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Increasing Engagement and Effectiveness of Independent Reading in the Kindergarten Classroom

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Classroom

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Reading independently is often a part of a balanced literacy program for students of all ages. Reading to one's self is a great skill to practice at a young age because it sets students up for success as life-long learners. Independent reading at a young age is also a way to foster a love for reading, use imagination and develop critical thinking and inferencing skills. Today we can read in many different ways. Devices like a Kindle are commonly used to read. Many readers use their phone, tablet, or computer to dive into a good book. Even still, many prefer the feel and smell of the paper of a real book. Whichever way you choose to read, reading is not only an enjoyable hobby but also necessary to live (jobs, managing emails, school, personal finances, etc.) and should be an integral part of a child's elementary experience.

As a kindergarten teacher, my job is not only to teach children foundational reading skills and how to comprehend what they are reading but also to hopefully help students develop an enjoyment of reading. Teaching children to select and read books by themselves is a skill that they will use for the rest of their life. Many schools require and/or promote independent reading time in a classroom's daily schedule. In the classroom, students usually have access to hard-copy books as well as books on technology devices. Many students may not have access to books at home. Therefore, independent reading time in the classroom could be the only time in the day when a learner could read a book.

In order to better serve my students, I want to know the most engaging and effective way for early readers to read independently. The question that I will be answering in my research is: *What are the most effective and engaging methods for*

independent reading in the kindergarten classroom? My capstone thesis will allow me to do research in my own kindergarten classroom so that I can explore my research question within my career. This research will enable me to change the way I implement independent reading in my own classroom, and I can share my findings with my co-workers.

In addition to researching the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading, I will also be exploring the subquestion of: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of reading traditional books and books on a digital device for young readers?* In this chapter, I share my personal story of how and why I chose to explore the topic of independent reading, the development of my research interest, the significance of this research and the benefits of my research to fellow educators.

My Journey

When I was in elementary school, I used to love DEAR time. DEAR stood for "Drop Everything and Read". During this part of the school day, we would read books that we checked out from the school library or our classroom library. It was a quiet, independent reading time. We were able to choose the books that we wanted to read, and it was a very relaxing part of the day. I recall finding a special spot around the room and reading there for about 20 minutes.

Another fond memory I have of my elementary school days was taking Accelerated Reader (AR) tests upon completing a book that we read independently. These tests were done on the computer and were focused on comprehension and vocabulary skills. Depending on our score, we could earn points. When we earned

enough points, we received a prize. I can still recall the friendly competition my classmates and I had about who had the most AR points.

Truthfully, as I got older my love for reading faded away a bit. I read books for my high school and college classes, but I rarely picked up a book "just for fun". Today I still read books for my graduate school coursework and occasionally read books on the airplane or while at the beach, but that is typically the extent of most of my own independent reading. As I reflect on the motivation and interest I had for reading as a child compared to now, I wonder if it has to do with the lack of motivation and competition from peers, as well as rewards. I do not believe that children should need rewards for reading, but I understand that sometimes this can increase engagement for a period of time. Ultimately, teachers and parents should be supporting and encouraging young readers to enjoy and see the benefits of reading without the presence of rewards and prizes. There is certainly something satisfying and enjoyable about reading and finishing a book, but there is no physical reward for reading through an entire book cover to cover. I also do not have a deadline or other reason to read the book cover to cover unless it is for school. As a kindergarten teacher, I would like to learn more about healthy and nurturing ways to encourage students to read more.

Teaching kindergarteners is a magical job. I get to help students learn foundational skills that they will use for the rest of their lives, as well as develop new interests and hobbies – including reading to self. I take this role and privilege seriously and want my students to love reading as five and six-year-olds so that they will still love reading when they are older. After reflecting on my personal experience with independent reading as a student and how that impacted my desire to read as an adult, it has caused

me to think more carefully about the way educators like myself are motivating children to read. Should children love to read because of the prizes they will get after they are done? Do students need reinforcers to want to read books, or should they love to read because they know how to choose books of interest to them that they are capable of reading and understanding? If students are coming to my classroom without high academic motivation, how can I support them? I would also like to learn more about the benefits of using digital devices to read, instead of reading traditional books. These questions are driving the part of my capstone thesis that is focused on what are the most engaging ways for students to independently read.

In addition to identifying the most engaging and motivating ways to implement independent reading in the elementary classroom, I also want to discover the most effective methods. At the school where I currently work, independent reading is required for all grades for about twenty minutes per day (this varies a bit based on the grade level). In my kindergarten classroom, it can be very challenging for students to remain on task during this time. A major reason for this is because of students' limited reading ability. In the beginning of kindergarten, children are not expected to know how to read yet. Some kindergarteners will know how to read, but many may not even know how to hold a book correctly at the start of the school year.

Additionally, children may not know how to select books that they are interested in. The attention span of a kindergartener is also limited, making it challenging to sit and read by themselves for more than a few minutes. I have noticed in my own classroom that many students were not on task and were not actually reading during this time. They were not getting anything beneficial out of this time in our day, and it felt like a waste of

twenty precious minutes of our schedule. I want to explore methods that will allow students to grow in their reading ability, stamina, and practice comprehension skills. I want to learn how to leverage this time to help my students become stronger readers.

Development of Research Interest

In my first years of teaching, I noticed how challenging it was for students to remain on task and seem interested in reading by themselves. I saw behavior challenges arise during this time of the day, and struggled to motivate children to read on their own. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, I received a class set of Chromebooks for all of my students to use. I was finally able to incorporate various educational applications and websites for students to use!

In the fall of 2020, I started using a website called Raz-Kids in my classroom. I created a class roster and each student had a profile with their reading level connected to their account. With this website, I was able to assign books or reading challenges for students. Students read books, take quizzes after each book they read, and earn stars. They can click on a word if they do not know it, and the word will be read aloud. They can also listen to the whole book read aloud to them. During the 2021-2022 school year, I made a Raz-Kids challenge in my class. When students read all of the books assigned to them and got to "Level Up" to the next reading level, I would give them a prize. Finally, students were engaged during independent reading and they were reading books at an appropriate reading level for them. I also noticed that my students' reading levels were improving as measured by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) reading assessment, which was very encouraging and exciting for me.

Still, I was left with some hesitations and questions. Why did I feel like my students needed prizes to be motivated to read? Are students actually enjoying reading these books because they like to read, or just because they want a prize? I was also concerned that students are not choosing the books they read at this time, because they are assigned books that they have to read based on their reading level. Additionally, now my students were not reading physical copies of books on their own – only during our guided reading time. All of these thoughts and concerns have led me to wonder if the use of technology and prizes is an effective and engaging way of implementing a quality independent reading model in an elementary classroom.

Significance of Research

My experiences as a child and as an educator have led me to my research question of: *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the kindergarten classroom?* I am also exploring the subquestion of: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of reading traditional books and books on a digital device for young readers?* I believe that what I discover from my research – both through literature and the research that I conduct in my own classroom will allow me to make well-informed decisions about how I implement independent reading in my classroom. I will be able to leverage independent reading in my classroom to see academic growth in reading and literacy skills and also foster a love of reading in my students! The knowledge I gain from experts who have studied independent reading will help me to design a system for independent reading that is proven to be effective and meaningful, while also enjoyable.

As a part of my research, I gave an attitude survey to my students on how they feel about reading and what their preferences are when reading by themselves. I also

interviewed six students individually to learn more about what they like/dislike about reading. I asked them about the kinds of books they like to read, where they like to read, and when they prefer to read. I also asked them questions to understand the level of support and access to books that students have at home. These preferences may include the topics and genres of the books, the kind of space/environment they like to read in, and whether they prefer to read books with technology devices or with physical books. This information provided influential data that I can use to create the best independent reading experience for my students. I also conducted observations of my students reading independently with traditional books and devices, and compared the level of engagement and participation that is present in students.

Benefits to Fellow Educators

Not only will my research benefit myself and my students, but I can share this information with fellow educators. It will allow me to find better ways to use independent reading times well, as students are not receiving much guidance or support from the teacher. I can share my findings with my co-workers, especially my grade-level teammates, as we plan daily schedules and routines for our classrooms. It will be beneficial for my co-workers to hear about what I found are the best ways to utilize independent reading in their classrooms so that it is not time wasted. I can share with educators what I have found is helpful or ineffective in my classroom to provide others with some guidance. Perhaps there will be a new teacher who is considering how to build routines and interest for independent reading who can use my findings to create a strong model in their own classroom.

Today electronic devices are becoming increasingly available and the new generation of children are being referred to as "digital natives" (Wright, Fugget, & Caputa, 2013, p. 367). The data and information collected in my research will support fellow educators in making choices that are right for their own classroom and their students for many years to come.

Summary

As a child, I loved to read to myself. As I got older, I slowly lost my interest in reading for enjoyment. When I have time to sit down and read I really enjoy it, but it is a hobby I do not often think of doing when I have free time. As an educator, I value the necessity of learning to read and being a fluent reader as well as the creativity and pleasure that can come from reading. I want to make sure that I am providing a positive, motivating, and engaging classroom culture that encourages my students to love reading. My goal is for students to read because they truly enjoy it – not just for points, prizes or rewards! Finding the best ways to engage students in reading to themselves is important to me. I also want to discover the most effective and meaningful methods and systems for independent reading and would like to see my students growing in their phonics skills, reading comprehension, and confidence as readers as a result of a strong independent reading model in my classroom.

The information I learn from my literature review as well as the data collected from my personal classroom research will influence the way I use independent reading in my classroom to better serve my students. It will also benefit other educators, as I will share my discoveries with them to engage in conversations and implement best practices surrounding independent reading in their own classrooms.

