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Tracy L. Schaper
Rowan University

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**KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS' INTERACTIONS WITH TEXTS DURING
INDEPENDENT READING**

by
Tracy L. Schaper

A Thesis

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Thesis Chair: Marjorie Madden, Ph.D.

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, Ken, who supported me unconditionally throughout the Master's program. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my fiancé, Mike, who supported me by cooking dinner every night that I worked on my thesis.

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I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Madden for providing me guidance throughout the thesis process. I would also like to express my gratitude to Heather for helping me establish independent reading in my classroom.

Abstract

Tracy Schaper
KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS' INTERACTIONS WITH TEXTS DURING
INDEPENDENT READING
2018-2019
Marjorie Madden, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study was to examine how emergent readers interact with texts during independent reading. Audio recordings of student talk, video taped observations, notes in a teacher research journal, a book selection chart, and concepts about print assessments were all analyzed to determine how emergent readers interact with texts. Findings were that students interact with familiar, unfamiliar, and leveled texts differently including varying levels of conventionality and prosody of language, the comprehension strategies and skills they use to make meaning, and the concepts about print they apply. Findings also included trends for the types of teacher support students needed. Implications for implementing independent reading in kindergarten classrooms and for future research are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It was a rainy afternoon, like it had been all week, and my class was stuck inside again during recess. The students were sprawled throughout the room participating in center activities of their choice. I usually took indoor recess as a rare, extra opportunity to conduct running records, pull a small group for brief supplemental instruction, or make up an assignment with students who had been recently absent; however, I had done that all week. On this particular day, I decided that I was just going to take a break from my kidney-shaped small group table and visit centers, observe, and provide assistance as needed. As I was providing guidance to a few students with a center activity, I heard a familiar voice reading Dr. Seuss's (1960) *Green Eggs and Ham*. I tuned in, noticing that the reader was using similar intonation and phrasing that I had used several weeks ago when I dramatically read the story to the class. With a quick scan of the room, I spotted Ethan[1] reading the book aloud to himself at his seat.

While Ethan was an advanced reader, the text was much higher than his independent reading level. I moved closer to watch Ethan read the remainder of the book. Upon closer observation, I noticed that he was seamlessly applying multiple word solving strategies when he got stuck, while simultaneously relying on his memory to "read" parts of the story that were overly challenging to solve. I was impressed at his ability and persistence to read the text. When he was done, he picked up another book and began to read in a similar manner. My initial reaction was, "Wow! I wish all my students had that type of engagement and interaction with texts!" That thought was fleeting though because

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[1] All names are pseudonyms.

I immediately realized that my comparison of Ethan with other students in my class was not accurate. Independent reading was not a current practice in my classroom and students typically only engaged in it during center time.

That day I decided to be present and to observe a student read independently, but how often did I do that? I had a solid understanding of the word-solving strategies my students possessed when they were with me during guided reading and I also had a sense of my students' vocabulary knowledge and level of comprehension based on classroom discussions; however, I did not know how they translated instruction when they were selecting their own texts and reading them without scaffolding. While I had a significant realization that day, my literacy block had many components vying for my attention and I quickly lost sight of this concern. It would be a few years later before this concern would resurface after a transformation of my reading instruction and establishment of daily independent reading.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to record how emergent readers interact with texts during independent reading. The specific aims are to determine what strategies, skills, and text feature students use to make meaning and to examine how they transfer strategies and skills taught during one-to-one conferencing to their independent reading. This study began in my third year of implementing reading workshop. I had received training with the reading workshop model, gathered the appropriate resources for independent reading, and had developed mini-lessons that would support my students as readers. In my first two years of implementation of reading workshop, I was not able to consistently implement independent reading daily for various factors. The school had

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started a school-wide independent reading initiative the prior year and was in full implementation mode this year. This is the first year that students will receive a full year of independent reading as part of the reading workshop model.

Independent reading is a common reading practice in many primary and elementary classrooms as part of the reading workshop framework (Calkins, 2015; Miller, 2012). Within this framework, all students engage in independent reading for a designated period of time daily. In other classrooms, independent reading primarily occurs as an activity choice, such with the Daily Five, that students choose to engage in at different times (Boushey, 2006). Despite independent reading being a widespread practice, my preliminary research revealed that little current research exists with young students and independent reading. Research that focused on primary students suggested that independent reading is beneficial because it gives students the opportunity to apply reading strategies to their own texts and, with support, grow as readers (Boushey & Moser, 2006; Calkins, 2015; Collins & Glover, 2015). Assertions that independent reading is beneficial existed, but little research existed to illustrate how emergent readers applied reading instruction to an independent reading context.

Kindergarten students do not typically start out reading conventionally, but move towards conventional reading as the year progresses (Collins & Glover, 2015). My preliminary research was on how emergent readers interact independently with texts when they possess limited sight word knowledge, concepts about print, or word-solving strategies and cannot read any or a large range of texts conventionally. Much of the published research for independent reading justifies the use of or advocates for the use of just-right texts, texts that students can read with 98 percent accuracy or above (Boushey

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& Moser, 2006; Sanden, 2012). These texts are those in which students can conventionally read independently. Collins and Glover (2015) acknowledge that reading just-right texts is important for kindergarten students, but posit that student choice beyond leveled texts should still be honored within a portion of the day.

The interest of this research question was to determine how students interact with a variety texts during independent reading that involve text collections that include just-right texts and texts of interest, but are not limited to the students' reading levels. My research revealed that kindergarten students unconventionally read familiar stories by retelling them using a combination of the pictures and their memory of the stories to guide them through (Boushey & Moser, 2006; Collins & Glover, 2015; Miller, 2012; Sulzby, 1985). Sulzby (1985) and Collins and Glover (2015) posit that emergent readers possess different levels of language as they "read" familiar texts from naming objects and actions without telling a connected story to "reading" the text with syntax and connecting the pages to form a story. Research suggested that students unconventionally read unfamiliar texts by using a combination of texts' pictures, their background knowledge, and their oral language registers (Collins & Glover, 2015). Fountas and Pinnell (2007) have noted many behaviors that emergent readers go through and detail a continuum that describes how emergent readers progress towards conventional reading when reading leveled texts.

My preliminary research also included the structure of independent reading that would be supportive to emergent readers. The term "independent reading" is not truly independent in nature in kindergarten. While there are many approaches to independent reading, the traditional approach to independent reading, sustained silent reading (SSR),

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does not provide a supportive framework to unskilled readers because the teacher is expected to serve as a model to students and read while the students read (Pilgreen, 2000).

Many researchers believe that students need to receive individualized support in the form of teacher-student conferences to help them grow as readers. (Collins & Glover, 2015; Goldberg & Serravallo, 2007; Sanden 2012; Trudel, 2007). Teacher-student conferences yield information about reading skills and strategies students are using and provide a window into needed instruction (Collins & Glover, 2015; Goldberg & Serravallo, 2007; Sanden 2012; Trudel, 2007). When teachers confer with students during independent reading time, they often provide brief strategy or skill instruction based on their observations (Goldberg & Serravallo, 2007). Additionally, teachers use what they learn about their students during conferences to make decisions about mini-lessons to teach to the class during reading workshop (Calkins, 2015; Miller, 2012).

The preliminary research I conducted indicated that there are gaps in research with independent reading with emergent readers. The existing research suggests that students should receive support with independent reading, but little research exists on how students transfer that support to their own interactions with texts. My research was conducted to discover more about emergent readers' interactions with texts during independent reading.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The purpose of this study is to examine how emergent readers interact with texts during independent reading. Sub-questions that guided my inquiry included: What strategies, skills, or text features do students use as they read to make meaning? How do students interact with different types of texts? How do students transfer feedback from

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teacher-student conferences from one session to the next to read conventionally and unconventionally?

Story of a Question

During my first year of teaching, I sat and listened to a new supplemental curriculum for independent reading that my district would be implementing. The presenter quoted facts about how independent reading would help close the gap of equity between students from middle class families and our district's students, that mostly came from families with low socioeconomic statuses. The discussion centered around how independent reading would give students daily access to texts and time to read books of their choosing, which was significant because most students in the district had few books at home. I was excited about this program because it came with bins full of books that would be on the independent reading levels of my students, something my classroom library had lacked. I could hardly wait to get started.

