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AUDIO BOOKS' IMPACT ON STUDENTS' READING EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of audio books on students' reading experiences in a public elementary school in rural upstate South Carolina. This study was conducted to address the problem of practice reported by teachers as low motivation and engagement during independent reading in classrooms that contributed to negative experiences during independent reading. This action research study utilized interviews, a focus group, a survey, and classroom observations to gather qualitative data on the reading experience before and after the introduction of audio books from three resources. Adult support, access, interest, focus, and difficulty were themes revealed during data collection and analysis that impacted the experience of reading for students. The study revealed that audio books may or may not have an impact on students' perceptions of reading, but their implementation can positively impact the reading experience for students.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Reading is an integral part of language and literacy development for children. In schools, independent reading is a key component of a balanced literacy curriculum as it is important for building stamina, fluency, and comprehension. Experts in reading instruction agree the best way to learn to read is to practice reading (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). Research in schools around the world has found that student choice and the contexts in which students read impact the desire to read (Daniels, Marcos, & Steres, 2011). Educators may assume that creating a peaceful environment and giving students choices would be enough to create a positive reading experience. However other factors can impact students' experience while reading. While there are many theories suggesting reasons for a negative reading experience for students such as lack of time for independent reading and an over instruction on reading skills, it is a widely agreed upon notion that motivation and engagement are suffering. A 2007 study by the National Endowment for the Arts found that families are spending less on books than in the previous twenty years, so students may not read at home if texts and interests are limited. The National Endowment for the Arts (2007) also found that when readers utilize books and other media simultaneously such as television and video games, they experience low engagement in reading. As a result, students may have negative feelings about the reading experience. For many students, independent reading may occur only during school hours. As a result, it has become the responsibility of teachers and librarians to

collect, organize, and offer access to high interest reading materials for students. With the introduction of one to one mobile learning in schools, students have more access to electronic resources than ever before.

Because schools are dynamic environments that change as their participants change, assessing activities in classrooms is a process that naturally appeals to practitioners in the field of education. Leaders as far back as John Dewey (1910) recognized the need for and benefit of educational reform through practitioner research. In the field of education, particularly in the area of instructional best practices, action research is favorable because its purpose is to improve one's practice while traditional research is meant to offer information that is generalizable to all settings (Herr & Anderson, 2015). For this reason, an action research model is preferable to a traditional research model as it can have an immediate impact on educational experiences for teachers and students. In addition, action research is situational in that the researcher seeks to understand the context and participants of the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Educators working in the field with students on a daily basis are in an optimal position to examine situational factors and make the practical decisions that are necessary for student learning. For action researchers, the process of self-reflection is as important as the data gathered, so this type of research is best to inform my instructional and purchasing decisions for digital resources (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Statement of the Problem of Practice

I have worked in the same elementary school for the past nineteen years, and during my tenure, I have seen motivation and engagement to read independently rise and fall among individuals, classes, and grade levels. Each year, I administer a revised

version of the Motivational Reading Questionnaire developed by Guthrie and Wigfield (1995) to students in grades two through five. Each year, I find fifth grade students to indicate the lowest levels of reading motivation. As a result of declining motivation for this age group, I have implemented incentive programs that have led to short term improvement in motivation. These programs, however, did not impact student engagement in independent reading, and due to the extrinsic nature of reading incentives, they have not impacted motivation long term. Utilizing my experiences in the field, the Motivation to Read Questionnaire (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1995) and anecdotal reports from teachers, it has become clear that the problem lies in the experience of reading for students. Low motivation and engagement as reported by teachers is a symptom of this problem. This problem appears most significantly in my fifth grade students as they begin the pre-adolescent stage of development and prepare to leave the elementary school setting for middle school. For these students, motivation to read is highly important as they must read extensively and increasingly difficult texts in social studies, science and language arts. Reluctance to read and difficulty fostering engagement and a love of reading are grade level problems that persist each year.

Research Questions

   This study was intended to answer one main research question and two sub-questions created as a result of the problem of practice:

Research Question:

How do audio books impact the experience of reading for students in the elementary classroom?

Sub-questions:

1. How audio books affect student motivation to read?

2. How do audio books affect student engagement while reading?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was examine the impact audio books have on student experiences while reading. Data from the study is also useful in collection development for the library collection and classroom libraries in the school, so the information will be used in making decisions about material expenditures. I selected an action research study because the information I sought required focused inquiry and a holistic understanding of student experiences. I used observations, interviews, a focus group, and a survey to glean information that will inform instructional and purchasing decisions to improve the reading experience for students.

The school in which I work receives additional funding for programs and services as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2015) administered by the U.S. Department of Education Office of State Support. The funding is intended to provide support to schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families. The low socioeconomic background of students is a factor in reading achievement and reading abilities. Low reading engagement reported by teachers who monitor off task behaviors and difficulty in maintaining student reading stamina is affected by distractions as well as students' desires to be doing something other than reading. These students are required by their teachers to read for a specified amount of time each day and report their reading on a printed reading log. The materials they are required to read are teacher approved traditional print materials on students' independent reading levels. In my role as library media specialist, I hypothesize that the traditional

expectations and format create negative experience for students while reading that are then reported by teachers as low levels of motivation and engagement. The purpose of this study is to assess the impact audio books as an alternative to traditional print materials have on the reading experience for students. This study gathered information from students and teachers on their perceptions of reading including information on motivation and engagement before and after the introduction of audio books.

Scholarly Literature

There is a great deal of literature on the importance of reading, and there are a variety of best practices educators use to impact the reading achievement of students. Within the field of education, it is widely accepted that opportunities for independent reading and reading aloud are components of a successful balanced literacy program. With one to one mobile technology becoming a staple in schools, the ability to access digital materials for reading is becoming commonplace in classrooms as students have access to a wide range of electronic books and audio books. Audio books provide the opportunity for students to experience both independent reading and reading aloud simultaneously.

Reading Aloud. Information about reading aloud is important to this study because audio books can be used to read aloud to students. In schools, it is a widely agreed upon that teachers must incorporate reading aloud from high interest books every day (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998). Research supports this notion as referenced by the 1985 report entitled *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (National Academy of Education, 1985). The report found that reading aloud to children is the most important activity to build success in reading. While reading aloud is a foundation of early literacy

programs, reading aloud often diminishes in classrooms as students grow older and become more independent. Documents read aloud are often "capable of mesmerizing children, adolescents, and adults and drawing them into real engagement with the subject matter" (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998, p. 30). Since audio books are produced using human voices, they provide a similar experience for students as do books read aloud in the classroom.

      Independent Reading. Just as hearing books read aloud is important to reading success, so is reading independently. Independent reading has a strong association with improved reading achievement (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). As part of a balanced literacy program, independent reading requires students to apply the skills learned during instruction (Giordano, 2011). A study conducted by Brannan (2016) found that average achieving readers and lower achieving readers who participated in an independent reading program in class scored better on assessments than students who did not. In addition, the study found that students who participate in independent reading in class read more than students who did not participate in independent reading in class. Students must choose the books that are appropriate and that they can read on their own for independent reading to be successful (Giordano, 2011). For struggling readers or for students with prior negative reading experiences, audio books may apply to their interests and be appropriately challenging without being overwhelming, while print versions of the same titles may be frustrating.

      Student Motivation. The National Endowment for the Arts (2007) found that fewer than one-third of 13 year olds read daily, which leads educators to note that something is happening to reader motivation prior to students becoming teenagers. In

addition, the same study found that the 17-year-old individuals who do not read for pleasure doubled during the previous 20 years (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). Researchers also found that the amount students read for homework or schoolwork had stayed the same indicating that the amount of required reading has not changed (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). A 2006 study used conversational interviews with elementary aged students to assess the impact reader motivation has on reading practices. The study found that student interests influenced reader motivation with 84% of the children preferring to talk about self-selected reading, while 16% chose to discuss books that were assigned by teachers (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). Educators understand that a positive learning environment is best for students, but brain research shows that positive feelings may have a larger impact on learning than once thought. According to the *Journal of Reading Recovery*, "learning occurs best when positive emotions facilitate the chemical secretions required in the brain to connect neurons" (Lyons, 2004, p. 4). When these positive emotions are not associated with reading, students may feel negatively toward reading.

Technology and Reading Integration. There is a great deal of information available on the growing popularity of electronic reading materials, but the amount of research addressing student motivation to read digitally is not as prevalent, especially for elementary students. Hess (2014) found that the use of e-readers in an elementary classroom encouraged enthusiasm in students, but the study did not address text to speech e-books or audio books. Similarly, a study in Taiwan found that the implementation of an e-book learning system for elementary students produced feedback that was "quite positive" and "the e-book was found to be more acceptable than the printed book"

(Huang, Liang, Su, & Chen, 2012, p. 721), but audio books were not considered. A Canadian study found that the use of literacy software promotes motivation to read for beginners and limits off task reading behaviors (Ciampa, 2012). According to Larson (2015), shifting from print to digital formats must be gradual and span a length of time for it to be successful, indicating that educators may expect reading outcomes using technology to change as reading digitally becomes more prevalent.

Not all research supports the use of digital reading tools to improve motivation. Researchers in Turkey discovered conflicting results and found that reading electronically affected fifth grade students adversely (Aydemir and Ozturk, 2012). The study utilized predetermined texts, and measured students' motivation using a pretest-posttest model. Student interests were not considered, and it is difficult to determine if the subject matter of the texts may have affected motivation. In the design of my study, students used self-selected texts in an effort to rule out interest as a variable that would impact validity. In addition, the Turkish study focused on e-books rather than audio books. In the design of my study, students were offered audio books on a variety of topics with accompanying print and electronic versions.

Knowlton (2016) examined the popularity of electronic books compared to print books in a university setting and found "the overall preference for print, combined with the drawbacks of e-books for preservation and resource sharing, leads to a recommendation that most monographic purchases be in print" (p. 32). Again, these results reflect electronic books and do not consider the audio book medium. Thooft (2012) examined the effect of audio books on reading comprehension and motivation with English language learners and students with special needs and found that while the

use of audio books impacted student achievement, audio books did not appear to have an impact on motivation. Like other studies in which a subgroup is the focus, it is difficult to attribute causality as the characteristics of the subgroups may have had an impact on the findings.

McGill-Franzen, Ward, and Cahill (2016) concluded that the use of electronic reading resources can impact students and provide information for educators. According to their findings, electronic resources provide opportunities to read materials that might be too challenging in the traditional print format. Pearman (2008) found that low achieving students remain on task longer when reading using electronic resources than when they read that same resource in a traditional print format, so reading stamina may be affected by electronic formats. This literature review provides an overview of topics relevant to the study and is a shortened version of the in-depth review of literature found in Chapter Two.

Key Words/Glossary

Audio books: Books that are read aloud by means of a human voice. Audio books may or may not have a print counterpart.

Electronic Books (E-books): Printed monographs that have been scanned or otherwise recreated in a digital format that may or may not be enhanced with audio. Electronic books are read visually.

Independent Reading: Reading that is scheduled to occur in the classroom environment during which students read a self-selected text for a pre-determined amount of time prior to conferencing with the teacher.

One to One (1:1): One to one mobile learning and one to one technology refers to

models in schools that provide a dedicated device for every student such as a laptop, iPad, or tablet and access to resources in multiple locations through wireless capabilities.

Potential Weaknesses

One potential weakness of this project exists in placing too much emphasis on the positive impact of audio books. Audio books may replace traditional print in some instances, but currently, they are considered an alternate form of print rather than a primary resource for reading (Cahill & Moore, 2017). Therefore, the number of available titles in audio formats are more limited than traditional print formats. As the librarian, I must avoid over emphasizing audio book purchases in lieu of print and focus on balancing the collection. My personal and professional opinions also pose a weakness to the study since I prefer to read aloud to students and listen to audio books when I read for pleasure. Another weakness may be this study's acceptance by the wider research community in library and information science as it does not consider circulation data to determine impact. While circulation statistics are helpful in purchasing materials, students may access materials without actually reading or enjoying them. There is no measure of student motivation and engagement available in the circulation system, so circulation statistics show what students are selecting, not what they are reading. My background is also a source of potential weakness. As a product of a white, middle class upbringing, I critically examined my biases with regards to literacy and technology. The home access students have to text and technology differs from my experience, so my inferences must be free of preconception. The limited size of the study and its representation of one group in one school and geographic location may also pose a weakness as generalizability is limited. Time is also a potential weakness in this study as

it considers only the reading behaviors observable during a limited portion of the school year. The experiences students have may impact their reading perceptions in the long term, but this study is not constructed to consider those impacts.

The Significance of the Study

As an action research project, the results of this study are most significant to my professional setting. For my purposes, I will use the information gathered to inform purchasing decisions as well as instructional decisions. On a larger scale, however, this study has the potential to impact historically underserved student groups. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds due to poverty may lack the opportunities students from privileged backgrounds enjoy particularly in the area of early literacy. Children who are not read to at an early age may begin school without the literacy skills that are crucial to success in all areas of the curriculum. Although poverty is not the sole variable in determining at risk reading behaviors in students, it is the most universal factor (Cunningham, 2003). Students from impoverished backgrounds and schools that serve these students may find information from this study helpful in stimulating lacking early literacy skills with the use of audio books. In addition, this study may be of significance to students who are learning English as a second language as many of those students must read below their abilities due to difficulties deciphering printed English. Most importantly, this study has the potential to remind educators in every environment that there are many ways to excite and motivate children to read, but teachers must continue to seek out those various ways.

Conclusion

While the use of action research for making purchasing and instructional

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decisions is not uncharted territory, the studies about the use of audio books for students is an area that has not been widely undertaken. The abilities to learn to read, read to learn, and read in all aspects of one's life are crucial to success, so it is imperative that educators implement any and all ways they can to motivate and engage students in reading. While audio books may not be the answer to all students' motivation and engagement problems, it is an area worth examining to learn as much as possible about what engages children. Like other action researchers, I want to ensure that the knowledge obtained is valid and trustworthy, and my goals are to improve instructional practices and inform purchasing decisions. As I seek to learn further about the student reading experience and the implementation of electronic resources for reading, I hope to inform the purchasing of materials for my school, but more importantly, the engagement and motivation factors that affect all students.

CHAPTER TWO: Review of Literature

Independent reading is an integral part of academic learning experiences in schools. Reading for pleasure and information is important as "individuals read to live life to its fullest, to earn a living, to understand what is going on in the world, and to benefit from the accumulated knowledge of civilization" (Cullinan, 2000, p. 1). Students become skilled readers by reading extensively, especially during independent reading (Adams, 1995). In order for independent reading to be informative and engaging for students, the reader must be motivated to read and engaged in the act of reading (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999; Miller, 2012). Despite its importance, there exists a problem with student motivation to read independently and student engagement while reading. In this chapter, I review available literature pertinent to the problem of practice in my professional practice. The literature review contains a statement of the problem of practice in my professional setting, the study's main research question and sub questions, an explanation of the purpose of the chapter, and a description of legislation that impacts literacy instruction in public schools. The literature review also addresses the theoretical and historical perspectives that frame the research study followed by pertinent literature to the topic. The research contained in the literature review examines socioeconomic impacts on reading, reading aloud, reading motivation, reading engagement, independent reading, and technology tools for reading including electronic books, audio books and interactive books.

Theoretical Perspective

This research study is informed by constructivist theory that requires educators to focus on the learner to create meaning in learning experiences. The learner centered approach to curriculum and instruction requires the student to be the central focus of instruction rather than the content (Shiro, 2013). In reading, the learner centered approach relies on student self-selection of text and opportunities to read using differentiated means to meet their needs (Spivey, 1989). In *Experience and Education* (1938), John Dewey explains that when learning is the "acquisition of what is already incorporated in books and in the heads of elders" (p. 19), information is incorrectly assumed to be static. In reading, the acquisition of what is in books and the heads of elders does not improve the development of the learner as the learner centered ideology prescribes. The heads of elders as Dewey describes it refers to information contained in textbooks or in notes provided by teachers through which students lack opportunities for questioning, self-selection, and reflection. Dewey's theory of experiential education (1938) explains that it is a mistake to expect the future to be the same as the past. In reading instruction, teaching using traditional print materials, basal readers, and whole class novels does not recognize the future as different from the past and therefore requires diverse resources and methods (Pearson, 2000). Also vital to this research study is the understanding that education and experience are not necessarily equated as some experiences can lead to mis-education (Dewey, 1938). In reading experiences, mis-education can occur as a result of poor vocabulary acquisition, low appreciation of literacy in the home, and inadequacy of reading materials that may exist in homes with low levels of financial resources (Reardon, Valentino & Shores, 2012).