In the next chapter, I provide a review of the literature that I have read surrounding the topic of independent reading. The chapter highlights key findings and analysis on independent reading for elementary students. I share different perspectives and ideas of those that are experts in the areas of child development, education, and literacy. The information that is presented in the next chapter is what I used to conduct my own research for the thesis and help me answer my research question of: *What are the most engaging and effective methods for independent reading in the kindergarten classroom?* In addition, I am also exploring the subquestion of: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of reading traditional books and books on a digital device for young readers?*

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to examine and compare different research studies and consider the opinions of experts in the field of education around the topic of independent reading in elementary classrooms. The chapter provides a variety of studies that discuss the effects of independent reading and strategies for teachers to use that will make independent reading meaningful. The research question that is guiding this literature review is: *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the kindergarten classroom?*

Elementary teachers have the privilege and challenge of teaching young learners how to read. Whether an elementary teacher enjoys teaching reading or not, they will likely be required to teach reading and there will definitely be pressure for their students to grow. Reading is a skill that these students will use for the rest of their lives. However, there is not a clear consensus on the best way to deliver reading instruction (Brannan & Giles, 2017). While experts may still be working on finding the most effective ways to teach reading, there is a lot that we do know.

There is research available to support the connection between how much students are reading and their academic achievement (Brannan & Giles, 2017). The use of independent reading in elementary classrooms is one way to increase the amount of exposure students have to reading, and hopefully help students improve their reading achievement (Brannan & Giles, 2017). Additionally, independent reading can support an appreciation and enjoyment for reading.

In order to explore the topic of independent reading and give insight to the two research questions, the research and literature in this chapter will focus on the following topics: history and current trends, independent reading and academic success, engagement and motivation, technology in the classroom, and effective independent reading strategies.

History and Current Trends

It is important to understand what has happened in the past in relation to independent reading, as well as what is currently happening in America's classrooms. In this section, a context is provided to better understand the origin of independent silent reading and how it impacted education, as well as an explanation for why independent reading needs to be further researched.

History of Independent Reading

Silent reading is something that most literate people can do naturally and is so common in the westernized world (Robertson, 2012). We do it so often without even realizing it – such as at work or the grocery store. According to Robertson (2012), there was a time when reading was not done silently but out loud. As literacy became more common and reading materials became more available, reading transitioned to more of a silent and independent activity (Robertson, 2012).

This change also affected education. Robertson (2012) explained that silent reading allowed reading and studying to occur more quickly than before. Silent reading encouraged individuals to think more independently compared to when readers were partaking in the reading with others. Robertson (2012) argued that this shift led to readers developing critical thinking skills and relying more on collaboration following the

reading. In the past, reading was collaborative and shared. When people started reading silently, they had to choose to either keep their thoughts to themselves after reading or share their ideas with others. According to Robertson (2012), this led to a value for collaboration and critical thinking skills, which are still highly valued today in our education system.

In the year 2000, the National Reading Panel submitted its conclusions and findings after conducting an in-depth study on the best ways to teach children how to read (NICHD, 2000). The panel was made up of 14 members of different backgrounds, such as school administrators, teachers and scientists. The report discussed the following aspects of reading that were found to be helpful for teaching reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, guided oral reading, teaching vocabulary words, and reading comprehension strategies.

Surprisingly to many, the report stated that there was sufficient evidence to conclude that independent silent reading was directly correlated to reading achievement. The report explained that the many studies that have been done about this correlation are looking at exactly that, a correlation but not a *causation*. The report stated that specific research in this area is yet to be done, but it is important research. It also was clear that independent reading is of value and should be encouraged for students to partake in. This report came out in 2000 and has not been updated since.

Current Trends

Although the report from the National Reading Panel challenges the actual correlation between independent reading and reading achievement, teachers, administrators and parents still believe there is much value in it (NICHD, 2000). A report

was issued by Scholastic titled *Teacher & Principal School Report: Focus on Literacy* which stated that a majority of educators think that students should have time to select books to read independently, but only 36% of educators can set aside time for this in their day (Scholastic, 2017). According to the article, the main reason for not being able to have this time in the daily schedule is due to the high demands of the curriculum.

The Scholastic (2017) article stated that 77% of teachers make time for independent reading and read aloud stories, but only 36% do this daily. The article also stated that 63% of teachers wish that independent reading time could happen more often, and 90% of teachers believe that the high demands of curriculum expectations are the primary reason for not having enough time to make this happen (Scholastic, 2017).

Having a robust classroom library full of high-quality books is also important to educators. According to Coppens (2018), research has shown that students who have classroom libraries read 50% more than students who do not have access to a classroom library. Unfortunately, 54% of educators have less than 150 books in their classroom library, and 31% have less than 50 books (Scholastic, 2017). Additionally, 47% of teachers are only able to grow or change their classroom books every few years, and 13% of teachers are not able to update or change their classroom library (Scholastic, 2017).

Not only is it important to have a large quantity of books available to students, but there should be a wide range of books that represent the children in the classroom. According to Crisp (2016), there has been a lot of research surrounding the importance of having a lot of books available to students, but not a lot of research about the need for diversity and representation in the books. Educators today also want to ensure that the books in their classroom libraries represent the students that read them. According to

McNair (2016), quality books in the classroom do not just spark a love for reading but they also affirm student's identities. It is clear that educators believe there is a lot of value in independent reading and having access to quality books, but there is a lack of resources and time available to teachers to make this happen in their own classrooms.

In the last few years, there has been a growing movement of educators looking closely at the need for an updated and science-based approach to teaching reading. According to author Barshay (2020), there are a lot of crucial and challenging conversations happening as schools re-evaluate how they are teaching reading and starting to bring phonics instruction and the science of reading back to the core of reading instruction. Barshay (2020) explained that children need daily phonics instruction- a method of teaching people to read by correlating letters to sounds, and argued that a balanced literacy program, which was a trend beginning in the 1990s, is not working because it typically does not provide a strong phonics program. Authors Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, and Willows (2001) also argued that systematic phonics instruction is essential for elementary students to learn to read and decode words. They explained that in the past, educators have disagreed on the most effective way to teach early readers but that in general, the current view is that phonics instruction should be the priority (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl & Willows, 2001).

Barshay (2020) identified another popular trend of using leveled texts in the classroom to support students of varying abilities. Whether for guided reading or independent reading, teachers across the country use leveled texts to group students and attempt to meet their students' needs. Walski (2020) explained in the past educators have used leveled texts as the primary tool for reading instruction. He also wrote that while

leveled texts can be useful tools, they should not be used too heavily within the reading program. Barshay (2020) explained that teachers fear that if a student is reading a book that is too challenging they will get frustrated and want to quit, but research indicates that learning actually increases when students are challenged. Barshay (2020) argued that the use of a challenging text coupled with vocabulary instruction, teacher support, and comprehension strategies will increase learning more than giving a student a book that is at their reading level.

In an article titled *Independent Reading: Trends in the Beliefs and Practices of Three Classroom Teachers,* authors Brannan and Giles (2017) wrote about a study done about the beliefs of real teachers. The study found that these teachers agreed that independent reading is meaningful and effective when a few key components are in place (Brannan & Giles, 2017). Brannan and Giles stated the following:

> …the commonly agreed upon components of independent reading are as follows: 1) a sustained amount of time for reading, 2) reading appropriately leveled text, 3) participating in reading as a social activity, 4) eliminating the requirement of silent reading, 5) reading with a purpose, 6) teacher-student conferences, and 7) access to a large variety of quality text. (2017, p. 1)

Overall the study showed that teachers highly value both the amount of reading done and the quality of the time that students are reading (Brannan & Giles, 2017). The findings in this study especially align with the Scholastic (2017) article, in that today's teachers are striving to give their students the best reading instruction and provide enjoyable independent reading to take place.

Conclusion

Silent reading was not always a part of the Western world's history, but it is certainly a part of our society today. Teachers face many odds as they seek to give their students high-quality reading instruction – including small and non-representative classroom libraries, and lack of time in the day to fit everything in. Although the National Reading Panel did not find conclusive evidence that reading independently directly supports reading achievement, many teachers today still see the value in it. The challenge now is to find the most effective ways to implement it to see if it really is meaningful.

Academic Success and Independent Reading

There have been many different kinds of studies done to examine what influences student reading performance. This is a critical conversation for reading teachers, as the pressure is on to improve the direction of our nation's proficiency levels in reading.

Does Practice Equal Performance?

There have been many studies done to understand if there is a correlation between reading practice and reading performance. According to one study by van Bergen, Vasalampi, and Torppa (2021), reading fluency, comprehension and print exposure were all clear indicators of the students' reading proficiency when measured at age 15. However, according to the study, the amount of reading learners did seemingly only indicated reading proficiency as the learners reached an adolescent age. The study seemed to show that the amount of text exposure students had did not improve their reading performance until they could actually read on their own and were solid in their foundational reading skills, fluency and comprehension skills (van Bergen et al., 2021).

Similarly, Harlaar, Deater-Deckard, Thompson, DeThorne and Petrill (2011) conducted a study that examined twins ages 10-11 and examined how independent reading influenced reading achievement, and also how reading achievement influenced independent reading. The results of this study seemed to align with what other studies have found, as well as what the National Reading Panel suggested in 2000, in that a child's reading achievement at the age of 10 is a strong indicator of their independent reading ability at age 11 (Harlaar, Deater-Deckard, Thompson, DeThorne, & Petrill, 2011, p. 2123). Therefore, the older and more advanced children are in their reading skills, the greater the impact of independent reading.

Additionally, researchers van Bergen, Vasalampi and Torpa (2021) found that reading fluency in young children may help predict fluency, comprehension and the amount of reading they will do later in their life. Therefore, if we want children to be strong readers who enjoy and participate in reading later in life, elementary teachers should focus more on reading fluency and teacher-guided instruction and less on the number of books children are being exposed to and reading independently (van Bergen, Vasalampi, & Torpa, 2021).