Fast forward to a few weeks later and the books arrived in my classroom. I was expected to implement independent reading time as soon as possible in my classroom. I taught a few mini-lessons on the procedures for independent reading such as which basket of books to select from, how to fill out the reading log, and how to read quietly. Once independent reading was up and running, I was expected to circulate the room and take running records or introduce books' sentence patterns to students. The approach seemed to make sense with all the books being on a kindergarten level; however, I found that implementing independent reading was much more difficult than I had anticipated.

I was unable to build the students' stamina and, despite giving students choice, they seemed bored, frustrated, or a combination of both. I acutely recognized some of the

issues that created these student attitudes. One issue was that all the leveled books did not require the same set of skills or strategies. Each leveled box of books contained a variety of books including rhyming, alphabet, fiction, and nonfiction and the students did not seem to possess the skills or strategies needed to navigate the texts independently. Another issue was that the books were leveled differently than the books I used for guided reading. This created issues with matching students to appropriate independent leveled texts. Third, the students were overly concerned with filling out the reading log. This was a task that could be done in less than a minute by an older student, but seemed to take 10 minutes or longer as students obsessed with fitting the books' titles they read in the log's boxes, writing the titles correctly, and obtaining new book logs. Finally, I felt that the supplemental program was not congruent with the other adopted curriculum. As a result, I implemented daily independent reading only by compliance. I was frustrated by my students' lack of engagement with independent reading and I was sure that my students could sense my less than enthusiastic attitude towards it. With the conclusion of the funding for the program, independent reading was no longer required. I quickly disbanded independent reading in my classroom with the exception of center time.

Towards the end of the following year, an outside consultant and reading coach, came in and introduced reading workshop to kindergarten through third grade teachers. As soon as she mentioned that independent reading was part of the framework, I felt my resistance build. Despite her confidence that independent reading was feasible and beneficial at all grade levels, I remained skeptical. At the beginning of the next year, the reading coach returned to the school and began to provide coaching with how to establish reading workshop in my classroom. I quickly recognized how the reading workshop

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framework would teach my students how they could be readers. Unlike the previous independent reading initiative, I realized that independent reading did not need to be a separate component from my core reading instruction; the reading workshop framework utilized a gradual release of responsibility approach. I would model procedural lessons, reading behaviors, and reading strategies, and then provided guided practice with each lesson, so that students could practice what they were learning with their own texts.

As my comfort for reading workshop grew, I reinstated independent reading in my classroom. I had success with students' engagement and stamina during independent reading, but I found myself realizing that my work with independent reading was not done. While it ran smoothly in my classroom, I wanted to continue to ensure that independent reading was an effective practice. In order to do this, I needed to deeply understand how my students were interacting with texts during independent reading. I spent countless hours creating reading workshop mini-lessons and guided practice activities as well as gathering resources for my mini-lessons and independent reading, but I did not know how my students were using my instruction to interact with texts. According to Calkins (2015), independent reading is the heart of reading workshop. I aim to use the data I collect in this research to assist with formulating effective instruction and support to my students during independent reading.

Organization of Thesis

The following four chapters detail my teacher research. Chapter Two details my review of the literature on the variations of independent reading in the classroom, the effectiveness of independent reading, and how young students interact with different types of texts. Chapter Three provides community and school contextual information, the

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research design and methodology, and information about data collection and analysis. The data collected from the study is analyzed and conclusions are provided in Chapter Four. The final chapter, Chapter Five, consists of a summary of the study's conclusions, limitations, and implications for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Independent reading has been a widespread literacy practice in many classrooms for at least the last four decades. Traditional independent reading programs have many different names such as sustained silent reading (SSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and Sustained Quiet Independent Reading Time (SQUIRT) (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). Despite the name differences, traditional approaches to independent reading are designed procedurally similar and are often collectively referred to the most common name, SSR, in literature. Teachers using traditional independent reading approaches typically have students read while the teacher also reads as a model (Pilgreen, 2000). Students self-select texts based on their interests and are expected to read the same text throughout the independent reading period (Pilgreen, 2000). As time has gone on, modifications in approaches to independent reading have developed to include more teacher support to students as they read, specifications of what students read, and guidance for how students should interact with the texts they read. In order to understand the need for this study, the literature has been reviewed to summarize different approaches to independent reading, the effectiveness of independent reading, and how emergent readers interact with texts.

Independent Reading Programs

   Silent sustained reading. Hunt (1970) promoted the use of uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR) and believed that it should be the "primary activity of the reading period" (p. 281). The goal of this independent reading approach was for readers to be given opportunities to construct meaning from texts of their choosing. Students

were not limited to texts deemed on their independent level, but rather, students could read any text that they were interested in and motivated enough to read. SSR programs typically have the following characteristics: students self-select texts, the teacher reads while the students read, time is established for a set period, and no accountability measures are used (Pilgreen, 2000). The goals of these programs were to increase reading stamina, promote student enjoyment for reading and provide students opportunities to derive their own meaning from their selected texts (Hunt, 1970; Pilgreen, 2000). Criticisms of these programs are that teachers do not provide support to students with selecting appropriate level texts, students are not supported in their efforts, many students are not actually engaged in reading, and student progress is not measured (Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Pilgreen, 2000).

R5: read, relax, reflect, respond, and rap. Considering the shortcomings of SSR, Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2006) conducted research to figure out how to implement more effective independent reading in classrooms. The researchers created the program R^5: Read and Relax, Reflect and Respond, and Rap. This program had accountability, teacher support, and opportunities for students to share their learning with others. Before each reading period, the teacher takes the status of the class to determine what book each student is reading and the page number he or she is on. This ongoing record helps keep the students accountable for the progress they make. Once status of the class is taken, students engage in Read and Relax. During this time, students read in a self-selected area of the classroom while the teacher engages in conferences with students. These conferences involve checking with the students to have them summarize their current reading, assessing the students' metacognition of their usage of self-selected

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strategies, and goal setting strategies for future conferences. After Read and Relax, students engage in Reflect and Respond by writing a response to their reading using a modified reading log. Students have access to prompts to guide their responses. Finally, students participate in Rap by sharing their responses to their reading with a partner. Students then share out what their partners shared with them to the class. The teacher highlights responses that he or she deems valuable for extending discussion and that provide models for appropriate strategy use.

Independent reading. Ongoing research suggests that independent reading programs are more effective when teachers provide support and assistance to students as they read (Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Sanden, 2012; Trudel, 2007). In her teacher action research, Trudel (2007) compared her students' engagement and attitudes about reading during a period of SSR to those during a period of independent reading (IR). Trudel also noted how her involvement changed student reading. Her data revealed that students selected more appropriate leveled books during IR than SSR. She drew the conclusion that lessons before IR helped students select more appropriate books. Additionally, Trudel found that teacher-student conferences provided her with usable assessment data about the reading skills her students were using and what lessons she needed to teach individual students as opposed to just words her students did not know.

The daily five. While many different independent reading frameworks exist, some exist as a component of a larger literacy framework. Boushey and Moser (2006) created the literacy framework, the Daily Five, which addresses students' independent practice of literacy skills into five activities: word work, work on writing, read to self, read to someone, and listen to reading. The goal for students when they select read to self

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is to read an appropriate leveled text and increase their stamina to about 30 minutes (Boushey & Moser, 2006). While students engage in the Daily Five, teachers confer with students during different activities, including independent reading.

Reading workshop. Reading workshop is a reading framework that incorporates independent reading. This framework follows the gradual release of responsibility model (Miller, 2013; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Miller (2013) summarizes this model as "reducing the amount of scaffolding across time, and lessons, as students gain independent control of applying what they've been taught" (p. 18). The basic structure of independent reading involves connecting previous taught strategies or skills to current ones, a mini-lesson, active engagement, independent reading period, and share time (Calkins, 2015; Miller, 2013). Throughout the independent work period, the teacher confers with students (Calkins, 2015; Miller, 2013).