Theories of learning and human development proposed by Jean Piaget (1964) provide crucial information to this research study, as well. Piaget (1964) examined the differences between learning and development explaining that these processes in children are not identical. Piaget (1964) explained that development is spontaneous and considers the totality of knowledge, while learning is caused by situations that differ based on one's experiences. In reading, students can experience the spontaneous development Piaget discusses as they develop word recognition, fluency, and phonetic awareness. Learning in reading, however, requires situations, teachers, and materials that can produce different results in different learners (Guzzetti, 2002). This study utilized audio books to improve the reading experience for students rather than to create changes in the development of reading abilities.

Because reading functions best in situations that are authentic, it is a constructivist activity in which students participate naturally during an instructional day (McLaughlin, 2012). Literacy is also a body of skills and sub skills which are constantly evolving and changing as students mature and participate in different experiences (McLaughlin, 2012). Constructivist theory of reading emphasizes the importance of schema in children's reading experiences, so for students with limited experiences with text, comprehension can be difficult (McLaughlin, 2012). For students from high income homes, expenditures on enrichment activities such as music lessons, travel, and summer camps are often available and offer experiences that are inaccessible to their peers from lower income homes (Reardon, Valentino, & Shores, 2012). According to constructivism, readers comprehend by building mental representations that combine new information from text with previously acquired knowledge (Spivey, 1985). In line with the notions of Piaget

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(1964) and Dewey (1938), reading must be a learner center process to ensure success.

Dewey (1938) also questioned the role of the teacher and of books in the educational

development of children and concluded that education is not to intended impart subject

matter alone. In this action research study, the subject matter of the reading materials was

irrelevant because the researcher was not attempting to impart content. Rather, as the

researcher, I sought to address the problem of practice using learner center theory. This

research study recognizes that for activity to be meaningful, "everything depends upon

the quality of the experience which is had" (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). Addressing the problem

of practice in the research setting requires high quality reading experiences for students.

     In addition to constructivist theory, this research is based on the theory of new

literacies that state that literacies evolve as the world around us changes (Gallego &

Hollingsworth, 1992; Leu et al., 2013). Independent reading as it is framed in this study

is the reading students do using self-selected texts in which they engage for pleasure

(Miller, 2002). The type of literacy required for independent reading is pleasurable

literacy during which engagement and motivation are necessities regardless of the type of

text being read (Resnick, 2000). In addition, this research requires the use of audible

language in the form of audio books, so spoken language is an important factor in

understanding this research as a possible means to improve the reading experience. This

research study is not intended to measure comprehension skills, reading levels, or

academic growth. In line with Lewin's action research theory (1946), it is intended to

examine a potential solution to an identified problem that exists separate from academic

achievement data.

Historical Framework

The history of reading education during the last century has followed the trends in the larger scope of education (Guzzetti, 2002). Prior to the 20th century, drill and practice were the primary methods of instruction as all learners were expected to read by identifying sounds and letters (Pearson, 2000). Ability grouping during the early 20th century was done in classrooms using reading groups, but educators soon realized that ability grouping by class incorrectly assumed students who showed strength in one curricular area to be strong in all subjects (Guzzetti, 2002; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998). Studies of whether students in homogenously grouped classrooms learned more than heterogeneous classes were inconclusive, so grouping trends began to change (Guzzetti, 2002). In addition, researchers began to recognize inequalities in classes where students were homogeneously grouped, particularly students with lower abilities. Concerns about the limited vocabulary in texts also led to the creation of controlled vocabulary basal readers that were widely used as the primary resource for reading instruction until the 1980s (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1999). As norm referenced tests became useful as accountability measures for schools in the 1970s, assessment became a driving force in reading instruction (Guzzetti, 2002; Pearson, 2000). Students were required to pass basic skills tests in order to graduate high school, so an instructional emphasis in reading was placed on basic skills (Guzzetti, 2002). During the 1990s, the standards movement led to reforms in both instruction and accountability when standards based instruction measured by high stakes testing became the focus in reading (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1999). In the current system of education, value added measures seek to show improvement in students' reading abilities from one year to the next (Guzzetti,

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2002). As a result, schools have implemented differentiated practices in reading and assessments that measure individual student progress using reading materials based on children's independent and instructional reading levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012).

Reading interventions as part of school reform have been used in classrooms typically to improve word fluency and comprehension with an overarching goal of improving student achievement, but interventions today are aimed at effectively teaching diverse learners how to read for deeper understanding (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Marie Clay (2013) contributed reading intervention strategies not to improve high stakes testing results but rather to monitor the progress of individual students. Current models in education recognize that the reading process involves four areas of learning in which students must understand messages expressed in language, conventions used in print, and visual patterns as well as master the ability to listen to language. Listening to print resources read aloud is an important component of the first and last area of learning (Clay, 2013; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998). In this research study, messages expressed in language and listening to language are key components of the instruction that occurs with the target group of students.

Current best practices in reading education indicate that all children do not learn the same content at the same rate or in the same ways, but daily instructional programs in schools have not necessarily changed in ways that implement this philosophy (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). While models such as the Four Blocks emphasize a self-selected reading block, it has varied in its use and effectiveness from class to class (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999). Studies that track achievement in literacy indicate that the literacy problems in America are not because of

a decline in literacy but a result of economic, political, and social challenges that demand more advanced skills not currently addressed in traditional classrooms (Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012; Resnick, 2000). For this reason, achievement data is not an emphasis of this study because it does not measure these advanced skills. This research study utilizes technology for learning, self-direction, and self-selection of materials in an effort to improve the reading experience for students.

Read to Succeed Act 284

Legislation passed by the South Carolina General Assembly is intended to impact instructional practices and student opportunities in South Carolina's schools. The largest piece of legislation to be passed in South Carolina that impacts student literacy is the Read to Succeed Act 284 which was passed in 2014. The Read to Succeed Act 284 (2014), an amendment to the 1976 Title 59 Code, was enacted in an effort to improve literacy in South Carolina. According to the bill, many students "fail to develop proficiency with reading and comprehension because of inadequate instruction and engaged practice" (Read to Succeed Act 284, 2014). In order to address the proficiency problems, the Read to Succeed Act requires schools and teachers to take specific steps to improve proficiency. Of importance to this action research study is the mandate by the South Carolina General Assembly that "all students must be given high quality instruction and engage in ample time actually reading and writing in order to learn to read, comprehend, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively across all content areas" (Read to Succeed Act 284, 2014). While this research study does not measure proficiency with reading and comprehension, it examines the motivation and engagement

problems reported by teachers in an effort to provide tools for the engaged practice required by law.

Socioeconomic Impact on Reading

Socioeconomic background has long been recognized to have a direct impact on reading as poverty creates unequal opportunities between children growing up in high income homes and children growing up in low income homes (Gorski, 2013; Lesaux, 2012; Leu et al., 2013; Zhang, Washington & Yin, 2014). Family income is not the only predictor of reading proficiency, but family income has been found to be a predictor of parents' behaviors with their children around print, so children from low income backgrounds may be less likely to have interactions with reading materials while with their parents (Wambiri & Ndani, 2015; Zhang, Washington & Yin, 2014). This impact is present even prior to the beginning of school for students with as much as a fourteen-month difference in reading readiness between students from low and middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds (Worley & Story, 1967). Only one-third of middle school students from low income homes show reading comprehension proficiency, and students from low-income homes enter high school with literacy skills as much as five times lower than their higher income peers (Reardon, Valentino, & Shores, 2012). In addition, these students are not gaining the literacy skills to be successful in high school, college and the work force even though measurements of procedural word reading skills taken in third grade indicate proficiency (McGill-Franzen, Ward, Cahill, 2016; Reardon, Valentino, & Shores, 2012). The problem worsens for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds as they encounter texts with specialized academic vocabulary as these students show higher levels of difficulty than their peers (Heppt, Haag, Böhme, Stanat, 2015).

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For students from low income homes, parent involvement in reading has been found to be lower than for higher income peers as low income parents are less able to provide resources in the home, and support in reading is largely school based (Chen, Pisani, White, & Soroui, 2012; McGill-Franzen, Ward, Cahill, 2016). Families differ in their abilities to provide enriching literacy activities for children, and parents earning lower incomes face economic challenges that hinder reading experiences in the home (Chen, Pisani, White, & Soroui, 2012). According to Bianchi and Robinson (1997), the higher a family's income, the more time children spend reading or in other literacy activities because these families may be more financially able to fund these activities. For low income families, the responsibility of working multiple jobs may keep parents away from the home. Lack of reliable transportation may inhibit families' access to libraries and community activities in which children from higher incomes participate. These school like activities provide background experiences that may help students excel more easily in literacy activities in school while leaving students from low income backgrounds at a disadvantage (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997; Burney & Bielke, 2008).

The subjects in this research study are largely from backgrounds of low income, so the struggles indicated from past research likely exists for these students. Reading experiences are school based, so these must be the most positive, engaging and motivating experiences possible. This study seeks to offer tools teachers can use to improve their students' reading experiences and materials that appeal to students' interests and digital proficiencies.

Reading Motivation

Abraham Maslow (1954) contributed to educators' understanding on motivation

with the publication of *Motivation and Personality*. According to Maslow (1954), the needs of individuals exist in a hierarchy, and needs on the lower ends of the hierarchy must be met before higher level needs are addressed. On the subject of education, Maslow said, "my own criticism of our traditional educational methods is that they are far too much occupied with intellectual analysis, and with the acquirement of formularized information" (p. 224). In reading instruction, this intellectual analysis may be gathered using assessments in which every student reads the same text regardless of interest. The formularized information in reading instruction can be the diagnostic reading levels and teacher selected texts that are then used with students that may or may not impact their motivation to read because motivation to read is not secondary to basic reading skills (Johnson & Blair, 2013). Treating reading motivation as an afterthought creates a population of students with reading abilities but without the desire to read (Johnson & Blair, 2013).

While reading motivation and engagement are often used synonymously with one another, they are two components that work both separately and in conjunction with one another as students read independently (Johnson & Blair, 2003; Unrau & Quirk, 2014). Reading motivation is a broad term that encompasses eleven constructs of reading including efficacy, challenge, curiosity, involvement, importance, work avoidance, competition, recognition for reading, reading for grades, social reasons for reading, and compliance (Guthrie et al., 2004). For students, many factors may affect motivation including frustration with text difficulty, lack of interesting materials, and preferences for other activities (Chua, 2008). Information on student attitudes is important in understanding motivation and in planning instruction as it prevents educators from

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assigning arbitrary reading materials students may not be motivated to read (Unrau &

Quirk, 2014). Assessing reader motivation is one component of improving it as educators

work to understand why reading fails to hold an important place in some student's lives

(Conradi, Jang, & McKenna, 2014; Unrau & Quirk, 2014). It is clear that for some

students, motivation to read lessens as the students get older (Varuzza, Sinatra,

Eschenauer, & Blake, 2014). In the current research study, advancing age as students

enter pre-adolescence appears to be a factor in reduced motivation to read.

F. Herzberg (1954) examined the factors of motivation and hygiene in his work,

Work and the Nature of Man. Herzberg observed employees and determined that certain

factors may lead to dissatisfaction with a job, but he termed these factors as hygiene

factors because they do not impact motivation. Herzberg explained that policies,

relationships, working conditions and salary are important but they are not predictors of

motivation nor can they be used to motivate. For students, hygiene factors may be

extrinsic rewards, the classroom environment, and relationships between teachers and

students (Gawel, 1997, Nichols, 2004). Some educators attempt to impact motivation

with rewards, but because these rewards are extrinsic, they operate as hygiene factors

rather than motivators (Herzberg, 1954). Other factors such as policies that require a

specific amount of time spent reading, relationships with one's language arts teacher, and

classroom environment would also be considered hygiene factors according to

Herzberg's theory, so they do not have the ability to motivate. Educators may focus on

hygiene factors in their classrooms, but they may or may not impact a student's reading

experience (Miller, 2012). Herzberg (1954) determined achievement, recognition, the

work itself, responsibility, and advancement to be motivators for employees, so following

his theory, it is these intrinsic factors that incite students to read (Gawel, 1997; Unrau & Quirk, 2014).

Reading Engagement

Educators recognize that students learn best when they are actively involved in thinking about their own learning (Buoncristiani & Buoncristiani, 2012). The metacognition that is necessary in all content areas carries additional importance in reading because students are required to think about what they want to read, engage with their reading material, and reflect on what they read (Miller, 2002; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). The multistep metacognition required in reading is critical to reading for meaning (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). In order for literacy instruction to be successful in engaging students, it must be skill driven and instill a love of the reading process in students (Gorski, 2013). Engagement is a prerequisite for reading enjoyment, and for students from low income backgrounds, promoting literacy enjoyment is crucial for reading proficiency (Gorski, 2013; Resnick, 2000; Chua, 2008). Like other areas of academic behavior, reading is influenced by a child's skill set, but because engagement is a necessary factor in reading for meaning, it is important most critically in older students (Miller, 2002; Buoncristiani & Buoncristiani, 2012). For engagement in reading to occur, students must read materials of interest but these materials can be neither too difficult nor too easy (Miller, 2002). Due to the emphasis on assessments and accountability, readability is often a factor in encouraging students to select texts, but if "we want children to actively engage in text for a variety of purposes and for increasingly long periods of time" book

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selections must be made for the purposes of engagement rather than text readability (Miller, 2002, p. 40). In choosing materials, students must have the opportunity to self-select based on content, schema, and variety (Miller, 2002).

Engagement is an area of student behavior researchers have had difficulty measuring although it is recognized to be important in reading because students may appear to be engaged when they are actually not (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). Williams, Hall, Hedrick Lamkin, & Abendroth (2013) found that the outward indicators and the physical interaction with text while reading might be present, which indicated engagement, but these physical indicators were not necessary for involvement. Researchers found this to be true especially with students who had lower reading proficiency. For these students, reading engagement may or may not have been measurable with observations, but the authors did find that disturbances such as a student's own movements and external factors acted as distractors during independent reading. In the current research study, these external factors will be minimized as students engage with audio books independently utilizing headphones.

Engagement in reading is more complicated that observations of a series of off-task behaviors. Powell, McIntyre, and Rightmyer (2006) collected data by observing and interviewing teachers during 60 to 180 minutes of literacy instruction. They used 75 data sets and found that tasks that they determined to be closed tasks with low levels of student choice, challenge, control, and collaboration produced the highest number of instances of off-task behavior. Researchers determined that more closed off tasks during literacy instruction led to less engagement in students. In this study, disengagement was determined to be a form of resistance to the closed tasks presented suggesting that tasks

that allowed for more student choice, control and collaboration would offer less opportunities for resistance. When instructional and assessment programs consider only the cognitive process of decoding, fluency and comprehension, students are not always able to become deeply involved in the text (Johnson & Blair, 2013).

Reading engagement may be just as affected by intrinsic factors as motivation (Baker, Dreher, & Guthrie, 2000, Johnson & Blair, 2013). In addition, reading engagement is highly variable among students. Cole (2002) examined four reading personalities and determined that students' literacy personalities were informed by their beliefs about reading, their purposes for reading and by their capabilities. She found that even though a student may take literacy goals seriously, that is not a predetermining factor for engagement. Cole (2002) observed and interviewed four students of differing interests, personalities and reading aptitude to determine what might motivate them to read. During the process, the researcher also examined engagement. The researcher examined student engagement over a seven-month period and found that it was student beliefs that contributed more to engagement while reading than anything else. When readers in the study were engaged, they found the reading not too challenging nor too easy, and they were eager to collaborate about reading.

In the technology rich environments in homes and schools, engagement may also be affected by factors that are in competition for student attention. The National Endowment of the Arts (2007) found that when reading occurs using print materials at home, the act of reading competes with other media. According to researchers, this multitasking suggests a lower level of engagement than students might have if they were focused on one activity. The National Endowment for the Arts (2007) also found strong

relationships between reading skills and engagement noting that learners who indicated more engagement also scored higher on summative assessments. In the current action research study, reading engagement has been recognized by teachers as problematic and continuing to diminish as the students get older. The use of audio books may have some impact on engagement in these readers contributing to an overall improved reading experience.

Independent Reading

Because independent reading is a requirement in this school setting, it is necessary to understand the implications independent reading has on the experiences of students. Independent reading is one way to give students experience with materials. Because "experience counts in cognitive functioning," the more experiences a child can have with reading, the better (Clay, 2013). For teachers, an overarching goal in literacy instruction is to produce independent learners. According to Clay (2013), becoming an independent learner requires students to monitor their reading, search for information while reading, discover new things, and check that information of different kinds fits with other information that is available. In classrooms, time must be purposefully built into the schedule for students to read on their own so they can practice the strategies they learn during language arts instruction and read texts that are self-selected (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Independent reading may take many forms in classrooms. In Silent Sustained Reading programs, students participate in recreational reading of self-selected texts without assessment (Chua, 2008). In reading workshops, students read every day from materials they choose and respond to reading as part of a structured community (Hudson

& Williams, 2015). In the Self-Selected Reading Block, children choose what they want to read from a variety of materials chosen by the teacher (Cunningham, Hall & Sigmon, 1999). The independent reading block is a time during which students are expected to read on their independent reading level as prescribed by a diagnostic program and conference with the teacher about what they have read (Cunningham, Hall & Sigmon, 1999).