In the studies described above, it was found that as students get older, the impact of independent reading on reading achievement becomes more apparent. A study done by Cuevas, Irving, and Russell (2014) examined the effects of independent silent reading for secondary students. The study examined 145 10th grade students, and measured reading ability, vocabulary, reading attribution, reading comprehension, and state-mandated assessment. Overall, students who participated in silent independent reading greatly improved in their overall reading ability in comparison to their peers (Cuevas, Irving, &

Russell, 2014).This finding supports the ideas of the other research studies that have found that as students grow older and more advanced, independent reading may be a useful tool in increasing reading performance.

Reading comprehension is an essential skill for students to master. Both studies from Cuevas, Irving, and Rusell (2014), as well as van Bergen, Vasalampi, and Torpa (2020) found that independent silent reading seemed to greatly increase student growth in the area of reading comprehension. Based on the data collected, it was found that older students made gains in all of the reading areas targeted except for vocabulary and this supports the idea that independent silent reading could be a useful method for addressing reading concerns (Cuevas, Irving, & Russell, 2014).

There is evidence that supports the claim that independent reading practice can increase reading achievement in older students, but there is little evidence to support the impact it can have on early elementary learners. Authors Erbeli and Rice (2022) wrote about a series of 14 primary studies that were completed between the years 2000 to 2020. Participants were in all different grades from kindergarten to 12th grade. Erbeli and Rice (2021) found that apart from three studies, there was not sufficient data to show that independent reading had a positive impact on reading achievement in elementary students. Erbeli and Rice (2021) explained:

> …due to a lack of primary studies adhering to the highest quality standards and implementation, it is impossible to determine whether such a result is universal or whether there might be conditions under which silent independent reading could have meaningful benefits. (p. 267)

These findings align with the statement made by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) that it has yet to be proven that independent reading for elementary students will increase reading achievement. Garan and DeVoogd (2008) reiterated that there can certainly be positive impacts from independent reading, but that these impacts may not be evident for some time because it is a process. Garan and DeVoogd (2008) explained that it is difficult to collect timely and accurate data about the effectiveness of sustained silent reading because the effects are not visible right away. The positive impacts could be reading fluency or comprehension, as authors van Bergen, Vasalampi, and Torppa (2020) have found, but these skills develop and improve over a long period of time and it is difficult to prove the effectiveness of independent reading.

Conclusion

There have been multiple studies done in the past to look at the correlation between independent reading and academic achievement. There is not enough clear evidence to prove that independent reading practice in elementary students leads to reading proficiency. However, there is more evidence to support the effectiveness in improving reading skills in older students. The effectiveness of independent reading is a topic that needs more research and further development, but it appears that it is worth the time to continue learning and understanding.

Motivation and Engagement

Motivation and engagement play a crucial role in education. If students are not motivated or engaged in the learning, it is very difficult for them to succeed. Discovering what increases motivation and engagement in students is important for educators and

parents so that they can help children enjoy learning and achieve high academic proficiency.

Academic Intrinsic Motivation and Perceptions of Reading

According to Gottfried (1990), "academic intrinsic motivation involves enjoyment of school learning characterized by a mastery orientation; curiosity; persistence; task-endogeny; and the learning of challenged, difficult and novel tasks" (p. 537). Intrinsic motivation can play a critical role in the academic success that a student can achieve, especially in the area of reading. She also studied academic intrinsic motivation in young elementary children and found it is "a significant, independent construct for young elementary school children with increasing stability over the early elementary school years" (1990, p. 537). This means that academic intrinsic motivation present in a student during one school year is often an indicator of academic intrinsic motivation in the following year. In Gottfried's early work, she found that the following factors contributed to academic intrinsic motivation: "early provision of a variety of stimulation, parental expectations for achievement, and parental encouragement of curiosity and challenge" (1990, p. 537). These are important considerations for educators to make– especially for elementary teachers, in order to support their students more effectively.

In addition to academic intrinsic motivation, a student's perception of the importance and value of reading can also play a large role in the level of motivation and engagement they have within themselves. Merga and Roni (2018) collected data from a sample of 997 older elementary children about their perceptions around reading and determined that the value of reading "may not be adequately communicated to all

children, and that low valuing of reading influences reading frequency through low task valuing" (p. 148).

The authors found that nearly a fifth of the students surveyed did not understand that reading is important and valuable beyond gaining reading skills and made the conclusion that "educators and parents need to better understand, value and transmit the benefits of being a lifelong reader" (Merga & Roni, 2018. p. 148). Gottfried's (1990) study found that parental influence and involvement played a significant role in a child's academic intrinsic motivation, and the same appears to be true for a child's values and views about reading. Both studies found that the role of parents and family members can be very important to help children develop intrinsic motivation and understand the value of reading.

It was also found that as students grew older, the value placed on reading increased. Merga and Roni (2018) suggested that this could be because of the "development of cognitive maturity" as students grow older, as well as the higher expectations and high-stakes testing that older students experience in older grades (p. 148).

There is also a concerning gap in the number of boys that are significantly lower in reading in comparison to girls. This is not new, but it is a continuous problem. Scholes (2019) explained that boys are consistently underperforming on standardized testing-particularly in the area of reading. Authors Merga and Roni noted that there was a stronger correlation between age and the importance of reading in boys than in girls. They stated that while there is no data to prove that the belief of reading value increases

in girls as they get older, girls "may be more effectively socialized to attribute value to the practice of reading" (Merga & Roni, 2018, p. 149).

Scholes (2019) also discussed how society has placed generalizations and stereotypes on boys in comparison to girls, and that reading achievement is not seen as highly valued for boys as it is for girls. These influences could be negatively impacting young boys and affecting them well beyond their elementary years. Merga, Roni and Scholes all have concluded that there needs to be more of an emphasis on the value of reading for boys at a young age.

Recreational and Academic Reading

Although researchers Cuevas, Irving, and Russell (2014) found that the effectiveness of independent reading increases as students grow in age, researchers De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste and Rosseel (2012) stated that reading motivation generally decreases as students grow up. This means that while the effectiveness of independent reading may be stronger for older students, their motivation to read on their own is likely not as high as that of younger children. If children enjoy reading by themselves at a younger age, then perhaps there is a higher chance that those learners will participate in independent reading when they are older– when it really counts!

Data collected also determined that "recreational autonomous reading motivation is associated with more positive reading behavior and better performance" (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012, p. 1006). The results also found that there was not a significant indirect correlation between reading motivation and reading comprehension. Similarly to the ideas that Scholes (2019) shared about how girls are performing higher in reading than boys, De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, and

Rosseel (2012) found in their research that girls had a higher motivation to read in both academic and recreational contexts. The expectations and beliefs that society has placed on boys and girls appear to be playing a role in the level of motivation to read, both recreationally and academically. It also seems to be affecting student's reading performance and reading proficiency.

Authors De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, and Rosseel (2012) believed that educators and parents should "focus on enhancing autonomous reasons for reading" because it will lead to "more qualitative reading behavior and better reading performance" (p. 1019). Gottfried (1990) shared that same belief about the power and importance parental involvement and encouraging reading can have for children. Educators and parents should work together to support all children, especially young boys, in developing academic and recreational reading skills.

Increasing Engagement

Authors Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009) described engaged readers as those who "actively interact with text, seeking to understand what they have read", they "avoid distractions" and "choose to read because they are interested in a text" (p. 313). They also acknowledged the challenges that come with independent reading and that many teachers have gotten rid of independent reading altogether in their classrooms.

Despite the challenges that independent reading can bring, Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009) explained that identifying the types of readers that teachers have in their classrooms can help them better support and differentiate independent reading time can make a great impact. They stated that there are typically eight types of readers: fake readers, challenged readers, unrealistic or wannabe readers, complaint readers, readers

who crave information and nonfiction texts, readers who can read but do not want to, readers who hold a preference to one genre, and readers who truly love reading (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009). It was suggested that after identifying the kinds of readers a teacher has in their classroom, they can specifically address the needs and challenges of each student to help them be successful at independent reading.

The authors offered some tips for implementing a successful reading program in the classroom to increase engagement. They suggested that teachers be clear about goals and expectations, support students through conferencing and helping them select books, and observe students during independent reading time to help students with specific needs (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009). They also suggested making sure there are books that match students' interests, creating a consistent procedure for independent reading, practicing comprehension strategies during independent reading, and modeling your own enjoyment for reading to students.

Kelly and Clausen Grace (2009) noted that facilitating peer discussions about the books that were read can increase engagement, and Hall, Hedrick and Williams (2014) found this to be true in their study. They discussed a student who previously had a difficult time staying on task during independent reading. After the implementation of having time to talk with peers about the reading, the student was able to focus more during the reading and excitedly prepare for the discussion. Sanden (2014) explained that the exceptional teachers she observed did not require the independent reading to be silent, and many teachers provided opportunities for students to have social interactions about their reading.

Clearly, there are some challenges to independent reading, so researchers Moses and Kelly (2019) asked the question "Are they really reading?" to understand what contributes to engagement in independent reading. When Moses and Kelly (2019) looked at the strategies that were used to keep the first graders engaged they found that using sticky notes to show students' thinking and learning, having conferences between the teacher and the student, and having conversations about the reading all helped students make meaning of their reading time. Many of these strategies were also suggested by Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009) to support the different types of readers in the classroom during independent reading time. All of these authors have concluded that independent reading needs to be more involved than just simply reading – which may be where many educators have gone wrong in the past.

While Walski (2020) cautioned the use of leveled texts during independent reading to ensure students have the ability to self-select texts that interest them, Moses and Kelly (2019) found that the use of emergent readers during independent reading time still proved to be beneficial to student learning. A balance of using emergent readers and leveled texts while still giving students the freedom to choose books that they want to read seems appropriate.