Independent Reading Approach for Kindergarteners

While there are many methods for implementing independent reading, some approaches are more suitable for kindergarten students than others. Kindergarten students need significant support with concepts about print, vocabulary, and comprehension and have a limited repertoire of literacy skills and strategies to draw upon. With SSR, the teacher is a model and does not provide support to students as they read (Pilgreen, 2000). With the R^5 model, students are expected to select strategy goals and then work towards those goals. This metacognitive process was developed for middle school students and would not be easily adaptable for kindergarten students because students would need to have understanding about the appropriateness of the selected strategies and young students use significant processing skills with decoding texts. Independent Reading can

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be used with a range of grade levels; however the majority of student support in independent reading comes from teacher-student conferences. The Daily Five provides more teacher support with brief focus lessons in addition to teacher-student conferences; however it does not lend to the gradual-release of responsibility model daily for every student. Out of the reviewed approaches for independent reading, the Reading Workshop framework provides the most support to students through the gradual-release of responsibility framework. The teacher provides daily, explicit strategy instruction to show students how to interact with texts and then guided practice time through active engagement prior to releasing students to independently read. The active engagement component combined with teacher-student conferences provide the supportive structure that is needed to foster the transfer of modeled strategies and skills to students' own independent reading.

Effectiveness of Independent Reading

   Student reading achievement. Manning, Lewis, and Lewis (2010) reviewed 29 studies on independent reading. Out of the studies reviewed, 12 studies did not produce quantitative, statistical data. Six of those studies revealed no difference in reading achievement between groups of students receiving SSR and groups not receiving SSR while some of the remaining studies noted positive correlations between independent reading and students' motivation to read and students' selection of a wide variety of texts. Out of the 29 studies, 17 studies showed statistical data for independent reading effectiveness. None of the studies revealed a negative effect for independent reading. Most studies comparing SSR with non-SSR classrooms revealed slightly higher performance differences between SSR groups of students with vocabulary and

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comprehension, with two studies citing significantly higher achievement with students using SSR in one or more literacy skills. Manning et al. (2010) recommend that future research is needed to determine how teacher support with book selection, pre-reading activities, and teacher conferences impact the effectiveness of independent reading.

The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) studied effective reading practices and found insufficient evidence linking sustained silent reading to increase reading proficiency. Since that report emerged, stark criticism of the report has evolved because only 14 studies with experimental designs were used to evaluate SSR, while many others were discounted due to their design methods. Reutzel et al. (2008) posit that inconclusive effectiveness of independent reading does not truly reflect the effectiveness of independent reading because the included studies only followed the SSR approach for independent reading. Reutzel et al. (2008) claim that the effectiveness of SSR has been questioned for reasons such as lack of teacher support in students' text selection, lack of teacher-student interaction during reading, and no feedback to students on their reading behaviors. Garan and DeVoogd (2008) point out that one issue with only including experimental designs in the NRP report is that classrooms are not controlled settings and variables cannot be eliminated. As a result many researchers have concluded that the strict criteria for included studies eliminated possible evidence that SSR is effective. Despite widespread criticism of the NRP report, Sanden (2012) asserts that, "Many teachers have been pressured to shift independent reading time to more 'scientifically based' activities. (p.223)"

While there have been numerous studies on the effectiveness of independent reading with older students, there have been very few studies on specifically independent

reading with kindergarten students. Out of the 10 SSR studies in the NRP's report, only one study analyzed involved primary students (NICHD, 2000; Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008). Very little literature has been written on independent reading approaches with kindergarten students. Studies that have been located focus on students' engagement with reading, interest in reading and how students engage with texts, but not on reading achievement. Kaisen (1987) interviewed kindergarten and first grade teachers and found that teachers were frustrated with implementing SSR in their classrooms. The teachers cited frustrations such as students' lack of attention span, students' own frustration with attempting to read books, and that students were not silent during the reading period. Drawing off these frustrations, Kaisen reviewed a revised SSR program, Booktime (Hong, 1981). The approach was intended for a small group of students and not practical for most classrooms. As a result, Kaisen implemented a modified independent reading approach that blended SSR and Booktime. With this approach, he gave each student several books to read as opposed to one book for the whole period like with SSR (Kaisen, 1987; Pilgreen, 2000). This approach also encouraged a book collection that would not frustrate young students and that would help them build confidence such as wordless books, familiar books from home, and pre-primers. As a result of implementing this approach, Kaisen concluded that his first grade students' engagement with reading increased drastically, students were engaging in appropriate reading behaviors during independent reading, and that his students' interest in reading extended beyond the allotted time period for independent reading.

Martinez and Teale (1988) conducted research to investigate how kindergarten students independently interacted with books in the classroom library. The researchers

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found that a majority of students' time was spent either browsing books or studying their illustrations. The study revealed that kindergarten students spend significant time not reading, with less than one third of students' time being spent on emergent or conventional reading. Despite these discouraging results on this form of independent reading, the researchers did determine that students were more engaged in emergent reading behaviors when interacting with familiar, predictable books.

Teacher support. Research suggests that effective independent reading approaches contain teacher support. Sanden (2012) investigated the independent practices of eight teachers whom were identified as highly effective literacy teachers. She noted that these teachers' independent reading practices deviated from traditional independent reading such as SSR in that they believed in the importance of adult support in various forms such as book selection, monitoring progress, and providing guidance with reading strategies. Trudel (2007) similarly found that independent reading was much more effective with teacher support versus SSR. During a six-week trial period of independent reading, Trudel found that teacher-student conferences provided her assessment data on how students were using reading skills, allowing her to offer brief strategy instruction to her students to assist them with successfully navigating their personally selected texts.

Teacher-student conferences are a critical piece of implementing an effective independent reading framework. Serravallo and Goldberg (2007) contend that teachers should confer with students as they read independently to assess where they are, hold students accountable for their reading efforts, and to determine how students are applying taught strategies. The data obtained from these teacher-conferences should be analyzed

and used to develop lessons for whole group and individualized instruction (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007).

Reading time in relation to reading achievement. While evidence of effectiveness of independent reading is not clear in primary grades, research suggests the amount of time reading correlates with reading achievement (Stanovich, 1986). Independent reading provides additional instructional time for students to interact with texts. According to Stanovich (1986) "readers of differing skill soon diverge in the amount of practice they receive at reading and writing activities" (p. 373). In other words, students who read more become more proficient readers and those who read less become remain less proficient, producing an achievement gap.

Kent, Wanzek, and Al Otaiba (2012) observed 109 kindergarten students at-risk for reading difficulties during their literacy block and found that on average they spent a mean of 71.53 seconds actively engaged in reading print. Out of that time, they only spent an average of 24.27 seconds reading connected text. Most of that short time was oral, choral reading with the remaining 10 percent, or a mere 7 seconds, being individual reading. Kent et al's (2012) findings show that at-risk students are given almost no time to apply skills and strategies that teachers model and they conclude, "It stands to reason that students who have opportunities to practice reading during the year will be better prepared to meet expected goals in reading" (p. 63).

After studying exemplary first and fourth grade teachers for nearly a decade, Allington (2002) concluded that more effective teachers provide their students ample time to engage in reading and writing. While some classrooms only dedicated 20 minutes or less to allowing students to read, effective teachers made it a point to incorporate

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significant time for students to engage in reading. Allington (2002) posited that exemplary teachers recognized that "extensive practice provides the opportunity for students to consolidate the skills and strategies teachers often work so hard to develop" (p. 742).

A Discussion About How Emergent Readers Interact with Texts

Independent reading has been studied primarily in the context of students who read conventionally; however, most kindergartners read unconventionally before they read conventionally. The way kindergarten students engage in reading differs from other grades because they are still learning concepts of print, have limited sight word knowledge, and have a narrow repertoire or little flexibility with word solving strategies. Despite not being able to read conventionally, kindergarten students unconventionally read texts drawing on their stores of oral language and prior knowledge to interact with illustrations or pictures in texts (Collins & Glover, 2015). As they learn sight words and word solving strategies, they begin to transition to conventional reading.

Interaction with familiar texts. Sulzby (1985) studied how emergent readers interact with familiar texts. In order for a text to be familiar, it had to have been read to the child at least three times. She theorized that adults could gain a window into children's learning by asking them to read familiar books to an adult. According to Sulzby's (1985) research, students read familiar books at various levels before reading conventionally. She categorized students' reading attempts as reading using the pictures with stories not formed, reading using pictures with stories formed, reading using print, and refusals to read. When students read using the pictures, their reading fell into two sub-categories: labeling or commenting and following the action. When students'

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attempts were classified as labeling or commenting, they simply made comments about the pictures or characters. Students' reading attempts that were classified as following the action, made comments about the action that was presently occurring in the pictures without de-contextualization. As students moved onto forming a story, they used pictures with different types of language including more oral storytelling language and written story telling language.