Despite the differences in how reading independently is facilitated in classrooms, independent reading takes place on an individual basis with personal interaction with a text (Miller, 2002; Moss, 2016). In classrooms with adult support and a focus on students, independent reading can be an effective way to build literacy skills and engage students in the experience of reading for pleasure (Hudson & Williams, 2015; Krashen, 2004; Sanden, 2012). Because self-esteem is tied to both motivation to read and reading engagement, students with low self-esteem in reading or other academic areas may find independent reading challenging (Boeglin-Quintana & Donovan, 2013). In this action research study, the introduction of audio books as an option during the required independent reading time in an effort to impact both motivation and engagement and improve the overall reading experience.

Student Choice

Research studies on student habits during independent reading in school provide information on what works well when motivating students to read and keeping them engaged in reading. Hall, Hedrick, and Williams (2014) observed 21 third graders over a four-week period in a classroom in which at least 75% of the students qualified for free or reduced priced meals. The researchers found that providing students with choices during

independent reading positively affected engagement with the texts during reading. Choices were provided as to whether to listen to music or to read silently, whether to talk about reading with a peer or reflect silently. Choices were also provided for materials as students selected from different genres and levels without limitations imposed by the teacher. Researchers concluded from this study the climate of a classroom and the opportunity to develop their own preferences can improve the reading experience for students.

Dickerson (2015) conducted a two-year study between 2013 and 2015 in an English class utilizing surveys, observations, and teacher notes to assess the impact of student choice during independent reading and amount of reading students report completing in class. According to results, after implementation of an in class independent reading program for students, 77% of students indicated they read more in the class than in other classes, and 47.92% of students indicated they enjoyed the independent reading time. Of note in this study is that the students in the class were eleventh graders, so they may represent the teens for whom the National Endowment for the Arts (2007) study on reading expressed concern.

Research on teacher habits during independent reading offer information on how effective programs work in classrooms. Sanden (2012) conducted a study across a six-month period in eight first through fifth grade classes in Illinois and found that teachers who provided opportunities for choice and allowed students to work at their own levels and own paces without relying on adult intervention were also the teachers who were recognized by administrators to have the most effective programs. The researcher also noted several outcomes of teacher behaviors including a concentration on student

learning and privileging of student needs rather than assessment results and static literacy instruction. According to the researcher, utilizing these methods improved self-efficacy in reading, one facet of student motivation.

Hudson and Williams (2015) utilized observations, achievement results, and teacher journaling to assess a reading workshop model in a classroom. The researchers found that when students were able to select their own books, they did not express unwillingness to read independently. Some of the students in the class settled on one book to read independently and committed themselves to read the remainder of the series without teacher intervention. The researcher also noted increases in self-confidence as reported by parents of students in the class.

While each of the pieces of research on student choice in reading contains different components, when considered together, data shows that self-selection of materials is favored over teacher selection of materials by students. Because my research study seeks to improve the reading experience rather than achievement results, student selection of materials is a key variable in the study.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud exposes students to a wide variety of texts and models fluent reading, and it is a strategy used in schools as part of a balanced literacy program (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999; McClure & Fullerton, 2017). Early language development for children occurs in the home and community prior to beginning school, but children continue to learn new words beyond their initial language acquisition as vocabularies for children in elementary grades grow by thousands of words each year (Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Children learn new words when they encounter them in verbal

contexts, and one of the widely used verbal contexts in schools that impart new vocabulary to children is the read aloud (Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Despite the recognized importance of reading aloud, it is sometimes neglected in classes above the primary grades (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998). In order to examine the effects reading aloud has on the acquisition of vocabulary, Robbins and Ehri (1994) selected unfamiliar texts to read to fifty-one kindergartners from different classrooms in a school serving students from low and middle income homes. In the study, students were separated into three groups based on ability from an achievement assessment, and each child listened to a selected unfamiliar story individually on two separate occasions. The children then took a multiple choice assessment to determine if they acquired new vocabulary from the story. Researchers found that the students expanded their vocabulary after listening to the stories twice and hearing the unfamiliar words repeated. This study is of significance to the current action research study because the use of audio books provides the opportunities for students to listen and re-listen to stories read aloud and have new or challenging vocabulary repeated.

Educators may assume that children have been exposed to many types of texts and a range of vocabulary from being read to at home, but students from low income homes below the poverty level are less likely to have been read to by parents and caregivers (Chen, Pisani, White, & Soroui, 2012). For children, being read to aloud can be a joyful experience and one that is considered a luxury, so it can help build engagement in reading (Laminack, 2016; Miller, 2012). Hearing the written word read aloud also assists students in constructing meaning and examining possibilities their experiences may not provide (Laminack, 2016). Reading aloud to students can also help

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those who have had fewer verbal experiences in the home learn how language is used in different ways (Laminack, 2016). Because reading for meaning requires students to build mental representations of details contained in text, reading aloud can supplement reading for students who have difficulty constructing these mental representations (Spivey, 1985).

As an instructional tool, reading aloud in the classroom is intended to build students' motivation to read, increase background knowledge on various subjects, and develop listening and speaking vocabularies (Laminack, 2016; Miller, 2002). These skills are difficult to measure through traditional assessment methods, so the read aloud portion of reading instruction also varies from class to class (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999). For the purpose of vocabulary acquisition, reading aloud is a fundamental part of classroom literacy instruction that can take place as a whole class, in small groups, and individually.

For students, the benefits of reading aloud can be measured by assessments. Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua (2008) studied thirty-five subjects in three experimental groups as they listened to sets of stories during ninety minute intervals over a course of two weeks. Researchers sought to determine how the reading aloud of the stories affect vocabulary acquisition. In addition, the researchers gathered information on students' reading format preferences. Results suggested that the highest vocabulary acquisition and comprehension for learners improves most when materials are listened to and read visually simultaneously rather than being listened to or read separately. The researchers also reported that the majority of subjects preferred to read while listening as opposed to listening or reading material only. For the purposes of the current action research study, it is important to understand the importance of reading aloud to students

for language acquisition as it cannot be taken for granted that all students experience early reading aloud in the home. In addition, as the research study above shows, for some learners, listening to stories read aloud is preferable to reading visually. This preference for listening to books plays an important role in the current research study in which all of the materials have the read aloud option. In my study, students had the opportunity to read visually while listening to audio books, but they were not required to do so.

Technology and Reading

There are many ways in which technology can be used in reading including books in electronic forms that are static, audible, and interactive (McGill-Franzen, Ward, Cahill, 2016). While many students may indicate enjoyment for reading using technology, the use of technology in reading cannot motivate students to read (Conradi, 2014). However, using digital tools that make reading a less stressful task for students may impact self-concept, which is an important part of motivation (Conradi, 2014; McGill-Franzen, Ward, Cahill, 2016). Using technology for reading is not a new activity as electronic books have been widely accessible for over a decade. However, with the addition of one to one technology in many schools, access to electronic reading materials is more convenient, and it can be done by students individually as a part of independent reading (Larson, 2015). For the purpose of this literature review, research studies are examined in three sections according to format: electronic books, audio books and interactive books. Schools access different formats in different ways using a variety of hardware, software, and subscription services, but all of the reading materials fall into one of these three categories.

For librarians, balancing the library media center's collection of electronic

materials and print materials is a yearly challenge that is informed by curriculum,

teacher's needs, student needs, and student interests (Knowlton, 2016). For the purpose of

this research, student interest is the focus, and it is informed by research on student

perceptions of electronic resources. Knowlton (2016) examined student preferences for

electronic materials in the academic library. The researcher examined circulation

statistics for course related materials at the library and found that overall, patrons

preferred traditional print materials to electronic materials offered by the schools'

databases. However, the college students enrolled in education and curriculum courses

preferred electronic materials over print materials. The findings of this study are

important to the current action research study because it suggests that students in

curriculum and education courses and possibly educators working in the field are more

open and interested in using alternate forms of reading materials, particularly those that

are accessible electronically. Also important to the current study are the types of

materials being accessed by the students in the academic library. The materials were

electronic textbooks and other required course content rather than self-selected materials

for independent reading or for recreational reading. While the electronic resources did not

engage students more than their print counterparts, introducing self-selection of materials

may have a different outcome.

Much of the research available on digital reading materials examines computer

assisted software. While this action research study does not focus on gains in reading

achievement but rather engagement and motivation, research on computer assisted

instruction is an important component of the literature review. Students who have reading

difficulties may also struggle with reading motivation Students for whom reading is

frustrating may have difficulty remaining engaged, so computer assisted instruction may assist in correcting these problems and improve the reading experience. Gonzalez (2014) examined computer assisted instruction in seventeen third and fourth grade students with reading disabilities. The researcher used three formats of books with students to determine if oral retelling and comprehension could be impacted using electronic resources. Researchers used electronic books with text-to-speech capabilities that read aloud to students, electronic books with pronunciation tools for difficult vocabulary, and traditional print books with students. According to data from the study, comprehension scores did not show differences as students used different formats for the books. However, researchers found that students scored higher on oral retelling of stories when using the electronic resource with the most audio support. These books were electronic books the students followed visually, but the text-to-speech feature read the entire book to the students. This research is informative to the current research study because it reveals how audio support can be beneficial to students. However, because Gonzalez (2014) focused on students with special needs, the results may or may not be reflected in the current action research study because the subjects in my study were heterogeneously grouped and had access to audio materials regardless of the presence or absence of disabilities.

Electronic Books. Electronic books have gained popularity for both children and adults as personal wireless devices have become more affordable and commonplace in homes (Jones & Brown, 2011). In schools, electronic textbooks as well as books students would typically find in print versions in school libraries have become accessible from mobile devices. Electronic books without audio features may or may not appeal to all

students. Jones and Brown (2011) examined reading comprehension results and satisfaction surveys during a study in which twenty-two students read three books including one traditional print book and two electronic books. During the study, the researchers were surprised to learn that while students seemed excited to use the electronic books at the beginning of the study, comprehension scores did not reflect improvement. For one of the electronic books, students actually scored lower on comprehension than on the print book and the additional electronic book. In addition, researchers found that students did not prefer one format over another when reading, but they were impressed with the variety of books available electronically. This research is important to the current action research study because it is a reminder that using technology for reading for the sake of using technology cannot be expected to impact student motivation to read or engagement while reading. In this case, reading electronically was a novelty that did not produce overly favorable results in comparison to reading traditional print books.

Korat and Shamir (2012) conducted a study of electronic books and their impact on students in Israel with a purpose of comparing direct and indirect word and vocabulary recognition following the use of electronic books with students. According to researchers, indirect decoding and vocabulary recognition occurs when students read so extensively that incremental decoding and vocabulary create a cumulative effect that improves reading. According to researchers, direct decoding and vocabulary occur when educators purposefully select words for exposure to children as part of instruction. Researchers obtained a sample of 288 students in twelve pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes. The experimental group of children worked in pairs to read an electronic book on a

computer while the control group used the traditional print version. The activity was followed by questions posed by researchers. Children read the book visually while listening to the read aloud feature. The children also had the opportunity to re-listen and re-read the book as well as use the audible dictionary and highlighter tool for unfamiliar words. The children were then assessed on vocabulary, word reading, and comprehension. Researchers found a positive correlation between comprehension and word reading for the students who received the computer support. This research is important to the current study as it emphasizes the need for electronic materials with audio capabilities rather than electronic books without those supports.

Hess (2014) investigated the effects of electronic reading devices and electronic books on student motivation to read without consideration of electronic texts' impact on comprehension. This study is relevant to the current action research study because it considers the precursor to comprehension and student achievement, motivation to read. In the study, the researcher utilized ten electronic reading devices with access to 62 electronic titles. The electronic books were used during guided reading instruction in which fourth grade students worked in groups of two to four with the teacher who also used an electronic reading device. The e-readers were also used by the teacher for reading aloud, and students had access to them during their independent reading time. Attitude survey results assessed reading motivation and interest, and researchers found students who used the electronic readers expressed more interest and motivation than those who did not use them. Overall, students in the experimental group were more positive toward reading than the control group, but it is important to note that the experimental group and control groups were examined one year apart, so there are many other variables such as

class climate that may or may not have impacted the survey results. However, of particular importance to the research in this study were the answers students gave to the open ended questions in which students indicated they liked using the electronic devices because of the wide access to resources that they might not find in the school in print.

Aydemir and Ozturk (2012) conducted a study of sixty fifth grade students to examine the effects of reading from the screen on student motivation. In the study, researchers selected four texts for students. Thirty students read the text from the screen while the remaining thirty read the traditional print version. Researchers created and used a reader motivation scale in the form of a pretest and posttest. Unlike other studies in this literature review, the researchers found that student motivation while reading the texts from the screen was lower than for those students who read the traditional print versions. One factor that is absent from this study that is present in others of similar design is the allowance of students to choose reading materials. In addition, the researchers utilized passages from the textbook, but they did not address whether students had shown high levels of engagement when reading from the textbook prior to the study. This research is important to the current research study because of the components of student choice not included in the research design. This omission of student choice is an important reminder of how electronic resources cannot create engagement in students when they are used for the sake of including technology. Taken together, the research studies on electronic books are informative for this research study as they examine both student perceptions and student outcomes while reading using electronic devices. In addition, in those studies with audio supports, students' levels of satisfaction are higher, a component similar to those of the audio books in the current research study.

Audio books. When books in audio formats were first introduced on tape and later in CD-Rom versions, they gained some popularity with adult listeners who had long commutes to work, but it was not until personal devices and downloadable audio book formats became affordable and accessible that audio books became widely popular (Kahill & Moore, 2017; Moyer, 2012). Popularity of audio books in educational settings has increased as more schools have moved to technology models with one to one devices making audio book usage more practical (Moyer, 2012). The number of audio books available is far lower than print books, but as audio books continue to gain popularity, the demand is growing (Kahill & Moore, 2017). In addition, while measurements of the amount of reading students are doing has been falling, audio books for young listeners are growing in popularity suggesting a relationship between student motivation to read and engagement in reading in audio formats (Kahill & Moore, 2017).

The use of audio books has impacted motivation to read and engagement in reading even though the use of audio books and other technology supported reading experiences appear not to impact comprehension (Boeglin-Quintana & Donovan, 2013). Because readers interact with audio books similarly to the ways in which they interact with printed materials, utilizing audio books for reading is accepted by researchers as a valid form of reading (Moyer, 2011). By listening to an audio book and simultaneously reading the print version of the material, students show benefits in language proficiency, comprehension, and language rhythm (Brown, Waring & Donkaewbua, 2008).

Larson (2015) examined the combination of digital texts for visual reading and audio books. In the study, sixth graders utilized digital texts with audio contents to gain information on navigation and student perceptions. Twenty-six students accessed three

electronic books and their audio books simultaneously using individual devices during seventeen class periods. Students were also permitted to take the devices home with them to continue reading. After completion of each of the three books, students completed questionnaires about their reading experiences and their attitudes toward reading and listening to books digitally. Students indicated satisfaction with the technological tools including the highlighter and dictionary features of the electronic books, and they favored the ability to listen to the stories at different paces and hear unfamiliar words read aloud. This study is important to the current research study because the subjects in my study also had the opportunity to utilize electronic books for visual reading and audio materials simultaneously. In addition, because this study measures attitudes rather than academics, it is most relevant to current problem of practice. Larson's study (2015), however, is different from my study because of the ability to take devices home to access materials. That component is not a part of my study as the problem of practice occurs during the instructional day. In addition, current district policy prohibits students from taking one to one devices home prior to sixth grade.

Interactive Books. Interactive electronic books differ from electronic books in that they have features that allow readers to interact with the text and illustrations and provide opportunities for personalized learning (Huang, Liang, Su, Chen, 2015). Huang, Liang, Su, Chen (2015) conducted a research study that examined interactive electronic books. The students participated in eighty-minute evaluation sessions with the interactive electronic book program. Students assessed usability and functionality of an interactive electronic book system, and researchers examined the effects of the system on student learning. Students also answered forty-eight questions detailing their perceptions about

the program. In the study, researchers did not see significant improvement in achievement in the twelve student subjects following implementation of the interactive electronic books. However, data gathered from the questionnaires indicated overall positive feedback and preference for the electronic format over print materials. While reading accuracy did not show improvement, this study is relevant to the current research on audio books because it reinforces the notion that students view electronic materials positively and are enthusiastic about their use in reading.