Hall, Hedrick, and Williams (2014) agreed that independent reading is a great opportunity to add more student choice into the school day. Adults make choices when it comes to reading – adults choose what they read, where they read, and the level of background noise heard when reading, so they believe students should have the same choices.

Hall, Hedrick, and Williams (2014) found that students were visibly more enthusiastic about their daily independent reading time when given the choice to use iPod Shuffles. Some students chose to use them only a few days a week, and other students tried using the iPods but ultimately decided not to continue using them. This kind of choice allows students to create their own restrictions if they felt like it was going to cause them to be distracted, which builds stronger self-awareness.

Conclusion

Students must be engaged and motivated in their reading to be successful. Independent reading can be a highly engaging, enjoyable and effective time if students are given choices and provided with teacher guidance. It is imperative that teachers plan independent reading time thoughtfully, knowing the needs of their students. When this is done will teachers see the benefits of independent reading.

Technology

According to authors Milman, Carlson-Bancroft, and Vanden Boogart (2014), "in the first few weeks of the Apple iPad release in 2010, more than three million units were reportedly sold" (p. 119). Since then, schools around the country are investing their money in purchasing devices to enhance the learning experience for students. Now, educators have been tasked with finding the best ways to leverage the technology in their classroom to differentiate for student needs and enhance the learning experiences.

Technology Use in the Classroom

The majority of students have access to technology in their classrooms. It is important to understand the advantages of technology to leverage their capabilities, but also understand when computers and screen time should be limited. Milman,

Calrson-Bancroft, and Vanden Boogart (2014) found that teachers across grade levels were able to use iPads in multiple content areas and that the teachers used iPads to differentiate learning progress at each student's level. They also found that students used the iPads to access e-books that were at their reading level, as well as books not available in the classroom. Teachers also used iPads to extend learning by allowing students to dig deeper into different content areas, which provided further differentiation.

While many educators see the benefits of using technology, some are cautious about overuse. Vlieghe (2015) argued the great importance of what he called "basic literacy training" (p. 209). He explained that there is a clear difference between traditional and digital literacy, and that in today's world they both have an important role to play in our education system. He stated that without education in both traditional and digital literacy our "productive and creative potential" is going to suffer (Vlighe, 2015, p. 222).

Benefits of Technology for Reading Instruction

Milman, Calrson-Bancroft, and Vanden Boogart (2014) wrote about the use of e-books in the classroom, and researchers Wright, Fugett and Caputa (2013) analyzed the differences between reading with a device and reading traditional books in elementary classrooms. Paper-based books are a part of the traditional literacy model that Vlighe (2015) believed is essential, and the use of e-books follow the digital literacy model. Wright, Fugett, and Caputa (2013) found that students were consistent in their reading comprehension and understanding of vocabulary when using both E-readers and paper-based books, implying both are effective for use in the classroom.

While students certainly need access and exposure to reading traditional books as Vlighe (2015) noted, Wright, Fugett, and Caputa (2013) found that students were more likely to use reading resources such as a dictionary, word pronunciation tools and a thesaurus if they were reading books on a device compared to paper-based books. These are unique advantages to reading on a device that traditional books do not have.

Another benefit of using technology while reading is that often readers can click on a word to hear it read aloud, or listen to the correct pronunciation of a word. Reitsma (1988) determined that guided reading and reading with self-selected feedback from a computer were much more beneficial than participating in a reading-while-listening activity and believed that using computer-based speech feedback while independently reading could help beginning readers grow in their reading skills. This feedback from a digital device is not something that would be available to students if they read a traditional book.

Just as Reitsma (1988) wrote about the benefits of feedback while reading, Mostow, Nelson-Taylor and Beck (2013) explained that the Reading Tutor program has the ability to give students spoken or graphical support while they are reading out loud. Mostow, Nelson-Taylor and Beck (2013) found that the students who used the Reading Tutor made significantly greater gains than the students who did silent reading. These students performed better in areas such as blending words, spelling and word identification. Students also made more progress in the areas of reading comprehension and fluency, and Mostow, Nelson-Taylor and Beck (2013) determined that oral reading is more beneficial than silent reading.

Conclusion

Today's students are using technology more than any generation before, and there is a need for both traditional and digital literacy. Schools have access to incredible technology devices and various programs to support the needs of all of their students. Educators have found that reading resources on devices can increase reading growth and engagement, as they provide many tools and resources to help learners be successful.

Effective Independent Reading Strategies

Independent reading can have many benefits when it is implemented in a thoughtful and intentional way. The key is for educators to use effective strategies to make independent reading meaningful, and not just a time to relax or fill up time. Many researchers like Sanden (2014) have been interviewing and observing real teachers and their students to discover some of the best strategies for independent reading.

Strategies of Expert Teachers

Based on teacher interviews and observations done in real classrooms, Sanden (2014) determined that combining student independence and teacher support will increase engagement and effectiveness. Teachers did this by allowing students to choose the books they were going to read, while teaching them how to find books that were at an appropriate reading level (Sanden, 2014). Teachers can give students choices while still providing some guidelines. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009) also suggested that teachers allow their students to choose the books they want to read, but give some support and suggestions to ensure they select books that they will be successful at reading.

Sanden (2014) noticed that causal independent reading did not happen in classrooms of the expert teachers that were observed. There was always a purpose for

independent reading happening, such as practicing specific reading strategies.

Oftentimes, these strategies were taught in a lesson to the class and then students

practiced the strategy while reading independently. Sanden (2014) also reported that

teachers would hold students accountable by having them document their learning or

practice in some way. This helped to ensure students were actually reading.

Book Choice

Sanden (2012) noted that book choice and providing reading behavior support led

to "guided independent reading" (pp. 225-226). It is important to give students some

parameters and suggestions for the books that they choose to read. In an article by Wutz

and Wedwick (2005), a suggestion was made for teachers to use the acronym

BOOKMATCH to help students select appropriate books for independent reading.

In the acronym, BOOKMATCH stands for book length, ordinary language,

organization, knowledge, manageable text, appeal to genre, topic appropriateness,

connection, high interest.Following the BOOKMATCH criteria can help students choose

books that are "just right" for them, and it helps them develop more self-awareness as a

reader (Wutz & Wedwick, 2005, p. 32).

Literacy Clubs

Literacy clubs are another way to promote independent reading. Tichenor,

Piechura, Diedrichs, and Heins (2020) wrote about three literacy clubs that are making an

impact on the students attending each club. The first club described was a lunch bunch.

University students read with elementary students during their lunchtime at school.

Together they ate lunch, read a book and had a discussion. About 95% of the students

reported that they would like to come back to the lunch bunch during the next semester,

and 97% of students reported that they wanted to return because they had fun (Tichenor, Piechura, Diedrichs, & Heins, 2020).

Another kind of club that the authors described was called "The Boys Book Club". This book club was specifically created to target boys, especially minority boys. Many of the boys who came to this book club were below grade level in reading. After participating in the book club, many of the boys' reading scores and standardized test scores improved. The number of books that the boys read also increased. Providing a special place for the boys to read and discuss with their peers proved to be a great intervention for students, as well as an enjoyable time for them (Tichenor, Piechura, Diedrichs, & Heins, 2020). This kind of book club could provide support in closing the learning gap that young boys are facing as Scholes (2019) identified.

The last kind of literacy club that Tichenor, Piechura, Diedrichs and Heins (2020) reported on was called "The DaVinci Club". This club took place at an after-school program that has a focus on science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM). At this club, students chose books to read and then created something in response to their reading. For example, a student may read a book and then create a mural or sculpture to represent the story. Nearly 70% of students that were involved in the club showed growth on a standardized test, and many students performed higher than their peers who had not participated in the literacy club (Tichenor, Piechura, Diedrichs, & Heins, 2020). There are many other factors that could have likely contributed to this academic success, but literacy clubs like The DaVinci Club could definitely have played a role in this success.

Conclusion

There are many amazing educators who have found independent reading practices that help to make independent reading engaging and effective. Providing students with choices while still giving them guidance has proven to be helpful. Independent reading does not have to be silent, and students can enjoy discussing their reading with their peers. Literacy clubs and holding students accountable for their reading also increase engagement and reading achievement. When teachers implement these practices in their classrooms, they can look for positive results and watch as students find an increased enjoyment of reading.

Summary

Throughout this chapter, numerous examples of previous research and related articles connected to the topic of independent reading were presented and discussed. The question that guided this literature review was: *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the elementary school setting?*

The chapter provided research around five related topics: history and current trends, independent reading and academic success, engagement and motivation, technology in the classroom, and effective independent reading strategies. The origin of silent reading, and findings from the National Reading Panel in 2000 were shared and the current trends and beliefs of educators were discussed. Information was presented to understand the potential benefits of independent reading, as well as strategies that have proven to be effective in supporting students' academic achievement. The use of technology to increase reading achievement was also discussed. It is clear that when

independent reading is implemented well, it can have many positive effects on students'

attitudes and reading performance.

　　In the next chapter, the methods selected for this capstone will be explained in

detail. The reason for choosing this research will be shared. There will be a description of

the study, including details about the participants, the setting, and the process followed

for conducting the research. The data tools that will be used will be described.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

The research question that is guiding this work is, *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the kindergarten classroom?* In addition to this question, I am also exploring the subquestion of: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of reading traditional books and books on a digital device for young readers?* In the previous chapter, literature related to the research question and the topic of independent reading were discussed. It has been made clear from the literature and research studies reviewed that students can benefit from successful implementations of independent reading in elementary classrooms.