Sulzby (1985) noted that students used print at different levels. At the lowest level, children refused to read without the assistance of an adult citing reasons such as they could not read the words yet or needed help to read the words. In the next advancing level, children read by focusing on some aspects of the text and ignored others. Sulzby noted that this could at times appear to be a regression because children seemed to sacrifice meaning for attempts at decoding the print. As students' print awareness increased, children moved into reading using an overemphasis on preferred reading strategies that often left parts of the story making little sense. Finally, children read with more flexible use of reading strategies based on the text, which was classified as independent reading.

Sulzby's (1985) early research reveals that unconventional reading has different development levels. While her research did not establish a developmental pattern, it did provide evidence of distinct patterns for students' reading attempts and suggests a hierarchy of behaviors as students move towards independent reading. Students' progress can be loosely monitored based on the students' reading behaviors. Notably, when Sulzby conducted her research, students had not received formal reading instruction. Despite the lack of formal instruction, the students' emergent literacy improved over the course of the year.

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Collins and Glover (2015) extended upon Sulzby's (1985) research by examining how children make meaning with familiar texts. Collins and Glover (2015) posit that familiar texts build students' confidence and comfort with reading. For their research, they extended the type of text considered familiar to any text that the child has been read regardless of genre, who read the text to the child, and the number of times the text has been read to them. The researchers came up with four broad language levels that children fall into with any text. In the lowest level, Language Level 1, children commented or labeled pictures on each page without the pages connecting. In Level 2 interaction, children used the pictures and prior knowledge to read the text. Children reading at this level sometimes still named actions or made comments, but in more detail. Unlike in Level 1, children connected the pages within the text to one another. When children read at a Level 3, their accuracy with content continued to grow while they used the pictures to aid with reading the story. In this level, children began to use more story language while incorporating some of the story's syntax. Children who were reading at Level 4 read near the actual text. Additionally, they incorporated expression and intonation in their reading showing their high level of familiarity with the text.

Interaction with unfamiliar texts. Collins and Glover (2015) also studied how children read unfamiliar texts. According to their research, they found that children use different strategies and skills to read unfamiliar texts than familiar texts. The researchers posited that this type of text reading required "self-reliant inferring" (p. 47) because students had to use their own experiences to make sense of the story. Like with familiar texts, the researchers devised levels of language that students use when they interact with unfamiliar texts. Level 1 interaction was similar to Sulzby's (1985) Level 1 interaction of

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familiar texts; the students commented or labeled pictures and named action without elaboration. The pages did not connect. In Level 2 interaction, students' language became more elaborate as they noticed more details in the text and they began to make inferences. In Level 3 interaction, their language sounded more like story language as they used syntax that they were familiar with. At that level, students began making deeper inferences and inferring events that were not on the current page.

Collins and Glover (2015) acknowledge that reading unfamiliar texts presents a unique set of challenges for young readers. Some students simply do not know how to begin and are not confident in attempting the text without a little support and others page through texts like a picture walk. Yet, there are still students that dive right in and begin using the illustrations or pictures to tell the story.

Conventional reading. While a small number of students enter kindergarten reading conventionally, most students learn to conventionally read throughout the kindergarten year. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) outlines several goals for kindergarteners needed for conventional reading such as displaying knowledge of concepts of print, reading high-frequency words, and reading emergent-reader texts. Teachers often use guided reading to provide instruction with concepts about print, word-solving strategies, and comprehension strategies using emergent level text.

Due to lack of research on independent reading behaviors with kindergartners, conventional reading behaviors have been largely been researched in the context of guided reading. Fountas and Pinnell (2007) have done extensive research on guided reading and have developed a continuum of behaviors that students exhibit as they move across levels of proficiency. Fountas and Pinnell (2007) use an alphabetic leveling system

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to describe common behaviors and needs of students at increasing levels of proficiency and to match students to appropriate leveled texts.

According to Fountas and Pinnell's (2007) continuum, kindergarten readers are expected to progress from Level A in the beginning of the year to Level D by the conclusion of year. Level A readers begin to track print and use language patterns to read predictable texts. Students begin to search for words they know as they read. Level B readers begin to track print with more accuracy and read texts with two lines of print. At this level, instruction begins with teaching students to solve unknown words such as using the initial letter and picture. By the time students reach Level C, they are able to track print and are typically able to independently solve some new words as they read. By the end of the year, the students are expected to be reading at least on Level D. Students reading at this level often read longer texts and continue to increase their flexibility with solving new words. Suggestions for teachers at this level include to instruct students when to reread and look for chunks in words to solve them. At all levels, students work on comprehension strategies appropriate for the text they are reading.

Not silent reading. For young readers, independent reading is not necessarily silent reading. Young students often read orally or sub-vocalize as they read. In a study of first grade readers, Wright, Sherman, and Jones (2004) found that emergent readers displayed a range of reading behaviors such as oral reading, whisper reading, mumble reading, lip movement while reading, and silent reading. While the researchers did not identify a distinct progression from oral reading to silent reading, they did find that often students were flexible with reading behaviors as they encountered difficulty. Additionally, they found that most readers, but not all, moved to silent reading by the end of first grade.

With these findings, it is reasonable to assume that reading orally and sub-vocally in the first half of kindergarten is within normal developmental range.

Conclusions

Independent reading has taken many forms over the years. Current research is showing that teacher-support is needed for effective independent reading approaches (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Trudel, 2007). Two studies of independent reading have been located with kindergarten students, but in both studies the students were not provided teacher support with selecting appropriate texts or with reading the texts (Kaisen, 1987; Martinez & Teale, 1988). Other research has been conducted with how kindergarten students interact with texts, but not within an independent reading framework (Boushey & Moser, 2006; Collins & Glover, 2015). Therefore, research is needed to determine how kindergarten students interact with texts within an independent reading framework with teacher guidance and support.

Current research on independent reading with older students suggests that students should be reading just-right texts, or texts on their independent level; however, kindergarten students are just learning to read conventionally (Boushey & Mosey, 2006; Collins & Glover, 2015). This means that books that are considered on students' independent level is drastically limited. Collins and Glover (2015) have argued that unconventional reading is valuable for young readers and provides them opportunities to make inferences as they use illustrations to tell stories. Research has not been conducted with kindergarten students reading a variety of texts including leveled texts and picture books with various levels of familiarity. Additionally, research is needed to determine how teacher support during independent reading can help kindergarten students develop

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skills and strategies needed to read conventionally. The aim of this study is to investigate how kindergarten students interact with a variety of texts and how teachers can support their interactions.

Chapter 3

Context of the Study

Community

The study took place in a kindergarten classroom in a New Jersey school. The district is a K-12 school with six kindergarten through eighth grade schools, one high school, and two preschools. Approximately 75 percent of the kindergarten students attend the district's preschool. Most students in the district come from low socio-economic status families and all students receive free breakfast and lunch. According to the United States Census Bureau, population estimates for the city of Bridgeton was 24,505 people as of July 1, 2017. The racial demographics were estimated to be 51.3 percent Hispanic, 30.2 percent Black, 16.6 percent White, 2.8 percent Two or More races, 1.1 percent American Indian or Native American, and 0.4 percent Asian. Approximately 5 percent of the population of people 25 and older possessed a bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income was $34,135 with 32.3 percent of the population living below the poverty line.

School

Cherry Street School had approximately 600 students as of November 2018. The majority of the student population identified as Hispanic, 51 percent, or Black, 45 percent. The remaining 4 percent of students identified as White, multiple races or ethnicities, or American Indian or Alaskan Native. The student-teacher ratio was 12:1 for the 2016-2017 school year and was similar for the 2017-2018 school year. On the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the school-wide student results for students that met or exceeded expectations for language arts were: 12.9 percent

of third grade students, 14.1 percent of fourth grade students, 14.8 percent of fifth grade students, 13.1 percent of sixth grade students, 23.1 percent of seventh grade students, and 33.4 of eighth grade students. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark System was administered to all grade levels at the end of the 2017-2018 school year to determine students' independent and instructional reading levels. Out of 64 kindergarten students, 72 percent of students met or exceeded expectations, 5 percent of students were approaching expectations, and 23 percent of students were below expectations.

