Read-Alouds in the School Setting

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The Definition and Purpose of a Read-Aloud

A report by the National Institute of Education, completed in 1985, as reported by Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson (1985), in an article by Morrow, Rand and Smith (1995), stated that "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (Morrow, Rand, & Smith, p. 23). Reading aloud to children, or read-alouds, can also be referred to as storybook reading, depending on the study. Regardless of the name, studies on reading aloud to children can be found as long ago as the nineteenth century, meaning that "a strong body of research" (Wan, 2000, p. 157) already exists. In professional literature within the field of education, many articles exist that address the issue of read-alouds, allowing educators an opportunity to review information regarding this topic (Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop, & Linn, 1994).

Read-alouds are one means of assisting with the emergent literacy of children, which is defined as "the precursory knowledge about reading and writing that children acquire prior to conventional literacy instruction and that they bring to the task of learning to read" (Justice & Pullen, 2003, p. 99). Many studies have shown that the literacy development of children is influenced by verbal interactions between the children and adults while reading stories (Wan, 2000). Wan reported that Trelease (1989) stated that reading aloud to children is a way to instill a desire to read within each child. Simply providing children with access to storybooks can help those children make strides in emergent literacy, including the areas of print concepts and alphabet recognition (Justice & Pullen, 2003). Additionally, as reported by McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, and Brooks (1999), Dowhower and Beagle (1998) identified providing access to books as a

critical dynamic in aiding early literacy development, especially for children at the kindergarten level.

Beck and McKeown (2001) conveyed the research of Snow, Tabors, Nicholson and Kurland (1995), which said that "the most valuable aspect of the read-aloud activity is that it gives children experience with decontextualized language, requiring them to make sense of ideas that are about something beyond the here and now" (Beck & McKeown, p. 10). Smolkin and Donovan (2001a) noted that Pearson (1996) stated that children also gain experience with reading strategies as modeled by the teachers during read-alouds, allowing the children to learn within the context of the situation.

Teacher Approaches to Read-Alouds

While teachers can learn strategies for how to effectively practice reading aloud to students, one would think that they also have to engage in the activity of reading aloud, in order to use those strategies. As conveyed by Blok (1999), Karweit and Wasik (1996) recommended four read-aloud practices to educators: small group reading, rereadings of stories, limiting how many questions the teachers ask during reading, and presenting new vocabulary with a specific approach. Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) conducted a probability study of 1,874 elementary teachers to find out how often they read aloud to their students. The survey used had the teachers report their read-aloud activity over the previous ten days. The findings indicated that the frequency of read-aloud activity decreased as the grade level (first through sixth) increased. In primary grades, picture books were used much more frequently, while intermediate teachers employed the use of chapter books and novels more often than their primary grade peers. The bottom line of

the study was that "book reading does occur often in elementary classrooms" (Jacobs, Morrison & Swinyard, p. 190).

One factor that may prevent teachers from utilizing read-alouds often and effectively is the dearth of children's books in some classrooms and the lack of training in the use of read-alouds. Significant differences were found by McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, and Brooks (1999) between schools with access to books and those without. In their study, they provided about 250 children's books to several schools in an urban district. Other schools received no books. The schools that did receive books showed a gain in number of books read aloud. Some schools in the study also received teacher training to go along with the books. The teachers in these schools read out loud fifty percent more than teachers in schools where books were received without training.

While read-aloud sessions are often a whole class affair, Wood and Salvetti (2001) stated that Morrow and Smith (1990) found that children can be more participatory during read-alouds if they are able to have one-on-one interaction. The findings of Morrow and Smith declared that students in one-on-one readings "asked more questions and made more comments than those in either whole-class or small-group settings" (Wood & Salvetti, 2001, p. 76). Additionally, as conveyed by Wood and Salvetti, Wells (1986) declared that one-on-one read-alouds allow teachers, and other adults, to guide students in the process of creating meaning of the text. Project Story Boost, examined by Wood and Salvetti, is one program that involves outside readers coming into schools in order to do one-on-one readings with students deemed at-risk. The outside readers are trained in effective read-aloud strategies in order to create the best possible situation for the students.

Morrow, Rand and Smith (1995) reported that Roser and Martinez (1985) identified three roles that teachers take on during read-alouds, all of which have caused positive literacy development in children. The role of co-respondent involves the teacher in initiating discussion and sharing reactions and personal experiences that connect the text to real life. As informers/monitors, teachers explain and assess students' understanding. When teachers act as directors, they fulfill a leadership role by announcing story beginnings and endings. In the observations of Beck and McKeown (2001), teachers predominantly used two types of interactions: clarifying content or vocabulary and attempting to involve students by asking them questions about what was just read to them.

A study conducted by Morrow, Rand and Smith (1995) found seventeen statistically significant correlations between teacher and student behaviors. The study showed that teacher behaviors can directly influence what students do during storybook reading. Morrow, Rand and Smith stated that Green, Harker and Golden (1986) found that reading style is another important part of ensuring student success during oral story reading. For students engaged in emergent literacy, how teachers model reading behaviors, such as finger-point reading, can prepare students to use the same behaviors (Uhry, 2002). Uhry defined finger-point reading as "the ability to make a voice-print match while repeating memorized text in a familiar picture book" (Uhry, p. 320). In Uhry's study of kindergarten children, teachers modeled reading for meaning as well as finger-point reading, prior to the children being tested on finger-point reading. The findings indicated that there is a strong association between finger-point reading and phonemic awareness, an emergent literacy skill. Uhry suggested that modeling finger-

point reading during read-alouds may encourage children to read on their own and possibly increase their sight vocabulary.