The correlation between reading achievement and the practice of reading independently has not been confirmed yet so the work of studying how independent reading benefits students is important (Barshay, 2020). Many elementary students have access to technology at home and at school. Teachers can utilize the technology resources that they have to engage students and differentiate for student needs. Independent reading can be done with traditional books, but can also easily be done with a device. This leaves teachers and parents with decisions to make about the best ways to have students read and what programs to use.

In this chapter, the methods of the research done to pursue the guiding question will be shared. Details about the methods chosen, the setting, the participants, the research process, research tools, and data analysis methods will be explained as it relates to the research. This explanation will provide readers with a clear understanding of the work that was done so that the data collected and interpreted can be understood fully.

This will also allow the reader to reflect and evaluate their own practices, and possibly make positive changes based upon the information given.

Research Paradigm

When designing a research study, there are a few different types of data collection techniques to consider. I have chosen to use a mixed methods design for my research. In a mixed methods design, a researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative data sources to investigate the research question. The focus of the research and the guiding question help determine the best methods for data collection. A large part of my research question is focused on the engagement and experience of students, so qualitative data makes sense for my research paradigm. Mills (2018) explained that often for an action research project, qualitative data will support the research best because of the nature of action research. Therefore, the majority of the data I collect will be qualitative but I still want to collect some quantitative data to strengthen my data collection methods.

Choice of Method

For this action research study, a mixed methods design was chosen. I felt that a mixed methods approach would provide me with a more clear picture of my students' thoughts and opinions surrounding independent reading while also collecting data on what was happening in the classroom. The majority of the data collected was qualitative data. In order to research what was most effective and most engaging for students, qualitative data about students' preferences, feelings and behaviors was examined. As a classroom teacher, observing students and making decisions based upon those observations is something that happens on a daily basis. Therefore, it was natural to select qualitative data methods. It was also personally important for me to observe what

students seem most excited and motivated about in terms of independent reading. Surveys and interviews completed allowed data to be collected in a way that let readers share what they enjoy about reading and their preferences when it comes to independent reading.

Quantitative data was also collected through the use of an attitude scale. The same attitude scale was given to students on two different occasions in order to show if students' attitudes about independent reading increased, decreased or remained the same.

Setting and Participants

The setting of this research study was a kindergarten classroom at an urban Charter school. The school is a K-8 school with about 650 students. There are about 30 teachers and 90 staff members in total. Each of the kindergarten classrooms has about 20 students in the class. There are two paraprofessionals who support students in two of the kindergarten classrooms. The classroom where the action research was conducted had 20 students, and all 20 students participated in the action research study. There was not a paraprofessional working in this classroom. There were no students in the classroom with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Students ranged from age 5-6 years old at the time of the study. All of the students in this class were observed and surveyed for the action research. All participants had parental consent to be a part of this research. In the classroom, students have access to their own Chromebook to use throughout the school day. Students do not take Chromebooks home.

Approval Process

The first step in the approval process for this action research was to bring the entire research plan and goals of the research to the thesis advisor and the school's administration to review and approve the plan.

The next step was to inform the families of the students and get their consent to be a part of the research study. The most effective way to do this was to send a letter home to families. The letter was written in English and also translated in Somali to ensure that all families understood the letter. The letter included information about the graduate school program and Masters degree that was being pursued, as well as an overview of the Capstone thesis being done. There was a detailed description of the research study, the length of time that the study would take to be completed, and an overview of how students would participate in the study. There was also an explanation of why the research study was meaningful to the researcher, and how the findings of the study could also impact the families. The letter also explained the option for families to choose not to have their child participate in the study, as well as how to contact the teacher with questions or concerns.

Research Tools

For this study, multiple data collection techniques and tools were used. There was a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data collected to investigate the research question. This was done in order to get comprehensive data about the engagement of students during independent reading time, as well as information about the preferences and beliefs of students about reading.

Direct Observations

First, the teacher researcher used direct observations to observe how students were participating in independent reading time. This was done while the teacher was also teaching a small group of students. This technique was chosen because as Mills (2018) said, "direct observation as a data collected strategy is familiar and not overly time consuming" and yet still provides a "systematic and rigorous way to view this process of observation" (p. 112).

Structured Student Interviews

Another research tool that was used was structured student interviews. This technique was chosen because it allowed the teacher to ask the same questions to a variety of participants and gave students a chance to share their preferences and ideas about independent reading (Mills, 2018). In order to understand more about the most engaging methods of independent reading, it was important to hear what students prefer and understand what students think about independent reading.

Attitude Scale

To collect data about students' attitudes about reading, an attitude scale was given twice to students. This was chosen because attitude scales can be helpful tools for an action researcher to better understand the participants' beliefs and attitudes about the topic of independent reading (Mills, 2018). This data also allowed the teacher researcher to compare if/how students' attitudes about reading affected their engagement in independent reading while in the classroom setting.

Procedures

Clear procedures were developed in order to gather high-quality data that helped the researcher answer the guiding question of: *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the kindergarten classroom?* The procedures also helped the researcher explore the subquestion of: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of reading traditional books and books on a digital device for young readers?*

Direct Observations

As students participated in independent reading, the researcher recorded direct observations 4 days a week for about 20 minutes each day. These observation notes captured what was happening in the classroom every few minutes of the independent reading time. The notes included the time of each observation, the number of students that appeared to be on task, the number of students reading traditional books and books on devices (see Appendix A). Notes about the types of books selected were also documented, including genres, book titles or popular authors.

During the first week, students read traditional books that were self-selected with some guidance from the teacher. Students selected new books from the classroom library the week beforehand and stored them in their own book bags. During the second week, students read books on a website called Raz-Kids on their Chromebooks. There was a variety of books for students to choose from, and the books that students had access to were at their individual reading level. During the third week of the observation, students got to choose between reading traditional books or books on their devices.

In order to hold students accountable for their reading and engage students in the books, students recorded on a post-it note how many books they read during the 20-minute time period, and also created a book review about one of the books they read. On the book review, students recorded the title, author, genre, rated the book out of 5 stars, and drew a picture to tell about the book.

Structured Student Interviews

In order to gather data from a group of diverse students, the teacher selected multiple students to be interviewed. The first two students that were interviewed were below grade level in reading. The third and fourth students that were interviewed were on grade level in reading. The fifth and sixth students interviewed were above grade level in reading. Each student was interviewed individually during lunch, one on one with the teacher. Six questions were asked of each student (see Appendix B). The teacher recorded their answers, and read the same questions in the same exact order for each student.

Attitude Scale

The first attitude scale was given in November, and the second attitude scale was given a few months later in February (see Appendix C and Appendix D). This allowed the researcher to examine if students' attitudes about reading increased, remained the same, or decreased after being in school and participating in the practice of independent reading. Additionally, in November students were just starting to read decodable books and learn high frequency words. In February, many students could read more challenging books. This allowed the researcher to consider if students' attitudes about reading became more positive as their reading ability increased.

Students completed the attitude scale independently, as the teacher read each statement to them out loud. The attitude scale was exactly the same both times to maintain validity. Students selected Emojis to represent their feelings/thoughts on each statement. There were three choices for each statement: a sad face, a neutral face, and a happy face. Each sad face was worth one point, each neutral face was worth two points, and each happy face was worth three points. This allowed the teacher to collect a score for each student's attitude towards reading and better understand student trends.

Data Analysis Methods

Mills (2018) encouraged teacher researchers to reflect throughout the research process to consider if the research question remains valuable and a question that can still be answered. Therefore, the first step in the data analysis process was to pause a few times during the study and ask these questions.

Most of the data collected for this research study was qualitative. According to Mills (2018), one way to analyze qualitative data is to repeat the following steps: read the data and become familiar with it, study and describe the data, and classify the data by grouping them into themes. When analyzing the data from the different observations that were done, patterns and common themes in the data were analyzed, coded and grouped together to make sense of the data.

When analyzing the interviews with students, careful reading and annotating of the interview was done. Themes and patterns in the interviews were also searched for, and similarities and differences were found between the interviews. The three-step process of reading, describing and classifying the data was followed for the interviews.

Key questions were also asked about the data collected to better understand what was happening in the classroom and why it was happening. Types of questions asked included questions about who was participating, who was on task, what was being read, how long students were reading for, and what kind of choices did students get to make in the independent reading practice.

Mills (2018) suggested using descriptive statistics for an attitude scale. In this research study, an attitude scale was given to students to learn about what students believe and feel about reading. In order to analyze the data of the attitude scale, descriptive statistics were used. Each possible response was given a point value, and the average responses were calculated to identify common feelings, ideas and beliefs of students.

Ethical Considerations

All data was carefully analyzed multiple times throughout the course of the study. Reflections and considerations about validity and possible barriers were also made. The privacy of students remained throughout the course of the data analysis and interpretation process. The Hamline IRB holds clear procedures for researcher studies in order to protect the privacy of the participants and their families. These procedures were carefully followed throughout the entire research process.

First, an application was submitted to the Hamline University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. After approval was granted from the Hamline University IRB, the school administration where the research study took place gave written approval for the research to occur. As stated previously, all parents and guardians

were made aware of the research study and gave written consent for their child to be a participant in the study or to be withheld from the study.

Researcher Positionality

I was privileged to grow up in a household as an only child with two parents who were very involved in my life. Both of my parents had a high expectation for me to do well academically, and they cared deeply about me having a quality education and access to whatever I needed to be successful. My mom stayed at home with me until I started school, and we read many books together throughout my childhood. As I grew up, my parents continued to invest their time and money in buying me books that I was interested in, as well as reading to me at home. I grew up going to the local library often, and frequently received books as gifts from family members on my birthday or Christmas. I recognize that my childhood experiences impact me and the research that I conducted for this study. I believe all children should have access to quality literature, but it is easy to forget that many do not have that access. I also believe parents and family members should invest in their child's education as they are able to, but again I recognize that this is not always an option for some children and their families.