Classroom

There were 12 students in the class at the time that the research commenced and 10 students received parental consent to participate in the study. Out of the participating students, there were five girls and five boys. Eight students spoke English at home and two students spoke primarily Spanish at home. The students who spoke Spanish did not qualify for ESL support in school due to their high levels of English proficiency on the WIDA Test. Nine of the students attended the district's full-day preschool program and one of the students attended a daycare program prior to kindergarten. Two of the students received supplemental support in an afterschool reading club twice a week for students who are at-risk for reading below grade-level expectations at the end of the year.

Research Design

This study used the qualitative teacher research paradigm. Teacher research is an inquiry stemming from issues or wonderings from observations in the classroom. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), "The unique feature of the questions that prompt practitioners' inquiry is that they emanate from neither theory not practice alone but from critical reflection on the intersections of the two" (p.42). Therefore, once teacher

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researchers develop a question they gain knowledge about the topic of their inquiries by reading published research on it. Researchers use the obtained knowledge to develop a study to answer their questions and to provide local knowledge and extend public knowledge on it (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Unlike traditional qualitative data research methods, knowledge is constructed using systematic observations and analyzing them (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Teacher research is not conducted in a controlled environment. This study was conducted within the teacher researcher's own classroom and the teacher assumed dual roles as a teacher and researcher to investigate how emergent readers interacted with texts during independent reading. The qualitative data collection methods used included observing students engaged with texts, taking notes about behaviors during student conferences, maintaining a teacher research journal, and collecting information about the types of texts students selected. The knowledge generated from students' observations continually influenced the reading strategies taught throughout the study. Additionally, as knowledge was generated, the teacher adjusted individual student support throughout independent reading, "blurring the lines between inquiry and practice" that is often characteristic of teacher research. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Procedure of study. In the beginning of the school year I introduced the Reader's Workshop framework. I taught a series of procedural lessons including how to select a text by interest, how to read quietly without interrupting others, and how to increase stamina. I also conducted mini-lessons on how to read a book three different ways: using the illustrations, reading words they know, and retelling familiar stories. The

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students engaged in guided practice with all lessons before applying them to independent reading. Once students had ample practice, students were given book boxes in October.

Students had a designated spot in the classroom to read with a reading buddy. Reading buddies were changed frequently. During the study, most students had the same reading buddy. The only exceptions were when two new students entered the classroom and adjustments needed to be made. Students were permitted to trade and borrow books from their book buddies. At the end of independent reading, students shared their books with their books buddies

Students were engaging in independent reading for 15 minutes when the study commenced. The students each had a book box with 7 to 9 books from the classroom library and a poetry journal with poems they have read at least three times throughout a week as part of shared reading. In addition to these texts, the students had black-and-white printed emergent readers that they used during the active engagement portions of Reader's Workshop, giving them a total of 10 to 12 books at any given time. Students selected books every 5 to 7 days from the classroom library. As they selected books, I noted which books the students selected. The students had to select three to four texts on their independent level. If students were bordering two different levels, they selected books from both levels. The students then selected three books based on interest from any bin. I assisted the students with their book selections by asking students their interests, making recommendations, and reading titles to students. As students selected texts, I noted on a Book Selection Chart the types of texts selected.

Data collection. To get a baseline of the students' conventional reading skills, I administered the Concepts About Print task to all participating students (Clay, 2008, p. 1). This gave me information for how to proceed with teacher-student conferences and insight on behaviors I could expect to notice as I was observing students. At the conclusion of the study, I administered the Concepts About Print task again.

As students selected texts for independent reading, I noted on the "Book Selection Chart" the types of texts students selected. Each book selected was coded as: familiar text (F), unfamiliar (UF), or leveled reader (LR). Since leveled readers in the library were typically not read alouds or used in guided reading, they were likely to be all unfamiliar and were coded as their own category. The chart was used to identify the types of texts students were choosing to select.

As students read, I observed students and their behaviors. Since most students vocalize and sub-vocalize, I was able to observe the language students were using, the strategies they were applying, and the skills they possessed. I video recorded some of these observations, so that I could analyze them further at a later time. I also jotted notes about my observations in a teacher research journal. I used my teacher journal to reflect on student observations.

To gain a deeper understanding of the skills and strategies students were applying as they read, I conferred with two to three students daily. The conferences were audio taped and lasted from 5 to 10 minutes. The conferences consisted of a compliment for a skill or strategy I noticed that the students were using and a brief modeling or strategy instruction based on students' behavior that I noticed.

Data analysis. The Book Selection Chart was analyzed for trends in the types of texts students selected. The students' text selections were coded as familiar, unfamiliar, and leveled texts. Trends were determined and compared with the texts students selected during my conferences with them and observations of them. The type of text impacted how the student interacted with it. Knowing whether a text was familiar and unfamiliar to the student also impacted how I approached conferences with students.

At the conclusion of the study, I compared students' pre-assessments and post-assessments for the Concepts About Print task to identify any trends in gains that students experienced from the beginning of the study to its conclusion. I analyzed the data to determine how students evolved as readers and how this correlated with their interactions with texts throughout the course of the study.

My observations, student conferences, and notes in my teacher research journal were coded for trends I identified. This data was analyzed for the behaviors students exhibited as they read. These were triangulated sources of data that I used to determine any patterns that existed with how students interacted with texts. Chapter Four details the patterns that I found for how students interact with texts.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Data was collected for five weeks to investigate my research question, "How do emergent readers interact with texts during independent reading?" I administered the Concepts About Print observation task (Clay, 2008, p. 1) at the onset of the study as a pre-assessment to gather information about the students' conventional print awareness. As students selected books for independent reading, I noted the types of texts they selected to determine student preferences. During independent reading time, I observed students as they read and video recorded some of my observations. I also conferred with students in one-to-one, audio-recorded conferences to provide support to them based on the reading behaviors I had observed. I reflected upon my observations and one-to-one conferences in my teacher research journal. My observations, audio taped one-to-one student conferences, and my teacher research journal provided triangulated data. The data suggests that students interact with texts differently based on their type: familiar, unfamiliar, or leveled texts. For each type of text, three themes in the data emerged with how students interact with them: conventionality and prosody of oral language, comprehension strategies and skills, and concepts about print. A fourth theme also emerged, teacher support, which suggests how students needed support to navigate the types of texts. This chapter discusses the finding for each of the themes for each type of text: familiar, unfamiliar, and leveled text.

Book Selection

Throughout the study the students selected books between three and four times from the classroom library. I compared the types of self-selected texts they selected to the

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texts I observed them reading during observations from afar and those within conference settings to identify trends. The main trend that I found was that nine students self-selected only one or no leveled texts; Maurcel selected three. Despite these low numbers, seven out of the ten students read leveled texts fifty percent or more of the time. Destiny was the only student who did not read a leveled text. This trend suggests that leveled texts appealed to the students.

The other major trend that I found was that students selected unfamiliar texts the most. Unfamiliar books were the most popular choice of text and the type of text that students struggled with the most in my observations.

Concepts About Print Task

I administered the Concepts About Print observation task (Appendix A; Clay, 2005) on the first two days of the study to determine what crucial concepts about print skills my students possessed and what skills they needed to be able to navigate beginner leveled texts. The test was out of 24 points, but students do not typically score all 24 points until the end of first grade or after (Clay, 2013). After scoring the pre-assessment, I found that most students in the study possessed all the developmentally appropriate concepts about print skills needed to handle at least the lowest level of leveled texts in my classroom library. These key understandings included that print contains the message and identification of: the front cover of a book, where to start reading, where to go once they started reading, and the bottom of a picture. They also were able to locate specific letters within the print. All students, except Dominique, were able to use word-by-word matching. The students did not receive explicit instruction or enough exposure with many of the tested items including the meaning of a variety of punctuation marks, identification

of incorrect letter order, and identification of word order errors, so I was not concerned that they missed those concepts. These were not skills my students needed at this time to understand the level of texts that they would be reading independently.

