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Increasing Student Engagement in Kindergarten Read Alouds

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INCREASING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN KINDERGARTEN READ ALOUDS

by

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DEDICATION

To my family and husband for their continued support and to all the teachers who have

had an impact on me as both a student and a teacher.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

As an educator, it is not only my job to teach students what is in the curriculum, it is also my job to find ways to keep students actively engaged throughout the school year. A teacher, if they chose to, could stand up in front of the class, of any age, and read directly from the teacher's guide to teach their students, but is that the most effective way? How many students do you think would benefit from this? Perhaps there are a few students who learn well this way and would be actively writing down notes, but I can guarantee you will lose the attention of a few, if not most of the students in that class as the class period goes on. Students will begin to zone out, look around the room, or even begin drawing on a piece of paper in front of them. They are no longer focussed on the material that is being taught to them. At this point, you have lost those students for what will most likely be the rest of the class period unless the teacher changes their teaching style. They are no longer retaining the information in the lesson and there is nothing that is being done by the teacher to keep their focus for an extended period of time.

Now envision a similar situation but in a kindergarten classroom. The teacher decides to leave the students sitting on the floor for an extended period of time while they continue to read information the students are supposed to retain. The chaos and student disengagement would be off the charts. The attention span of young learners is even shorter than that of an older student. Young learners also need a hook or something to grab their attention immediately starting something new as well as continued movement or 'wow' moments as the lesson progresses. I have witnessed this first hand as both an

observer in a classroom and as a kindergarten teacher. You can quickly determine the students who were drawn in by what the speaker had to say and the students who quickly lost interest because what was being said did not connect with them. My goal is to attempt to change that. I want to find a way to engage as many students as possible, especially during whole group activities.

In many cases, kindergarten can be considered its own animal and is very different from any other grade based on a teacher and student perspective. Even though it comes with its own set of needs and demands, it doesn't mean it can't bring forth joy and an abundance of learning for everyone. Rog sums up teaching kindergarten nicely. They write,

> teaching kindergarten has never been more exciting - or more demanding - than it is today. There is an increase in pressure on kindergarteners to perform and increasing pressure on teachers to ensure that they do. The children entering today's classrooms are more diverse than they have ever been - in their background experiences; their language development; their home and cultural environments; and their cognitive, physical, and emotional needs. (2011, p.28)

Though teaching these young students comes with its own challenges, there are ways for teachers to bring students together as a classroom community of learners to make their kindergarten experience more enjoyable and rewarding for both the students and their teachers.

In particular, within this thesis project, I would like to take a closer look at teaching kindergarten and even more specifically at read alouds in the kindergarten classroom. The books that are used during read alouds are usually preselected books,

often included in a reading curriculum, that are best suited and pertain to the lesson for

that day. The pre-selected books effectively portray information pertaining to the lesson

but not always targeted to the diversity amongst the students' backgrounds, interests, and

learning abilities in the classroom. My goal for this thesis project is to create lessons that

can be implemented into the existing curriculum, to increase student engagement with

books that are being read aloud to them. By incorporating the component of allowing

each student to select a book for the read alouds, I am providing my students with the

opportunity to bring a little piece of who they are into the classroom to share with their

classmates. The question this capstone project seeks to answer is: *Can student*

engagement be increased during the whole group read alouds by incorporating books

selected by students with follow up activities pertaining to the theory of multiple

intelligences?

This chapter will outline my rationale for incorporating these read alouds into the

reading curriculum. This rationale is based on my own experiences as both a student and

a kindergarten teacher. My focus is on the lack of relatable texts for the wide range of

students that are in a classroom by allowing students to bring in books that they already

know and love to share with their peers. Students will then be given the opportunity,

using the theory of multiple intelligences, to interact with the texts in various ways after

the book has been read to the whole class. In this chapter, you will read about both my

personal and professional experience that has led me to this project.

Rationale

As I began to consider a topic of importance to me for this capstone project, I

focused on the areas where I felt there were gaps in the kindergarten reading curriculum.

My thoughts were focused on enhancing student engagement with this project rather than adding an unnecessary amount of work for both the teacher and the students to do outside of the current reading curriculum being used. A few questions that came to my mind were: How can I be a better teacher? What can I do for my students that incorporates a piece of each of them as individuals that fits within the time and framework of a reading lesson? One of the first thoughts that came to my mind was actually a memory from my first year of teaching. One of my students approached me at the end of the day, after we had read a read aloud story about students sharing during show and tell. He had asked me if we could have our own classroom show and tell because he already had something in mind he wanted to bring in to share with his classmates. As a kindergarten teacher, I know how exciting and fun a show and tell can be for students, but what value does it bring to the classroom? Most students bring in their favorite toy and that wraps up class show and tell. My thoughts then began to shift to turning a show and tell into something academic and engaging into the kindergarten classroom.

Thinking, in particular, of the student who brought the idea of show and tell to my attention, he was a student who was oftentimes disengaged when it came to read alouds, especially when he was uninterested in what the story was about. He would sit in the back of the class on the rug and part of the way through a read aloud he would begin spinning around in circles or would constantly be moving around and his attention would be anywhere but on the story that was being read. He was clearly unengaged and uninterested in the story that was being read to them. He had a hard time relating to the characters in these stories. Kindergarten students can easily become distracted, especially when what is being taught cannot be tied to them or any of their past experiences.

Taking a look at the personality of this student, he had always been one of the more quiet students in the class. I would find him engaging with his twin brother most of the time in class and at recess, but not necessarily with other classmates. The school that I had taught at was a very small rural school and all of the other students had gone to preschool together. This student and his twin brother were new to the school in kindergarten and had not had the extra time to get to know their classmates in preschool like all of the other students had. This student, approaching me the way that he did, made me stop and think. What was it that piqued his interest about that book in particular? What was he really wanting to get out of bringing something from home to share with his classmates? Quite simply, he was looking for a way to share with his classmates something that he loved. He was looking for a way to make a connection with his classmates using something that was familiar to him. Thus the development of this thesis project began.

Context

Encouraging students to engage with their peers through books is very important to me because of my background and love of sharing the books that I love with others. Ever since I was a young student, I have always considered myself to be a reader. When I read a book that I could not put down, I was always eager to share it with others. If the book I was reading brought me joy, I wanted others to feel the same way that I did too.

Even though I have always considered myself to be a reader and, at times, an avid one, my journey as a reader has not always been linear. I have had peaks and valleys, just like many others have, and I go through phases of either reading book after book or not picking one up for months. In order to pick up a book again after some time has passed, it

usually takes a really great recommendation from someone to jumpstart my reading again. Sharing what you love is a great way to encourage others who may be struggling, and that is one of the main reasons behind this thesis project. When students are given a space to present something that provides others a glimpse into who they are as a person outside of the classroom, it allows students to begin to create deeper connections with each other. They are being provided a safe place to share with others who they are to give their classmates a better understanding of the things that they like. A space like this also provides an opening for teachers to help facilitate and celebrate both the similarities and differences that students have with their classmates. This way of sharing is a great example of looking beyond what is presented on the cover of a book. You can make assumptions or predictions but you do not truly know what is inside until you take the time to read it. This directly correlates to the way students only see some of their classmates from the outside but do not necessarily know much more about them beyond that. Therefore the need for an opportunity for students to express themselves through classroom learning is something that is missing within the classroom curriculums.

When students are given the opportunity to use what they know or are able to reference a topic that is already familiar to them, they are able to dive deeper into the lesson that is being taught to them. This statement is the driving force for this thesis project. I want to be able to offer students, even as beginning readers in kindergarten, the space to connect with each other as well as grow academically. As a teacher, I know students do not always have a lot of choices in what they learn in the classroom, but it is important to offer students a choice in the way that they learn. Thus the idea of allowing students to choose a read aloud text that they enjoy along with a follow up lesson that

coincides with the learning that is already happening in the classroom. No two students learn in exactly the same way. By incorporating various books and follow up lessons, teachers are able to tap into how the theory of multiple intelligences is present in the classroom.