Summary

This chapter gave an overview of the research study that was done to answer the question of: *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the elementary school setting?* The chapter described the research paradigm and the method selected for the research study along with evidence to support these choices. The setting of the research and the participants involved in the research were also described. The procedures and data collection tools were discussed to understand the research study.

A summary of how the research was analyzed was also included in this chapter. The approval process and ethical considerations that were made for the research study were also explained in the chapter.

In the next chapter, the data that was collected from the research study will be presented. Appropriate graphs/charts will be discussed and available for viewing in the appendices. A thorough analysis of the findings from the study will also be shared.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The research that I conducted in my kindergarten classroom was centered around the research question of: *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the kindergarten classroom?* In addition to this question, I was also exploring the subquestion of: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of reading traditional books and books on a digital device for young readers?* In order to research these questions, I used a variety of different research methods to learn from my students and their experiences.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the results from the different research methods that I used. The first research method that I discuss is the direct observations of students reading independently in the classroom. The results of the second research method that are discussed are the student interviews that I conducted with six different students in my class. The third and final research method that is discussed are the student surveys that were given twice— once at the beginning of the study and once at the end. Tables and charts are referenced to provide specific data to reference the results of the research study, which can be found in the appendix as stated throughout the chapter.

Direct Observations

Over the course of three weeks, I observed my kindergarten students reading independently every day. During the first week of the study, students read traditional books. During the second week, students read books on their devices. They read on a website called Raz-Kids. During the third week, students got to choose if they wanted to read traditional books from the library or on Raz-Kids. Every day, I observed student

behaviors, noticed the different kinds of books the students were reading, and collected data on how many students appeared to be on task and reading books.

Traditional Books

During the first week of the study, students chose books from our classroom library to read independently. They stored the books in a book bag, and read them throughout the week during independent reading time. Students seemed to enjoy choosing their own books from the classroom library. There have not been many opportunities this school year for students to actually read books from our class library. I noticed students reading mostly fiction books. Most of the students were reading picture books, and occasionally students read emergent reader books that are very short.

In order to observe the level of engagement and effectiveness of each type of independent reading, I counted how many students appeared to be "on task" throughout the reading time. It is important to clarify that "on task" in this study could be actually reading the book, but it could also be students simply looking at the pictures and trying to read books. This "on task" behavior could sound like students reading out loud to themselves, even if they are not reading accurately.

Table 1

Week 1- Traditional Books

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Percent of Students on Task	88%	82%	83%	92%

Each independent reading time was about 15-20 minutes long, so every few minutes I counted how many students appeared on task. As seen in Table 1, there was a small range of the number of students that were on task during this first week. The highest percentage of students on task throughout the day was on the last day of the week, at 92%. The average number of students on task throughout the whole week was 86.25% (see Table 3). When students appeared to be off task, they were typically looking around the classroom, or telling me that they were finished reading their books and wanted to pick new books. Overall, the number of students on task was very high throughout the week.

I was also really pleased with how interested the students appeared to be while reading their books. I saw some students showing their books to each other, some students reading out loud, and some even making up the story but appearing to be feeling very confident. This is something I do not see often with young readers. I also had a few students come up to me and ask me to read the book to them or ask for help reading a specific word. The classroom felt a little bit noisier than other times, especially in comparison to when students read on their computers. However, the "buzz" that I felt in the classroom showed that students were excited and engaged in their reading.

Books on Devices

During the second week of research, all students read books on their devices. Students logged onto a website called Raz-Kids. This website allows teachers to choose a level of the books they want each student to read, so students have access to different books depending on their level. The students have been using Raz-Kids all year long, so this was very familiar to them. Students know how to navigate the website easily, and

know the expectations for using this website. Students were all sitting at their desks, with a few exceptions where some students sat at different tables around the classroom to help them focus better. All students have their headphones on when they are using their computers. This website allows students to listen to the book being read aloud before they try to read it on their own. They also have the option to click on words that they do not know.

As seen in Table 2, the percentage of students who were on task was very high every day. The first days of this week were two of the three highest days of "on task" engagement over the course of the whole research study. Table 3 shows that this week had the highest level overall, with an average of 90% of readers were on task during this week.

Table 2

Week 2- Raz-Kids Website

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Percent of Students on Task	91%	94%	89%	87%

Table 3

Overall Weekly Average of Students On Task

Week	Week 1- Traditional Books	Week 2- Raz-Kids	Week 3- Choice
Percent of Students On-Task	86.25%	90%	86.5%

According to my observation notes, if students were not on task, it was because they were using the bathroom, getting water, having a technology issue, or were just looking around the room instead of reading. There were a few instances where students were on a different website— occasionally playing a game, but students were quickly redirected because I was walking around the classroom monitoring students and telling these students to go back to Raz-Kids. Overall, I was very pleased with how the second week of research went with students on their devices.

Student Choice

During the third week of the research study, students were allowed to choose if they wanted to read books on their devices, or select new books from the classroom library to read. I had students who were going to read traditional books sit around the room to read. Students who chose to read on their device needed to sit at a table.

Each day, students got to make their choice about how they were going to read. Table 4 shows a breakdown of how many students chose to read books on devices and how many students show to read traditional books each day. I was shocked when on the first day, all students chose to read traditional books. I wondered if students were feeling some peer pressure to do what "everyone else" was doing.

Table 4

Student Choices of Each Day

Day	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Traditional Books	15	10	8	10
Devices	0	7	10	4

On the second day of this week, I reminded students that this was their chance to choose how *they* want to read, and I told them that I would be happy to see a mix of both ways of reading independently. On this day 10 students chose to read traditional books and 7 students chose to read on their devices. I was excited to see that there was a variety on this day. The third day was pretty evenly split, with 8 students choosing traditional books and 10 choosing to read on their devices. More students chose to read on their devices on this day, so I was curious if on the last day there would be an increase in the number that read on their device. To my surprise, more students chose to read traditional books this time. Only 4 students chose to read on their device.

During this week of students choosing how they wanted to read, I made some interesting observations. I also noticed that students reading on their devices were rarely reading out loud, while students with traditional books were more likely to read out loud— even if they were making up words.

I also observed that students who had traditional books seemed to read through their books quickly and wanted to pick new books. On the other hand, students who read books on their devices only read through a few books. On Raz-Kids students listened to the book, then read the book, and finally they answered some comprehension questions about the book. Therefore it takes longer for a student to really be finished with each book. Something else that I noticed was that almost all of the traditional books from the library were fiction, while students reading on Raz-Kids read a mixture of fiction and nonfiction books.

When looking at the level of engagement, the percentage of students who were on task during this week was almost exactly the same as the first week— where all students

read traditional books. Table 5 shows that students were most on task during the first and last days of the week. These were the two days where the number of students reading on their devices was the lowest within the week.

Table 5

Week 3- Student Choice

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Percent of Students on Task	88%	83%	84%	91%

The week with the highest number of students on task overall was the second week where students were reading on their devices. The first and third weeks were almost exactly the same, just slightly lower than the second week. I was so pleased with the high levels of engagement that I saw every day throughout the research study and how hard my students were working on their independent reading skills.

Student Interviews

The second research method that I used was student interviews. I selected six kindergarteners in my class and interviewed each of them individually. Each interview lasted about 10 minutes. I chose to meet with one boy and one girl that read above a kindergarten level. I also met with one boy and one girl who are reading on-grade level. Last I interviewed two girls who are reading below grade level. Both of these girls have been receiving reading interventions throughout the school year. I asked each student the same six questions, and I got a variety of responses from them.

Question One

The first question that I asked each student was "Do you like to read paper books better or books on the computer?" and I heard a mix of responses. One of the lower students said she preferred books from the library, while the other lower student shared that she prefers books on the computer "because it's fun".

Similarly, one of the on-level students preferred traditional books, while the other preferred to read on the computer "because it's so fun". The two highest readers that I interviewed also had different opinions. One said she liked reading books from the class library, while the other said he preferred to read on the computer because "you can be smart". This question tells me there is truly a mix of preferences amongst students, no matter their reading ability.

Question Two

The second question I asked students was "Do you like to read by yourself, with a friend, or with a group?". I was curious about this because I try to give students opportunities to read in all of these ways in my class. Both of my lower students shared that they prefer to read with a friend. One of the students shared that she "doesn't want to read alone".

The on-level students had different opinions. One student shared that he preferred reading alone "because I want to be smart", while the other one shared that she prefers to read with a group because "if I don't know it, I need someone to help me".

The two higher readers had different opinions, one said she preferred to read with a group "because they are nice" and the other preferred to read alone. Interestingly, the

two students who shared that they like to read by themselves are boys. All of the students who preferred reading with a friend or group are girls.

Question Three

The third question that I asked each student was "Do you read at home?" and I followed that question by asking who they read with. All of the students except for one shared that they read at home. The student who explained that she does not read at home said that no one reads with her at home, and she mentioned one specific book that she has at home. This student is one of the below level students. All five of the other students shared that they read at home. Most of them said that they read with their mom or their siblings.

A follow-up question that I asked the students who do read at home is if they read to their family, or if someone at home is reading to them. There was a mix of responses to this question. Both of the higher readers said that their family reads to them. I was surprised at this because I would have expected the higher readers to read to their families. Both of the on-level students told me that they read to their families, as well as listen to their families read. The fifth student who is one of the below-level readers told me that her mom and sister read to her, and that she will ask them to help her with the letters to read. I was happy to see that 5/6 of these students do participate in reading at home, whether they are reading to their families or listening to someone else read.