The pre-assessment results showed that my students had developed kindergarten appropriate understandings about concepts about print and thus, I did not need to use the assessment to guide my one-to-one instruction as I initially thought I would. I did use the assessment task results to select good fit independent texts for Dominique considering she still needed to gain one-to-one correspondence. Even though the pre-assessment results showed that students were already reading within grade appropriate limits, I administered the post assessment to determine if any gains had been made. Surprisingly, all students made gains, except one (Table 1). One item that they all got correct that seven of them had missed on the pre-assessment was the meaning of a question mark. Other gains were seen in understanding of letter concepts, concept of a word, and identifying reversible words.

Table 1

Concepts About Print Pre-Assessment and Post Assessment Scores

Student	Pre-Assessment Score Out of 24	Post Assessment Score Out of 24
Tatiana	12	17
Maurcel	17	18
Rufino	11	16
Dominique	9	14

Table 1 (Continued)

Student	Pre-Assessment Score Out of 24	Post Assessment Score Out of 24
Ashton	12	16
Mia	10	17
Lizbeth	13	18
Destiny	14	17
Jesse	16	18
Jerome	18	17

Familiar Texts

Language. Students read texts by relying on their memories of the stories they selected. Many of the students that selected familiar texts selected ones that had repeated lines in them. One popular text choice was Bill Martin Jr's (1967) text *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* The text uses the same repeated phrases throughout it, only changing the name of the animal and its color within the pattern. I observed Ashton, Rufino, and Destiny read the text using almost the exact wording to the actual text. The only variations they made from the actual text were at the end of the story when the text shifts away from repeated pattern. Jesse read *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes,* which also has repeated phrases, but more of them than in *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* He appealed for help at first, but once I helped him through the repeated phrases one time, he read the rest of the text with near exact wording.

Ashton and Maurcel selected texts with repeated phrases, but the texts had a significant portion of additional text that required the students to use their memories of the texts to read them. Both students did not use near exact text wording for the majority

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of the texts, but their readings of the repeated phrases were near exact. For example, when reading *The Three Little Pigs,* Maurcel repeated the wolf's line almost exactly, "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and blow your house down!" and the little pigs' response to the wolf's demand exactly, "Not by the hair on my chinny, chin, chin!" (Leonard, 1990). Ashton read *Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes.* He did not remember a majority of the text, but recalled the song that Pete sang about what he was doing in different parts of the school with the pattern, "I am (action verb) in my school shoes" (Litwin, 1999). He read the entire text using the pattern, changing the verb to support Pete's actions in the pictures.

Dominique and Mia both selected books from the *No David!* series. These books did not have repeated phrases, but the texts possessed highly predictable plots with the main character, David, being told by adults to stop certain behaviors or to engage in appropriate ones that were depicted in the pictures. Both students used similar syntax to that of the text, providing brief commands to David using the perspective of an adult. Dominique's reading was near exact to the text's wording, while Mia's reading provided more detailed commands to David than those in the actual text (Table 2).

Table 2

Excerpts of Students' Reading of Familiar Texts

Student	Student's Reading	Actual Text
Mia	"David, get your clothes on. Your butt is out./ David, stop banging on the pan./David, eat your food. Stop playing with it./David, you are going to choke."	"Come back here, David!/ David! Be quiet!/ Don't play with your food!/That's enough, David!" (Shannon, 1998, pp. 8-15)
Dominique	"David, raise your hand, David./David, keep your hands to yourself, David./ David, pay attention, David./ David, wait your turn, David./ I don't care who started it, David./Recess is over, David./David, shhhhh!"	"David, raise your hand!/ Keep your hands to yourself!/ PAY ATTENTION!/ Wait your turn, David!/ I don't care who started it!/ David! Recess is over!/ Shhhhh!" (Shannon, 1999, pp. 8-21)

Most students read familiar texts mimicking the prosody that they had heard an adult use read the text. For example, Ashton, Rufino, and Destiny used phrasing and rhythm that matched mine when I read *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You Hear?* to the class. Jesse read *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* and Ashton read *Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes* using the same, or possibly better, tone and pitch as I had used, when they sang Pete's songs throughout the books. Jesse also read using the appropriate stress to match punctuation for the repeated lines, "What color did it turn his shoes?" and "Oh No!" (Litwin, 2008).

Comprehension. One of the primary ways that students constructed meaning with familiar texts was by using the pictures. They seemed to use the pictures to guide them through the books. For example, Jesse read *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes*

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cautiousl*y* at first, studying each picture as he read what the main character, Pete, stepped in and what color it turned his shoes (Litwin, 2008). He also used the pictures to guide him when to time the repeated lines that he had memorized. Similarly, Dominique read *David Goes to School* looking at the pictures as she read and relied on her memory of the syntax and what lines said to read it very closely to the actual text.

Two students needed to study the pictures to remember how the stories for their books went. Ashton had difficulty getting started to read *Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes*. After he turned the first few pages, I reminded him that he should read the text using the pictures. He still struggled to get started, so I asked him to tell me where Pete was at and what he was doing. This questioning seemed to help Ashton recall the repetitive song that Pete sang throughout the book that told what he was doing in his school shoes. On a page that showed Pete at the library, he read the words the same as the text, "I am reading in my school shoes. I am reading in my school shoes. I am reading in my school shoes" (Litwin, 1999, pg. 10). After this page, Ashton independently progressed through the text confidently singing what Pete was doing in the illustrations in his school shoes. Ashton added several additional songs that Pete sung to his reading of the text based on what he saw in the illustrations. For instance, in the actual text Pete only sang one song on the playground, but Ashton saw Pete the Cat sliding on the slide on two pages and swinging on a swing on another, so he read each page singing a song:

I am sliding in my school shoes, I am sliding in my school shoes, I am sliding in
my school shoes. I am sliding in my school shoes, I am sliding in my school shoes,
I am sliding in my school shoes. I am swinging in my school shoes, I am swinging

in my school shoes, I am swinging in my school shoes. (personal communication, November 19, 2018)

Mia also was also hesitant to begin reading *No David!* When she did begin reading, she just said the character's name on two pages and named one of his actions, "David./ David. /David gonna knock it" (personal communication, December 4, 2018). She paused between each line studying the pictures. She then began to use the illustrations to identify what the character was doing wrong and read the text by telling the character what to do that would make sense based on the illustrations. She read, "David go take a bath. David, clean this mess up." Her reading did not match the printed text, but, like the actual text, it did use the perspective of an adult telling David what to do or not do in brief statements (Shannon, 1998).

In addition to using the illustrations to recall events in the text and read the texts, students made inferences using the pictures. As students read, I stopped them to ask questions about the events occurring. Mia made several inferences throughout her reading of *No David!* On a page that shows David tracked mud through the house, Mia inferred that he was in the garden because he had plants attached to him (personal communication, December 4, 2018; Shannon, 1998). In another part of the story where David was jumping on the bed with a cape and a mask, Mia inferred that he was pretending to be a superhero using the character's attire as her evidence. Jesse also made inferences as he read *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes.* As he read, he commented on what color Pete's shoes were going to turn based on what Pete stepped in. Dominique made inferences about David's feeling as she read *David Goes to School* based on David's facial expressions.

As some students read familiar texts, they tried to read as accurately as possible to the actual text and self-correct when their reading was not supported by the illustrations. When reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* Destiny said the wrong animal on two different pages, but as soon as she began turning the pages, she recognized her errors and went back to self-correct her reading. Other students recognized the need to self-correct when I questioned how they read part of their text. At the end of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* Rufino said "Teacher, teacher, what do you see?" (Martin, 1967, p. 19) on two consecutive pages. I questioned his reading and he immediately self-corrected his error by going back to reread the second page. In Maurcel's reading of *The Three Little Pigs,* he read, "He did not blow the house down of bricks. He went down the chimney" (personal communication, November 29, 2018). He was flipping to the last page and moving to close the text when I asked him to go back and look at the picture with the pigs stoking the fire. I questioned what the pigs were doing and he immediately revised his ending to, "He's getting burned up. And the little piggies were safe."