Not only is this topic important to me on a personal level, it also holds a special place in my heart on a professional level as well. I have worked in various Kindergarten classrooms over the last several years. One thing that I have noticed, over the years, is that no matter what classroom I have been in, there will always be a few of the students in the classroom who quickly become disengaged in a read aloud lesson. This can be for a various number of reasons. One reason being that the student has zero interest in the story as it does not pertain to who they are or the things that they enjoy. Another reason why these students become disengaged is because they have no background knowledge of the story that is being read. They are unable to relate the story to anything that they've learned or done in the past to apply this information to the present. Though these are not the only two reasons, they are common reasons why students can easily become disengaged and can be taken into consideration before a read aloud is read to the class.

Not only does this directly affect the student who is disengaged, it can also affect the teacher and the other students in the classroom. As a teacher, watching students slowly becoming disengaged can be very distracting. My mind immediately shifts to the many reasons why this student has lost interest. My mind is no longer completely focused on the lesson. Not only is this affecting the way I am delivering my lesson, it also impacts the other students who are still currently engaged in the lesson. I like to think of this as dominos lined up one after another and one of them gets knocked down. What happens

next? The rest of the dominos begin to fall down too. When one student is off task, it is only a matter of time before the other students become distracted and also disengaged from the lesson too. In order to keep the majority, if not all of the class engaged, it is going to require something that resonates with them personally. I understand that there can also be many other factors as to why a student may be disengaged during a read aloud, but my goal is to tackle one of the issues to hopefully engage a few more students along the way with this project.

Each and every student in the classroom has their own set of skills, interests, and even certain things that they dislike. These can be very apparent in a classroom setting for a teacher who is looking out at their students during various classroom activities and lessons. You can usually pick out the students who are most engaged, least engaged, and everyone in between. As young learners, especially in kindergarten, it is easy to become distracted or disengaged in a lesson when it does not immediately pique their interest or is relatable to you as an individual. Unfortunately, as a teacher, you are not always going to be able to relate every single text or lesson to every student, but you can take steps in the right direction to help students connect their interests to what is being taught in the classroom. One of the best ways that I know how to do this is by simply allowing students to show you for themselves what it is they like and how that can be translated into their work in the classroom.

To help make this a little more relatable to you as a teacher, think of it in terms of The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Howard Gardner explains the Theory of Multiple Intelligences to be: "a theory stating that people are not born with all of the intelligence that they will have and in fact learn differently. The eight different types of intelligences

are: linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist." (Marenus, 2020). The goal is to incorporate as many learning styles as possible into the classroom to reach as many students as possible with the lessons. Looking at this theory through the lens of teaching kindergarten, kindergarteners are young learners. They are still figuring out the things that they like, the ways that they learn, and how to make connections between these two things. Using a familiar tool as reading a story to students and taking it a step or two further to ensure that students are drawing from their prior knowledge, and applying what they know in a way makes sense and is easy for them to understand.

As an educator, I do my best to ensure that I am using as many resources to help fill this gap in student learning. My goal through this thesis project is to give you, as the reader, an option to help fill the gaps in a curriculum that targets each student and focus on them as an individual in a classroom full of students.I believe that by adding show and tell read alouds into your reading curriculum, you will not only gain a better understanding of your students, you will also begin to learn the different ways that each of the students in your classroom learns. This project will move beyond simply reading a familiar book aloud to your students. This project will take in to affect the different ways that students learn, based on The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and create a meaningful lesson based on the text. Students will be able to work on the skills they are learning in the classroom and apply them through performances, writing, reading, and so many other formats based off of the theory of multiple intelligences. The idea is to first create a community through the text based on student interest and then apply that to current classroom lessons in various formats. This curriculum will begin with a read

aloud that was chosen by one of the students in the classroom and will then move beyond the text to apply what they have learned and read about to classroom lessons and create real world connections beyond the story.

As a kindergarten teacher, it is my goal to do the very best that I can for my students. I want to help foster a love for reading and learning in my classroom. In order to do that effectively, there need to be intentional practices set in place to help foster a student's relationship with learning. My goal is to bridge the gap between what students like and what they learn in school to increase student engagement by showing students how they can use information they already know and their interests and connect with the lessons they are being taught in school.

Summary

In the effort to make the show and tell read alouds engaging and academic, I will be taking a closer look at student learning and how incorporating the multiple intelligences theory into these lessons will create a more inclusive and engaging classroom environment. Based on my personal and professional experiences with this topic, my goal is to shift the way that students and even teachers look at read alouds and how they can be used as a tool beyond simply reading a book to the class. I believe that by connecting students' prior knowledge by allowing students to share a book from home, with the current lessons in the classroom, I will begin to make progress in engaging students during designated read alouds in class. Reading has always been a passion of mine and by finding engaging ways to allow students to share the books that they love with their classmates will help foster student relationships in the classroom as well as

increase student engagement. When students are happy and excited about learning, it tends to rub off on those around them too.

The following chapters explore the topic of the theory of multiple intelligences in the classroom through activities and lessons that coincide with a students show and tell read aloud story. In Chapter Two, I am taking a closer look at the literature that pertains to student learning in relation to the multiple intelligences theory and how that will directly affect student engagement in the classroom. Chapter Three describes my thesis project. It will specifically detail how this can be incorporated into the classroom. Chapter Four is a reflection of my project as well as an evaluation of its success. Through this work, I hope to gain a better understanding of the multiple intelligences theory and ways to incorporate the diversity of student learning styles into the classroom through engaging read alouds and follow up lessons and activities. My goal is to be able to implement one of these a week with the understanding that some lessons may vary in length. Upon completing this thesis project, I plan to share this with not only my fellow kindergarten teachers, but work with other elementary teachers on how they too can incorporate this in their classroom as well.

 I understand that not all students will love reading as much as I do or even as much as their fellow classmates. However, I do want all of my students to be able to build connections and understand how to incorporate the things that they love to do into the work that they do in the classroom. Reading is everywhere and shows up in many different formats. I want my students to leave my classroom at the end of the school year with an understanding of the importance of reading and how they can use their reading skills to do what they love.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Kindergarten teachers everywhere are using various curriculums in their classrooms to teach their students how to read. Included in these curricula are various read aloud texts that were previously selected to coincide with the lesson that is to be taught that day or week. What is not always included in these curriculums are books that children already know and love that are easy for them to connect with and apply to what they are learning in the classroom. Students have various ways in which they learn, process information, and apply it to various aspects in school and their everyday lives. The goal is to incorporate the numerous ways that students learn into the curriculum that already exists to make it more accessible and easy to understand for all students individually. The aim of this literature review is to better understand my research question: *Can student engagement be increased during the whole group read alouds by incorporating books selected by students with follow up activities pertaining to the theory of multiple intelligences?*

The research in the first section provides an overview of student motivation and what it looks like in the classroom. This section has information on how to help motivate students to learn in the classroom setting. Next, the research offers strategies and steps for teachers to take to help motivate their students in the classroom. In order to understand how students are motivated, we must first understand what it is that motivates these students. The third section of the literature review will focus on the use of read alouds in the classroom and how to use them as a learning tool for young learners. Lastly, the final

section of the literature review will discuss the Theory of Multiple Intelligences and how this theory can be applied to student learning in the classroom.

My capstone project is focused on incorporating an element to classroom read alouds to boost student motivation, engagement, and lengthen student attention spans while working in the classroom. In order to understand if my project will be beneficial for student engagement in the classroom, I will need to deepen my understanding of what it is that truly motivates and engages students in their learning. In order to deepen this understanding, we must first dive into what is at the core of student motivation.

Kindergarten Development

Kindergarten and early childhood education are important years in a child's academic career. Though its importance is known amongst many teachers, parents are not always on board with placing it at such a high level of importance. Bryce et. al. (2018) suggests that students who are entering kindergarten represent a sensitive and critical period of their academic career. Many factors including both internal and external have an influence on student functioning and development both academically and at home.

To further the importance of kindergarten and its impact on young learners, Searle et. al. (2013) states that kindergarten is a major life transition. Even though many students may see this as an exciting time in their young lives, it can always be a bit anxiety provoking. When a child enters kindergarten there is a greater amount of change, challenges, and adaptations than what they are used to at this age. When comparing preschool and kindergarten, kindergarten involves longer hours, greater demands on a child's behavior and attention, and a greater focus on academic work. Some of the biggest challenges for these young learners relate to student engagement with learning in the

classroom, which includes, paying attention, following directions, and working independently. In order to keep students engaged and on track to continue to learn from the very first day of kindergarten all the way to the last day of kindergarten, it is important for teachers to target the areas where students seem to be struggling.