Teacher talk during read-alouds can be effective in improving student responses to the read-alouds (Morrow, Rand & Smith, 1995). In their study, Morrow, Rand & Smith found that seventy-five percent of teacher talk during read-alouds was devoted to classroom management, asking questions, and supplying the students with information. Justice and Pullen (2003) recounted an approach described by Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, and Fiscehl (1994) known as dialogic reading in which teachers use interactive and evocative behaviors with children during storybook reading. Wan (2000) reported a study by Peterman (1988) that found that "children's story understanding can be enhanced by storyreading procedures which draw on the children's own experiences and highlight similar experiences among the story characters" (Wan, p. 156).

Beck and McKeown (2001) generated the idea of Text Talk, which is based more on open questions than on literal recall questions. The questions used "ask children to consider the ideas in the story and talk about and connect them as the story moves along" (Beck & McKeown, p. 13). Text Talk is a means for teachers to help children toward increasing their comprehension of the story as well as aiding in the development of children's language. Justice (2002) pointed out the need for research in the area of questioning during read-alouds, to see what effect the types of questions might have on student learning, specifically in the area of vocabulary.

<div align="center">Effects of Read-Alouds</div>

General Effects

While teachers play a major role in read-alouds, the effect of read-alouds on students can be a key in deeming reading aloud a successful practice. Often, both the teacher and the student play roles in read-aloud situations. Blok (1999) said:

> There are reasons to expect that an interactive reading style has a much stronger effect on language development than does a passive reading style. In fact, these are roughly the same reasons why entering into verbal interaction is much more effective than offering environmental language. Reading to children often takes place in a specific setting in which the actions are performed with a high degree of routine. These routines cause a certain degree of predictability, which enables children to gradually perform an increasingly large number of actions that were formerly performed by the reader – for instance, handling the book, turning the pages, completing the last word or, at a later stage, paraphrasing parts of the story. Despite its routine nature, reading is not a rigid activity. The setting offers ample opportunities for a certain variety in the repetition. (p. 350)

In a study by Morrow, Rand & Smith (1995), the researchers found that student involvement in discussion prior to reading and student participation during and after reading were both positively influenced by the teachers' focus and behavior. Students can make textual connections during read-alouds in a number of ways, although the connections made may rely on the type of text used in the read-aloud (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001a). Intertextual connections are connections made from one text to another text, while intratextual connections are those made within the same text (Pantaleo, 2004). Pantaleo also discussed autobiographical connections, which are those that relate the text to life and life to the text. In her study of first graders, Pantaleo found

that, of all of the textual connections made by students during read-aloud sessions, approximately twenty percent were intertextual, thirty percent were intratextual, and fifty percent were autobiographical. In the cognitive flexibility theory of Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich and Anderson (1994), as reported by Sipe (2000), "readers build up knowledge gradually across cases, as they read (or listen to) many stories and exact similarities and commonalities across them" (Sipe, p. 255). Sipe also gave an account of Cochran-Smith's (1984) study of preschoolers and how storybook reading helped the students to make connections between the text and their own lives. Crawford and Hade (2000) cited the work of Butler (1998), which stated that the more stories that children hear and the more read-alouds to which they are exposed, the greater the infusion of language and the greater the knowledge about the process of reading that the children inherit.

One effective measure when teachers incorporate read-alouds with their students is the rereading of storybooks, which can increase a child's understanding and enjoyment of the text (Dennis & Walter, 1995). As reported by Dennis and Walter, Lewis (1982) suggested that children will request that their teachers read a story again because they already know the outcome, and they can reconstruct the story upon each rereading. The story has no true surprises when it is repeated, but students maintain their willingness to act surprised.

Read-alouds may also be an effective means of improving reading for older children. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that "the trend toward dissatisfaction with reading as students move through the middle grades and beyond may be linked to classroom instruction" (Ivey & Broaddus, page number not available). Often, the reading curriculum is geared to satisfy only a small range of reading abilities, rather than

instruction being tailored to meet individual needs. Ivey and Broaddus conducted a

survey of over 1,700 middle school students in order to determine what aspects of

reading instruction worked best for the students. One question posed by the researchers

was: "Which reading activities do you enjoy most in class?" (Ivey & Broaddus, page

number not available). Sixty-two percent of students indicated that the teacher reading

out loud was an enjoyable activity. Only free reading time (sixty-three percent) was

checked more often. Several students who partook in the survey were interviewed in

order to determine the reason why read-alouds were an enjoyable activity. The students

mentioned the use of high-interest books, the dramatic performance by the teacher and

the inclusion of the teacher's own responses as important elements in an effective read-

aloud. Ivey and Broaddus concluded that teacher read-alouds can be a critical element in

keeping students engaged in reading at the middle school level.

The above study by Ivey and Broaddus (2001) included students of different

socioeconomic backgrounds, but all from typical school settings. In their research,

Malmgren and Leone (2000) worked with incarcerated juveniles with an average age of

seventeen, in order to improve their overall reading. One of the major components of the

program was teacher read-alouds. The researchers found that the students significantly

improved their reading skills, as the subjects showed overall gains in the areas tested.

Effects on Comprehension

Ulanoff and Pucci (1999) recounted Hall's (1987) report that the frequency of

listening to stories in preschool affected students' knowledge about books, which in turn

correlated to the same students' reading test scores when they reached the age of seven.

In a study done by Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986), as reported by Wan (2000),

children in three disadvantaged first grade classrooms, who were read to for twenty

minutes a day for six months, outscored the control classes, who did not have the read-

aloud intervention, in the areas of decoding, comprehension, and active use of language.