Ciampa (2012) conducted a study with beginning readers and examined data from eight first grade students who used interactive electronic books during ten twenty-five minute sessions over the course of fifteen weeks. The study gathered qualitative data from observations, teacher interviews, student and parent questionnaires, and reading assessments. During the observations, the researcher concluded that students were highly engaged and focused for the duration of the exercises, and questionnaires indicated increased levels of reading motivation. The researchers attributed the positive results to the choice, control, interest and involvement provided by the interactive electronic books. This study is relevant to the current action research study because it indicates the possibility of engaging students using technology for reading that have previously been disengaged, and it suggests that the intrinsic rewards from this engagement have the potential to motivate young readers before they lose interest in reading.

The research studies conducted using electronic materials for reading vary widely in materials and outcomes, but they all inform the current action research study because with the exception of the textbook and course related materials in the academic setting, student perceptions of reading using technology are positive. However, they are also

important because none have shown a large increase in comprehension or academic achievement. Due to the information gleaned from these, the current action research study did not attempt to gather data on comprehension or academic achievement as the use of technology in the aforementioned studies had no bearing on improvement.

Conclusion

The school in which I work serves students from low income backgrounds with 68% of those students qualifying for free or reduced meals as well as additional funding provided as part of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2015). The reading problems associated with students from low income backgrounds exist in the learners in the school in this research study, and this research study is an effort to address those problems in the current practice. Educators in the school have attempted to address problems such as low access to printed materials at home that are commonly a problem in low income situations (Gorski, 2013; Lesaux, 2012). Like other children from low income backgrounds, the students in this study may have had fewer encounters with text while with their parents, so exposing them to as much text as possible is a key to bridging the discrepancy that exists between high income and low income students (Washington & Yin, 2014). In addition, the students in this research often show weaknesses in reading as a result of starting school with literacy skills that are behind their peers (Worley & Story, 1967). However, if the student reading experience can be improved, these students may have better opportunities to succeed academically and read more extensively.

Due to funding in place by programs such as Title I, the school has the resources to provide materials to students to increase students' access to reading materials, but determining which materials to purchase can be challenge. This research study is

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intended to examine the impact audio books have on student motivation to read and reading engagement because of the understanding of the impact of extensive reading on student learning (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999; Miller, 2012). In addition, the information gathered from this research study will be used to inform future purchasing decisions for the library media center.

The current action research study is similar to those presented in this literature review because it examines the impact on student motivation and engagement on reading in school settings in an effort to improve the reading experience. In addition, the study focuses on independent reading using technology which is also similar to several of the studies included. However, this study is unique because it does not rely on improvement in academic performance or achievement scores in the utilization of technology tools. My goal as the researcher in this study is not to improve comprehension and fluency as an outcome. Rather, my goal is to determine if audio books have the potential to improve the reading experience for students. For this reason, the literature in this review is both helpful in informing the current research as well as highlighting the gaps in the research that exist on the impact of technology on students' experiences.

CHAPTER THREE: Action Research Methodology

Introduction

Although there are many studies on students' reading behaviors, information from students on what motivates them to read and keeps them engaged is rare. For this study, I chose an interpretive case study approach because it is useful as both a teaching method and a research strategy (Ponelis, 2015). The purpose of this chapter is to explain the relationship between the problem of practice in the research setting and the use of action research to address it. This chapter also explains the rationale of qualitative research design and the data collection techniques in the study. In this section, I discuss the ethical protection of subjects, how data is collected and analyzed and how my positionality and subjectivity affect my role as an action researcher working in the field of education.

Qualitative Paradigm

This study is phenomenological in nature because the researcher seeks to understand the relationships among the emotional connections, human experiences and a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the phenomenon is the act of reading in the elementary school setting and the emotional connections and experiences are those encountered by both students and teachers relative to the phenomenon.

In order to address a problem of practice in one's professional setting, educators serve a dual role of teacher and action researcher in which they participate in the research setting as well as control the research design and methodology (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Because I am serving in both roles as teacher and researcher, the interpretive case study

approach offers the classroom situations for data collection and discussion and the intensive description and analysis necessary for action research (Ponelis, 2015). The problem of practice is identified as low motivation to read and low engagement while reading as reported by teachers. These are indicative of a negative reading experience for students. Because the research is conducted while the educator is both in the field as researcher and teacher, the data in this study is gathered from fieldwork (Patton, 2002). According to Creswell (2009), the research design including the strategies for data collection, analysis and interpretation must be chosen based on the problem of practice, the experiences of the researcher, and the audiences for the study. The problem of practice in this study required the examination of human feelings, perceptions and experiences rather than achievement data, so it required qualitative rather than quantitative design. As the researcher, I am concerned with impacting feelings, perceptions and experiences of students to encourage a love of reading. Creswell (2009) explains that qualitative research explores the meaning people ascribe to a problem and requires the researcher to use an inductive style which differs from the quantitative measures that use statistical procedures to analyze data. The problem of practice in this study requires exploration and understanding of the meaning students ascribe to the reading experience.

Research design

In order to address the problem of practice in this action research study, I selected the interpretive case study model of qualitative research as it provides opportunities gather a variety of data, establish a relationship with research subjects and obtain rich descriptive information (Ponelis, 2015). A case study requires the researcher to explore

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an activity or process in depth using varied data collection methods over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2009). This type of qualitative research is appropriate for the problem of practice because it permits the in depth study of the teachers and students in the setting during the activities in which the problem of practice occurs (Patton, 2002).

Every student in grades three through five received equal opportunities to interact with the materials during their fifty minute library classes and during independent reading time in their classrooms. During library classes, every student utilized the audio book resources. In the classroom, students were given the option to use audio books for independent reading. Although students in grades three and four are not a part of study, their teachers were invited to participate as part of the focus group and survey, so it was necessary that they have the opportunities to access audio book materials. During instruction, students utilized the one to one Google Chromebooks they are assigned for daily use at school.

This study utilized typical case sampling for the purpose of highlighting what is typical or normal in the behaviors and perceptions for students in the larger group (Palinkas et al, 2015). Because students who qualify for special services from the resource teacher had previously received instruction on audio books and participated in oral reading during academic interventions, they were not eligible to participate in the sample, but they were present during observations. In addition, students who were new to the school during the current school year were not eligible for sampling for interviews because information on their reading experience prior to the fifth grade was inaccessible. Students who had been identified as at risk in language arts and awaiting formal evaluation or students already receiving special services for reading were not eligible for

sampling because lack of engagement or motivation reported by these students may or may not be a result of academic difficulties yet to be identified.

Two levels of sampling were used as it was necessary to provide the richest information possible (Merriam, 2009). The first level of sampling was the selection of the fifth grade class for the study from the available classes within the school. Every student in the class was informed of the study during that time so they would understand why I was conducting an observation during independent reading. The second level of sampling was to sample within the case. This sample was comprised of six students including three girls and three boys.

This study utilized a semi-structured interview format in which all subjects were asked the same questions with the option to ask follow up questions to gain as much rich data as possible. This approach avoided the weakness of using only a structured interview that does not allow the researcher to discuss items that were not anticipated when the questions were created (Patton, 2002). The open ended nature of the questions was also used to create a low pressure conversational situation for the researcher and the subjects.

In selecting the class from which to sample individual students, I considered both the cooperating teacher as well as the student participants because my role as librarian necessitates a partnership with a classroom teacher and strong collaboration for the action research study to be successful. The cooperating teacher chosen for the study is a 5th grade teacher that instructs one class of students each day language arts and three classes on science. She was chosen because she has expressed concern over student motivation and engagement, and she is a strong leader in the grade in language arts instruction. In addition, she possesses the technical skills that are necessary for supporting students in

the use of audio books, so her involvement minimized technical problems in material access.

The research study occurred over a course of seven weeks. During Week 1, all eleven teachers in grades three through five were invited to participate in a thirty minute after school focus group discussion to gather information about independent reading in their classrooms. Nine teachers participated in the focus group. During Week 1, I met with the teacher of the fifth grade target class, Mrs. Har, to identify the six students for the interviews. During Week 2, three boys and three girls from the target class participated in individual interviews during the school day that lasted from fifteen to thirty minutes each. Also during Week 2, I conducted a classroom observation of the target class during a thirty minute independent reading block. During Weeks 3, 4, and 5, I delivered instruction to each third, fourth and fifth grade classes during their scheduled fifty minute library media center block on TumbleBooks, Capstone Interactive, and Destiny Discover audio books and their print counterparts respectively. During Week 6, I reviewed each of the resources with students in the library media center. During Week 7, I conducted a classroom observation of the target fifth grade class. Also during Week 7, I conducted individual student interviews with the three boys and three girls in the sample, and I distributed the survey electronically to teachers through Google Forms.

Research Site

The research site is an elementary school in a rural area of Spartanburg County in the upstate of South Carolina. The school district is composed of four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school, all in rural areas of the county. The school serves 416 students from the surrounding community in addition to students with

special permission to attend from other attendance areas. The school serves students in a full pay daycare program beginning at age three, and a free four-year-old kindergarten program serves at-risk students based on academic and socioeconomic assessments. The school offers regular educational classes with special services provided by two resource teachers, one speech language pathologist and one teacher for the gifted and talented. During the 2017-2018 school year, there were two 4- year-old kindergarten classes, two 5-year-old kindergarten classes, three 1st grades, three 2nd grades, four 3rd grades, four 4th grades, and three 5th grades.

As a school that receives funding through the Title I program, teachers and administration undergo training to understand the relationship between poverty and reading. As part of the effort to improve reading achievement, the school has implemented ninety minutes of uninterrupted language arts instruction daily. Thirty minutes of this instruction is devoted to daily required independent reading. As indicated by teachers, low reading stamina, disinterest in reading, and low motivation to read for extended periods are hindering the effectiveness of the scheduled independent reading block resulting in frustration for both teachers and students.

Ethical Protection of Participants

Eleven teachers were invited to participate in the focus group interview and survey. Participation was voluntary, and teachers were informed that they were not required to answer any questions about which they may feel uncomfortable. Teachers were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The students in the study participated on a voluntary basis, and students' and teachers' are referred to using pseudonyms to ensure their responses are confidential. All information was coded

using these pseudonyms, and only the researcher has access to the names and responses of individuals in the study.

Participant Selection

Although low motivation to read and low levels on engagement while reading are common concerns among the teachers in grades three through five at the school, the problem in fifth graders appears to also be connected to achievement. According to 2016 data from the South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY), 28.5% of 5th graders at the school met or exceeded expectations in English/Language Arts. In grades 3 and 4, however, 55.5% and 47.6% of students met or exceeded expectations respectively. Data from 2015 and 2014 showed the same trend in achievement with 5th graders at the school performing below 3rd and 4th graders. While the purpose of this study is not to solve the problem of lower reading achievement in 5th graders nor is it to correct achievement problems in current students, the correlation between poorer performance and low motivation and engagement in reading are variables that affected the selection of 5th grade students for the study as this appears to be a trend with the students entering adolescence.

The students in the target class were fifth graders who were heterogeneously grouped by academics. Demographic data was gathered using the PowerSchool database in which ethnicity is reported by parents at registration. There are eleven females, two of whom are African American and nine of whom are white. There are nine males, one of whom is African American, and eight of whom are white. Thirteen students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Five students qualify for daily special services from the resource teacher and were not considered for the interview sample due to the use of audio books

by the resource teacher for academic intervention with these students.

Table 3.1 identifies student participant characteristics including gender, race as reported by parents, socioeconomic information as reported by access to free or reduced meal prices, whether students receive free or reduced lunch, and achievement data on grade level report cards and the South Carolina Ready Assessment in English Language Arts. Each student participants was assigned a pseudonym so their responses would not be associated with specific students. Table 3.2 identifies teacher participants who were invited to participate in the teacher focus group interview and the electronic survey. Each teacher was given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and encourage candid responses. Table 3.2 also identifies teachers' gender, race as reported by teachers, years of teaching experience, and current grade and subject area.

Table 3.1 Descriptions of Student Research Participants

Participant	Gender	Race	Socioeconomic Background	ELA Academic Data
Caleb	Male	white	Qualifies for free lunch	Grades: A's and B's SC READY: approaches grade level expectations
Dalton	Male	white	Does not qualify for free lunch	Grades: A's SC READY: meets grade level expectations
Logan	Male	white	Does not qualify for free lunch	Grades: B's and C's SC READY: meets grade level expectations

Alexa	Female	African American	Economically disadvantaged/qualifies for free lunch	Grades: A's and B's SC READY: approaches grade level expectations
Ashley	Female	white	Economically disadvantaged/qualifies for free lunch	Grades: B's and C's SC READY: approaches grade level expectations
Ivy	Female	white	Does not qualify for free lunch	Grades: A's and B's SC READY: approaches grade level expectations

Table 3.2 Descriptions of Teacher Focus Group Participants

Participant	Gender	Race	Experience	Content	Grade
Ms. Huf	Female	white	4	Language Arts/ Social Studies	3
Ms. Rai	Female	white	2	Language Arts/ Social Studies	3
Ms. Cam	Female	white	15	Math/Science	3
Ms. Cox	Female	white	1	Math/Science	3
Ms. Mck	Female	white	24	Language Arts/ Social Studies	4
Ms. Will	Female	white	17	Language Arts Social Studies	4
Ms. Rob	Female	white	16	Science	4
Ms. Snap	Female	white	18	Math	4
Ms. Gar	Female	white	14	Language Arts/ Math	5
Ms. Har	Female	white	22	Language Arts/Science	5
Ms. Eld	Female	white	20	Language Arts/ Social Studies	5

Data Sources

As a participant observer in qualitative research, gathering data requires the researcher to use every part of oneself to experience what is happening and subsequently understand what is seen and heard during observations (Patton, 2002). Because fieldwork requires more than a single technique (Patton, 2009), I included multiple sources of information, two levels of sampling, and triangulation in the study design. The multiple sources of information were used to ensure the information I gathered provided data on the different aspects of the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013), and the sampling variations assisted me in gaining insight from students who were representative of the grade level where the problem of practice was most apparent. Triangulation was used as a strategy to avoid the biases that may accompany a single method (Maxwell, 2013). The examination of audio book's impact on reading was triangulated by utilizing different methods of data collection: observations, an interview, a focus group and a survey. These tools allowed me to obtain the rich data representative of the multiple perspectives that are required to understand and address the problem of practice.

Table 3.3 Descriptions of Sources of Data

Sources of Data	Details
Interviews	Individual semi-structured interviews occurred twice during the study, once prior to instruction and once after four weeks of student access to audio books. Interviews were transcribed and coded according to theme.
Focus Groups	One focus group interview with teachers occurred. The focus group session took place prior to the introduction of audio books to

	students. Eleven teachers were invited to participate. Nine teachers agreed to participate. Two were unable to attend due to a schedule conflict. The focus group was video recorded, transcribed, and coded according to theme.
Observations	The class selected for the study was observed during 30-minute independent reading sessions once prior to the introduction of the audio books and once after four weeks of use. Observations were recorded using field notes and coded according to theme.
Teacher Survey	A survey of open ended questions was distributed to the eleven teachers in grades three through five after students had access to the audio book resources for four weeks. Eight teachers responded to the survey, and their responses were downloaded and coded according to theme.

Observations

Observations were a key component of this research study because it was imperative that as the researcher, I witness the students' reactions to audio books in the authentic classroom environment and observe what teachers reported both prior to the introduction of audio books and after their use. As a researcher, observational protocol was necessary in maintaining notes that were clear, organized, and sequential (Creswell, 2009). Utilizing a table, I recorded descriptive notes of student behaviors in three minute increments and I immediately recorded my reflective notes detailing my perceptions of student activities upon completion of the observations. These field notes contain

descriptive, detailed information including direct quotations, the observer's perceptions and reactions and the significance I applied to the scenario (Patton, 2002). In gathering data, rich description is necessary in recording field notes to ensure reflexivity (Creswell, 2009). As I reflected on what I observed in students' behaviors, I also considered how my biases, values, and personal background may have affected my interpretations of observations.

Focus Group

The teacher focus group was integral to this study as it provided teachers an opportunity to discuss their students' experiences during reading in a group of colleagues who each conduct language arts instruction and independent reading differently. The goal of this focus group was to gather data on the students' experiences in reading through the eyes of their teachers prior to conducting the instruction on audio books. I conducted the focus group using a semi-structured format so as to provide opportunities for follow up questions and frank discussions. As I conducted the focus group, I reflected on the frustrations the teachers shared with one another about independent reading experiences in their classrooms. I recorded the focus group using a video camera, and I took detailed notes so that I could report the information offered by teachers candidly.