Student Engagement

When looking at a kindergarten classroom, student engagement plays an important role as to whether or not children are absorbing and applying the information that is being taught to them each day. Ponitz et. al. (2009) shares that even though early elementary grades are spending most of their instruction time on literacy-related activities, there are still many students who struggle when it comes to learning how to read. When students begin to struggle with reading, oftentimes other issues arise such as attention and behavioral problems. Noticing a lack of student engagement early in a child's academic career can be incredibly beneficial as the continue throughout the rest of their year in kindergarten and carry on throughout the rest of their academic career. When taking into account a student who has low engagement, there are many factors that can come into play in regards to why this student is struggling academically in the classroom. Though not all can be managed solely by the classroom teacher, it is important to take into account the individual circumstances of each student and how that is being translated into their performance in the classroom.

Student Motivation

What is Student Motivation?

The word motivation refers to 'being moved' to do something. It is connected with a goal or what a student generally wants to achieve (Zee et al., 2021). In order to

identify what it is that motivates students, we must first understand what each student's goal in the classroom is. Teachers need to know what it is they want to achieve. Are they wanting to get good grades? Are they truly wanting to learn and grow in the classroom? A student's motivation is directly related to their goals and can have a major impact on whether or not they are able to stay motivated on school related tasks. What is it that motivates students? According to Deci and Ryan,

> we, as humans, are mostly motivated not by the material consequences of our actions, but by the inherent enjoyment and meaning that those actions bring us, a phenomenon they labeled intrinsic motivation. They identified three human needs - our need for competence, our need for autonomy, and our need for relatedness, meaning personal connection. And they contended that intrinsic motivation can be sustained only when we feel that those needs are being satisfied. (Tough, 2018, p.117-118)

More than one factor goes into what we, as humans, need when it comes to feeling motivated and staying motivated. This can therefore be directly transferred over to student motivation in the classroom.

Looking exactly at how this related to student motivation in the classroom, Mark Lepper conducted a study with four year old school children. He writes,

> A group of preschoolers who liked to draw were told one day that they would get a reward - a blue ribbon and a certificate - at the end of the class for drawing some pictures. Two weeks later, the students were noticeably less interested in drawing, and less likely to choose to draw during free time than they were the day before the experiment. (Tough, 2018, p.119-120)

These students were no longer intrinsically motivated to draw because of their new desire to receive a reward for something they once enjoyed doing. Those needs were no longer being met in those children.

Tasks for students in the classroom, or in any other environments of learning, can become incredibly repetitive and boring.

Deci and Ryan acknowledge that many of the tasks that teachers ask students to complete each day are not inherently fun or satisfying. It is in these moments that extrinsic motivation becomes important: when behaviors must be performed not for the inherent satisfaction of completing them, but for some separate outcome. Deci and Ryan say that when students are encouraged to internalize those extrinsic motivations, the motivations become increasingly powerful. This is then where we return back to those three basic human needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. (Tough, 2018, p.119-120)

Students exhibit much higher levels of motivation when teachers are able to create a classroom environment centered around those three feelings. These are the key aspects to motivating students over a long period of time, like a school year, rather than small rewards that take out the enjoyment the students feel when completing tasks in the classroom.

How to motivate students in the classroom?

"As educators, almost everything we say to our students sends a message. Some messages enhance students' motivation, but other messages undermine it" (Dweck, 2007, p.6). As an educator, it is important to know what each student needs in order to succeed

and feel motivated, but depending on the student, the way that they are motivated can vary. Carol Dweck, who has done extensive research in motivation and mindset writes:

> Imagine a brilliant student who enters a new school and suddenly starts to get poor grades. Or a struggling student who needs encouragement. Or a talented child who lacks confidence. What should teachers say to these students to send messages that motivate them? In each case, teachers might be tempted to look for opportunities to praise the students abilities to assure them of their intelligence. Our research shows that this is wrong. (Dweck, 2007, p.6)

Dweck worried that this kind of praise was sending the wrong kind of message. She classified it as a fixed mindset message. When students are praised for a job well done, two things can happen. The first is that the teacher is able to look at student performance and judge their underlying intelligence (a fixed mindset message). This means that students are who they are and are unable to gain any further intelligence. The second is that the teacher cares first and foremost about a student's underlying intelligence and that is what is most important (a fixed mindset message). In the end, praise from a teacher is not looked at fondly and can put students in a fixed mindset rather than a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007). There is more than one way to offer students a reason to stay motivated in the classroom. We first took a look at something that can have a rapid decline in motivation. Let's move on to an option that can help to increase student motivation in the classroom.

Rather than offering a fixed mindset approach to helping students to stay motivated in the classroom, Dweck offers an option for a growth mindset approach to increase student motivation. Students who were praised for their effort, rather than their

success, entered themselves into a growth mindset. These students were embracing the challenges rather than becoming frustrated by their own perceived limitations to do them. These students wanted the challenges and were able to maintain their confidence as well as the enjoyment in the presence of difficult tasks (Dweck, 2007). Praise for student growth rather than student success was a better option for teachers to use in the long run with their students in order for the students to continue to have or gain a growth mindset perspective with their education. While each student's reasons to stay motivated are different, there are clear differences as to how these can affect the longevity of a student's need to stay motivated. If a student is focused on completing a task for the sake of praise or completing it for the high grade, they are more likely to show a decline when tasks become more difficult and their grades begin to show it or they are no longer praised for the work they have done. However, if a student is motivated based on their eagerness to learn and work through tasks as they become more difficult, it is likely that you will see growth amongst these students in not only their grades but also in their willingness to persevere even through the more challenging tasks.

Macklem also offers an approach to student motivation in their book *Boredom in the Classroom.* They discuss how motivation comes before engagement even occurs in the classroom. A student must first be motivated to want to participate and engage in classroom activities or lessons. If a student is bored in the classroom, then neither motivation or engagement will be present. If a student is bored in the classroom, there can then be a lack of information processing and can deplete cognitive resources (2015). Boredom has a negative effect on student motivation. If a student begins a lesson or a school day already checked out because they feel bored, then not much else will occur

within the students brain to engage themselves in the lessons. Not only is it important to continue to motivate students throughout the duration of a school day or even school year, it is even more important to ensure that students are immediately engaged and motivated from the first day of school to try to keep boredom from being an immediate factor to disengage students from learning.

Even when a student is motivated in a classroom, there can still be times when it is still hard for them to pay attention. Outside or even internal distractions can happen that will quickly draw a student's attention away from what is happening in the classroom. Why is it that some students seem to be so hyper focused and easily able to stay focused on a classroom task while others' minds seem to be anywhere else but in the classroom? In order to understand this aspect of student learning better, we'll need to take a closer look at students and their attention spans.

Student Attention Span

What is an attention span?

An individual's attention span is the amount of time they are able to stay focused on a task. Looking at this from a classroom perspective, in particular with kindergarten students, the amount of time a student can stay focused on a task can vary but is overall a shortened period of time in comparison to older students.

Why do students struggle with paying attention?

Lang writes in his book that one reason students struggle with paying attention in class is because they feel isolated or threatened in the classroom. Therefore, part of their mental resources, in particular their attention span, is being used in other ways. These students are no longer able to focus on the classroom material because of the influx of

negative emotions that are keeping their focus elsewhere (2020). When a classroom is lacking community among its inhabitants, the ability for students to focus on their school work dwindles.

There are many factors that contribute to a student's ability to pay attention. Lang writes:

It is important to remember that attention is a limited-capacity resource.When some of that capacity is being used up by worry about whether the student belongs or has the ability to succeed, it diminishes what is available for attention to material. (2020, p.104)

While there are many other factors that play a role in a students ability to pay attention in the classroom, whether or not a student feels as if they belong or are a part of the classroom community is a big one and an important issue for teachers to address.

How are attention spans connected to learning?