Ouellette, Dagostino, and Carifio (1999) reported that Cohen (1988) stated that reading

aloud to elementary students benefits the students' reading comprehension, as well as

other reading skills such as word knowledge. In Cohen's study, second grade teachers in

the experimental classes reread stories out loud to their classes for an entire school year,

while the control group teachers followed the regular curriculum, which involved the

students reading from basal readers without any oral rereading by the teachers. Students

in the experimental group had a significant increase in reading comprehension over their

pretest scores, more so than their peers in the control group.

One study of a classroom of first and second graders sought to see what impact

storybook read-alouds had on the students' literary understanding, defined as "the gradual

growth of knowledge about story structure and the way stories work" (Sipe, 2000, p.

260). In this study, Sipe reviewed the verbal responses of students during read-alouds to

determine which facets of literary understanding were most prevalent. Sipe found that

analytical responses, or text interpretations, accounted for seventy-three percent of all

responses. Sipe also suggested that teachers should allow for verbal responses during

reading, as well as before and after reading, because "the children's responses in this

study were so often *of* the moment and *in* the moment" (Sipe, p. 272) and for the teacher

to wait to hear those responses until after the reading might mean the students would lose

their response. Fifth graders of low reading ability were a part of an intervention using a

read-aloud program to gauge its effect on the students' reading ability and sense of story structure (Ouellette, Dagostino, & Carifio, 1999). This study suggested that "reading aloud to intermediate grade students from children's literature and involving them in the stories that they hear may serve as a suitable complement to the basal reading program already in place in the classroom" (Ouellette, Dagostino, & Carifio, p. 87). Morrow (1985), as cited by Ouellette, Dagostino, and Carifio (1999), found that, when children take an active role in read-alouds, they show improvement in oral language and comprehend the story more completely.

Students involved in Project Story Boost, the program that involves one-on-one readings for at-risk students, showed greater gains in story retelling than students who were not involved in the program (Wood & Salvetti, 2001). The average gain for words used in story retelling was 114.98 words for students in Project Story Boost versus a gain of 56.65 words for nonparticipants.

According to Heath (1982), as related by Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop and Linn (1994), the socioeconomic status of parents can have an effect on the way in which students approach comprehension for read-alouds. In Heath's study, parents of a middle class community provided a scaffold during storybook reading with their children; therefore, these children came to school with the framework for answering comprehension questions. Parents from a working class community stressed letter recognition and simple retellings of the stories, which meant that teachers still had to make connections from the read-aloud books to the students' own lives. In a poor community observed in the same study, very little, if any, storybook reading took place, meaning that these

students had to learn that books are stylized versions of everyday utterances before they were able to move on to more complex comprehension techniques.

Vivas (1996) carried out an experiment with children in Venezuela, forty-three percent of whom had no books at home, in which language comprehension and language expression were assessed. Vivas implemented two programs, one of which was a school-based program where teachers read one storybook out loud each day. The children in this program showed significant gains in areas such as story comprehension and sequence memory. Ouellette, Dagostino and Carifio (1999) found that the greatest gains in recall and comprehension occur when the text used in a read-aloud is organized and "matches well with an over-learned framework for the story" (Ouellette, Dagostino, & Carifio, p. 77).

Yaden (1988), as acknowledged by Dennis and Walter (1995), proposed that younger children could need repeated readings of a story before they are able to completely understand the story. In their own study, Dennis and Walter used first graders as their subjects to find if hearing the same story read aloud would significantly increase their comprehension of the story. The study took place over four weeks and the students listened to the same story read aloud four times. Dennis and Walter used oral retellings of the story by the students after each reading session as their measure. The researchers found a positive correlation between repeated read-alouds and student comprehension. This relationship was true for students of differing reading abilities as well. Dennis and Walter also supposed that practice in retelling the stories can aid students in overall story recall. Students' scores, based on a range of 0 to 10, showed a gain of 0.5 points to 7

points from the first retelling to the third retelling. Sequence was one area that showed overall improvement.

According to Crawford and Hade (2000), wordless picture books can be a source of determining how well students can engage in story construction. In their study, Crawford and Hade found that students were able to interact with wordless picture books much in the same way that they would with storybooks with text. The researchers attributed this to the possibility that the students had acquired the skills to construct meaning from read-alouds. The researchers also stated that teachers should consider using wordless picture books read-alouds within the curriculum.

Effects on Vocabulary

Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop and Linn (1994) proposed the benefits of read-alouds on language understanding and vocabulary:

> The language in storybooks is richer and more complex than language that children are exposed to in their daily conversations. Storybooks contain more descriptive vocabulary and longer and more complex sentences than ordinary speech. Through exposure to storybooks, children are exposed to new word meanings and encouraged to comprehend more complex grammatical forms.
> (p.72)

Additionally, students seem to learn word meanings through the incidental learning that takes place during read-alouds.

Ulanoff and Pucci (1999) reported that Nagy and Herman (1987) stated that "the major mode of vocabulary growth, once students have learned to read comes from incidental learning of words from context through reading" (Ulanoff and Pucci, p. 321).

As noted by Justice (2002), Robbins and Ehri (1994) specified one reading activity through which students acquire new vocabulary as shared storybook reading. Justice also pointed out the research by Senechal (1997), which stated that children showed significantly greater gains when adults used questions about new vocabulary, rather than when adults simply labeled the words. In her own research, Justice (2002) found contradictory evidence that showed students having greater gains when adults labeled words versus when adults asked questions about words. Justice also found that the types of questions used by adults did not have a profound effect on learning, regardless of whether the questions were conceptual (involving judgment-making or predicting) or perceptual (involving concrete features of the text).