The use of a focus group was vital to providing the information classroom teachers possess about reading motivation and engagement as these individuals spend the most time observing and interacting with students during independent reading. As classroom teachers and research participants, their perceptions offered insight into variables that may affect students' reading habits during the current school year. By utilizing the focus group approach to data collection, participants revealed how the

perceptions of independent reading, student motivation and student engagement were impacted by their positionality and the experiences students have had with teachers during past years and in various academic subjects. In the unique communities that are schools, adult perceptions may have a significant impact on their students' beliefs and perceptions about a topic. Keeping in mind that the focus group is organized for the purpose of an interview rather than a problem solving session or decision making body, it was required to be carefully planned in an environment that was comfortable and enjoyable for participants (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), "the power of focus group resides in their being focused" (p. 388). For this reason, an interview guide was necessary to maintain the focus of the conversation. The Interview Protocol for the Teacher Focus Group can be found in Appendix G.

Interviews

In research, interviews are necessary to find out information from people that cannot be directly observed, and they are important for gathering information about things that have taken place at previous points in time (Patton, 2009). In addition, the interview can offer the researcher insight into participants' perspectives whereas observations focus on the researcher's perspective (Merriam, 2009). The initial interview in this project solicited information about students' past experiences with reading, their reading practices outside school, and their feelings toward the requirement of independent reading, all of which are impossible to observe in person. The follow up interview sought information on students' perceptions of reading using audio books and was semi-structured to allow for information about outside experiences to be shared. The questions for the interviews were framed in terms specific to the setting in this case study

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to avoid over generalization of the topic and recognize the diversity among the subjects in the setting (Maxwell, 2013). For this reason, the interview questions for both the teacher focus groups and the students were site specific and relied on personal experiences. The use of an interview protocol is necessary in qualitative interviews such as those in this study to maintain the necessary amount of organization and structure for data collection (Creswell, 2009). The interview protocol for the study includes the date, place, and descriptive information about the interviewee with open-ended questions. The questions were drawn from the prevailing themes found in research on student engagement and motivation found in the literature review. The order of questions followed Efron and Ravid's (2013) model of questioning using simple, uncontroversial topics organized in a logical order beginning with broad questions. The questions were open-ended and lent themselves to further questioning and discussion determined by students' responses. Students were encouraged to be as specific and as honest as possible about their perceptions of reading, and they were assured that their responses would not be shared with their classroom teacher. This study used components of both the conversational interview and an interview guide. The semi-structured interview has been selected because it is guided by a list of questions, but the order of the questions and the wording of the questions can change dependent upon the progression of the conversation (Merriam, 2009).

As the subjects in this study were children, the semi-structured format also served to focus their thinking but provide them the freedom to express their thoughts based on their own understandings of independent reading, engagement, and motivation. By using an interview guide, I was free to ask follow up questions that varied by student and that

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built a conversation while remaining cognizant of the time constraints during the discussion (Patton, 2002). The Interview Protocol for Students used during this study can be found in Appendix E.

Teacher Survey

In an effort to offer teachers an alternative medium for sharing responses, an open ended survey was used to solicit information on how audio books were received by students in their classes. Although all students in grades three through five received instruction on audio books, teachers allowed and encouraged their use according to their instructional plans and timelines in their classrooms, so individual responses were required for gathering information on student use of the resources. The survey questions were disseminated to the eleven teachers in grades three through five electronically using Google Forms. The Follow-Up Teacher Survey questions can be found in Appendix H.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative action research is subjective and reliant on both participant and researcher subjectivity, so methods must be employed to ensure data trustworthiness (Efron & Ravid, 2013). In addition to personal interviews, observations, and focus groups, the use of a video assists in recording the entire scenario and behaviors the researcher might miss (Creswell, 2009). A video recording allowed me to gather information during the focus group, and detailed transcriptions and field notes were vital to gathering information during interviews and observations. In addition, it was necessary for me to record my perceptions of participant responses and behaviors including my biases as a librarian, as a female and as an educator from a socioeconomically privileged background. As a participant researcher, my impressions and feelings become part of the

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data, and the video recording of the focus group has assisted me in the both the reflection and introspection required in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). In order for my field notes to be useful, they were required to be descriptive and contain everything I as the researcher believed worth noting at the time so as not to rely on future recall (Patton, 2002). They contained the direct quotes spoken by students and teachers as well as my feelings, reactions and reflections about what I observed to maintain the trustworthiness of the data collected.

Data Analysis

Action researchers analyze data as it is collected, and the preliminary understandings of the data help revise investigation as it progresses (Efron & Ravid, 2013). I began data analysis during data collection using conventional content analysis as categories were generated from the data. I utilized descriptive coding to summarize the primary content of each response.

Using the model presented by Creswell (2009), I followed a six step process to organize the information gathered from teachers, students, and classroom observations to identify themes. The first step was to organize and prepare the data. Immediately following the teacher focus group, I transcribed both the notes I had taken and the conversation from the video recording. During each student interview and the classroom observations, I transcribed data from participants using handwritten notes. I then entered all notes and transcriptions into a Microsoft Excel workbook organized by data collection tool and participant. Upon completion of the teacher survey, I downloaded teacher responses into the workbook. During the second step, I read and reread the information in the workbook and created a list of general thoughts about the data as a whole. During

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the third step, I began the detailed data analysis. I color coded words and phrases in the Excel workbook and labeled each color code with a category. In the fourth step, I generated a description of the perspectives shared by participants, and identified the themes of adult support, access, interest, focus and difficulty. I then created the narrative description of themes to convey the findings of the study. The last step in the process was to make an interpretation of the data during which I identified positive and negative perspectives of participants, lessons from the study, and further questions to explore about student experiences with audio books.

Subjectivity and Positionality

My positionality offers both advantages and disadvantages in this study. While I grew up and was educated in the same county as the school in which I work, my upbringing and educational background is different than most of my students. As a white female from a middle class background living in a home with two parents, I enjoyed both implicit and explicit privileges as result of my upbringing most notably because of my parents' level of education, their purposeful interaction with my education, and the print rich environment they created. As a daughter of a teacher, my mother read aloud to me extensively, and I was able to read prior to beginning kindergarten. Both of my parents worked in jobs that required college educations, and they emphasized the importance of formal education and held high expectations for my academic achievement. In addition, I perceived academic engagement in elementary, middle and high school positively, and I was successful academically. As a student, I enjoyed learning and excelling, and I enjoyed and valued reading and writing above all other subjects.

As a result of my background, I often feel disconnected from the parents and

students with whom I work, and I find myself purposefully considering my biases on a daily basis. Professionally, I work as the library media specialist in the research site. The school in which I work serves primarily white lower middle class families with 70% of my students being eligible for free or reduced lunch. In addition, the majority of my students live in either a single parent home or with neither of their natural parents. My school serves the highest population of students with special needs in the school district, and the community surrounding the school is a depressed area due to the high rate of unemployment. Parent involvement in the school is low. These factors have been the most influential on my research decisions, practices, approaches, epistemologies, and agendas.

Prior to my professional experience, I had not considered the importance of literacy. As a result of the variation between my literacy background and that of my students, I am lead to research the strategies educators can use to impact reading. My practices are influenced by my background which is different from my students as I place no limitations on the reading privileges of my students. Children who do not return library materials are not prevented from borrowing further materials. This practice of unlimited access to materials is a direct result of my feelings of privilege in contrast to the underprivileged backgrounds my students. My professional agenda is to expose my students to as many materials as possible, so the library collection for which I am responsible is based largely on student interest. According to the classic educational scholar, John Dewey (1933), "the consequences of a belief upon other beliefs and upon behavior may be so important, then, that men are forced to consider the grounds or reasons of their belief and its logical consequences" (p. 5). This notion reminds me to

consider my personal and professional beliefs and engage in inquiry as to their impact on students, and I am reminded that I must constantly reflect on my beliefs and practices regarding reading motivation and success.

As the library media specialist at the school, I am conducting this research as both a teacher and researcher. I also have the perspective of an outsider because I am not the students' classroom teacher. As an action researcher, this process has been both an effort to address the problem of practice and a process of self-reflection as my role as teacher and researcher are central to all parts of the process (Efron & Ravid, 2013). As I examine the relationship between resources and motivation, I have observed my students in their learning environments and studied their learning as it occurred naturally during instruction (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The use of interviews has required me to interact extensively with the students in the research setting as both a researcher and a teacher (Efron & Ravid, 2013), and I have carefully considered my perceptions of the topic so as not to lead student responses. As both researcher and colleague, the focus group altered my coworker, co-teacher, and instructional support staff roles and placed me in a position outside my colleagues' discussion. Because I work within the site in which I am conducting the research, it was important that my positionality as insider not contaminate the data in the research, so I did not offer personal or professional insights or suggestions to teachers during the focus group discussion.

As the library media specialist at the school who works in the role of both instructional support for teachers and instructor for students, I am a practitioner researcher (Herr & Anderson, 2015), but I also have a personal interest in the data as it will be used to guide my future purchasing decisions for the library media center. Like

other action research, I face a dilemma as both a researcher and a participant (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As the library media specialist, I am both the selector and collector of resources for the library media center including the print and audio titles that were accessible to students as part of this research. My personal biases and preferences for genre, duration and authors have naturally impacted the selection and acquisition of materials, so during the instruction on how to access and use the materials, I avoided highlighting those materials that reflect my interests. As a result, during instruction on how to access and utilize the audio books, I selected texts based on subjects that have the highest circulation in the library media center circulation system rather than those that I had previously read. In this way, the materials I use as examples reflected student interests. In addition, my personal preference for recreational reading using audio books is a bias that I recognized prior to the study, so it was necessary that I not favor audio books over their print counterparts when working with students.

As the instructor during library media center classes, I acted as a participant in the research, but as the observer and interviewer during data collection, my dual role shifted my relationship with students as the study progressed. As a result of my positionality and prior relationships with subjects, I am not privy to truth in this research but rather one truth among many (Herr & Anderson, 2015), so overgeneralization of data in the project to settings outside the school must be carefully considered.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the relationship between the problem of practice in the specified setting and the use of action research to address the problem of practice. This chapter also detailed the methodology of the study including descriptions of sampling,

data collection and data analysis. In addition, this chapter described teacher and student

study participants and their relationship to the problem of practice. The goal of this

chapter was to explain the rationale a qualitative research design and the use of

interviews, focus group, survey and observations in data collection as well as the

limitations created by the researcher's positionality and research site.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings from the Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact audio books have on elementary students' experience during reading as well as factors that influence motivation and engagement. Prior to this research, teachers in grades three through five repeatedly reported a decline in student motivation to read independently and frustration with off task behaviors during independent reading. Teachers reported this decline each year despite efforts to improve motivation and engagement using reading incentive programs and improved print collections. Teachers reported that this decline was noticeable beginning in third grade as text becomes more difficult and students are expected to read independently for longer periods of time, and they believed the problem worsened in both fourth and fifth grades.

After securing permission to conduct the study from the principal and district superintendent, semi-structured student interviews and a teacher focus group interview were used to gather data on student motivation and students' experiences while reading. One class observation was then conducted in a fifth grade classroom during independent reading for the purpose of gathering data on engagement. Field notes were used to document student behaviors during the observation in three minute increments as a means to improve the validity of student and teacher interviews. The three resources for accessing audio books were then introduced to third, fourth and fifth grade classes during weekly library media center lessons. Students utilized the audio book resources with

assistance during library classes, and they were encouraged to utilize them for reading in the classroom and outside school. Face to face student interviews, and a teacher survey were then used to collect data on the impact of audio books after students had utilized the resources for four weeks. Another class observation was then conducted in the same fifth grade class during independent reading during which students had the option of using print or audio books for reading. Field notes were collected on student behaviors during this observation to improve the validity of the follow up student interview and teacher survey. The data from these tools is described in this chapter with an examination of the themes of access, adult support, difficulty, focus, and interest that arose during the analysis of qualitative data.

Findings of the Study

Data analysis and interpretation revealed the perceptions of reading using audio books were positive with the exception of one student. Access, adult support, difficulty, focus, and interest were found to be interconnected themes that affect students' experiences while reading. Data analysis and interpretation also revealed that audio books can lessen reading difficulty and improve focus for students during reading. Furthermore, the reading experience is improved for students when they have the opportunity to choose audio books that represent their interests rather than having them assigned by the teacher. Although not all students prefer audio books to traditional print materials, the option for their use offers a beneficial alternative. The implications for study are most significant for the school as the data revealed an immediate need for professional development for teachers in creating an environment and experiences more conducive for reading as well as increased collection development of audio books for students in second grade. While

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audio books may or may not have an impact on students' overall perception of reading, they may improve some reading experiences in the classroom and potentially add value to the literacy program.

The findings from the study are organized by the themes of access, adult support, difficulty, focus, and interest that were identified during data analysis. These themes were identified during data analysis from teacher and student feedback, and they were found to be interconnected. Each of these themes may have been impacted by the characteristics of the class that was chosen for observation and the specific students selected for interview, so there is also a brief biographical description of each of the six students who were interviewed and a description of the observed class.

Class Description

The fifth grade class selected for this study consisted of twenty students, none of which had repeated the fifth grade. The entire class was observed for the initial classroom observation and the follow up classroom observation. Six students in the class were selected to participate in the initial student interviews and follow up student interviews. The teacher in the class had twenty-two years of teaching experience and provided instruction in science and language arts. During this school year, language arts instruction was scheduled after both lunch and recess. Thirty minutes of the ninety minute language arts instructional block was dedicated to independent reading during which students may be assigned to read for a specific purpose or for pleasure. Students were required to read independently from a self-selected text that may be brought from home, checked out from the school's library media center, or borrowed from the classroom library located at the back of the room. Strategies for choosing books on students' independent reading levels

were included in language arts instruction throughout the year. The class was heterogeneously grouped by language arts performance data from fourth grade state testing. According to SC Ready Test results, three students exceeded expectations, six met expectations, seven approached expectations, and four did not meet expectations in language arts. One of the goals set by administration was to move students to a higher achievement level as reported by the SC Ready Test, so language arts instruction was planned according to this purpose. With the exception of one student, all of the students in the class have attended the school for more than one year. Twelve of the students in the class qualified for free or reduced lunch. There were eleven females, two of whom are African American and nine of whom are white. There are nine males, one of whom is African American, and eight of whom are white.

Student Biographical Descriptions

Six students were chosen from the target class in the study for the two interviews in order to provide the richest information possible. Each of the students in the interview sample were assigned a pseudonym in order to protect their privacy. Students were informed that their real names would not be used in data reporting. Demographic data indicating economic status is included for each student and is important to this study because of the connection explained in Chapter Two between economically disadvantaged students and difficulties in reading. Overall, students did not report significant time spent reading at home, so school absences for students was important to the findings because each absence accounts for one thirty minute period of missed independent reading. Student achievement data is included in biographical information

due the correlation between difficulty in reading and motivation and engagement as examined in Chapter Two.

Ashley. Ashley is a white female who is outgoing and friendly to teachers and popular with students. In class, Ashley is talkative and distractible, but she is described by her teacher as eager to learn even if things are difficult. Ashley lives with her father and sister, and she participates in the after school Boys and Girls Program at the school. According to demographic data, Ashley qualifies for free lunch, and Ashley's family is characterized as economically disadvantaged. Ashley was absent ten days during the school year. According to data from the SC Ready Language Arts assessment, Ashley approached grade level expectations for fourth grade, but according to data from the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) projections, Ashley was not on track to meet fifth grade language arts grade level expectations. During the initial student interview when asked how she feels about reading independently, Ashley responded, "I actually like reading independently because you don't have people saying I want to read this or that." Ashley's overall perception of reading is positive, and she does not consider it a social activity.

Alexa. Alexa is an African American female who is outgoing and friendly to teachers and students. Alexa is described by the teacher as very bright and well behaved, but she needs more support at home with reading and homework. Alexa lives with both of her biological parents as well as two sisters and one brother. Alexa qualifies for free lunch, and her family is characterized as economically disadvantaged. According to SC Ready information from fourth grade, Alexa approaches grade level expectations in language arts, but results from NWEA MAP projects Alexa is not on track to meet

expectations for fifth grade language arts. Alexa has not been absent any days during the school year. For Alexa, independent reading can be an escape from other students. When asked how she feels about it, she responded, "I feel good about reading because we get to sit anywhere we want, and I don't like sitting at the table."