In James Lang's Book on distracted students, he provides his readers with a look into classroom settings and what can be done to help engage distracted students in the classroom, He writes:

to understand the crucial connection between attention and learning, whether in a kindergarten classroom, or a university lecture hall, consider the three phases we must pass through in order to have learned something. First, we must attend to the item, whatever it might be: object, experience, fact, or idea. Our attention might take the form of simple visual perception, or a meeting between any of our senses and an object of experience. For children as young as kindergarten, it could be as simple as an encounter with a letter of the alphabet. Second, we must process

what we have been learning and incorporate it with our knowledge that we

already have. In the classroom, teachers help students process the new

information by asking them to use it in various ways like writing, speak about it,

incorporate it in word problems, or even answer questions to expand their

knowledge. Finally, for true learning to happen, students need to be able to

retrieve this new information from their memory. When a student is able to recall

newly learned information in various contexts and use it in the classroom or in the

real world, teachers know they have truly learned the material. (2020, p.44-45)

When teaching a classroom of students, all of these steps are important when it comes to

ensuring that students are learning and absorbing the information that is being taught to

them.

Taking things a step further, Lang emphasizes the importance of attention when

looking at the three phases he proposed. Without the first step of student attention, the

processing and retrieval of information will not be possible (2020). The first step in his

three step process is the foundation of student learning and must come first. "Attention, in

other words, precedes and underpins the kind of cognitive work we expect students to

undertake. Attention holds the object, word, or thought in our minds - puts a spotlight on

it and prepares it for potential processing" (Lang, 2020, p.46). If there is a student in the

classroom who appears or is struggling with the content being taught, perhaps it is time to

take a step back and figure out what kind of prior knowledge and experiences the student

has to build on. If the foundation is not there, there is nothing that can be built upon. The

second step cannot be performed without the first just as the third step can not be

implemented with the foundation of the second.

Not only does Lang find student attention crucial when learning in the classroom, so does Pagani et al. writes that:

> higher levels of kindergarten attention were proportionately associated with greater chances of belonging to better classroom engagement trajectories compared to the lowest classroom engagement trajectory. In fact, improvements in kindergarten attention reliably increased the likelihood of belonging to more productive classroom engagement trajectories throughout elementary school, above and beyond confounding child and family factors. Measuring the development of classroom productivity is pertinent because such dispositions represent precursors to mental health, task-orientation, and persistence in high school and workplace behavior in adulthood. (2012, p.1)

It is clear gaining and having student attention is important for their learning, but the bigger importance is how can teachers gain or even hold student attention, even the more challenging students.

How to gain a student's attention?

A common question among teachers who are struggling with a classroom full of students who seem disengaged and are no longer paying attention is: How can I bring them back? What is it that I can do as a teacher to gain the attention of my students? In Vicki Halsey's book about connecting, engaging, and inspiring students, she writes: "When it comes down to it, inspired teachers who get their students to work hard and join them in a collaborative process are people we want to be around. We trust them" (2011, p.25). Trust plays a huge role in not only gaining a students trust, but to also gain their attention. If a student feels positive and uplifting energy from their teacher, it is more

likely they will be willing to engage back with their teacher. "Learners trust teachers who demonstrate their authenticity and reliability. Their words and actions are in alignment; they walk the talk" (Hasley, 2011, p.25). Students are willing to give their teachers the amount of attention that is being given to them. They want to know that someone is invested in their learning and is willing to put in just as much time and effort into their learning as they are their own. Once this relationship is established, teachers are more than likely to see a dramatic increase in the students and their eagerness to learn and to pay attention.

The way a student mentally feels in a classroom plays an important role as to how much they are willing and able to stay focused and pay attention to the lessons that are being taught. People want to feel accepted and welcomed into any space, but especially a classroom that they will be in everyday for the rest of the school year. Along with a student's attention span and their ability to focus on the lessons being taught, it is also important to take note of students and their levels of engagement in the classroom. What is it that a teacher can do to ensure a student not only is paying attention, but actively engaged in their learning and the lessons that are being taught throughout the school year? This next section will take a closer look at student engagement and what it looks like in classrooms that are designed for students to actively engage in their learning, especially as it pertains to teaching students to read.

Read Alouds

Benefits of read alouds in the classroom

Looking at children of kindergarten age, most students do not begin their year of kindergarten knowing how to read, but perhaps they do have a few pre reading skills, or

will learn them from books being read aloud to them. In an article written by Meagan K. Shedd and Nell K. Duke, information on read alouds and their importance in early childhood education is crucial. Not only do teachers want to fill their classrooms with print-rich materials, they can also engage their students in early literacy activities such as: literacy conversations, writing experiences, and even joint reading experiences. Reading aloud to students and using further instructional tools to enhance learning at this age can have an increasing effect on a child's concept of print and phonological awareness, allowing students to continue to develop their pre reading and soon to be reading skills (2008). Teachers are always looking for ways to further student learning and engaging them in what is being taught in the classroom. It appears that read alouds may be an important tool to do just that.

Looking at read alouds through a slightly different lens, while they are an important tool when it comes to teaching young learners how to read, there is still more that needs to be done in regards to reading instruction. McGee & Schickedanze share in their article that there is clear evidence as to how reading aloud to students positively impacts vocabulary development, acquisition of literary syntax and vocabulary, story recall, and sensitivity to linguistic and organizational structures of narrative and informational text. Even though there is lacking evidence as to a read alouds effectiveness on decoding skills, oral vocabulary, and listening comprehension (2007). While the evidence behind these is not sufficient, it does not mean it is not possible, therefore when a teacher is preparing to read aloud a book to a group of students, it must be done thoughtfully and with the attention to provide students with the greatest learning opportunity as possible.

Engaging students in an effective read aloud

Teachers are always looking for the best way to deliver information to their students, especially when it comes to read alouds. It can be easy to read the story straight through to the students, but that takes away from the learning opportunities inside each read aloud book. Kaefer describes to us that there are many steps involved in reading a story aloud to students. One being, it is crucial to activate any student background knowledge about the text, prior to reading the text. This can help students to improve their own learning by being able to connect the story that is going to be read to them based off of something they already know, their background knowledge. This pre reading strategy can be as simple as asking students if they know any information that is relevant to the book that is about to be read based off of the title and the cover (2020). When activating this background knowledge, it is important for the teacher to target themes and ideas that will be present in the text rather than general ideas that may appear. For example, look at the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.* If the teacher were to attempt to activate background knowledge by asking students if they have ever eaten any of the foods that the caterpillar plans to eat in the story, the students focus will most likely be only on the different foods in the book. The focus would not be on the major theme of the story. If the teacher, prior to reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, asked questions like these: Have you ever seen a caterpillar? Does anyone know what a cocoon is? Then the teacher will be allowing students to access knowledge they already know or will learn to build the foundation for the learning that will occur upon reading this book.

In kindergarten, many students are learning to read and most, if not all, of the books that will be used as read aloud books will be too challenging for the students main

focus to be on the words. Thus the importance of using the illustrations in the book to facilitate student learning. Schaper talks about the significant role in which read alouds play in a kindergarten classroom setting. Kindergarten read alouds are different from other grades because teachers are using them first as a tool to help students understand concepts of print. Students, in kindergarten, typically have very limited, if any, sight word knowledge and have minimal skills when it comes to strategies in word solving. Therefore, students at this age rely heavily on oral language and prior knowledge through the illustrations to understand and comprehend a story that is being read to them (2019). While reading aloud a story to kindergarten students, it is key to point out the illustrations that coincide with the text to allow students to build a deeper understanding of what is being read to them.

  While incorporating read alouds into regular class instruction has been a common practice for quite some time now, there are areas in which these read aloud instructions are lacking based the new demands of our society, Jessica Hoffman writes, "if we compare the kinds of literacy learning that reading aloud has tended to emphasize (i.e., print awareness, vocabulary, and story comprehension) with the kinds of literacy practices our changing society demands (i.e., interpretive and critical reading), even the most effective strategies fall short" (2011, p.1). Hoffman proposes interactive discussion as an addition to what is already being done during read alouds. She talks about the importance of interactive discussion. Students are able to make meaning through social interaction and language. This allows students a space to make meaning and discuss topics with their peers to explore deeper understandings (2011). She continues on to say that the key component to interactive discussions is for teachers to no longer be the ones

leading the conversation but to be an equal and active participant just as the students are. Allow students to draw their own conclusions rather than hearing them from the perspective of the teacher (Hoffman, 2011). Students are now able to begin thinking more critically and independently in the classroom and the real world rather than looking for the teacher to provide them with answers.