Increased, effective read-alouds can lead to positive gains for students in written vocabulary and word and letter identification (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi & Brooks, 1999).   In the study conducted by McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi and Brooks (1999), the researchers saw gains on three assessments (Concepts About Print and Diagnostic Survey, Ohio Word Reading Test and written vocabulary) given to students whose teachers had undergone training in how to effectively read aloud and whose classroom environments had been enriched with children's books. The teachers in these classrooms read aloud with much more frequency than their colleagues who did not receive the training. Elley (1989), as reported by Ulanoff and Pucci, conducted research in which the teacher provided repeated readings of a story and found a thirty-three percent gain, compared to pretest scores, in vocabulary acquisition. Vivas (1996) reported on the same study by Elley and cited Elley's evidence that reading stories out

loud is a major source of acquiring vocabulary for students at different levels who score across the spectrum in vocabulary assessments.

Effects on Second Language Acquisition

Read-alouds can be used in classrooms where English is not the primary language. Ulanoff and Pucci (1999) conducted a study in which three methods were used for presenting read-alouds to a group of Spanish-speaking students. In the first method, the students were read the text in English with no type of language intervention used. In the second method, the teacher used both English and Spanish interchangeably without directly translating anything. In the third method, referred to as the preview-review method, the text was previewed in Spanish, read in English, and reviewed in Spanish after the reading. The research showed that students in the third group, in which the teacher used the preview-review method, had significantly higher gains (fifty-seven percent higher than on the pretest) on a vocabulary acquisition assessment than the other two groups.

Negative Effects

Beck and McKeown (2001) reported that Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) stated that not all research points to positive outcomes for readers due to teacher read-alouds. When researchers conduct naturalistic studies, many of the findings show a negative correlation between reading aloud and reading achievement in students (Meyer. Stahl, Wardrop & Linn, 1994). Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop and Linn suggested that approaches to storybook reading that lack quality will not promote literacy growth simply due to the presence of the read-aloud. Furthermore, in the same study, the researchers hypothesized that the time teachers spent on storybook reading took time away from other activities

that can also influence reading achievement, such as activities involving written text. For informational storybooks in content-area subjects, Brabham, Boyd and Edgington (2000) stated that educators at the primary level who employ their use may cause the students confusion rather than help their students gain understanding of the content.

A study by Wellhousen and Yin (1997) was conducted to investigate whether or not gender bias might have a negative impact on read-aloud interactions between students and teachers. Evidence exists that boys are asked higher-level questions by their teachers (Handley & Morse, 1984) and that teachers' interactions, such as praise, are of a higher quality when directed at boys (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The Wellhousen and Yin (1997) study monitored four types of teacher interactions during read-aloud sessions: praise, accept, remediate, and criticize. Over a six-week period, the researchers found that the teacher had significantly more interactions with the male students during the read-alouds than with the female students. The teacher's behavior indicated to the students that "one sex is more worthy of teachers' time and attention," (Wellhousen & Yin, 1997, page number not available).

Informational Book Read- Alouds

Supplementing content-area instruction in subjects such as science and social studies using informational read-alouds can be an effective way to engage students and enrich their knowledge of the area being covered (Albright, 2002). Brabham, Boyd and Edgington (2000) found that, when asked to state their preference in regard to type of book, more than two-thirds of third graders chose informational storybooks that included both fact and fiction over books that had only facts and books that had only fiction. Albright (2002) conveyed that Alvermann and Phelps (1998) found that picture book

read-alouds can be especially effective because they allow students to visualize the content, and they come in a shorter format while still giving in-depth coverage of the topic. Furthermore, the picture book read-alouds can provide students with motivation and can illustrate applications of the content-area material.

However, informational read-alouds are not necessarily frequently used in content-area lessons or units. In a survey by Jacobs, Morrison and Swinyard (2000), teachers who responded read informational books to their students much less frequently than picture books or novels. Teachers used informational books on three out of their previous ten days of teaching, compared with five out of ten days for children's novels and six out of ten days for picture books. In their study, Smolkin and Donovan (2001b) pointed out that teachers involved in the study of the use of science informational books only found a few of the books (thirty-eight overall) applicable to read-aloud situations. The researchers found that the nature of the discussion involved with the read-aloud may be the key to the book's effectiveness.

When informational books are used as read-alouds, they can lead to "lively, student-centered discussion" (Albright, 2002, p. 419). Pantaleo (2004) cited research by Oyler and Barry (1996) where, during informational book read-aloud sessions, students in first grade classrooms made connections between the text being read and other texts, such as poems, cartoons, and storybooks. Smolkin and Donovan (2001b) noted that first graders in their study "engaged in more intensive discussion" (page number not available) during information book read-alouds than they did during picture book read-alouds. Smolkin and Donovan (2001a) found that, in school settings of both lower-middle-class and upper-middle-class, students dedicated seventy to seventy-eight percent

of their total actions to comprehension during informational read-alouds, compared to twenty-two to thirty percent during storybook read-alouds. Albright (2002) devised a model for how to use read-alouds effectively for seventh graders in the area of social studies. She read picture books aloud twice weekly to her geography students. Prior to the read-aloud sessions, Albright activated prior knowledge through a series of questions. During the read-aloud, the students were encouraged to participate in a discussion of the text in order to reinforce the content knowledge. Students who took part in the read-aloud sessions faired just as well on tests as students who used the same class time working on completing study guides and answering questions from the textbook. Smolkin and Donovan (2001b) found structured interactions between the teacher and students to be the most effective in increasing comprehension of the text and an increased knowledge base. Brabham, Boyd and Edgington (2000) stated that Leal (1994) found that third graders learned more facts from informational storybooks than from books classified as nonfiction that covered the same content.