Question Four

The fourth question that I asked each student was "What kinds of books do you like to read?" I also said "What do you like to read about?" to help students understand the question. There was a wide variety of responses, most of them were fictional

characters like princesses and Batman, or famous stories like The Three Little Pigs and Cinderella. One of the higher readers told me she likes to read books about animals like monkeys. I asked her if she preferred reading fiction or nonfiction books. We have discussed the terms "fiction" and "nonfiction" throughout the year, but I still reminded the student what these words mean. She explained that she likes "real books" more. After asking all students about the kinds of books they like to read, it was helpful for me to learn that 5/6 students prefer reading books with fictional characters.

Question Five

The next question that I asked students was about if they wish there was more time to read books in the classroom. The two higher readers both said they would like more time to read books. One said she likes reading, and the other student said he "loves Raz-Kids" because "it has nice books". Both of the on-level students also said they would like more time to read books. One of these students said "yes, because I want to be a smart boy".

Of the two below level students, one of them said she would like more time to read and one said no. The student who said she would like more time to read shared that she felt this way because "the timer always goes off and I didn't finish the book". The student who shared that she would not want more independent reading time shared that she doesn't like to read by herself because she "can't read" and that she "wants someone to read with her". I was surprised that 5/6 students said they wish they had more time to read by themselves, including one of the below-level students who cannot read very much yet.

Question Six

The final question that I asked each student was if they think reading is important and why they think that. All but one of the students shared that they think reading is important. The student who said "no" is one of the below-level students who has also shared that she does not read at home, and does not want to read alone. I was surprised that she did not think reading was important. When I asked her why not, she shared that "reading is not fun" and that games are fun. Reflecting on this I am wondering if she was referring to reading books on the computer as not fun, in comparison to being able to play games.

All five of the other students shared that they do think reading is important. The below-level reader shared that "you have to read so you can know how to read books and learn". One of the on-level readers shared that reading is "important because it's good for you" and "your teacher gives you stars". He is referring to the classroom management system that I use in my classroom. I do give stars when I see students working hard and staying on task. One of the higher readers said "yes because if you know how to read books, you know how to read everything". The last student—also a high reader, explained "if you read you will go to first grade and you will do hard stuff". I found it humorous and enjoyable to listen to all of these kindergarten students to share why they think reading is important as their answers were very sweet and honest.

Student Surveys

The third and final method of research that I used was student surveys. I gave the student survey two different times— once before I started my independent reading observations, and once after the research was done. I wanted to gather information

quickly from each of my students. All of the information collected was related to students' ideas and feelings about reading.

The first two statements that I asked students were about how they feel about reading by themselves and with a friend. As seen in Table 6, the results were very widespread. In the second round, there were 3 more students who chose the smiley face to demonstrate how they felt about reading by themselves. Interestingly, there were 0 students who chose the middle smiley face in the second round compared to 8 students who chose it in the first round. The number of students who chose the sad face was about the same, it changed from 7 to 8 students.

Table 6

Student Surveys

Emoji	😊		😊		😐		😐		🙁		🙁
Circle the Emoji that shows how you feel about reading by yourself.	Round 1	4 (21%)	Round 1	8 (42%)	Round 1	7 (37%)					
	Round 2	7 (47%)	Round 2	0 (0%)	Round 2	8 (53%)					
Circle the Emoji that shows how you feel about reading with a friend.	Round 1	14 (74%)	Round 1	1 (5%)	Round 1	4 (21%)					
	Round 2	10 (66%)	Round 2	4 (26%)	Round 2	1 (6%)					
Circle how you feel about the teacher reading stories to you.	Round 1	15 (78%)	Round 1	2 (10%)	Round 1	2 (10%)					
	Round 2	11 (73%)	Round 2	3 (20%)	Round 2	1 (6%)					

Circle how you feel about reading nonfiction books.	Round 1	9 (47%)	Round 1	6 (31%)	Round 1	4 (21%)
	Round 2	7 (46%)	Round 2	4 (26%)	Round 2	4 (26%)
Circle how you feel about reading fiction books.	Round 1	7 (36%)	Round 1	4 (21%)	Round 1	8 (42%)
	Round 2	12 (80%)	Round 2	0 (0%)	Round 2	2 (13%)
Circle how you feel about reading books on a website like Raz-Kids.	Round 1	11 (57%)	Round 1	3 (15%)	Round 1	5 (26%)
	Round 2	9 (60%)	Round 2	2 (13%)	Round 2	4 (21%)
Circle how you feel about reading picture books.	Round 1	9 (47%)	Round 1	4 (21%)	Round 1	4 (21%)
	Round 2	13 (86%)	Round 2	2 (13%)	Round 2	0 (0%)
Circle how you feel about going to the school library.	Round 1	12 (63%)	Round 1	3 (15%)	Round 1	3 (15%)
	Round 2	14 (93%)	Round 2	1 (6%)	Round 2	0 (0%)

The second statement asked students to show how they feel about reading with a friend. The number of students who chose the smiley face decreased from 14 to 10, and the number who chose the middle face increased from 1 to 4. I was glad to see that less children chose the sad face— this number changed from 4 students to only 1 student.

The third statement asked students to circle how they felt about listening to the teacher read stories to them. There was not a lot of change between each round, however only 11 students chose the smiley face in the second round compared to 15 in the first round of the survey. There were less students that took the survey in the second round, so

it would be interesting to see how adding a few more student responses would have altered the data.

The next two statements were asking students to demonstrate how they feel about reading fiction and nonfiction books. In the first round 9 students chose the smiley face, and in the second round only 7 chose the smiley face. Similarly, there were 6 students who chose the middle face in the first round compared to 4 in the second round. The number of students who chose the sad face remained the same.

It was surprising to see that there was an increase overall in the way students felt about reading fiction books. The number of students who chose the smiley face increased from 7 in the first round to 12 in the second round! The number of students who chose the middle emoji decreased from 4 to 0, and the number of students who chose the sad face decreased from 8 to 2. I was excited to see that there was an increase in how many students had positive feelings about reading fiction books after the research study was completed. I believe because students were mostly reading fiction books through the three weeks of independent reading, their interest and favor in reading fiction books went up. I think students were able to choose fiction books that interested them through this opportunity and they were able to see how many fiction books are available to them to enjoy.

The sixth statement was asking students to indicate how they feel about reading books on Raz-Kids. In the first survey, there were 11 students who indicated that they enjoyed using Raz-Kids. This number decreased slightly from 11 to 9. There were 3 students who chose the middle emoji, and this number slightly decreased to 2. The number of students who selected the sad face slightly decreased from 5 to 4. Again, there

were less students overall who took the survey the second time around, so it is difficult to make a conclusion about how students' feelings changed throughout the research study. What can be determined for sure is that in both the first and second round, the smiley face was the most common emoji selected to show how the students felt about reading on Raz-Kids. This tells me that overall my class enjoys reading on their devices.

The next statement asked students to show how they felt about reading picture books. I wanted to compare these numbers to the data collected about Raz-Kids. I was also curious to see if there would be a positive increase in how students felt about reading picture books after finally having some time dedicated to just reading picture books that students choose for themselves. As I hoped, students seemed to enjoy reading picture books more after the research study was complete. The number of students who selected the smiley face increased from 9 to 13! The number of students who chose the middle face decreased from 4 to 2, and the number of students who selected the sad face decreased from 4 to 0. It was so encouraging to see that 0 students felt sad about reading picture books and the end of the research study.

The final statement on the reading survey was about how students feel about how students felt about going to the school library. I wanted to survey students about the school library because this is the first year that my class has been going to the school library twice a month and engaging in a lesson with the school librarian. Overall, students demonstrated that they enjoy going to the school library. 12 students indicated that they enjoy going to the library, which increased to 14 in the second survey. I was also pleased to see that the number of students who chose the sad face decreased from 3 to 0. Over the course of this research study, my class went to the library twice. It is difficult to know

why there was an increase in how students felt about the school library, but my hope is that students have grown more excited about books and reading overall.

Summary

The student surveys proved to be a quick and effective way to survey my students and collect some data about their attitudes towards a variety of topics that relate to reading. I am glad that I did the survey at the beginning of the study and again at the end because I was able to see if the research study made an impact on my students and their attitudes about reading. I learned that overall, my students enjoy reading with friends more than reading by themselves. The survey results indicated that most students enjoy listening to me read stories, and they enjoy going to the school library.

Overall, most students enjoy reading books on Raz-Kids. The survey indicated that students generally like reading fiction books more than nonfiction books, especially after the research study was completed. In the next section chapter, I will reflect on the research study as a whole, and I will share my big takeaways from the study. I will share how I plan to use what I have learned in my research project to influence my teaching and how I will share the results with others.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Throughout the research study process I have focused on the primary question of *What are the most effective and engaging methods for independent reading in the kindergarten classroom?* I have also been exploring the subquestion of: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of reading traditional books and books on a digital device for young readers?* In this final chapter, I reflect on my research project as a whole. I discuss the most important things I have learned from the process. I revisit the literature that I reviewed in chapter two. I also share implications for the future, as well as limitations that I faced in this research study. I share suggestions and ideas for future research, and explain how I am planning to communicate the results of this research study with others.

Major Learnings

I have learned so much from planning, implementing and analyzing data for a research study that took place in my own classroom. I learned about how giving students choices in reading allows me to meet their needs and interests. I also learned about the advantages and disadvantages of reading both traditional books and books on a device. Finally, I learned that with strong routines and clear expectations, kindergarten students can be successful independent readers.

Student Choice

One thing that I have learned from my research is that students enjoy choices because they are all different. From the survey results and the one on one interviews, I noticed how students feel strongly about different things and have preferences. Some students felt very strongly that they enjoyed reading by themselves, but many students

shared that they do not like reading alone. Giving students the option to choose if they want to read with a partner or read independently could increase the level of engagement. Only some students enjoy reading nonfiction books, but most students enjoy reading fiction books. Giving students the choice to choose what kind of books they want to read allows students the opportunity to read what interests them and engages them. I also loved seeing how students went back and forth between choosing to read traditional books and books on a device. This reminded me that student's preferences can change daily.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Reading on Devices

I also learned about the advantages and disadvantages of reading books on a device and traditional books. On a device, students could read books at a more focused reading level. They could listen to the book being read to them. Students could click on an unknown word to be read aloud to them, instead of asking a teacher or another student for help. When I was doing observations, I noticed how focused students were on reading. They were less tempted to talk to each other, and students were not asking me to help them read a word in a book. The classroom environment was also quieter when students were reading on a device. This is beneficial during a time when a teacher is working with a small group of students.