Furthering the read aloud instruction

Not only is it important what a teacher does while conducting a read aloud, it is also equally as important with what the teacher does following a read aloud text.

When you reach the end of the book, the discussion and learning do not need to end. Bringing the reading to a close can include a variety of activities that capitalize on the richness of the text and the discussion of the reading during the book. (Shedd, & Duke, N.K., 2008, p.26)

The information that is discussed during a read aloud does not need to be drawn to a close once the book has been shut. In order to further student learning and build off of what has been taught, there are various activities and lessons that can be used. If there is not a pre planned activity to follow the text or there are not plans to use the text in further classroom instruction, there are ways to bring in student interests into further learning. A discussion of the book post reading can also help you plan related activities, either for that day or later on in the week or month. An example of this could be: if you were to read *Growing Vegetable Soup*, by Lois Ehlert, you could make vegetable soup or plant a garden with the class. Or if you read a book about trees or nature, you could go on a walk with the class and try to identify different trees or other things found in nature using the book as your guide for reference (Shedd, Duke, N.K., 2008). While not all post reading

activities have to be planned ahead of time, it is most important to ensure that they are engaging and meaningful to the students and furthering their learning. The key aspects of the story that has been read to the students must transfer over into real world learning and be made applicable to the students in order for them to be able to apply what they have recently learned to their own knowledge.

Read alouds do not end when the teacher closes the book. In order for teachers to take the next step in furthering a students understanding of the text, there must be more, but what? Various learning activities can be incorporated to elevate a students understanding of a read aloud text and how it can be applied to both classroom learning and its real world application. Using the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, a teacher can target these learning activities to engage students in learning that is easy to understand for how their brain processes and interprets information. This next section will touch on the Theory of Multiple Intelligences and how it can be applied in the classroom.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

What is the Theory of Multiple Intelligences?

The way in which to determine one's intelligence has evolved overtime, especially when looking at student intelligence in the classroom. Are we born with all of the intelligence that we could ever have? Can we continue to learn and grow our intelligence as we get older? Can everyones intelligence be measured the same way? Howard Gardner, who has done an immense amount of research on the topic of intelligence, proposed a vision of how we look at intelligence. He writes in his book:

I would like to present an alternative vision - one based on a radically different view of the mind, and one that yields a very different view of school. It is a

pluralistic view of mind, recognizing many different and discrete facets of

cognition, acknowledging that people have different cognitive strengths and

contrasting cognitive styles. (2006 , p.5)

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences goes beyond a certain way of thinking and

learning for students. It allows us to look at students each as an individual with a different

combination of intelligences and ways of learning. He writes, "It is of the utmost

importance that we recognize and nurture all of the varied human intelligences and all of

the combinations of intelligence. We are all so different largely because we have different

combinations of intelligences" (2006, p.24). In order for students to reach their full

potential, the opportunities must be available to them and learning needs to be easily

accessible to the wide range of learners in the classroom.

Howard Gardner originally proposed a set of seven different intelligences that

show up in various ways in individuals; while there are more that Gardner has added

since this initial research, the focus will be on the main seven as they have the most

research to back them up. These seven intelligences are: musical intelligence,

bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, linguistic intelligence,

spatial intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence (2006). With

the addition of the naturalist intelligence later on, these eight different intelligences are

the ways in which students learn and apply what they learn into areas that are easy for

them to understand. Not all students will be able to understand a lesson that is being

taught to them in a mathematical sense, just as another student will struggle to read

music. Each student has an individual set of skills and intelligence make-up that drives

their interests and ways of learning in the classroom.

Musical intelligence

Armstrong defines musical intelligence as the ability to perceive, discriminate, transform, and even express various musical forms. Musical intelligence also includes the sensitivity to rhythm, melody or pitch, and the tone of a musical piece (2009). This intelligence allows individuals to thrive in learning environments where they are able to express or use their musical intelligence to help them engage in their learning.

Ellen Arnold, the author of *The MI Strategy Bank: 800+ Multiple Intelligence Ideas for the Elementary Classrooms,* defines musical intelligence as someone who often finds themselves tapping or moving to a rhythm, connects their emotions to various types of music, or even is constantly singing or listening to music (2012).

Bodily- kinesthetic intelligence

Armstrong addresses bodily - kinesthetic intelligence as the use of one's whole body to express their ideas and feelings. Those with this intelligence are also known to use one's hands to make, produce, or even transform things. People who are strong in this intelligence will typically have one or more of the following physical skills: coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, flexibility, or even speed (2009). While this intelligence is often used during a gym or physical education class, it can oftentimes be looked over in the classroom. Those who are strong in this intelligence need the outlet of movement to help them to engage in their learning.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence can also be referred to as body smart. This intelligence refers to a person who likes to build, move, feel, and touch as their way of engaging with the world around them (Arnold, 2012).

Logical-mathematical intelligence

The capacity to reason well and use numbers effectively is howArmstrong defines logical-mathematical intelligence. This intelligence includes sensitivity to logical patterns and relationships, statements and propositions, functions, and other related abstractions. There are a few different processes that can be used by individuals who fall under this intelligence. They include: categorization, classification, inference, generalization, calculation, and hypothesis testing (2009).

Logical-mathematical intelligence can also be seen in someone who is very number smart. These types of people like to be very precise and want to know how to solve things. They are very focused on how numbers play into every aspect of their life and learning and often receive their highest grades in school in their math classes (Arnold, 2012).

Linguistic Intelligence

Armstrong has defined linguistic intelligence as the capacity to use words effectively, whether orally or in writing. Those who strongly carry this intelligence can have the ability to change or alter the syntax or structure of language, the phonology or the sounds of language, the semantics or meanings of language, and the pragmatic dimensions or practical use of language. This can include rhetoric, mnemonics, explanation, and metalanguage (2009).

Linguistic Intelligence, which is prominent in someone who is word smart, are people who are interested in reading and writing. They enjoy activities that involve learning new words to add to their vocabulary and are drawn to writing in various forms and reading (Arnold, 2012)

Spatial Intelligence

Armstrong defines spatial intelligence as the ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations upon these perceptions. This intelligence includes individuals who are sensitive to color, line, shape, form, space, and the relationship that exists between these different elements. It can also include the capacity to visualize, to represent visual or spatial ideas as graphics, and to orient oneself appropriately in a spatial matrix (2009).

Spatial intelligence can also be referred to as someone who is picture smart. They tend to use visualization and images to engage them in their learning. Those with a strong focus in spatial intelligence will often like to do puzzles, draw, use color, visualize, and image when they are engaging and learning in the world around them (Arnold, 2012).

Interpersonal intelligence

The ability to perceive and make distinctions in the various moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings that other people have is how Armstrong defines interpersonal intelligence. This, oftentimes, may include the sensitivity to facial expressions, voice, and gestures; the capacity for distinguishing between the various kinds of interpersonal cues; and the ability to respond effectively to those specific cues in some way (2009).

Interpersonal intelligence can also be referred to as someone who is people smart. Those who favor this intelligence like to be surrounded by people. They are usually great at empathizing with others, interacting with people day to day, and are more likely to be ones who like to lead or teach in various settings (Arnold, 2012).

Intrapersonal Intelligence

Intrapersonal intelligence when someone is hyper aware of themselves. They will typically also have the ability to act appropriately on the basis of this known knowledge. This intelligence includes having an accurate picture of one's strengths and limitations; an awareness of one's inner moods, intentions, motivations, temperaments, and desires; and may also have the capacity for self-discipline, self-understanding, and one's self-esteem (Armstrong, 2009).

Intrapersonal intelligence is someone who is very self smart. They thrive when they are alone, like to take time to think things through, and leave themselves time to reflect on the work that they have done (Arnold, 2012). This intelligence is geared towards someone who generally likes to be independent and work independently.

Naturalist Intelligence

Naturalist intelligence is the expertise in the ability to recognize and classify the abundance of species,the flora and fauna, of an individual's environment. This can also include the sensitivity to other natural phenomena, for example: clouds, and, in the case of those growing up in an extrememly urban environment, the capacity to discriminate among inanimate objects around them, such as cars, sneakers, or even items like CD covers (Armstrong, 2009).