Vocabulary acquisition is one area on which informational storybooks may have an impact. Brabham, Boyd and Edgington (2000) conducted a descriptive study of second, third, and fourth graders in order to find the effects of reading storybooks with content knowledge contained within fictional narratives. The researchers examined the students' content comprehension, ability to differentiate between fact and fiction and vocabulary acquisition. For this particular study, the researchers had the cooperating teachers use a read-aloud strategy in which students were primarily involved before and after the reading of the informational storybook. During the reading, interruptions were kept to a minimum. The results of the study showed that there was significant growth by

the students in the area of vocabulary acquisition. Students understood unfamiliar science and social studies words after as few as two read-aloud sessions of the informational storybooks used in the study. Smolkin and Donovan (2001b) reported on research by Duke and Kays (1998) who studied kindergarten children and found that as the children heard information books read aloud more frequently, they increasingly used the vocabulary and other linguistic elements found in the book.

When teachers model effective reading behaviors during informational book read-alouds, children may be able to translate the teacher behaviors into their own more effectively than in storybook read-alouds because both the teacher and students are more engaged in attempting to find and make meaning from the text (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001a). Smolkin and Donovan found a number of teacher-modeled reading behaviors that students emulated during read-aloud sessions. Establishing links between different parts of the same text and establishing links to prior knowledge are two of the behaviors that the researchers recorded when the teacher involved in the study read an informational book out loud. The teacher also scaffolded often allowing the children's understanding to emerge through steps rather than straightforward direct instruction. Because the primary purpose of informational books is to inform and the primary purpose of storybooks is to entertain, reading informational books aloud offers "numerous opportunities for nonliterate children to acquire a large, distinct range of written text comprehension principles" (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001a, p. 115).

Dyad Reading Groups

An alternative to teacher read-alouds can take place when a student takes the role of the teacher in an interactive read-aloud situation. Eldredge and Quinn (1988) stated

that research has shown that poor readers can improve their reading comprehension skills by using different assisted reading strategies. One strategy developed by Eldredge is dyad reading in which a struggling reader is paired with a more capable reader. Eldredge and Quinn reported on a study by Eldredge and Butterfield (1986) where students used a grade-level basal reader in dyad groupings. The lead (stronger) reader read the book at a normal rate, touching each word as it was read. The struggling reader followed along looking at the words and reading aloud as many of the words as possible. The students in the dyad groups achieved as well or better on end-of-the-year assessments as students who were placed in groups according to their instructional reading level.

Eldredge and Quinn (1988) conducted a study with second graders to determine the effect of dyad reading groups on struggling readers. The struggling readers only remained in the dyad group until they could begin to read grade-level material in their own. When the researchers assessed the students at the end of the nine-month period, they found that students in the dyad groups made greater gains than their peers (also struggling readers) in the control group in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. Students in the dyad groups may have also shown an improvement in sight vocabulary recognition due to the two modes of learning taking place: visual and auditory.

In a study conducted by Morgan, Wilcox, and Eldredge (2000), second graders were divided into three separate dyad reading groups. The struggling readers were still paired with stronger readers, but the first group used books at their instructional level, the second group used books two grades above their instructional level, and the third group used books four grades above their instructional level. The instructional level was determined by an informal reading inventory and was applied to the struggling reader in

the dyad pairing. While all three groups improved their reading ability over the length of the study, the gains were greatest for students who used materials two grade levels above their instructional level. The group that worked at the instructional level of the struggling readers showed the least gain, meaning that the researchers found dyad grouping to be most successful when the students work above their instructional level.

<center>Read-Alouds as Test Accommodations</center>

As reported by Helwig, Rozek-Tedesco, and Tindal (2002), according to Tindal, Hollenbeck, Heath, and Almond (1997), test accommodations are changes in test presentation, setting, scheduling, or type of response that do not change how the test will be measured. Helwig, Rozek-Tedesco and Tindal stated that using read-alouds as a test accommodation can be effective, but not in all circumstances. The read-aloud accommodation can often be used for students with a learning disability (Meloy, DeVille, & Frisbie, 2002). Helwig, Rozek-Tedesco and Tindal conducted a study of students in grades four, five, seven, and eight to determine whether read-aloud test accommodations would have an effect on the scores of students taking part in a math test. The students who received the read-aloud accommodation were given a test, in which each problem was read by a narrator, while at the same time the words being read appeared on a video monitor. The control group took the same test in the standard way with the participants reading the test on their own. The researchers only garnered limited evidence that the accommodation was effective. At the grades four and five level, students with a learning disability did perform better on the accommodated test; however, in grade seven, the opposite effect occurred, as students with a learning disability scored better on the

standard test. Students in general education performed better when using the standard format.

Meloy, DeVille, and Frisbie (2002) reported on a similar study, which they conducted in order to compare the effects of a read-aloud accommodations on special education students versus general education students. The students in this study were from grades six through eight. The researchers used four ITBS tests for the study (Science, Usage and Expression, Math Problem-Solving and Data Interpretation, and Reading Comprehension), although the researchers did state that read-aloud accommodations should not be employed for reading comprehension assessments as reading aloud affects what is actually being assessed. The procedure for the accommodation was carefully scripted and the educators who lead the read-aloud were trained in order to maintain the integrity and validity of the study. Students from both general education and special education classes scored significantly higher when given the read-aloud accommodation than did their peers who took the test in the standard format.

