine broke. The locomotive slowed and then fell behind the horse. Although Tom Thumb lost the race, steam engines would soon take over from horses.

Over the next 20 years, railroads replaced canals as the easiest and cheapest way to travel. By 1840, the United States had about 3,000 miles of railroad tracks. This was almost twice as much as Europe. A person could travel about 90 miles by railroad in just a few hours. Such a trip took a day and a half by horse-drawn wagon.

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Appendix K continued: Post-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Level: Four

Expository

Concept Questions:

What are railroads?

(3-2-1-0)

What is steam?

(3-2-1-3)

Why do people use more?

(3-3-1-4)

What is novel?

(3-2-1-0)

Score: 12 = 100%

FAM UNFAM

Prediction:

“Early Railroads”

Railroads began as rails laid down in a road. The rails were made of wood topped with iron. Horses pulled cars running along the rails. The rails were smoother than the roads so the horses could pull the carts faster than they could pull wagons over roads.

Then Peter Cooper got a better idea. Why not develop a steam engine, or locomotive, to pull the carts? He believed a steam engine would be able to pull heavier loads faster than horses could.

In 1830, Cooper built a steam-powered engine. It was small and weighed barely a ton. Because of its small size, it became known as the Tom Thumb, who was a tiny hero in old English stories. Cooper wanted to let people know about his new machine so he advertised a race between the Tom Thumb and a gray horse.

On an August day that year, the locomotive and the gray horse lined up side by side. Cooper stood at the controls of the Tom Thumb. The race began. At first the horse pulled ahead. Then the train picked up speed and soon it was neck and neck with the horse. Then Tom Thumb pulled ahead and a great cheer went up.

But suddenly a safety valve in the engine broke. The locomotive slowed and then fell behind the horse. Although Tom Thumb lost the race, steam engines would soon take over from horses.

Over the next 20 years, railroads replaced canals as the easiest and cheapest way to travel. By 1840, the United States had about 3,000 miles of railroad tracks. This was almost twice as much as
Appendix K continued: Post-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Level: Four

Europe. A person could travel about 90 miles by railroad in just a few hours. Such a trip took a day and a half by horse-drawn wagon. (297 words)

---

Details

— Why not develop a steam engine,
— or locomotive,
— to pull the carts?
— He believed
— an engine would be able to pull heavier loads faster
— than horses could.

Main Idea

— In 1830,
— Cooper built a steam engine.

Details

— It was small.
— Because of its size,
— it became known as the Tom Thumb.
— Tom Thumb was a tiny hero in old stories.

Main Idea

— Cooper wanted people to know
— about his machine
— so he advertised a race
— between the Tom Thumb
— and a horse.

Details

— On an August day,
— the locomotive
— and the horse lined up.
— The race began.
— At first,
— the horse pulled ahead.
— Then the train picked up speed.
— Soon it was neck and neck.
— Then Tom Thumb pulled ahead
— and a cheer went up.
— But a valve broke.
— The locomotive slowed
— and fell behind the horse.

Main Idea

— Although Tom Thumb lost the race,
— engines would take over from horses.

---

Retelling Scoring Sheet for “Early Railroads”

Main Idea

— Railroads began as rails laid down in a road.

Details

— The rails were wood
topped with iron.
— Horses pulled carts running along the rails.
— The rails were smoother
— than the roads
— so the horses could pull the carts faster.

Main Idea

— Peter Cooper got an idea.
Appendix K continued: Post-Study Qualitative Reading Inventory

Level: Four

Details

- Over the next 20 years, railroad replaced canals as the easiest and cheapest way to travel.
- By 1840, the United States had 3,000 miles of tracks.
- A person could travel 90 miles by railroad in a few hours.
- Such a trip took a day and a half by wagon.

37 Ideas
Number of ideas recalled ________.
Other ideas recalled, including inferences:

Questions for “Early Railroads”

1. What is this passage mainly about?
   **Implicit:** a race between the first steam engine and a horse; or how the steam engine replaced the horse in hauling things and people.

2. Why did Peter Cooper build a steam engine?
   **Implicit:** it could pull heavier loads and go faster than horses (If the students says, “to make money,” ask, “Why would it make money?”)

3. Why was the first steam engine called Tom Thumb?
   **Explicit:** it was small and Tom Thumb was small.

4. Why did Cooper set up the race between Tom Thumb and the horse?
   **Explicit:** to let people know about the engine.

5. How do you know that people who watched the race wanted Tom Thumb to win?
   **Implicit:** they cheered when Tom Thumb pulled ahead.