The naturalist intelligence is often referred to as someone who is nature smart. These types of people like to categorize, collect, plant, grow, sort, and tend to relate more to animals (Arnold, 2012). People who fall into this intelligence typically enjoy being outdoors or know a lot about nature and its inhabitants.

Theory of Multiple Intelligences Conclusion

Each of these unique intelligences are what make up each individual student. It is important to note that these are not secluded intelligences. An individual can have a make up of more than one but oftentimes there are one or maybe two that are most prominent in an individual that is the key to their successes in the classroom.

Multiple intelligences and classroom learning

Now that we have scratched the surface of the various intelligences that may be seen in individuals as to how they process information. Let's apply this type of thinking to the classroom, in particular with young students and learning to read. One of the first ways that children begin to engage in books is through having books read to them. This is also a common practice in the kindergarten classroom as teachers are moving their students from being read to, to reading on their own. "The Multiple Intelligences Theory essentially encompasses what good teachers have always done in their teaching: reaching beyond the text and the blackboard to awaken students' minds" (Armstrong, 2009, p.56). As a teacher includes the Multiple Intelligences theory into their classroom, there is much more that takes place than simply instructing students. The goal is to create hands-on, engaging, and lively activities for students to fully immerse themselves in their learning and be an active learner. Armstrong writes,

> A teacher in a Multiple Intelligence classroom contrasts sharply with a teacher in a traditional linguistic/logical-mathematical classroom. In a traditional classroom, the teacher lectures while standing at the front of the classroom, writes on the blackboard, asks students questions about the assigned reading or handouts, and waits while the students finish their written work. (2009, p.56)

While this way of learning does work for some students, it does not work for all. Now think about doing this in a kindergarten classroom. Their attention spans are short. If there is not something to grab their attention from the beginning of the lesson and that continues to hold their attention throughout the lesson, not much learning will take place.

Perhaps it is time to address this next question as we move further into how the Multiple Intelligences theory can be applied into the classroom. If the goal is to grab students' attention and keep them engaged, how can teachers do that with all of the various intelligences that may display themselves in the children in the classroom? It won't always be possible to incorporate all of the various ways that each student learns in every single lesson but incorporating some of them and ensuring that a teacher incorporates them all during a specific unit of study can ensure the success of as many students as possible. Ellen Arnold offers up examples of how each of the multiple intelligences can be incorporated into classroom instruction. For students who are musically intelligent, a teacher can incorporate lessons that involve creating rhymes, listening to songs relevant to the topic that is being taught, or even simply keeping a steady beat while reading or being read to. For students who have spatial intelligence, a teacher can allow students to draw what they are thinking rather than putting their thoughts into words. A teacher can also provide models, maps, or even various colors and color coding to make information stand out to these types of learners. For students who have bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, teachers can offer lessons that involve cooking, dancing, experiments/projects, hands-on activities, or even simply moving about the room to complete various learning tasks. When thinking of students who are interpersonally intelligent, teachers can incorporate learning activities that involve

brainstorming, independent work, time to reflect on a lesson that had recently been taught, or even simply time to read to themselves. When thinking about students who are linguistically intelligent, a teacher can incorporate research projects, freewriting or writing creatively, or even retelling a story or resharing information that has been shared with them. The students who are mathematically intelligent, can be offered lessons that involve sequencing, time lines, various step processes, or creating/finding patterns. Students who think with a naturalist intelligence, can be offered learning tasks that involve collecting, exploring outdoors, field trips, or even creating experiments. Lastly, for students who are interpersonally intelligent, teachers can offer them lessons that involve working with their peers through discussions, asking questions, or even an option for show-and-tell (Arnold, 2012). While these are not all the options for how each of these intelligences can be incorporated into the classroom, it is a start for a teacher struggling to ensure that all students' learning needs are being met.

Summary

Kindergarten teachers everywhere are using various curriculums in their classrooms to teach their students how to read. Some of these pre-selected texts are relatable to students, but many are not. As shown in the literature review, students need to feel comfortable, welcomed, and accepted for who they are, the things that they like, and they way that they learn in the classroom in order for any learning to take place. Students, especially young students, can easily be bogged down by information that is not relevant to them or lessons that are presented in uninteresting and unengaging ways based on how they learn.

The research in this chapter covered how students are motivated, as well as their attention spans. The two topics are key components when it comes to engaging students and keeping them engaged during a classroom lesson. This chapter also took a look at read alouds, what they are and how they can be used in a classroom to draw young students in and keep them engaged throughout the story. Lastly, this chapter took a look at Howard Gardner Theory of Multiple Intelligences. It covered what this theory is, what each of the intelligences are, and how they can be used in the classroom to increase student engagement and learning.

The information in this chapter supports the idea that student engagement can be increased through active read alouds based on the Multiple Intelligences Theory. When students are actively engaged and learning information based on how their minds process information, they are able to stay motivated on the task at hand and will therefore have an increased attention span while working. It is important to remember from the research that no two students will learn the same, and just because they fit the mold for one of the intelligences, doesn't mean that that is the only way that they learn. Keep students moving around the classroom, answering questions, talking with their peers, and engaging in hands-on activities throughout the day. When students are engaged, they are learning which is the ultimate goal as an educator.

Chapter Three will explain my project as it relates to student engagement during read alouds and the activities/lessons that come after the completion of a large group read aloud. This chapter will provide information on how to set up show and tell read alouds in the classroom. How to make notes and prepare a read aloud before reading it to the students. It will also include activity/lesson options, based on the Theory of Multiple

Intelligences to incorporate during the read aloud or after reading the story that builds

upon the information that was in the text. Chapter Three offers a detailed guide to this

project, its contexts, and its intended goals.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Overview

Reading is an important skill that students begin to learn when they are in kindergarten. Not only do students use their reading skills in school, they use them in their everyday lives. The older we get, the greater the importance of having a solid foundation in reading is. When teaching students to read, it is important to keep in mind their current reading abilities, their interests, and the various ways that each student learns. Students, especially when it comes to reading, are not a one size fits all way of learning. My goal for this project is to offer students the opportunity to share the things that they love, showcase the various ways that they learn, and feel successful while they are learning to read.

My research question for this capstone project is: *Can student engagement be increased during the whole group read alouds by incorporating books selected by students with follow up activities pertaining to the theory of multiple intelligences?* After reflecting on the research that I had conducted for this capstone project, I have come up with a reading curriculum that can be integrated into an everyday reading curriculum. This curriculum is titled "Show and Tell Read Alouds", and will be used as a way to peak the interest of students, hold their attention, and then offer them a way to use the new information that they've just learned and apply it in ways that are familiar to them.

This chapter provides an overview of my capstone project that will include a summary of the research that supports this project. The audience, setting, and timeline of my project is discussed in this chapter to describe, in detail, how this project is to be

carried out in the classroom. Lastly, there will be an introduction paragraph to Chapter Four that will complete the contents of this chapter.

Project Description

      I taught kindergarten for two years and I had noticed a lack of student engagement and interest in a lot of the read aloud stories that are pre selected and included in the reading curriculum. Oftentimes, the stories do not pertain to the students in the classroom and are solely focused on the curriculum. Students' attention is quickly lost if the stories that are being read are not relatable to them. In a busy kindergarten classroom, there is not always a lot of time available for students to engage in stories they love or that pertain to who they are and interests. There is a strong focus on the rigorous curriculum and kindergarten students are being asked to do more than they have before. Students who are beginning to learn how to read are drawn to books that are about things they already know and love. Reading about things that are familiar to them allows for students to be able to easily understand the story and are then able to apply what they have read to things that they do in real life or in classroom work. The curriculum that I have developed can be easily incorporated into the reading curriculum that is already being used in the classroom to engage students in the read alouds that are being read to them.