<center>Areas of Agreement</center>

The evidence that supports read-alouds as an effective part of a reading curriculum is strong. Most researchers viewed the read-aloud as an integral part of a reading program for early readers and agreed that, when studied, read-alouds have a positive impact on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension (Butler, 1998; Cohen 1988; Dennis & Walter, 1995; Hall, 1987; Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop, & Linn, 1994; Ouellette, Dagostino, & Carifio, 1999). The researchers who addressed the intermediate and middle grades agreed that read-alouds should be a part of reading programs at that

level as well (Albright, 2002; Brabham, Boyd, & Edgington, 2000; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Leal, 1994; Malmgren & Leone, 2000; Ouelette, Dagostino, & Carifio, 1999; Smoklin & Donovan, 2001a). Researchers stated that the availability of books in the classroom is an important factor in allowing for read-alouds (Downhower & Beagle, 1998; Justice & Pullen, 2003; McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, &Brooks, 1999; Vivas, 1996).

Most research pointed to the need for active participation by both the teacher and the students in order for read-alouds to be effective (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Blok, 1999; Karweit & Wasik, 1996; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Morrow, Rand, & Smith, 1995; Wan, 2000; Whitehurst et al., 1994; Wood & Salvetti, 2001). The teacher's role can be varied, but the teacher should take on more than just a role as a direct instructor during read-alouds (Morrow,Rand, & Smith, 1995; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Smolkin & Donovan, 2001a; Uhry, 2002; Whitehurst et al., 1994). Students should be given a chance to actively participate in book readings through discussion (Blok, 1999; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Morrow, Rand, & Smith, 1995;Pantaleo, 2004; Smolkin & Donovan, 2001a; Wan, 2000; . The discussion should lead to a better understanding of effective reading techniques and should promote positive reading behaviors (Cohen, 1988; Crawford & Hade, 2000; Dennis & Walter, 1995; McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop, & Linn, 1994; Nagy & Herman, 1987; Ouelette, Dagostino, & Carifio, 1999; Senechal, 1997; Sipe, 2000; Vivas, 2000; Wood & Salvetti, 2001; .

Teachers above the primary grade level should employ the use of informational books when teaching content-area subjects such as science and social studies.

Researchers agree that using informational books as read-alouds can lead to a better understanding of the content of the topic being addressed (Albright, 2002; Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Brabham, Boyd, & Edgington, 2000; Duke & Kays, 1998; Leal, 1994; Oyler & Barry, 1996; Smolkin & Donovan, 2000a; Smolkin & Donovan, 2000b).

Dyad reading groups can be an effective means of assisting struggling readers. The dyad groups should consist of a struggling reader working with a more competent reader, and the more competent reader should lead by example, reading aloud and pointing to the words as she reads (Eldredge & Butterfield, 1986; Eldredge & Quinn, 1988; Morgan, Wilcox, & Eldredge, 2000).

Areas of Disagreement

Some researchers diverged from the idea that read-alouds are always effective. These researchers feel that read-alouds may take away from other more valuable literacy activities (Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop, & Linn, 1994). Informational book read-alouds at the primary level may cause confusion for students (Brabham, Boyd, & Edgington, 2000).

Not all research points to one defining role that a teacher should assume during a read aloud. Some researchers feel that teachers should use read-alouds as an opportunity to instruct on and demonstrate reading skills (Justice, 2002; Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999), while others feel teachers should allow for the students to have a strong role in the activity, while the teacher serves as a monitor (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Ouelette, Dagostino, & Carifio, 1999; Whitehurst et al., 1994). Studies vary on the overall effectiveness of teachers during read-alouds, as some research points to teachers spending more time on classroom management issues than on more reading-oriented interactions (Morrow, Rand, & Smith, 1995). Some research points to gender bias as a problem in

read-alouds, as teachers tend to favor boys during the discussion, thus detrimentally affecting the girls (Handley & Morse, 1984; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Wellhousen & Yin, 1997).

Conflicting research on vocabulary acquisition shows that not one teacher-led method can be considered definitive. Research points to both teachers labeling words (Justice, 2002) during read-alouds and teachers using a questioning method (Senechal, 1997) during read-alouds as being effective. The type of questions used by teachers in regard to vocabulary is also an area for which no definitive answer exists (Justice, 2002).

Researchers disagree on how effective read-aloud test accommodations can be. The format for the read-aloud accommodation is also not standard throughout the research (Helwig, Rozek-Tedesco, & Tindal, 2002; Meloy, DeVille, & Frisbie, 2002). Which students should receive the test accommodations was not an area of agreement either (Helwig, Rozek-Tedesco, & Tindal, 2002; Meloy, DeVille, & Frisbie, 2002).

Despite the disagreements of some researchers, the majority of the research supports the notion that read-alouds are an effective and useful practice for educators to incorporate into their curricula. Most studies of read-alouds verify the idea that reading aloud to students leads to, at the very least, an awareness of textual concepts, and many studies have shown that read-alouds have a positive impact on reading comprehension and vocabulary recognition. Despite the number of results supporting the use of read-alouds, little research exists showing how well students will achieve when they have a companion text to follow while the teacher reads aloud. In the following study, the researcher examines the effects of having a companion text versus not having a

companion text during a teacher read aloud in order to explore the influence of "seeing" the text as opposed to "listening to" the text.

Methodology

<u>Subjects</u>.

Washington School is located in an upper middle class district in north central New Jersey. The school has approximately 350 students and serves students from kindergarten through fifth grade. This study involved eighteen fourth graders – eight boys and ten girls. All of the students who took part in the study speak English as their primary language. The students were randomly divided into two groups prior to the study. The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) was used to determine the reading level of the students and to ascertain that a balance existed between the two groups. All of the students in both groups had achieved a Proficient or Advanced Proficient score on the NJASK.

<u>Materials</u>.