6. Even though the horse won the race, why could you say that Tom Thumb really won?
   **Implicit:** because steam engines later replaced horses.

7. Why did the horse win the race?
   **Explicit:** a part of the locomotive’s engine broke.

8. By 1840, what country had more miles of railroad tracks?
   **Explicit:** United States.

---

**Without Look-Backs**

Number Correct Explicit: ________
Number Correct Implicit: ________
Total: ________
- Independents: ________ correct
- Instructional: ________-7 correct
- Frustration: ________-5 correct

**With Look-Backs**

Number Correct Explicit: ________
Number Correct Implicit: ________
Total: ________
- Independents: ________ correct
- Instructional: ________-7 correct
- Frustration: ________-5 correct

---

Early Railroads 267
Appendix L: Main Idea “Hand” Poster
Appendix M: Visualizing Poster

Visualizing
Imagining in your head the events of a story
Appendix N: “Tuning” by Gary Paulsen

The Winter Room
by Gary Paulsen
TUNING

If books could be more, could show more, could own more, this book would have smells...

It would have the smells of old farm: the sweet smell of new-mown hay as it falls off the oiled sidee blade when the horses pull the mower through the field, and the sour smell of manure steaming in a winter barn. It would have the stinky-dick smell of birth when the calves come and they suck for the first time on the rich, new milk; the dusty smell of winter hay dried and stored in the loft waiting to be dropped down to the cattle; the putrid fermented smell of the chopped corn silage when it is brought into the manger on the silage fork. This book would have the smell of new potatoes sliced and frying in light pepper on a woodstove burning dry pine, the damp smell of leather mittens steaming on the back of the stovetop, and the acrid smell of the slop bucket by the door when the lid is lifted and the potato peelings are dumped in— but it can't.

Books can't have smells.

If books could be more and own more and give more, this book would have sound...

It would have the high, keening sound of the six-foot bucksaws as the men pull them back and forth through the trees to cut pine for paper pulp; the grunting-gassy sounds of the work teams swearing and slapping as they hit the harness to jerk the stumps out of the ground. It would have the chewing sounds of cows in the barn working at their cuuds on a long winter's night; the solid thumping sound of the ax coming down to split stovewood; and the piercing scream of the pigs when the knife cuts their throats and they know death is at hand— but it can't.

Books can't have sound.

And finally, if books could be more, give more, show more, this book would have light...

Oh, it would have the soft gold light— gold with bits of hay dust floating in it— that slips through the crack in the barn wall; the light of the Coleman lantern hissing flat-white in the kitchen; the silver-gray light of a middle winter day, the splattered, white-night light of a full moon on snow; the new light of dawn at the eastern edge of the pasture behind the cows coming in to be milked on a summer morning... but it can't.

Books can't have light.

If books could have more, give more, be more, show more, they would still need readers, who bring to them sound and smell and light and all the rest that can't be in books.

The book needs you.

G.P.
Appendix O: Sensory Impressions – Form 1

Creating Strategic Readers: Techniques for Developing Competency in Phonemic Awareness, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension (2nd ed.)
by Valerie Ellery. © 2009 by the International Reading Association.
Appendix P: Sensory Impressions – Form 2
Appendix Q: Ice Cream Sodas

Ice Cream Sodas

Review Key Words
- accidentally: by chance, not meant to happen
- melt: to change from a solid into a liquid
- invented: thought up; created
- drink: liquid to swallow; a beverage

Write a Prediction

Read the Story

Most people have heard the saying, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Well, that's just what Robert M. Green did when he accidentally invented the ice cream soda.

Robert M. Green sold soda pop in Philadelphia. People really liked a special drink he made with soda pop and sweet cream.

One day in October of 1874, Mr. Green was selling his drinks at a celebration of the Franklin Institute. There was still a lot of time left in the day when he ran out of sweet cream. Instead of shutting his stand down early, he decided to make the best of things. He bought some ice cream, planning to let it melt and use it in place of the sweet cream. But before the ice cream had a chance to melt, some people wanted to buy a drink. Mr. Green didn't want to turn them away. So he made the drinks with the frozen ice cream. Lucky for Mr. Green, people loved the ice cream sodas.

Before inventing ice cream sodas, Mr. Green made about six dollars a day. After inventing ice cream sodas, he made about 600 dollars a day.
Appendix R: Book Pass Handout