Ivy. Ivy is a white female who is social and outgoing with teachers and classmates. Ivy lives with both biological parents and is an only child. Ivy does not qualify for free or reduced lunch. According to the teacher, Ivy is sometimes too interested in what is going on around her in class and can get involved in the "girl and boy drama." According to the fourth grade SC Ready assessment, Ivy approached grade level expectations, and data from NWEA MAP projected her to be on track to meet expectations for fifth grade. Absences and tardiness were a problem for Ivy as she had missed twenty two days of school when data was collected. In addition, she was regularly signed out of school early by her parents, so she missed independent reading at the end of the school day. Reading was viewed as a social activity for Ivy. When asked how she feels about independent reading, she stated, "I feel really good because sometimes I can read the same books as my friends."

Logan. Logan is a white male who is quiet and reserved in class but outgoing with his friends. Logan is an only child who lives with both biological parents, and outside school, he is involved in sports on a daily basis. Logan does not qualify for free or reduced lunch. According to the SC Ready assessment for fourth grade, Logan met expectations in language arts, but NWEA MAP projects that he is not on track to meet fifth grade expectations. Logan has missed ten days of school this year. According to the teacher, Logan is a "sweet boy who likes to please, but he does not like to read." For

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Logan, independent reading time offers an escape from the noise of the classroom and an alternative from other schoolwork. When asked how he feels about independent reading, he said, "It feels good because it is quiet, and I have something to do like imagining instead of being bored."

Dalton. Dalton is a white male who is outgoing and confident in class and with friends. Dalton is a leader among his peers. According to his teacher, he can sometimes be too talkative in class and get involved in the "fifth grade drama," but he is also a very good student. Dalton lives with both biological parents and a younger brother, and he is involved in after school sports on a daily basis. He does not qualify for free or reduced lunch. Dalton met expectations for fourth grade language arts according to SC Ready results, and he is on track to meet fifth grade level expectations according to NWEA MAP. Dalton has missed twelve days of school this year. When asked how he feels about independent reading, Dalton explained that he likes it only if he is enjoying the book he is reading. He explained, "I like it right now because I am reading *All the Answers*, and I really like the story."

Caleb. Caleb is a white male who is outgoing and talkative to both teachers and friends. Caleb lives with his aunt, uncle, and younger cousin. Caleb qualifies for free lunch, but the family with whom he lives is not characterized as economically disadvantaged. According to his teacher, Caleb needs a lot of attention and sometimes has a hard time staying on task, but "he works really hard at school." According SC Ready data from fourth grade, Caleb approached grade level expectations but was not on track to meet fifth grade language arts expectations according to NWEA MAP. Caleb missed only one day of school during the current year. When asked how he feels about

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independent reading, he responded similarly to Dalton, "If it is interesting, I will read it. If it is not, I will put it back. I tried to read about a boy who made electricity and I put it back because I just couldn't get into it."

Data Collection Tools

This study utilized four data collection tools in order to provide a variety of information from the participants. Data collection began with a teacher focus group that was followed by six semi-structured individual student interviews. One classroom observation was then conducted in the target class prior to the introduction of the audio books. After students had access to the audio books for four weeks, the same six students participated in a semi-structured follow up interview followed by a classroom observation. Teachers were then asked to submit feedback on the use of audio books via an open ended survey that was distributed electronically.

Teacher Focus Group. During the teacher focus group, teachers were asked to speak candidly about the required independent reading block in their classes, the strategies that are working to motivate students to read, the measures that are used to keep students focused on reading, and the barriers to positive student experiences in reading. The focus group was intended to gather background information on how students perceived reading prior to the introduction of audio books, but it also offered information on broader influences outside the classroom that impact student motivation and engagement. The themes that arose during the teacher focus group were access to time and materials, adult support in the home, the importance of student interest, student focus while reading, and text difficulty as a deterrent to reading. The teacher focus group

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included four open ended questions that led to a lively discussion of what is working and not working in reading.

Teacher Survey. The teacher survey included two open ended questions and was distributed electronically using Google Forms after students had utilized the audio book resources for four weeks. Teachers were asked to submit their thoughts on how digital audio books have affected student motivation to read during independent reading and how they have impacted engagement while reading independently. The survey was distributed to all eleven teachers in grades three through five, and eight teachers responded. The purpose of disseminating the survey electronically was to gather data from teachers about their students' experiences rather than their general perceptions about reading in the school and to offer a medium that would encourage teachers who were less comfortable sharing in a group to respond.

Initial Student Interviews. The six fifth grade students in the sample were selected using typical case sampling by myself and the classroom teacher, Mrs. Har, because they represent backgrounds, achievement levels, and personality traits that are typical of the target class in the study. Each student was invited to participate and given the opportunity to decline participation. The initial interview consisted of five open ended questions about reading and lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes. During the initial student interviews, all six students indicated positive feelings about reading, but each expressed negative feelings about certain aspects of reading. Just as with the initial teacher focus group, access, focus, adult support, difficulty, and interest were found to be interconnected in ways that either improve or detract from students' reading experiences.

Follow Up Student Interviews. After students had the opportunity to utilize the audio books for four weeks in the library and during independent reading, follow up interviews were conducted with each of the six students to gather information on their experiences with audio books. The interview consisted of two open ended questions, and each interview lasted from fifteen to thirty minutes. The themes of access, difficulty, and focus were found to be the prominent areas students discussed during interviews, and each of these themes was found to be interconnected in their impact on student perceptions of the audio books.

Class Observations. During the course of the study, two classroom observations were conducted during independent reading for the purpose of improving the validity of data provided using the interviews, focus group and survey. The first classroom observation was conducted prior to the introduction of audio books after all students provided answers to the initial interview questions and after the teacher focus group. Another classroom observation was conducted after students had access to audio books for four weeks. The classroom observations took place in Mrs. Har's fifth grade classroom during the thirty minute independent reading block in the last period of the day. During the class observations, I recorded student behaviors on a chart in three minute increments to gain an understanding of what students experience during independent reading. During observations, my goal was to note off task behaviors in students that affected their own reading experiences and the experiences of their classmates. I observed and noted off task behaviors including being out of his/her seat or chosen reading spot, trading in books, talking to classmates or the teacher, sleeping, and participating in tasks other than reading. I also recorded information about class

interruptions including intercom announcements and students leaving and entering the classroom.

Findings

The findings of this study consist of data and inferences made from information gathered during the teacher focus group, student interviews, classroom observations and the teacher survey. During data collection and analysis, five interconnected themes emerged. The themes of access, adult support, difficulty, focus, and interest were identified as having an impact on student reading experiences and are reported below.

Access

While coding the responses from the focus group, survey, and student interviews, the theme of access in reading was identified as influential on the reading experience. The theme of access refers to access to reading materials, access to the Internet, and access to time for reading. For students, the theme of access impacted their motivation to read, but students did not indicate that access to audio books impacted their engagement during reading. Teachers, however, noted that both motivation and engagement during the reading experience was impacted by audio book access, and the classroom observations supported this.

During initial student interviews, access to materials and time were addressed by students. Access to a variety of materials was reported by Ashley as something that gets her excited about reading when she stated, "I have a lot of books at home that I had when I was a baby, and I still like to read them." For other students, the access to time for reading was the biggest influence on reading inside and outside of school. Logan perceived the time built into the language arts schedule for independent reading as a

motivator but only because it allows him to avoid another activity. According to Logan, "reading during ELA is great because I don't like writing and it gets me out of that." For both Logan and Dalton, access to time for reading is difficult outside school because they are involved in sports, but Dalton stated "I like to get done with my work in my class early, so I can read instead." For Dalton and Logan, access to time for reading is positive as it allows avoidance of another task. Alexa echoed Dalton's responses about reading at home and explained she does it only if she has time after homework, and Caleb responded similarly that he reads when he does not have anything else to do. Ivy explained that she enjoys independent reading at school because "we get to sit by ourselves on the beanbags where it is quiet." This access to time in school is consistent with Ashley, Alexa, and Dalton's positive descriptions of independent reading but not necessarily indicative of motivation to read or engagement during reading.

Prior to the introduction of audio books, teachers indicated in the focus group that access to print materials in the classroom library was a factor in encouraging some students to read, especially those who have few reading materials in the home. However, teachers explained that access to variety does not encourage students who have reading difficulties, and variety is not enough to engage students who are easily distracted. According to Ms. Huff, "some kids would just rather be doing something else than reading." Access to time was reported by teachers as having a negative impact on student motivation to read because it is a required, scheduled daily activity that is not regarded as pleasurable by students. Ms. Huff compared her experiences as a child who read for an hour at a time to students who have difficulty getting involved in reading for only twenty minutes.

During the follow up interview with students, every student indicated the access to a variety of materials using the audio book resources as a motivating factor in their use. According to Logan, "I like reading books online because there are a lot more of them than there are in the library at school." Caleb explained that finding books online was easier than finding books in the library because he can use the search feature that works every time without having to look for a book on the library shelf. Ivy and Logan both noted access to a variety of materials as a motivator to use audio books for reading, but they explained that they did not equally enjoy the three resources we used. Both indicated that they enjoyed using TumbleBooks more than any other audio book source because it has more books than the others. Ivy explained that since everything is not on audio book that she wants to read, she reads sometimes for print and sometimes using audio books depending on if she can find what she wants. According to Ivy, "If I can find what I want online, I will read it there, but if I can't, I will read it in a regular book instead." For Ivy, the audio book is a convenience, but it does not replace the print book as her go to choice for reading.

While access to variety encouraged students to read using audio books, the lack of access to the online resources at home was reported as a detractor from their use by Ashley, Caleb, and Alexa, all of whom do not have unlimited access to online materials at home. Ashley, Caleb, and Alexa each explained that they do not like to begin listening to an audio book at school because they cannot keep listening to it at home without access to a device. They each explained that they have to then read something different for homework and cannot get back to the audio book until the next school day. Logan explained, "At home, I just read a regular book because at my house, the Internet is

blocked on my phone and laptop, so I don't even try to get on." For these students, the discrepancy in access to technology was a deterrent to using the audio books, but Ashley expressed excitement about using the audio books in the future. She said, "Next year, I will take a tablet home from school, and I will have homework on it, so I will get to use it to read online, too." Caleb and Alexa also explained that they think they will use audio books more during the next school year since they will be provided with a device to take home each day for homework.

Following the introduction and use of audio books by students for a duration of four weeks, teachers indicated in the survey that access to a variety of audio books improved reading motivation and engagement in their classrooms thus improving the overall experience. According to Ms. Har, "my boys were more motivated to read on their tablets than just reading a book." However, Ms. Har also reported that her students enjoyed the novelty of the books online, and she was not sure the access to them would keep them motivated to read long term. Ms. Will reported that "kids who prefer to read on a device are more engaged with their reading than they would be reading a traditional book. Ms. Mck stated that her students appeared to be engaged while using audio books but that she allowed them only on Fridays during independent reading, so it is unclear if they were still viewed as a novelty by her students. For Ms. Rai, students became engaged in reading more quickly each day using audio books because they could select from the variety of books online more quickly than they could select from the variety of print materials in the classroom.

Adult Support

Adult support is a theme that was not initially considered in this research project but appeared repeatedly in student interviews and in teacher feedback. Increasing adult support for reading and for the use of audio books was not a goal of the research, but it emerged as a need during data analysis and will be used to inform future research.

During the initial teacher focus group, teachers reported frustration with their perceived lack of adult support for reading at home that extends into the school day. According to Ms. Gar, "parents just don't read at home anymore." According to Ms. Huff, childhood experiences teachers may have had differ from those of her students in that students do not report visiting the public library next door to the school with their families as she did as a child. Other comments by teachers echoed Ms. Gar's and Ms. Huff's sentiments, and the discussion turned toward comments of judgement against parents. According to Ms. Har, fifth graders are required to read for twenty minutes each day for homework, but only two of her twenty students admitted to her they actually read at home. The group concurred that not going to the library indicative of lacking parent support for reading since the public library is easily accessible in its location next door to the school. Ms. Eld explained that "for students who like to read, it comes out in the classroom," and she reported those are the students who are supported at home. From this information, it became apparent that the action plan following this study must include components for both teachers and parents on how best to support reading at school and at home, and more information should be gathered on availability of resources and access in the home for adults. For teachers, lack of reading at home was perceived as purposeful,

so the action plan must also include professional development for teachers on the barriers families are facing that may make reading at home difficult.

During initial student interviews, Alexa, Caleb, Dalton and Logan explained that they read only when they have time or are finished with other activities such as written homework and sports and indicated that their parents do not make them read at home. Only one of the students, Ashley specifically stated that her dad requires her to read at home. While he appears to support the act of reading, he is specific in what constitutes reading. Ashley explained that he does not allow her to read on a computer at home because he believes "that is not real reading." During follow up interviews with students, Ashley repeated what she had stated earlier that her father forbids her from using electronics to read at home and requires her to read only from print materials. She was the only student to state that her parents oppose the use of electronics for reading, but the lack of technology at home indicated by Alexa and Caleb may be reflective of a lack of support for reading online by their parents, as well. Like the information gleaned from the teacher focus group, this data revealed a disconnection between teachers and parents who seem at odds in creating a positive reading experience for students.

In the follow up survey for teachers, all eight respondents indicated support for using audio books in the classroom. However, for some teachers, offering support and time for audio books is conditional. Ms. Mck noted that she supports listening to audio books during independent reading, but she only allows it one day a week when "students love using electronic books on Friday." For Ms. Mck, this one day a week opportunity to use audio books motivates them to read on their independent reading levels using print books during the previous four day. Ms. Cam explained that her students love to read on

their tablets but she has "caught some students sneaking on game sites instead of reading," so she limits their use in the classroom, as well. This notion of distrust between teacher and student during reading also indicates a need for professional development that must be addressed in the Action Plan.

Difficulty

The theme of difficulty in reading was reported most often by both teachers and students as a factor that influences student motivation and engagement in reading. In this study, difficulty refers to the difficulty of a text's structure and vocabulary as well as problems in reading comprehension. The repeated appearance of difficulty as a theme during data analysis suggests that students who may benefit most from audio books are those who find reading challenging. Teacher frustrations with student reading discrepancies also reveals the need for further professional development on how to encourage reluctant readers and those who may struggle with the academic expectations in reading.

In the initial interview, students reported difficulties in reading as a deterrent to feeling motivated to read. All six of the students stated that they like aspects of independent reading at school, but they all cited difficulties in reading at some times. For both Ashley and Alexa, reading is something they look forward to doing except when they have to read on their independent reading level. Engagement in reading was also explained by both Ashley and Alexa to be impacted by difficulty of text. Both students stated that when they have to read on the levels the teacher gives them that they "just don't want to do it for a long time." For Caleb, difficulty in reading a certain genre affects his desire to read because "it is still like learning from a book if it is nonfiction

which is hard, and I don't like that." Like Caleb, Dalton also explained that reading nonfiction is difficult for him, so he can only get into reading when it is a fiction book.

During the focus group, every teacher expressed concern for the impact of frustration with text on the love of reading. According to Ms. Cox, "for some kids, it's just really hard because they can't read something one time and comprehend it, so they have to read it over and over again which is frustrating for them. Some give up." For Ms. Garner, past experiences dictate whether a child will be motivated to read. She stated that "if they have struggled in the past or gotten pulled out of class for reading, they may already hate it by the time they get to fifth grade." Both Ms. Huff and Ms. Cam reported difficulty in reading as a problem that influences reading engagement. According to Ms. Cam, "for some lower level readers, holding a book on their level is just too embarrassing so they will pick one that is too hard and get frustrated." Difficulty in text was also noted by Ms. Gar and Ms. Rob as something that can cause disengagement in reading when the level of difficulty is too low for a student. Both teachers stated that readers who have the highest reading levels in the class often choose books that are "way too easy for them" and get bored quickly. Ms. Eld explained that it is the teacher's responsibility to help students choose books that are not too hard or too easy, but there are some students who do not show a desire to read anything. For these students, it is most important for the teacher to understand how to either rebuild a lost love of reading or help cultivate the desire to read for the first time.

During follow up interviews, every student except Dalton indicated that reading audio books is easier than reading print books. Dalton stated, "I don't really like the audio books. I like reading a real book more because it is hard for me to imagine what happens

if someone else's voice is talking." The other five students preferred the use of audio books to decrease the difficulty of the text. According to Ivy, hearing words said in audio books kept her from getting stuck on a word, and Ashley stated that listening keeps her from getting the headaches she often experiences when reading. However, Ivy also explained that she likes to be challenged, so she only wants to use audio books sometimes for reading "so it does not get too easy." For Ashley and Alexa, hearing the audio book helped them imagine what they were reading better than when they read a print book and Ashley stated that she will listen to a book longer than she will read it in print because "an audio book is more like a movie, and I want to finish it." For Logan, audio books were helpful in decoding difficult words, but they did not help him comprehend what he read. He explained that using Capstone Interactive made reading easier for him because he could see the words on the screen highlighted at the same time the speaker read them. He explained that he does not want to use audio books all of the time for reading because he reads out loud to himself "to understand what the author is talking about."