In order to best suit the nature of the study, and the students involved in the study, the researcher chose a chapter book at the fourth grade level. <u>The Pinballs</u> by Betsy Byars (1977) was chosen as an age- and level-appropriate text. The subject matter and vocabulary were suitable for the fourth graders and the students were familiar with the author's style through a previously read chapter book by Betsy Byars entitled <u>The Not-Just-Anybody Family</u>. The researcher determined that using different chapters from the same text would allow for fewer extraneous factors to affect the study.

<u>Procedures</u>.

The quantitative data used in this study began with chapters 12 and 13, as the researcher began data collection at this point, and the collection of data continued over a two-week period. The students had been in their groups from the beginning of the novel and the groups were alternating from having a companion text to not having a companion text prior to the collection of the data. The students' desks were arranged in a U-shaped formation with a gap in the middle. The two groups sat on either side of the U so that the students without a companion text would not have an opportunity to read along with someone seated close by who had a companion text. The read-aloud period took place at approximately the same time each day, during the class's reading period in the afternoon.

The researcher began each session with an oral review of the previous two chapters, in advance of the distribution of the texts. After the review, the researcher passed out the books to one of the two groups. The second group without the text was instructed to listen as the researcher read aloud. The researcher read two chapters every day for six days.

During the reading, the researcher read from the text in a natural tone and voice, using inflection when necessary. During the reading, the researcher introduced the five vocabulary words to be assessed after each session. The researcher discussed the meanings of the words, using context to generate a better understanding of each word. The students with the texts were able to see the words as they were discussed, whereas the students without texts listened and contributed without visual access to the words.

The researcher allowed for additional discussion, but did not generate any further discussion about words that were not included on the vocabulary assessment.

After each read-aloud session, the researcher collected the texts from the students who had been reading along. Without pausing for further discussion, the researcher distributed the vocabulary assessment (see appendix A); this assessment was distributed first for each session. All students completed the same assessment, which contained the words previously introduced and discussed during the read-aloud. After all of the students had completed their vocabulary assessments, the researcher disseminated the comprehension assessment (see appendix B). Again, none of the students had access to the text during the completion of the comprehension assessments.

In addition to the vocabulary and comprehension assessments, the researcher conducted a fluency assessment with one student. The student selected scored in the lower range of proficiency on the NJASK. This student was also identified by the researcher as a "struggling" reader, due to previous reading assessments and the researcher's own observations. During these six sessions, which took place after the vocabulary and comprehension assessments had been completed, the student read aloud from one of the chapters that had been a part of the teacher read-aloud that day. The passage used was two hundred words in length. The data collected by the researcher for these fluency assessments was a running record indicating the percentage of words read correctly by the student, as indicated in Table 3.

<div align="center">Results</div>

The raw data for this study are presented in Tables 1-3.

<div align="center">Insert Tables 1-3 here.</div>

The statistical analysis of this data revealed that there was no significant difference found for students with and without the text in vocabulary scores. There was no significant difference found for students with and without the text in comprehension scores when the students were presented with the text first. There was a significant difference found for students with and without the text when the students were without the text first and then were given the text for the next read-aloud session.

A series of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Paired Sample t tests were used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used on all statistical tests.

A Repeated Measure ANOVA was used to see if a student holding their own copy of text would influence vocabulary. There was no main effect for having their own text, $F(1,16) = .625$, $p = .441$. There was no main effect for order, $F(1,16) = .025$, $p = .876$. There was no interaction between having their own text and the order the test was conducted, $F(1,16) = .157$, $p = .697$. The means and standard deviations are represented in Table 4.

Table 4

| Group | With Text | | Without Text | |
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
With Text First	12.78	2.64	13.22	2.44
Without Text First	13.00	2.00	13.67	2.18
Total	12.89	2.27	13.44	2.26

A Repeated Measure ANOVA was used to see if a student holding their own copy of text would influence comprehension. There was no main effect for having their own text, $F(1,16) = 3.678$, $p = .073$. There was a main effect for order, $F(1,16) = 15.810$, $p < .01$. There was no interaction between having their own text and the order the test was conducted, $F(1,16) = .019$, $p = .893$. Since there was a significant difference found for order a series of Paired Sample t tests were performed to further analyze the data.

Paired Sample t tests were performed to examine the difference between comprehension scores in children with text and without text for both orders of presentation. There was no significance difference found in comprehension scores of students with the text and without the text when presented with the text first, $t(8) = -1.639$, $p = .140$. There was a significant difference found in comprehension scores of students with the text and without the text when presented without the text first, $t(8) = 3.787$, $p < .01$. As you can see by the means presented in Table 5 there is a significant difference between students presented without the text first for with text (M=27.11) and without text (M=20.11), suggesting that when students are presented without the text first they perform better with the text.

Table 5

Group	With Text		Without Text	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
With Text First	22.11	5.18	24.56	5.94
Without Text First	27.11	4.31	20.11	4.29
Total	24.61	5.29	22.33	5.52

Discussion

  This study examined the impact, on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and fluency, of having a companion text during a teacher read-aloud. The researcher sought to analyze whether students with a text would achieve significantly higher scores on vocabulary and comprehension assessments than students without a text. The eighteen fourth grade students involved in this study were randomly divided into two groups. The two groups alternated between having a text and not having a text for six sessions. All students were then given the same vocabulary and comprehension assessments, once the researcher had finished a read-aloud of two chapters from the chapter book, The Pinballs. When the raw data were analyzed, no significant difference was found for students with and without a text in the areas of vocabulary acquisition and fluency. No significant difference was found for reading comprehension when the students began the study with a companion text first; however, when students began the study without a text and then were given the text for the next session, a significant difference occurred in that group's scores with the text.