Concepts about print. All the familiar, picture books that students read were not on their independent reading levels. Many of the texts such as: *No David!, David Goes to School, Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?,* and *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* had only a few lines of print per page and some had oversized print. When students read these texts during a conference or while I observed them, I looked for evidence of students tracking print, using initial sounds to identify important words, and noticing familiar words on pages. Only one student, Jesse, attempted to track print as he read a familiar book. He conventionally read some of the lines. Maurcel was the only student

that pointed out familiar letters as read, but he read an alphabet text, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. Students did not read words conventionally when they were in their texts, even if there were mostly or all words they knew on a page. For example, on several pages there were lines or words that Mia knew in *No David!* She read the text entirely by the pictures, but when I pointed out that she knew lines or words, she read them conventionally. For instance, at the end of the story, there was the line, "I love you " (Shannon, 1998, p. 30) which is a line she could read independently. She read it conventionally until I pointed it out.

Conversely, when students read familiar, teacher-produced texts, they all attempted to read the texts conventionally. All the students tracked print and even attempted to self-correct when their one-to-one matching was not correct. When students did not know a word or words in these texts, they substituted words that would make sense, but were aware of their errors. For instance, when reading about community helpers, Dominique read the word *farmer* as *worker*. As soon as she read the line, she stopped and looked at me to question her guess. Similarly, when Rufino read a holiday book he substituted several words, such as *toys* for *gifts* and *bag* for *sack*. He immediately knew the words were not correct based on their initial letters and questioned his guesses. These students were aware that something was not correct based on the initial sound of the words, showing an awareness of the initial sound print concept.

Unfamiliar Texts

Language. Students varied the type of language they used as they read unfamiliar texts. My findings were similar to the findings of Sulzby (1985) with familiar books and Collins and Glover (2015).with unfamiliar books. Students' language that I observed

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included: naming objects or describing actions of characters or objects, using the illustrations to tell a connected story, and unwillingness to attempt the text without teacher support. Most students read one or more books by naming objects or describing actions of characters or objects. Jesse, Tatiana, Maurcel, and Destiny all read at least one book by connecting the pages to form a story. Four of the students selected at least one book where they had difficulty getting started to read it.

The students that read books by naming objects or describing actions of characters or objects did so in varying levels. Dominique simply named what she saw on pages of *Aladdin.* She noted something that she saw on each page, " I could see him, sitting on a rock./ Seeing the castle./ Petting the tiger./ Jasmine./ Climbing." I asked her questions in attempt to get her to elaborate her responses, but she continued to read naming the characters or what they were doing. Like Dominique, Mia read *Aladdin* naming objects or characters' actions saying, "Fell all the way down./ They fly together. Fly, fly, fly./ But this big circle./ And there was a lot of water there./The baby monkey was so cold." Maurcel and Ashton also named objects or characters' or objects' actions by using more descriptive language for each picture than Mia and Dominique. Their readings suggest that they tried to incorporate more details from the illustrations (Table 3).

Table 3

Excerpts of Students' Readings of Unfamiliar Texts

Student	Book	Excerpt of Student's Reading
Ashton	*I'm Fast*	"It's driving right next to him. And they are taking them where they belong…where those trucks made out of gas belong. /They are out of gas./ Watching out for those animals. You have to look out. The animals ran away./ Ohhh! A traffic. They are driving different ways. He is on top. He is on bottom. Every car is following her and him."
Maurcel	*The Candy Witch*	"The witch was hiding behind the table. The witch had no candy. She only had a candy corn. /Everyone out of houses with bags. The boy dressed up as a king. /The people was yelling at each other. These kids are crying."

Tatiana, Maurcel, and Destiny read unfamiliar books by naming objects, but they also attempted to connect some of the pages together to form a story. Tatiana's reading of *The Princess and the Pea* (Table 4) is not quite clear, but with close analysis, I could infer that she was telling a story about a princess who was having trouble sleeping because something was wrong with the bed. Tatiana's reading also included dialogue that demonstrated that she was familiar that some stories have dialogue. Maurcel read *The Candy Witch* the first time naming objects and characters' actions. On his second reading (Table 4), he linked some of the pages to tell a more connected story of the story's problem. Destiny had selected *Wacky Wednesday* to read. She started off reading quietly naming objects and appeared to be attempting to sound out words. After I conferred with

her, she created a story that suggested she was familiar with a first person narrator and read the story as if she was the character going from room to room of the house and then outside, noticing different wacky things.

Table 4

Excerpts of Students' Reading of Unfamiliar Texts to Form a Story

Student	Book	Excerpt of Student's Reading
Tatiana	*Princess and the Pea*	"Her, like a queen, her decided to call the princess. Her took her crown. Her said, "Majesty was a queen for the palace." They gave her things what her needed to her make her bed after one her stirred up the cake for the wedding for her sister. He was gone for the pillows but he made all the things for his sister. He made them for her. Her made her pillow like that. The lady could not go to sleep because something was in her bed. Her couldn't sleep after one when nobody fixes the bed. Something was wrong or right. But there's always something wrong with the bed. There! Right now. Her thought her did it. They keep it safe and her majesty cape, it's like a cape, but it's a pillow."
Maurcel	*The Candy Witch*	"While the father cooks food for the witches. And the grandpop- grandma is sweeping the floor. Everyone was dressed up for Halloween- trick or treating. The witch dressed up like a queen. He dressed up as a /d/-/d/-demon. He dressed up as a girl and he dressed up as a farmer. They were arguing about they lost their candy. These kids were crying because they lost their candy too. Once the father and the grandpa, and the grandma came and took the witch home. He's hiding behind the sign. What might he have to do? He uses the candy to decorate. They are on top of the building watching the face on kids, watching the smile on kids' faces."

Table 4 (Continued)

Student	Book	Excerpt of Student's Reading
Destiny	*Wacky Wednesday*	"I take a shower. I see somethin' on the toilet. It is a tree. I see it. And then I see another shoe on my wall. A purple shoe and a blue shoe. I look in the kitchen. I see the mouse and the cat running around. I went outside looking and there's people and a dog and a car. Then I went to a walk seeing outside and there's a shoe right here. And the ground rolled. And the people walking in the car. And then I see one shoe and the lady walking with her hands up. And there's two shoes..."

As I observed students and conferred with them, I did find that many students seemed unable to start reading an unfamiliar book. Four students that were observed reading an unfamiliar book seemed uncertain how to get started. Jesse, Mia, and Ashton were all observed browsing pictures in a book, making occasional inaudible lip movements, and then abandoning their books by placing them back in their book boxes without reaching the end of them. As I observed Ashton, he expressed to himself, "Can't really read it." and put the book back. I shared my observations with Mia about her book abandonments after just looking through a couple of pages of books and I asked her, "Is there an issue that you are having?" She replied, " I can't read them. I just looked at the pages." Upon further questioning, Mia revealed that her understanding of reading an unfamiliar book was reading the title of it and then looking at the pages; however, she did not seem to realize that she was supposed to use the pictures on the pages to tell a story.

Unlike Mia and Ashton, Jesse persevered longer through an unknown book. He studied each page and made partially audible words every so often. He got close to the end of the book before abandoning it. When Dominique selected an unfamiliar book, she mentioned she did not know it. I asked her, "How are you going to read it?" After some wait time, she had no response. I reminded her of strategies she had already used for other types of texts to help jog her memory. She finally arrived at the response "the page;" however, she could not explain what she meant by that. When I told her to read using the pictures she turned pages and stared at them in silence. I modeled how to read using the pictures and then she began to describe actions of characters and name them.

Comprehension. Some students used the illustrations to infer what was occurring in the texts they read. When Tatiana read *Princess and the Pea,* she inferred that the princess was having trouble sleeping, "The lady could not go to sleep because something was in her bed. Her couldn't sleep after one when nobody fixes the bed. Something wrong or right. But there's always something wrong with the bed." Destiny inferred that the text, *Wacky Wednesday,* was about a shoe was in unusual places. She started off reading where the shoe was on each page. Jesse inferred what David was doing wrong in the illustrations and how the character felt as he read the text. He cited evidence from the illustrations to support his inferences:

Teacher: How do you think he feels?

Jesse: He feels angry.

Teacher: How can you tell he feels angry?

Jesse: He don't like his food.

Teacher: How can you tell he don't like his food?

Jesse: 'Cause he's not eating it. (personal communication, December, 4, 2018)

Some of the students' inferences were in the form of predictions. When reading *Owen,* Terrence predicted, "This little mouse will take his blanket with him everywhere," based on his observation that the mouse was carrying the blanket in several of the beginning illustrations. While reading *I Will Try*, Karen predicted that the gymnast in the story was going to fall off the balance beam. When I asked her why she thought that, she replied, "I looked at the pictures" (personal communication, December 19, 2018).