Some disadvantages of reading on a device is that students may have limited access to a variety of books. I noticed less students sounding out words to read when they were reading on a device, so students may not be practicing their phonics skills as often when they read on a device. There were also a few students who attempted to play games on their computer instead of reading books. This is one disadvantage to allowing students

to use devices. It is easy for students to quickly switch tabs and make it look like they are reading the whole time. Thankfully, I was walking around during the research study as I recorded data from my observations so this did not happen too often. I believe this would have happened more often if I had not been walking around ensuring that students were doing what they were supposed to be doing.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Reading Traditional Books

I noticed that when students were reading traditional books, there was a wide range of books being used. Students read books of different reading levels, and the topics of the books were more diverse. I noticed that more students were sounding out words and practicing their phonics skills. I also noticed more students interacting with each other during reading time. Students were showing each other the books they were reading and many asked for help if they did not know how to read something.

One thing I really noticed when students were reading traditional books is that many were not actually reading the text. Some made up the words, and others just looked at the pictures. Because of this, many students "read" through their books very quickly. Overall the number of students that were on task was slightly lower than when students read on devices or got to choose how they read. This tells me that because of the age of the kindergarten students and their reading ability, reading traditional books for the purpose of actually practicing reading may be challenging and limited.

Strong Routines and Expectations

The final key takeaway from this research study is that if strong routines and expectations are in place, the engagement of independent reading can be strong (even in a kindergarten classroom). I was surprised at how many students remained on task every

day during independent reading. Whether students were reading a picture book, reading on their device, or choosing how to read, the level of engagement remained pretty high. I believe this is because my students have been practicing reading independently from early on in the school year. I have set clear expectations of what reading independently should look and sound like, and set up routines for traditional books or books on a device. I also think it helped that I was walking around checking who was focused on reading, instead of just having students read while I did something else.

Revisiting the Literature

In Chapter 2, I referenced a study from Wright, Fugett, and Caputa (2013) that found that using e-readers and traditional books were both found to be similarly effective for practicing reading strategies and reading comprehension. While I focused my observations to measure how engaged or on task students were instead of looking at the effectiveness of each for practicing strategies and building comprehension, both studies had similar findings. Both my study and the Wright, Fugett, and Caputa (2013) study found that using e-readers and reading traditional books are beneficial for independent readers.

I also discussed the topic of book choice in Chapter 2. Sanden (2012) wrote about the benefits of having students choose the books they want to read with the guidance from a teacher to select books that are appropriate for each reader. In my research study, I gave students the freedom to choose the books they wanted to read from the classroom library. I wish I would have given my students a little more guidance in making choices about which books to read, but it felt like there was no time for me to do this with every

student. Sanden (2012) described this as "guided independent reading", and this is something I plan to do differently in the future.

Implications

After completing this research study, I am able to consider how I can make independent reading a more meaningful and engaging time in my classroom. I would like to give students choices in what they read and how they read as much as possible. I would like to find a balance between having students read books that align more closely with their reading abilities, while also letting them explore and enjoy a variety of books that interest them.

I would prefer to have students read on a device if it is going to be during a time when I am teaching small groups so that the classroom is quieter. If I am able to support students while they read independently, I would love to find more time for students to read traditional books. In both the pre and post-surveys, over 60% of students indicated that they enjoy reading with a friend. This is in comparison to only 46% of students who shared that they enjoy reading by themselves in the post-survey. In the future, I would love to give students more chances to read with a partner instead of just reading independently.

Based on the survey results, more students prefer to read fiction books than nonfiction books. This did not surprise me, but I would like to pay closer attention to the kind of fiction books that I have available for my students to make sure they are of interest to my students. Some of my books are older, used books. I would like to get new books that are more reflective of fiction characters that are familiar to my students. I

would also like to try to get more nonfiction books that interest young readers, in hopes that students may choose to read some nonfiction books more often.

Limitations

There were a few limitations that I faced during this research study. Attendance was the first limitation. During the pre-survey that I gave at the beginning of the research study, I only had one student absent— 19 out of 20 students were present. During the research study, one of my students left the school to go to a different school. On the day that I gave the post-survey, I only had 15 out of 19 students present. I would have liked to survey all of my students, but it was challenging to find another time to survey the students that were gone on that day.

Another limitation was technology. I only have one spare computer in the classroom for students to use. Occasionally, throughout the research study, there were days when a few students had issues with their computers. Sometimes a computer was not charged, or the WiFi stopped working. Because I only had one extra computer, there were a few times when a student had to read traditional books instead. If there was a temporary WiFi connection issue, the student would be waiting for it to come back.

A third limitation was that I had originally planned to observe students reading independently while I was teaching small groups. I wanted to try doing my observations at this time because that is when I would typically prefer my students to have independent reading time- during small group rotations. Unfortunately, I found it very difficult to teach a small group and frequently observe and record data at the same time. I decided to adjust my daily schedule to have a whole group independent reading time. Every afternoon the class spent about 20 minutes reading independently, all at the same

time. This allowed me to freely walk around the classroom and monitor students, and record my observations.

The final limitation that I encountered during the research study was when students needed the bathroom or asked to select new books for their book bags. When either of these situations occurred, I was unsure of how to record this in my observation notes. I would count how many students were on task, and if students were selecting books, they were counted as on task. If students were in the bathroom, I counted them as off task. I had not thought about this before, and this may have affected the data very lightly. Overall though, this did not happen too often and I started requiring students to select books at a different time so the data could be more accurate and so they did not miss out on reading.

Future Research

This research study only lasted about 3 weeks. In the future, I would suggest a longer research study. My students had been reading books on devices all year long so that was not new to them. I expected the engagement to be fairly high because I knew that they knew how to navigate the website Raz-Kids. On the other hand, having students read books from the classroom library was rather new so I did not know what to expect. I would suggest giving students ample time to try both ways of reading so that both feel familiar and routine.

I think it would also be very interesting to try this research study at a few different times throughout the school year. Especially in kindergarten, most students can read very little in the beginning of the school year. In the middle of the school year— which is when I conducted this research study, there was a wide range of reading abilities amongst

my students. At the end of the year, most students can read simple, decodable books. It would be interesting to look more closely at how the reading ability of students affects their ability to engage in independent reading. I would love to know how the level of engagement changed throughout the school year as students become readers.

Communicating the Results

I plan to share the results of my research with my friends, family and co-workers. I am especially looking forward to sharing the results with the other kindergarten teachers at my school. I believe the one-on-one interviews and survey results will be interesting for them to hear about.

I am also looking forward to sharing the results with the administration at my school. It was difficult to fit this independent reading time into my daily schedule. Based on the survey results though, it seems that having some independent reading time and more opportunities to read books from the class library positively influenced how my students felt about reading.

Many of my friends who have children have expressed interest in this research study. With all of the access to books on devices these days, I think it is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of reading traditional books and reading on a device. I look forward to sharing what I have learned with others!

Summary

I have learned so much from completing this research study. I have learned about the need to know your students and give them choices in reading. I have learned about the advantages and disadvantages of reading traditional books and on a device. I have learned about the need for strong routines and expectations. Getting to interview some of

my students, survey all of my students at the beginning and end of the study, and observe my students while they read independently has been a very meaningful experience for me as a teacher.

I have loved getting to know my students better through this research study, and give them an opportunity to express their feelings and ideas about reading. I was pleasantly surprised at how many of my kindergarten students were able to read independently for around 20 minutes. My favorite part of the study was watching all of my students choose to read books from the classroom library on the first day of the choice week. I look forward to using the results of this study to inform my teaching, to encourage my students to develop a love for reading, and share the results of this research with others!

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APPENDIX A

Direct Observation Data Collection Form

Time of Data Collected	Number of Students "On Task"	Number of Students Reading Traditional Texts	Number of Students Reading on Devices	Other Notes (ex: behavioral, reading levels of books, genres of books selected)

APPENDIX B

Student Interview Questions

Student Name: _____

Date:_____

1. Do you like to read paper books better or books on the computer?
2. Do you like to read by yourself, with a friend, or with a group?
3. Do you read at home? Who do you read with at home?
4. What kinds of books do you like to read? What do you like to read about?
5. Do you wish we had more or less time to read by yourself in the classroom, or do you feel like you get a good amount of time to read?
6. Do you think reading is important? Why?

APPENDIX C

Reading Attitude Scale

Statements to be Read Aloud by Teacher:

1.Circle the emoji that shows how you feel about reading by yourself.
2. Circle the emoji that shows how you feel about reading with a friend.
3. Circle how you feel about the teacher reading stories to you.
4. Circle how you feel about reading nonfiction books. Remember, fiction books are real.
5. Circle how you feel about reading fiction books. Remember, fiction means pretend
stories.
6. Circle how you feel about reading books on a website like Raz-Kids.
7. Circle how you feel about reading picture books.
8. Circle how you feel about going to the school library.

APPENDIX D

Reading Attitude Survey

Reading Attitude Survey

Name: _____

1. 😊 😐 ☹️

2. 😊 😐 ☹️

3. 😊 😐 ☹️

4. 😊 😐 ☹️

5. 😊 😐 ☹️

6. 😊 😐 ☹️

7. 😊 😐 ☹️

8. 😊 😐 ☹️