      This read aloud curriculum can be used throughout the school year in any kindergarten classroom. It is called "Show and Tell Read Alouds". Each week, or every other week depending on how many students are in the classroom. Students will have the opportunity to explore the school or classroom library to select texts that they already know and love or books that pertain to their interests. The teacher will introduce the book and give the student a chance to share with the class why they chose this book to share

with the class. It will be important, as the teacher, to have the students select these books ahead of time, preferably at the beginning of the year, to allow the teacher time to organize and prepare these stories to be read aloud in class. The idea behind these read aloud texts is to allow students a way to share a little bit about themselves and the things that they like. This is allowing students the space to find connections with other students in the classroom. During the read aloud, it will be crucial to include various types of interactions with the text. Perhaps there will be moments to turn and talk to the person next to you, share an experience a student had that is similar to the story, or even predict what may happen next. Even following the read aloud, the learning does not need to come to a halt. Teachers can lead students in story retells or ask students to engage with their peers about the things that they noticed, liked, or disliked about the book that was read. In order for students to want to learn and engage in reading, they need to be excited and engaged in the texts that they are reading or that are being read to them. That is the main goal behind this lesson.

The engagement with the student selected read aloud text will not end there. Included in this curriculum will be options to engage further with the text after the completion of the read aloud. The activities to follow each read aloud will be based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. If the goal is to engage as many students as possible in the reading lessons, then we want to ensure that we are providing each student with opportunities to learn the best way for them. These follow up activities to the reading will be as simple as incorporating them into your everyday reading groups to additional activities that will allow for a little extra time or planning. Each student's

learning needs are different, therefore each of these activities will be set up differently to try and meet the needs of each student while they are learning to read.

Framework

This thesis project can be incorporated into any kindergarten reading curriculum, especially those that already have established read aloud and reading center routines. While it is not necessary, having this in place will not only be beneficial for the teacher when implementing this curriculum, but also for the students. "The read aloud has long been established as an important part of the development of children's literacy skills" (Shedd, Duke, N.K., 2008 , p.5). The curriculum that I had used to teach kindergarten that began the development of this thesis project had a focus in reading aloud to students. The goal behind using a reading curriculum with a strong read aloud focus is to give students a strong foundation in beginning reading skills before they begin to read on their own. If there is not a strong foundation in a student's beginning to read abilities, then more and more issues and gaps in knowledge will arise as the student progresses.

If the end goal is learning to read at a kindergarten level, then we must break down the steps that it is going to take to get there for each student. We must start with the basics of being read to. All students come into kindergarten with various levels of pre reading skills. Kaefer details this background knowledge in their article discussing the common consensus that background knowledge is essential when it comes to reading comprehension and learning from stories. When students have the appropriate background knowledge they are able to broaden their critical thinking skills throughout their years in school. Since knowledge is exponential, students need to have early development of content knowledge to ensure students have greater academic success

throughout their years in school (2020). In this capstone project, we are activating student background knowledge through stories that they already know or are relatable to them and then using them in classroom activities to help further that knowledge. By incorporating these read alouds into classroom instruction, we are adding one more building block for students to utilize as they are learning to read.

Setting and Audience

The school that I had taught at had approximately 50 students in kindergarten through fourth grade, which is what made up the elementary school. It was a very small private school out in the country. This school was not very diverse in ethnicity as the majority of the students identified as white. According to US News, "the student body in this district is 92.6% White, 1% Black, 0.9% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.8% Hispanic/Latino, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander" (2018). Although this school is a private school, it is still a part of a school district. This school district's demographics is an indicator of the types of students that have access to this school based on its location. Taking a look at the small school I was at, the demographics were fairly similar to that of the district. My first year teaching at this school the class was 77% white and 23% Hispanic/Latino. My second year teaching, the students in my kindergarten class were 100% white.

This school had a heavy focus on standardized testing and even in kindergarten, students were expected to take the same standardized tests that all the older students would also partake in. The students would take the test three times during the school year to help gauge their progress as the school year progressed. We would pride ourselves in our high scores that many of the students achieved. Because we were a smaller school

with smaller class sizes, classroom teachers were able to provide their students with more individual learning and assistance in the classroom when needed. While this focus on standardized testing can provide us with useful information on the students who took it, it doesn't always offer us a whole picture of each student. My curriculum project is geared towards working with students on skills that are and are not a part of standardized testing. My goal is to help students build the background knowledge that they need to continue to learn and progress through school and also to also give them opportunities to interact with their peers and the books they are reading and to engage in various ways of learning to find what works best for them.

This audience for this project was based on the kindergarten classes that I have previously taught in but is also geared toward the audiences of future kindergarten classrooms that I may be a part of. Kindergarten is an exciting time for the students entering into the classroom. Kindergarten students can have so many emotions and feelings about being at school all day during the week. That is why my focus in this project is to show students all the fun and engaging activities that can be done to engage them in their learning as they begin their journey as a student in elementary school.

Assessment

An important aspect of introducing a new curriculum is determining the best options to assess your students to determine the effectiveness of that curriculum. Based on my research question, I will need to assess these students based on their engagement and their understanding of the material. Students will be graded on their participation during the read alouds and the activities. They will also be graded on their understanding of the material and whether or not they are able to apply their knowledge to classroom

learning. If students are able to perform the tasks and are engaged in their learning then I will know that they are learning the material that is being taught to them.

Assessing student engagement can be done in many ways. Informally, I will be looking for students who are actively listening to the read aloud story, actively engaging and responding to questions during the read aloud, and finally observing students as they are working independently or in groups following the read aloud. While observing students in these various settings, I will be asking myself: *Are they students interested in the story that is being read to them? Do they seem to be understanding the main concepts of the story? Are they raising their hand to answer questions? Are they staying on task while working independently or in groups?* I can also have quick conversations with students as well and ask them how they think they are doing in terms of class participation and staying on task to get their perspective on how well they think they are performing.

When it comes to assessing students on their learning, this can also be done in various ways. For the work that requires them to do any writing, I will have them turn it in to me when they are finished to look for their understanding. This would be a more formal way to assess their learning for a particular task. I could also informally bring the class together and ask a few questions pertaining to the work that they had just completed. In this situation I would also be looking for the students who are willingly raising their hands to ask questions, as well as the ones who seem disengaged and do not want to offer up any answers about the completed work.

Overall, when assessing students both formally and informally, both provide the teacher with a clearer picture of who the students are, who are understanding the content

that has been taught to them and those who are still struggling to put it all together. The goal with assessment is not who has the highest grade, especially in kindergarten. Teachers want to ensure that students are understanding what has been taught to them so they can continue to build on that knowledge as the school year progresses.

Timeline

This capstone project began in May of 2022. When I began developing this project, I created a guide for teachers to reference in regards to the read alouds and example activities that coincided with Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. My curriculum project has not been implemented in a classroom yet, but has future plans upon my re entering into the classroom. This curriculum can be implemented in any time frame that works best for your classroom. You can use the number of students in your classroom to gauge how often you'll need to implement this to allow each student a chance to bring a book in to share. For larger classes, I recommend implementing this curriculum once a week and for smaller classes you can look at implementing this curriculum every other week or even just omitting the short weeks when students are not in school for a whole week.

Researcher Positionality

As a white female who grew up speaking English at home and a family who enjoyed reading and sharing books with me, I was able to naturally develop a love for reading. Books were always easily accessible to me whether it be at school or at home. I understood that not all students/children have had these similar experiences growing up that has allowed them to foster their own love for reading. Many students struggle with access to books, family or caregivers to read to them, and even struggle finding books

that are easy for them to read based on their native language and financial means. My goal in this research was to find ways to help motivate and engage students with books that they enjoy and to bring those stories to life so that they may apply their learnings to classroom work and real world scenarios.

Summary

The project that I have created for this capstone, "Show and Tell Read Aloud", offers students the opportunity to share their interests with their classmates, as well as establish collective background knowledge from the stories for teachers to use in everyday learning. These read alouds should be incorporated into the curriculum as often as possible, based on the number of students in the class to ensure every student's voice is heard through their favorite book. The curriculum that I have created can be used in conjunction with almost any reading curriculum at a variety of schools.

Chapter Three discussed the framework of this project, outlining how it can be incorporated into the classroom curriculum. The setting and the kindergarten audience were identified and the timeline for this project was described as well. Chapter Three also included connections from my research to explain how the topics that I researched tied into the project that I have created.

In Chapter Four I will be reflecting on the "Show and Tell Read Aloud" project that I have created. I will include the successes and challenges that arose through the creation of this project. Chapter Four will be the final chapter of this project, concluding all that has been done in the makings and the implementation of this project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

Children and adults are constantly reading. Whether it's a book, text message, or even a street sign. The ability to read and comprehend what is being read plays a vital role in one's everyday life. One of the struggles that comes from early engagements with children and books are finding books that children will want to sit down and actually read. These books need to pique a child's interest and draw them to not only read this one book, but also many other books after. My goal, as an education and what has driven this project is to allow students to find these books that they truly enjoy and to make connections with the stories that they are reading and their everyday lives.