In the follow up survey, every teacher explained that audio books had impacted reluctant readers and those with reading difficulties positively. Ms. Rai and Ms. Rob both explained that the audio books gave students who are reading below grade level the chance to read books their peers were reading, and Ms. Cox explained that her students who need to hear and see information to comprehend it were more motivated to read the audio books. Ms. Cam stated that her less excited readers were enthusiastic about listening to books, and Ms. Huff stated that audio books engaged students who get frustrated when a text appears long or difficult in print. Ms. Mck explained that students who were usually shy about sharing what they read with others were more outgoing with

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discussions of what they listened to on audio because "they could be sure what they are sharing is right since they heard it read out loud."

Focus

During data collection, focus was a common theme among teachers and students as a problem area in independent reading. During initial student interviews, every student indicated problems staying focused during independent reading at school due to noise and movement around them. For Ashley, Caleb, Dalton and Logan, other students who are talking or making noises cause them to lose their place in their books. For Ivy, other students walking back and forth to the books at the back of the room kept her from being able to stick to reading for thirty minutes. According to Ivy, "they just need to pick something and read it without getting up and down all the time." Logan also indicated classmates' behaviors as problematic by explaining, "If people are too rowdy that day, we can't change the book we are reading so I get stuck with something I can't focus on." Two of the students described how they overcome what is going on around them and stay focused. Ashley explained that she can put on headphones to block out the noise around her, and Dalton stated that he is able to go into his own world and ignore everything else. Both Ivy and Logan indicated that they use reading strategies to stay focused including tracking print with their fingers and blocking what is going on around, but both pointed out that sometimes it is difficult to do this for the entire thirty minute reading block.

During the teacher focus group, Ms. Eld, Ms. Cam, Ms. Cox, and Ms. Gar reported problems with student focus. According to Ms. Gar, some students "play the pretend game during reading and will ask to go to the bathroom fifty times rather than pull a book out." Teachers reported strategies they use in the class to keep kids on task

such as reading for a purpose and setting a timer for independent reading, but everyone in the focus group agreed that the appearance of being on task during independent reading did not necessarily mean students were engaged in the text. Ms. Cox reported using flexible seating that allows students to wiggle and sway while reading, but she indicated that some may appear to be focused on their books while really being focused on moving around on the flexible stool. Ms. Gar proposed habitual use of electronics at home as an enemy to reading because "technology is an instant…reading takes time and it is hard to stay focused… kids are used to technology being so quick and reading just isn't like that." The group discussed an overall lack of focus for students in reading that they perceived to be more apparent than in other subject. According to Ms. Cox, "in reading, some are just in la la land, but they do better in the other subjects."

During follow up interviews, every student indicated that focusing on reading using audio books could be easier than reading a print book alone in a room full of other students, but some features of the audio book resources affected this. For Ivy, the speed of the reader's voice determined whether she would finish a book. She explained that if she could keep up with the speed, she could focus on a book longer, and if she could follow along with the print book in her hand or on the screen she would finish it because she would not lose her place. For Caleb and Dalton, the sound of the reader's voice determined if they would finish a book, and both indicated if they did not enjoy the sound of the reader's voice, they would not remain focused on the story. Ashley, Alexa and Logan explained that using audio books with headphones helped them focus in the classroom more than reading a print book because they blocked out noises in the classroom.

In the teacher survey, Ms. Huff, Ms. Rob, and Ms. Rai referred to more sustained focus in reading when using the audio books. For Ms. Huff, sustained focus impacted students who typically exhibit difficulty focusing and those who have comprehension difficulties in reading. Ms. Rob explained that the use of earbuds and the attention to the screen kept her students more focused while reading audio books that also had the words on the screen. Ms. Rai reported that her students appeared more focused with the audio books because of the variety of titles in one place with no need to get up and down and go to the classroom library to change books. For Ms. Har, however, focus using the audio books was not affected for those students who "still like holding a book in their hand and turning pages."

Information gathered during the classroom observations also revealed that student focus was impacted by the audio books. During the first observation, I observed behaviors described by students and teachers during the entire reading block. During the first three minutes of the observation, there was a great deal of movement in the room as students located a book to read and a place to sit. By the end of six minutes, all students were settled in a spot with a book, but within fifteen minutes of beginning the observation, the overall movement in the room had increased as seven students went back to the classroom library or their desks to exchange books. For the remaining eleven readers, this created a distraction during which every students looked up and around the room. By the end of eighteen minutes, one student had asked to go to the bathroom, one was dismissed to the nurse, and two were signed out of the class for the day. By the end of twenty four minutes, only three students still appeared to be reading their books. The noise level and movement by students in the room appeared to make it difficult for

students who attempted to remain engaged in their reading to continue to focus. During the second classroom observation, students moved around the room and spent time selecting books just as they had in the first observation but all students were settled in a location after three minutes. Of the seventeen students present, three students read print books from the classroom library while fourteen utilized their tablets for audio book reading with headphones. Three students left the room for the bathroom, nurse, and early dismissal, but the remaining fourteen students stayed in their chosen spots during the duration of the observation. The disruption as these students left the room did not appear to decrease student focus although the noise level did increase.

Interest

Student interest as impacted by genre was identified as a theme during data analysis, and interest in the act of reading was identified by both teachers and students as a theme that influences reading perceptions. For Alexa, the power of choice impacts her engagement in independent reading as evidenced by her statement in the initial student interview, "I like how we get to read the books we like instead of just what she [the teacher] makes us read." For Ivy, Ashley, Caleb, Dalton and Alicia, area of interest is a motivating factor for reading independently. Each of these students indicated that if they are not interested in a book, they will not finish it. Logan favors fiction and nonfiction sports books and will finish those almost always because he feels like he imagines what is happening most often in those books. For Ivy, her interest in mysteries and dolphins determines what she reads. Like Ivy, Alexa and Ashley prefer mystery books, so they read from them almost exclusively as indicated in the initial interview.

Teachers reported student interest as having a significant impact on motivation and engagement in reading during the focus group. Ms. Gar explained that some students are "hard core readers" and are interested in the activity of reading, but some students "just aren't into it." Ms. Eld stated that the excitement that some students show toward reading has a positive impact on others when they see their friends excited about a book. She explained that this motivation is not always enough to impact engagement if the book is difficult or lengthy. Ms. Cam explained a similar excitement toward reading that motivates students to start new series books when she gets them in the classroom library, but she explained that she is not sure they are actually engaged in reading the series or if they just want to be the first to get a new book. According to Ms. Rob and Ms. Huff, reading aloud to students can spark student's interest in a book, and they cited novels they have used as read alouds in class such as *Mr. Lemoncello's Library* by Chris Grabenstein and *The BFG* by Roald Dahl, but they both explained that they were not sure the students who started these books on their own actually finished them. Ms. Gar agreed and explained that she ended up reading *Serafina and the Black Cloak* by Robert Beatty aloud in its entirety for this reason because even though many of her students were motivated to read it, the text difficulty may have disengaged some of her students. Ms. Cox explained that she believes the requirement of reading deters some students from reading despite interest. Ms. Mck agreed explaining that some love to read what they are interested in when they are young but when they are "required to read certain things, that kills their love and they grow to hate it." Ms. Har expressed her frustration with getting them to love reading in fifth grade if they have never found anything they are interested in reading in the past.

During the follow up student interviews, interest continued to be a factor in student motivation to read. Ivy indicated that two of the audio book resources in the study, Capstone Interactive and Destiny Discover, contained limited titles on mysteries and dolphins, so she did not enjoy them as much as TumbleBooks which had more titles in her area of interest. Caleb and Dalton honestly explained that they will not read something they are not interested in. Caleb revealed that if a book does not hold his interest, he will not continue to read it, so he starts but does not finish many books. Overall, interest was the strongest motivator for students regardless of the format of the material. Digital materials were not favored over print unless they met the students' interests.

In the follow up survey, teachers cited interest as impacting motivation to read online because they enjoy using the technology. According to Ms. Cox, students are accustomed to using technology, they can find what they are interested in reading quicker than in print. She explained that using the computer to read is more like a game for her students than reading a traditional print book, so students were more engaged. Ms. Will also supported this notion of engagement with a device and explained that "some children just prefer to read on a device because that is what they use for everything else." According to Ms. Rai, students perceive the variety of books online as better than those in the classroom library, so they are more excited to search for something that interests them online. Teachers concurred that the school offers the classroom library and the library media center, but the Internet has many more options that excite students about reading.

Interpretation of Results of the Study

For each of the themes identified during data analysis, there is a link to an improved reading experience and the option of using audio books for certain students and in specific settings.

At school, access to time and technology encouraged the use of audio books by students, and teacher feedback and classroom observations showed a positive impact on students' reading experiences. However, access to time and technology deterred the use of audio books outside the school setting which in turn impacted their use during required independent reading in the classroom. The data on access suggests audio books may have a stronger impact for these students during middle school when they have device to take home, but there is a need for more support for parents to help these students at both home and school. This is an area of support not currently provided for parents of elementary students, but recommendations can be made to administration in this area. Access to time in the classroom also showed a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement in reading therefore potentially improving the reading experiences. However, this time and support was limited in some classes, and there was a disconnection apparent between what independent reading currently looks like in the classroom and what would best benefit students. The frustration expressed by teachers showed through in the focus group, so there is a clear need for professional development for teachers on how to build a love of reading in the classrooms. Audio books can help to support an improvement in the reading experience for the students, but a strong and focused professional development plan must be implemented first.

Prior to data collection, the area of adult support was not intended to be a focus of research, but information from both teachers and students revealed that adult support in the classroom and at home is a key to motivation and engagement in reading both print and audio books. During data analysis, it became clear that access to time and technology is only possible with adult support. For both teachers and parents, there is concern that the use of audio books is not a valid form of reading, so more information will need to be shared with these adults on how audio books can support students in reading if teachers are to encourage their use. During middle school, the devices students will take home from school may encourage their use at home, but teachers must first construct a reading experience for students that is supportive of reading for pleasure rather than reading based on a prescribed level and recognize the value of available resources regardless of format.

Difficulty in reading was discussed as a deterrent to reading by both teachers and students. The impact of audio books was most apparent in lessening the difficulty students felt in reading. For students who have reading difficulties or who feel self-conscious about the books they read independently, audio books allowed them to try selections that may have been frustrating in print. For these students, listening to books spoken aloud decreased the difficulty of decoding words and encouraged them to read texts that previously would have been too difficult, so their excitement about reading improved. In addition, audio books had an impact on reading as students were able to listen to books that were longer than they may have been able to read in print. However, for some students, audio books detracted from engagement if the speaker read in a voice or speed that did not appeal to students. In these situations, listening to audio books made

reading more difficult and less engaging for students. Overall, this research revealed that audio books are helpful for making reading easier for some students, but they do not necessarily ease reading difficulties for every student and every book.

The theme of focus was identified during data collection and analysis has having a general impact on the reading experience. Maintaining focus was problematic for every student in the interview sample, and it was discussed by teachers due to the active nature of the elementary classroom. I also noted a loss of focus as a result of student disinterest in their chosen print texts and classroom disruptions during the first classroom observation which was not apparent in the second observation. The use of headphones and the spoken voices on audio books helped individual students maintain focus and create an environment conducive to independent reading. The use of individual devices for listening to audio books prevented students from moving back and forth to the classroom library during independent reading, so movement and noise in the classroom was decreased. Students were also able to maintain engagement in an audio book for a longer period of time than for print books, so focus improved this factor during independent reading. However, for books with voices or reading speeds that did not appeal to students, the use of audio books did not improve student focus.

Like difficulty, the theme of interest was found to have an impact on the student motivation and engagement as well as the overall reading experience. For teachers, finding books that were interesting for students and on their independent reading levels was a challenge, so the variety of audio books was helpful in this area. For students, locating books of interest was an easier process than finding them in the classroom libraries or the school library. In addition, the volume of titles in the audio book resources

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offered more choices for students, so a wide range of interests were met with many titles in some cases. Like focus and difficulty, however, the voice of the audio book speaker or the speed of the reader affected students' interest in particular books, so if students did not like the voice or speed they were not interested in the text.

Both classroom observations served to validate the findings of the focus group, student interviews, and survey as they reflected information about reading engagement in their classrooms before and after the introduction of audio books. Prior to their use, off task behaviors in students were more noticeable by other students, and after the introduction of audio books, these same off task behaviors were less interruptive in the classroom. It appeared during observations that students were more engaged because they were quieter and remained more still than before, so the use of these resources in a class of students may be beneficial for improving the experience of the group.

After considering the data gathered from teachers, students and observations, several conclusions may be drawn that can be used to inform professional development, instruction, purchasing, and future research opportunities using audio books. For some students, reading at school is an escape from work, but outside school, students do not feel they have enough time to or access to use them. In addition, this study suggests that access to audio books at both home and school are only available with adult support from teachers and parents, so building support should come prior to their use. According to the data from the study, audio books may or may not have an impact on the perception of reading, but they may improve some reading experiences in the classroom and can potentially add value to a literacy program.

Conclusion

  This chapter communicates information gathered during classroom observations, individual student interviews, the teacher focus group, and the teacher survey in order to capture rich, descriptive data on the reading experience. Data collected and analyzed also considered motivating factors indicated by students and teachers, as well as descriptions of the classroom observations that examined the reading experience and apparent engagement. This chapter also presented the themes that were identified during data analysis and collection. The interpretation of these results as they relate to students' reading experience was also offered in order to convey the interconnected nature of these themes and inform the creation of an action plan to address the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

This action research case study focused on the impact of audio books on students' experience while reading independently in the elementary school classroom. The study was undertaken in an effort to solve the problem of practice in the research setting that was identified by teachers as low motivation to read and engagement problems while reading. These reports by teachers were revealed to be symptoms of a larger problem in the research setting. This study recognized that the student reading experience needs improvement, and because it is a practical problem, action research was selected as the best method to address it in practice (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

According to Cunningham, Hall and Sigmon (1999), the more a child reads, the better reader he or she becomes. However, students in the research setting are exhibiting a decline in student reading rather than an increase. Adams (1995) explains that one requirement for becoming a skilled reader is to read a great deal, but teachers in the school report decreasing engagement and stamina in reading beginning in third grade that reaches a peak in fifth grade. Miller (2012) explains that in order for reading to be informative and engaging for students, the student must be engaged in the act of reading, so it is necessary to address the problem of practice for these students especially as they are preparing to leave the elementary school and enter middle school where they will encounter increasingly difficult texts. This problem of practice, which has become

increasingly frustrating for teachers, affects the overall reading experience of students and may potentially affect their reading skills.

Prior efforts have been put in place to address this problem of practice in the school. Incentive programs have been implemented for students, and school library and classroom library resources have been improved based on student indicated areas interest, but the problem of practice has yet to be addressed by these measures. According to Willingham (2015), the problem with motivation is that teachers want students to do something that they know is important due to their prior experience and training, but students may or may not do it. This action research study seeks to address the problem in way that does not incentivize reading nor punish students for failing to do so to the teacher's satisfaction.

This school is located in a high poverty area with 68% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. According Washington and Yin (2014), students from low income backgrounds may have fewer encounters with text outside school, so exposing them to as much text as possible is necessary for reading practice. The problem of engagement and motivation in reading is indicated by teachers in grades three, four and five, but several factors informed the decision to focus on fifth grade students for this study. While this action research study is not intended to address reading academic achievement, the selection of fifth grade students for the target class and student sample was in part based on lower than expected achievement data for this grade for the past three years. In addition, reading apathy was reported as most significant by fifth grade teachers. Fifth graders have the most experience with utilizing online resources on the

one to one mobile devices, so they were also chosen as the least likely group to encounter experience based technical problems.

Using data from individual student interviews, a teacher focus group, a teacher survey, and classroom observations, the impact of audio books on students' experience while reading was examined in an effort to solve the problem of practice in and inform future purchasing decisions in the library media center at the school. After collecting and analyzing the data, the findings revealed a need to targeted professional development for teachers on how to build classrooms of readers and improve the overall reading experience for students.

Overview/Summary of the Study

Major points of the study. In order to gather information about the impact audio books have on the reading experience, I utilized semi-structure interviews, a focus group, classroom observations and a teacher survey. Once analyzed, the information gleaned from participants provided insight into how students view reading in the classroom. The findings were then used to create an action plan to improve the reading experience for students through professional development, parent communication, and additional collection development.