  While none of the previous research referred to in this study directly addressed the issue of comparing the effects of a read-aloud with a companion text versus without a companion text, one finding of this particular study served to reinforce previous research on a topic related to read-alouds. The researcher utilized the questioning method of introducing vocabulary, as presented by Senechal (1997). The average score on the vocabulary assessments was 94.8% indicating the possibility that the researcher's use of

asking questions to generate vocabulary definitions, as opposed to the labeling method presented in the research of Justice (2002), was an effective one.

Through qualitative observations, the researcher did find that the students involved in the study had a heightened interest in the read-aloud, supporting the work of Ivey and Broaddus (2001). The students were engaged and excited throughout the study, even exhibiting remorse when the researcher did not continue reading after the two chapters were finished. This may indicate that the use of read-alouds should, but does not necessarily, extend to grades beyond the primary level, a notion examined in a prior survey conducted by Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000).

Most of the research on read-alouds has concentrated on their overall impact on reading skills. Because this study did not examine the effectiveness of read-alouds in general, but instead used the read-aloud as a condition for all facets of the study, no known contrasts with previous studies exist when scrutinizing the quantitative data.

This study attempted to extend the past research on read-alouds in order to provide a different outlook on the structure of the practice of reading aloud. While no significant differences were found for vocabulary or fluency, the finding that students achieved significantly better on the comprehension assessment with the text after having begun the study without the text may point to the use of a companion text as a potentially successful practice for read-alouds. The students who started the read-aloud sessions with the text showed no significant difference when the text was taken away for the next session. While this does not necessarily contradict the previous statement, this finding does not further the evidence in support of a companion text, nor does it have a negative impact on that issue.

The researcher believes that the difference in the scores for students beginning without the text and then using the text may exist because the students in that group were unaware of the type of assessment to be used after each read-aloud session when the first session took place. The students may have been more inattentive during the read-aloud, not realizing the importance of listening despite not having a text with which to follow. Conversely, the students who began with the text may have been equally successful without the text because they knew what to expect upon taking part in the second session, since they had already gained an understanding of the type of assessment to be used.

The small sample size of this study may be considered a limitation since only six sessions took place, three each with the text and without the text for both groups. Perhaps if the study had taken place over more sessions, the increased data may have shown a change in the difference between the two situations. As is, only the first two sessions of the study showed a significant difference in reading comprehension because, at that point, all students had been given the opportunity to experience the read-aloud under both conditions.

Further research is needed on this topic, in order to determine if a companion text is an effective part of a read-aloud. This particular study was done with fourth graders. A similar study done with primary students would be a useful tool in assessing how read-alouds should transpire. Additionally, a similar study involving informational books would serve a similar purpose, since this study incorporated the use of a fictional chapter book. The researcher suggests that future studies take into account the need for multiple sessions with the text and without the text in order for the researchers to gather more data.

Reading aloud to children is a common practice for many educators. The hope of many of the teachers is that the practice will spark an interest for reading in the children (Trelease, 1989) and will allow the children to use the reading model demonstrated by the teacher in their own reading (Morrow, Rand, & Smith, 1995). The use of a companion text may serve to encourage or enhance those processes. This study exhibits evidence that, with the support of other studies, may lead educators and administrators to consider providing students at all levels with the opportunity to take part in teacher read-aloud sessions with a companion text in hand. At the very least, other researchers could view this study as a springboard to future studies on more specific topics within the area of read-alouds, considering that most of the previous research already supports the role of the read-aloud as an effective and motivational teaching tool.

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Table 1
COMPREHENSION (10 QUESTIONS PER TEST)   Yellow = Score with text

White = Score without text

	Ch. 12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-21	22-23
A1	100%	100%	90%	100%	NA	100%
A2	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
A3	100%	100%	100%	100%	NA	NA
A4	90%	100%	70%	100%	100%	90%
A5	80%	40%	50%	40%	50%	90%
A6	NA	90%	90%	100%	100%	90%
A7	100%	90%	80%	100%	100%	100%
A8	90%	90%	90%	100%	100%	80%
A9	100%	60%	40%	NA	NA	80%
B1	100%	90%	80%	100%	80%	70%
B2	100%	90%	70%	100%	80%	100%
B3	100%	90%	90%	100%	100%	100%
B4	70%	40%	40%	60%	70%	60%
B5	90%	90%	NA	90%	70%	100%
B6	100%	90%	80%	100%	100%	100%
B7	90%	100%	40%	90%	NA	90%
B8	100%	100%	70%	100%	70%	100%
B9	100%	90%	90%	100%	100%	100%

Table 2

VOCABULARY (5 WORDS PER TEST)   Yellow = Score with text

White = Score without text

	Ch. 12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-21	22-23
A1	100%	100%	100%	100%	NA	100%
A2	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
A3	100%	100%	100%	100%	NA	NA
A4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
A5	100%	40%	100%	60%	100%	100%
A6	NA	80%	100%	100%	100%	100%
A7	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
A8	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
A9	100%	100%	100%	NA	NA	100%
B1	100%	40%	100%	100%	100%	100%
B2	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
B3	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
B4	100%	60%	100%	40%	60%	100%
B5	100%	60%	NA	100%	100%	100%
B6	100%	100%	100%	100%	NA	100%
B7	100%	60%	100%	40%	100%	100%
B8	100%	80%	100%	100%	100%	100%
B9	100%	100%	100%	60%	100%	100%

Table 3

RUNNING RECORD (FLUENCY), ONE STUDENT (A5)   Yellow = Score with text

200 WORDS PER PASSAGE   White = Score without text

PERCENTAGE OF WORDS READ CORRECTLY INDICATED

Ch. 12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-21	22-23
98%	97.50%	97%	95.50%	97%	98%