An issue that I have not only seen in my own classroom, but in other classrooms as well is students who are disengaged during a read aloud time. Not only does this affect the student who is no longer listening and engaging with the story, it can also cause a big distraction for other students in the classroom. This is why I decided to focus my research question on the topic of read alouds. My goal was to find a way to better engage students during this important time in the classroom. My research question for this capstone project is: *Can student engagement be increased during the whole group read alouds by incorporating books selected by students with follow up activities pertaining to the theory of multiple intelligences?*

In this chapter, I will be reflecting on the project that I have created, Show and Tell Read Alouds. I will take the time to discuss both the successes and the challenges that arose while creating this project. I will also take a moment to share my goals for the

implementation of this project as I will use it in the next classroom that I step foot in.

This chapter will also review some of the literature from Chapter Two and how it

supports the project that I created. Lastly, I will discuss some of the implications and

limitations of this project and the next steps that this project has encouraged me to take in

regards to teaching kindergarten students to read. My Show and Tell Read Aloud

curriculum was created to bring more engagement and excitement around reading in the

kindergarten classroom, so how did it go?

Creation and Implementation

While working on this thesis project, I have learned a lot about myself as a

learner, researcher, and as an educator. I have always considered myself a reader or

someone who loves to read. While teaching, reading is the subject that I tend to focus

more on and enjoy planning for this portion of the school day. Though I hold this to be

true about myself, I have not spent much time researching other people in the world of

education who also love to learn and teach about reading. While working on Chapter

Two, I was amazed at the amount of research that has been done in regards to

kindergarten students and learning to read. At times research can feel overwhelming and

heavy but after taking the time to really dive into a topic that interests me, it becomes

something much more effortless and informational.

Curriculum writing, therefore, became the fun part of working on this project. I

was finally able to put into words the ideas I had in my head in regards to strengthening

the relationships young learners have with reading. Though all the details were not fully

able to be described immediately after writing the curriculum, each time I reread the

curriculum, I was able to fill in the gaps and consider both the students who would be partaking in these lessons as well as the teachers who may be teaching it to their students.

Though I will not be able to have the opportunity to teach this curriculum right away, I am looking forward to sharing it with teachers that I know and using it in the future. My goal is for this curriculum to excite students about a key aspect of teaching young learners to read. Unlike traditional read alouds, these will be student centered based on stories that students have chosen rather than books that a teacher or a set curriculum have already chosen for them. Many students struggle, for various reasons, to sit in a large group during a read aloud time. By reading stories that students are interested in and excited to hear, the goal is to increase class participation, engagement, and even relationships among the students.

Literature Review

As I began research for this project, I originally started out very broad. I look at various sources I could find about kindergarten, reading, read alouds, Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and young learners. As I deepened my research, I was able to narrow my research to more specific topics that pertain more specifically to my project. I looked into student engagement in read alouds, building communities in kindergarten classrooms, incorporating the Theory of Multiple Intelligences in a kindergarten classroom and even ways to engage students in their reading at a young age.

Even though there were still many researchers who covered these topics, there were a few I found to fit best with the type of project I was planning to create. Gardner's and Armstrong's work on the Theory of Multiple intelligences and how these intelligences can be incorporated into a classroom setting were extremely beneficial

while working on the curriculum portion of this project. Gardner discusses how these intelligences came to be and how each of them can be presented or seen in people. Armstrong's work is what then solidified the importance of taking a look at Gardner's research by explaining how students can show the signs of these intelligences and how a teacher can use that in the way that they structure their classrooms to engage students in their learning.

Research done by Carol Dweck also played an important role in the creation of this project. Her focus was on mindset which also correlates with student engagement. If a student was not able to focus their mindset to prepare for learning, then there was not a lot of room for students to grow while in that mindset. Finding ways to engage students before the lesson even begins allows students to focus their minds and get themselves in a space to learn what is going to be taught to them.

Looking back at the research that I had done prior to completing the curriculum, I was able to make many new connections between the two. I strongly believe in the importance of gearing student learning around things they already know and applying them to classroom learning. Students are more willing to participate in something that sparks their interest before the lesson or activity even begins. Without my learnings and understandings from my research, I would not have been able to craft a curriculum as I did. There would have been important pieces of information missing in my curriculum that I discovered while conducting my research. In order to teach young learners, the teacher must also be willing to continuously learn as well.

Implications and Limitations

Even though I created this capstone project with a specific group of students in mind and based it off of the classrooms that I have previously taught in, I wrote it in a way that it could also be incorporated into various classrooms taught by various teachers. The idea of this project is to be student centered and therefore was structured so that student selection was the main focus rather than having preselected texts readily available for teachers to use. In this curriculum, students are strongly encouraged to share more about who they are outside of the classroom in order to create a stronger classroom community and a more accepting learning environment for the wide range of students. An implication of this project is engaging more students during classroom read alouds. My curriculum allows students to bring various parts of who they are into the classroom. Because the read aloud selections are chosen by the students, students of all races, genders, and backgrounds can see themselves represented in the texts.

A limitation of this project is the ideal that student choices should be constantly incorporated into a classroom setting. This curriculum only goes on for nine weeks and therefore it can be easy for a teacher to fall back into the routine of only using preselected curriculum texts for read alouds during the school day. The more we can incorporate student choice and select texts that pertain to all students in the classroom the likelihood that student engagement will continue to increase as the school year goes on. Future additions to this curriculum include ways to incorporate these read alouds throughout the whole school year now that students have become immersed in this way of learning.

Next Steps

Now that this capstone project has been completed, I am pleased with the work that has been done to make it the curriculum that it is. Though it is only a short term solution to incorporate student choice into the classroom, it is a great step in the right direction for student centered classroom learning. Even though there is still plenty of research and learning to be done in regards to this curriculum, this is a great start for myself as an educator and others who are looking to take their classroom in this direction. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences and student led learning can be incorporated into a classroom in so many ways. This idea would create a fun and engaging classroom environment across all subjects.

My journey with read alouds and the idea of student centered learning is only just beginning. Though I have completed a curriculum based on these concepts, there is always room to learn and grow just as a teacher hopes that their students are always eager to continue to learn even after they've left their classroom. Once this curriculum has been used in various classroom settings, I will take the feedback from both students and teachers to continue to alter and enhance this curriculum to make it even better before the next classroom of students to engage with it. The goal is for the long term, continued learning from this curriculum. If that is an expectation of the students who will be learning from it, then it should also be an expectation of myself, the creator of this curriculum, and the teachers who will be implementing it into their classrooms.

I believe this capstone project to be a benefit for both students and teachers in various classrooms. Even if it is not used by a teacher in a kindergarten classroom, it can be easily modified to fit the needs of various learners. The goal is to switch learning from

teacher centered to student centered to further engage students as they continue to learn and grow their skills in reading. Most of all, I hope this curriculum will allow for students and teachers to become more of a community of learners through the understanding of each student individually inside and outside of the classroom.

Summary

Reading has always been a passion of mine inside and outside of the classroom. It is so important for students to have these foundational reading skills as there will always be opportunities to read inside and outside of the classroom. This capstone project has increased my excitement around reading and strengthening foundational reading skills in young learners. In this chapter, I discussed the successes and challenges that I faced while creating this project. I shared the desired effects of the students upon the completion of this curriculum. This chapter also reviewed some of the key researchers I highlighted in my literature review that I found to be most important in the creation of this capstone project. The implications and limitations were also discussed in regards to this project, and lastly I shared my hopes for this project in the future.

Though not all students will complete this curriculum with as much excitement as I had while creating this project. The goal is for students and teachers to begin to shift their mindsets to be more open minded and engaged in the learning process before this curriculum has been implemented. Now that I have put in the time and effort to research and complete this capstone project, I have more confidence in the positive outcomes that will come with the completion of this curriculum to enhance both students and teachers read aloud experiences in a kindergarten classroom. Reading is so important and even

though we as teachers know and understand that, we need to make sure that our students are able to see that as well too.

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