At the beginning of the study, I gathered information from teachers in grades three through five during a thirty minute focus group session. During this session, the individuals in the focus group were asked to discuss their experiences with independent reading and provide general information on the factors they perceive to influence students' reading motivation and engagement. Teachers revealed frustration with lower than desired motivation in students to read in the classroom and difficulty curbing off

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task behaviors resulting in low engagement for the class during reading. In addition, teachers reported dissatisfaction with adult support outside school that they believe is leading to apathy toward reading. Teachers also expressed concern for increasing pressures from administration for higher reading performance from students who are disinterested in reading.

Following the teacher focus group, six students in the selected fifth grade class participated in individual interviews during which they were asked to share their perceptions of independent reading. All six students responded that they enjoy aspects of independent reading, but each revealed barriers to their enjoyment in the classroom including distractions from classmates, boredom with certain selections, and the difficulty of reading on a specific level. In addition, it became clear that reading may be favorable only if the alternative is a worse task, and reading was revealed as a chore. The students also shared information about their reading experiences outside of school which revealed that reading is often not prioritized for either the academic requirements or for the pleasure of the experiences.

After completing both the focus group and individual student interviews, I conducted a classroom observation to examine what teachers and students communicated about independent reading. I found the descriptions by both teachers and students to be accurate as class disruptions, noises in the room, and movement by students to be distracting. In addition, I observed students' lack of focus during reading as evidenced by their repeated up and down movement between their desks and the classroom library and requests to get water, go to the bathroom, and visit the health room. Although the independent reading block was intended to last thirty minutes, after eighteen minutes, the

noise level and activity in the classroom made attention to reading nearly impossible. It was clear after this first classroom observation that neither teacher nor students found enjoyment in the independent reading opportunity, and it was perceived by both parties as a frustrated portion of the tightly scheduled instructional day.

After gathering and analyzing data from the focus group, interviews, and classroom observation, I conducted four once per week fifty minute library class periods of instruction with each third, fourth, and fifth grade class on the use of audio books. Students were given the opportunity to select and read materials from Capstone Interactive Library, Destiny Discover, and Tumblebooks. During the first three weeks of instruction, students were given access and support on one resource in library class, and they were asked to use the resource for independent reading for the duration of the week. Teachers were asked to allow students to use the resources during independent reading in the classroom. During the fourth week of instruction, students had the opportunity to utilize all three of the resources with my support in the library media center, and students were asked to share what they liked and disliked about each resource.

After this four week period, the six sample students from the target class participated in follow up interviews during which they were asked to reflect on their experiences with audio books. With the exception of one student, all of the students revealed positive experiences with the audio books, but they also revealed barriers to their use. Lack of access to the technology for audio books outside school proved to impact the use of audio books at school as students did not wish to begin a book during class and be unable to continue it at home. Students indicated that they intend to use the resources in middle school when they can take the one to one devices home with them.

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Students also revealed that their interest in a book and the reader's voice determined whether they remained engaged in the book, and they might still begin and end a text that did not hold their interest. All of the students believed that the use of audio books in the class improved their focus during independent reading because the use of headphones and earbuds blocked out noise from classmates. Student responses also indicated that the use of audio books made reading easier for students thereby improving their engagement in text and preventing frustration.

Teachers were also asked to submit information about students' independent reading experiences with audio books in their classrooms through an electronic survey. Eight of the eleven teachers who were asked to participate responded, and each provided positive feedback on the use of audio books in classes. The teacher survey revealed that student motivation to read using the audio books was encouraging, but teachers were not certain if improvement would continue as it might be attributed to the novelty of the experience. Teachers also revealed that for struggling readers, audio books had an impact on both motivation to read difficult texts and engagement in reading in class, but again, the novelty of the resource was also considered by teachers as a factor that may have led to more favorable experiences. In addition, the survey also revealed that the audio books were sometimes used as a reward. Such rewards represent the extrinsic motivators already attempted in classrooms prior to the study to no avail. The survey revealed that teachers did not fully embrace the use of audio books as an alternative to reading and did not consider the use of the audio books instructionally significant.

A second classroom observation was conducted after gathering data from students and teachers on the use of audio books. During the classroom observation, students had

the opportunity to read for pleasure from either print or audio books, and most of the students chose to utilize audio books. The overall noise level and movement of students in the room was improved from the previous observation suggesting that engagement during this independent reading period was impacted by the use of the audio books. However, disruptions occurred that led the loss of focus for much of the class toward the end of the reading block, so while engagement improved, the duration of reading engagement may not have been impacted. This engagement was observed as physical engagement with the texts students were reading, and it was unclear if students were truly involved in their books or appeared to be more focused due to the technology.

     Action Plan. The findings of this study have implications for practice in both the classroom and the library media center and will be used to impact professional development, instruction, and collection development. The five themes that emerged during analysis are driving factors in the action plan as audio books are inaccessible without access, and adult support. For students, focus, difficulty, and interest were the determining factors on whether audio books were used, so these themes are also addressed in the action plan. During data analysis, it became apparent that student perceptions of reading had been formed prior to fifth grade, so a portion of the action plan is devoted to young readers. Data analysis also revealed that more professional development is needed for teachers to understand their students' backgrounds, especially the impact poverty has on their ability to access texts at home. Data analysis also revealed that further professional development is needed to improve the reading experiences of students in the classroom so that reading for students is not a chore that is done only in avoidance of another task or simply as a requirement.

Access and Adult Support. The theme of access emerged specifically in student interviews as students explained that they did not have access to a device or the Internet at home. This made utilizing the resources difficult since students could not access books they began in the classroom after school. In addition, the theme of adult support arose from teacher feedback that was expressed as frustration their perceived lack of support for reading at home. Teachers compared their experiences as children to those of their students which revealed a lack of understanding of students' backgrounds. The first step in the action plan is to provide professional development for teachers on the impact poverty has on the literacy opportunities students have outside school. As the librarian and researcher in this study, I will work with the school literacy coach, principal, and school counselor to provide this professional development. As part of this professional development, teachers must examine their own biases and how those biases affect their expectations and serve to create their frustrations. As teachers gain a better understanding of their students' backgrounds and the impact those backgrounds may have on reading in the classroom, they can work to build environments that are more conducive for their students rather than focusing on what they did as children or their personal expectations.

Adult support at home was another area that the findings revealed to need improvement, but upon further reflection, partnership between school and home is an area that has not been cultivated by the school for students in grades three through five. For this reason, the school will provide more support for parents so that families have the information and the resources and do not experience frustration with reading at home and do not feel disconnected from what they children are learning at school. In kindergarten through second grade, parent support programs are regularly conducted by the literacy

coach and reading specialist and well attended by parents during which families participate in literacy activities together at school. However, this parent support is not in place for students in grades three through five as it has been taken for granted that these students need less support in literacy at home. The findings of this study indicate there is a high need for the school and home partnership. As part of the action plan, I will work with the principal, literacy coach, and reading specialist to expand these support programs for parents and invite them to participate in activities in these grades. During the upcoming school year, parent sessions on the use of audio books for students will also be provided during the annual school's technology family event and family literacy event to provide parents information on audio books and the opportunity to use them. In addition, representatives from the public library located next door to the school will also be invited to attend this event and offer support to families. Because the public library provides free internet access for patrons, families can utilize the public library after school hours to access online resources. In addition, training will also be conducted for after school staff in the use of audio books for students during the after school program. By working with parents and after school staff, access to audio book materials and adult support of these materials will improve.

The next area of professional development this action plan addresses is the creation of a community of readers in the classrooms of third, fourth and fifth grade teachers. According to Dan Willingham (2015), "academic reading feels like work because it is work. But pleasure ought to be the litmus test for reading" (p. 5). Professional development will also be tailored to rebuild pleasure reading into the independent reading program on the part of both teachers and students. The first step in

building pleasurable reading experiences will be to re-introduce the read aloud to classrooms in grades three through five through a guest reader program and professional development for teachers on how to conduct read alouds in these grades. Teachers in grades three through five erroneously believe the read aloud to be time taken away from instruction, so they must learn or relearn how reading aloud to students impacts their growth. Working with the literacy coach, reading specialist, and principal, I will work with teachers on selecting read aloud texts for their students and model how to conduct read alouds to captivate students and build the love of books back in to the curriculum. Professional development on how to incorporate pleasure reading into the instructional reading block will follow Dan Willingham's model (2015) which states that students must have choice, variety, opportunities to share in the reading community, and active teacher participation in modeling what a good reader does. The goal of this professional development will be to stimulate a love of reading for students and to assist teachers in creating communities of readers who do not view independent reading as a chore.

Another area of improvement will be in the area of teacher training on the use of the audio book resources. While some teachers allowed students to access audio book materials for independent reading daily, others limited access to one day a week or only after other work was completed. During the upcoming school year, I will offer professional development for teachers that mirror the instruction given to students so that teachers will have the opportunity to access the audio book materials and learn how to incorporate them into instruction. The goal of this professional development is to assist teachers in utilizing the resources as well as impact their current view of audio books as

part of a reward system and rather as a potentially valuable resource to add to the variety of books available for students.

All of the students in the study indicated that they plan to use audio books when they enter middle school, so one important area of this action plan will be to share the information gleaned from this study with the library media specialist at the middle school these students will attend. The media specialist and I will work together and potentially participate in resource sharing and vertical planning to offer more opportunities and resources for students at our respective schools.

Interest. During student interviews, it became apparent that reading perceptions have already largely been formed prior to fifth grade, so I will provide instruction on these resources for students in second grade for the upcoming school year. By introducing these readers to the audio book materials, the audio books may provide the opportunity to influence reading perceptions and motivation to read in younger learners. Many of these students may benefit from the use of audio books during independent reading, so the collection of these books will also be improved to include titles for younger readers. I will also use an interest inventory for students in grades two through five to determine popular areas and purchase new audio book materials according to these interests. This will include more print materials with corresponding audio books and additional titles on Capstone Interactive as these are the two resources whose collection can be tailored to the needs and interests of students.

Difficulty. Teacher and student feedback revealed the theme of difficulty to be interwoven with students' reading experiences. Both teachers and students indicated that difficulty in reading can lead students to feel unmotivated to read when their peers are

reading more difficult texts. The action plan includes further purchases using the library media center budget for high interest audio book materials for readers who may have difficulty reading material on their prescribed grade levels. I will build the library's electronic collection with these materials and promote them via the morning news program, the school newsletter, and the school website to encourage students to try these materials. I will also build the collection of books available on Capstone Interactive as this resource has the capability to provide high interest nonfiction audio books for students who may not be motivated to read print materials they view as difficult.

Focus. Student data during the classroom observation and interviews revealed that the loss of focus during reading detracts from engagement due to class disruptions and the active nature of the elementary classroom. Although students have the opportunity to bring headphones or earbuds to school, not every student has these piece of equipment. Those who bring earbuds often find that they break and are unusable prior to the conclusion of the school year. As part of this action plan, a portion of the library media center budget normally spent on equipment replacement for teachers will be allocated to headphones for students. For students in grades two through five, the library media center will purchase class sets of headphones for each room so that all students have the opportunity to utilize these devices.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further researcher is suggested in the use of audio books with students for the purpose of impacting the research setting and contributing to the literature in the field. One area more research is needed is in the use of audio books with younger students. In this action research study, fifth graders' perceptions of independent reading had been

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formed in earlier grades, so a study examining reading perceptions using audio books may be beneficial for younger students such as second or third graders. Upon entering middle school, students have access to a tablet to take home daily, so further research is also needed in the use of audio books for middle school and high school aged students with access to school provided technology. Access for these students may be more readily available after school hours, but it is unclear if these students will utilize audio book materials, especially if they have had negative reading experiences due to focus, difficulty and inability to find materials of interest. Teachers in this study expressed hesitation with utilizing audio books in place of print books, so further research is needed in the area of teacher's perceptions of independent reading with technology and how they may impact student experiences. Further research with parents is also suggested to determine if the use of audio books at home can impact parent support and understanding of reading outside the classroom. While this study did not intend to impact student achievement, there is a need for further research into how the use of audio books may impact academic achievement, especially in students who are expected to read on a prescribed level but do so with difficulty. Because students provided positive feedback about audio books' capacity to make reading easier, further research is also suggested in the use of audio books in other curricular areas such as social studies, mathematics, and science as domain specific vocabulary can make understanding in these areas difficult for some students.

Limitations

One of the advantages of this study is the rich descriptive information that was obtained by using a small sample of students and teachers. However, this is also a

disadvantage of the study because it may not be representative of the perceptions of large groups of students. Another limitation of the study stems from its setting in a small rural community with high levels of poverty as the information gleaned from participants may not be applicable to schools in different geographic locations or students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. The setting of the study was also a limitation in that the technological infrastructure and funding for materials in the library media center are such that technical or financial barriers do not detract from the use of the audio book materials, so data from the study may not be transferrable to settings without similar advantages. For school settings without the funding to acquire audio books and their print counterparts like those in this study, students could potentially use any number of free audio book resources on the Internet. However, these sources may contain advertisements and games that detract from the reading experience of students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss an overview of the study after data gathering and analysis. In addition, this chapter summarized the study's major points and detailed steps in the action plan that will be taken as a result of the findings. This chapter also offered suggestions for further research in the use of audio books and their potential to impact student learning and achievement across the curriculum. Limitations of this study were also discussed specifically for researchers wishing to replicate the study in a different setting.

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APPENDIX A: Tumblebook Library Handout

TumbleBooks contains fiction and nonfiction books. You can read the books on the screen and listen to them read aloud. Access TumbleBooks from the Library Media Center webpage. pacolet.spartanburg3.org

Username: _____Password: _____

Things I Like About TumbleBooks
Books I Would Like to Read

APPENDIX B: Destiny Discover Library Handout

Destiny Discover contains fiction and nonfiction books. You can read some of the books on the screen and listen to some of them read aloud. Choose an audio book from Destiny Discover and locate the print book to go with it. Access Destiny Discover from the Library Media Center webpage. pacolet.spartanburg3.org

Username: _____**Password:** _____

Things I Like About Destiny Discover
Books I Would Like to Read

APPENDIX C: Capstone Interactive Library Handout

Capstone Interactive contains fiction and nonfiction books. You can read the books on the screen and listen to them read aloud. Access Capstone Interactive from the Library Media Center webpage.   pacolet.spartanburg3.org

Username: _____**Password:** _____

Things I Like About Capstone Interactive

Books I Would Like to Read

APPENDIX D: Teacher Participation Email Invitation

Dear Teachers:

I am conducting an action research project on student motivation to read and student engagement while reading. In addition to being included in my dissertation for the Ed. D. program in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of South Carolina, the information gathered during the research project will be used to inform future purchases and instruction for the library.

I am asking you to participate in one focus group interview and one electronic survey this semester as a means to provide information on student reading behaviors in grades 3-5. Because this project is considered exempt by the Institutional Review Board, I am not required to obtain written permission from you to participate. However, if you do not wish to participate, please let me know in person or via email, and I will omit the information you provide from the action research report.

The responses you give today will be included in the research report for this project, but your responses are confidential. Each of you has been assigned an acronym that will be used in the report in lieu of your name.

The goal of this focus group is to gather as much information possible on the factors that influence student motivation to read independently and student engagement while reading. Because the act of motivated and engaged reading is required in all subject areas, your input as a general education teacher is valuable for gaining insight into students' reading behaviors.

APPENDIX E: Interview Protocol for Initial Student Interview

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Stop Time: _____ Student: _____

Question 1: How do you feel about reading independently?

Question 2: What reading experiences do you have outside school?

Question 3: What do you like or dislike about the independent reading block at school?

Question 4: What helps you stay focused while reading?

Question 5: What causes you to lose focus while reading?

APPENDIX F: Interview Protocol for Follow-Up Student Interview

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Stop Time: _____Student: _____

Student Follow-Up Interview Guide

Question 1: What are your thoughts on using audio books during independent reading?

Question 2: What do you like or dislike about the audio book resources we have been

using?

APPENDIX G: Interview Protocol for Teacher Focus Group

Question 1: What are your thoughts on independent reading in your grade?

Question 2: What do you think are the things that are working well to encourage students to read?

Question 3: What do you feel are the things that are working well to encourage student engagement during the independent reading block?

Question 4: What do you think are the barriers to student motivation and engagement during independent reading?

APPENDIX H: Follow-Up Teacher Survey Questions

Audio books for Students Electronic Survey

Your students have had several options for reading online using their Chromebooks this year. Students in grades 3-5 had access to TumbleBooks, Capstone Interactive, and Destiny Discover. Please consider the questions below and provide your thoughts on the use of audio books in your classroom during this school year.

1. How do you think using electronic and audio books during independent reading has impacted student motivation to read?

2. How do you think using audio books during independent reading has impacted engagement in reading?

APPENDIX I: Classroom Observation Guide

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Stop Time: _____ Class: _____

Time	Observations	Observer's Comments