Along with the pictures, the title of the story seemed to be a powerful text feature that helped students understand the main ideas of their books and read them. Mia did not know how to read the book *I Love School*. Once I told her the title, discussed what it meant, and asked her a few questions about the illustrations, she seemed to understand that the story was about what kids love to do at school. She then went on to read the book telling about the different things the children in the book loved to do at school. When I sat down to confer with Jerome I asked him to tell me what his book, *The Tooth Book*, was about. He did not know, so I told him the title. When I told it to him he commented on the front cover's illustration, "The book has teeth. These are the animals that have teeth" (personal communication, November 19, 2018). After that, he began to read the book attending to all the people and animals with teeth.

Concepts about print. Unlike with familiar picture books, several students tried to decode some words as they read. Maurcel tried to decode seemingly random words throughout his reading of unfamiliar texts. For example, he was reading using the pictures in *The Candy Witch* and then tried to sound out the word *town*. Jerome, Jesse, and Lizbeth attempted to read at least one of their texts conventionally despite the fact

that they were well above their independent reading levels. Even when I prompted them to use the pictures only, they switched back and forth between reading unconventionally using the pictures and conventionally using the words. Interestingly, the books that these students attempted to read conventionally did only contain a few lines of text per page and short sentences with sight words and decodable words.

Leveled Texts

Language. The students all attempted to read leveled readers conventionally. Due to the students' limited sight word knowledge, many students struggled to read some of their leveled texts completely without my assistance to provide the unknown words. As a result, students struggled to read some of their leveled texts fluently because they frequently needed to stop to solve unknown words. Despite having difficulty with some of their texts, eight out of the ten students were observed reading one or more of their leveled texts with a high level of accuracy and an appropriate rate. The texts that they read fluently typically had a pattern and one line per page.

One trend I noticed when students read leveled readers was that they struggled with the vocabulary in nonfiction texts. The students typically understood that the word or words they did not know were depicted in the illustrations and they were able to produce the initial sounds of the unknown words but did not know the name of the object in the illustrations. For example, Rufino read a text about hammerhead sharks. On one page, he got stuck on the word *gills*. He pointed to the gills of the shark in the picture and made the initial sound with prompting for the word. I told him the word and asked him if he knew what sharks used them for. He did not. Afterwards, he encountered the word *fins*.

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Again using the photographs, he knew that the word was depicted in the picture and knew the initial sound, but was unable to produce the word.

Ashton read a nonfiction, leveled text about birds. The book had the same pattern on each page with just the name of a different bird. He understood that the book was about birds and could produce the initial sound for each bird's name when asked, but he did not know the birds' names. Tatiana read nonfiction leveled books about sea animals. She did not know the terms *sea cow*, *sea lion*, or *eel*.

Comprehension. Fiction texts that the students read all had one or two lines of text per page with simple plots. Nonfiction texts that students read were all about different types of animals and simply stated different types of animals on each page. Jerome, Tatiana, Ashton, Lizbeth, and Jesse all read at least one text with 95% accuracy or above. At the end of reading those texts, they were able to recall key details in the text and tell what the text was mostly about. When Jerome read *What is Quiet*? he recalled all the animals that were in the text and explained, "It's about quiet animals" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Similarly, Lizbeth answered questions as she read about what the animals were eating in her book, *The Picnic*, and was able to explain what happened at the end, "They ate a lot and now are resting" (personal communication, December 5, 2018). Most of the students were able to recall key details and tell the main idea of texts that they could not read with 95% accuracy or above as long as they had support to read the text. Students tended to have issues with not knowing key sight words in text patterns or vocabulary words in the text.

Concepts about print. All students attempted to point to the words as they read leveled texts. Almost all the students used accurate one-to-one correspondence and attempted to self-correct when their voices and pointing was not in sync. Tatiana read a teacher-produced text about Halloween. When she got to *candy corn*, she said *candy,* but when she realized there was an extra word, she went back to self-correct. Jerome read *What is Quiet?* with accurate one-to-one matching until he got to the word *giraffe*, which he read in two syllables *gir-affe* and his pointing did not match up. He then went back to the beginning of the sentence to reread so that his pointing was accurate.

One challenge for students was not being able to read sight words within the patterns of their texts that were considered on their independent level. These texts were Levels A and Levels B, the lowest two levels of texts with complete sentences. Eight out of ten students encountered one or more sight words in text patterns that they did not know in a leveled text (Table 5). Not knowing the words in leveled texts seemed to frustrate students more than in unfamiliar texts. Lizbeth repeatedly got stuck on the word *help* in *The Little Red Hen* and made several comments that expressed her frustration with the text. As I was observing Lizbeth with the text from a far, she looked at a few pages and was about to abandon the text. When I approached her and asked her to read it to me, she replied, "I don't know this book yet." With some assistance, she began the text. I helped her with the word *help,* but when she did not know the word when she saw it again she said, "Ms. Schaper I did not learn this book" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). She appeared very concerned with not knowing the word. I also observed Tatiana abandon two books because she could not read the patterns in them. She looked at four pages in *Sea Animals,* turned to me, and said, "It is too hard" (personal

communication, November 13, 2018). When I conferred with her about another text that she had abandoned, *Sea Life,* and asked, "Do you know any words on there?" she hesitantly replied, "No…" (personal communication, November 28, 2018). These observations and communications suggest that the students were unwilling to read leveled texts when they did not know the text patterns.

Table 5

Sight Words That Students Did Not Know in Leveled Texts

Student	Missed Sight Words	Text Patterns	Texts (Appendix C)
Tatiana	the look is for	"Look at the sea (animal name)." "(Letter) is for (animal's name)."	*Sea Animals* *Sea Life*
Maurcel	this	"This is a (color word) flower."	*Flowers*
Rufino	look one	"Look at the (animal's name)." "I see one (animal's name)."	*At the Waterpark* *Forest Animals*
Dominique	he from	"He ran from the (character)."	*The Gingerbread Man*
Ashton	that	"See that spider's (body part)."	*Spiders*
Destiny	she	"She checks my (body part)."	*A Visit to the Doctor*

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Table 5 (Continued)

Lizbeth	help	"The (animal's name) did not help."	*The Little Red Hen*
Mia	sea	"Look at the sea (animal's name)."	*Sea Animals*

One-to-One Conferences

The final major pattern that I noticed as I observed and conferred with students was that they needed assistance with all types of texts. Before I provided support in each conference, I observed the student read a bit of his or her selected text. Trends that I identified for the type of support that students needed were assistance with: identifying patterns and sight words in leveled texts, using beginning letter sounds and pictures to solve unknown words in leveled texts, and reading using the pictures.

Patterns and sight words. Most of the leveled texts had patterns or repeated text. The knowledge of just one sight word impacted how students were able to read a book. My conferences with Rufino and Tatiana were mostly with leveled texts. When I conferred with the students, I provided the unknown sight words and helped the students learn their leveled books' patterns. At the beginning of the study, I observed Tatiana and Rufino abandon books that were too hard. Early in the study, Tatiana had abandoned both *Sea Animals* and *Sea Life* and she had voiced that they were too hard. On my last conference with Tatiana, she self-selected a hard text for her, *What is Quiet?,* and said, "I am having trouble with this one reading, 'A mouse …' I don't remember that word" (personal communication, December 20, 2018). I helped her with the word *is* and the

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word *quiet*. Once she knew the words, she read the rest of the book confidently and with complete accuracy. Similar progression was seen with Rufino. On two separate observations of him I noted in my teacher-research journal, "He stared at several pages and put away the book" (journal entry, November 13, 2018; journal entry, November 27, 2018). On my second to last conference with him, he self-selected a text he had difficulty with and identified the word that was difficult for him. Once I told him the word, he proceeded with reading the text. Instead of abandoning a difficult text, he had decided to ask for assistance.

I also conferred with other students and discovered that a sight word was preventing them from reading one of their books. Maurcel is an advanced reader and he approached one conference with a below level book stating, "I am having trouble with this book" (personal communication, December 20, 2018). He could not read it because the first word on most pages was *this,* a word Maurcel did not know. Once I told him the word, he was able to read the entire text without difficulty. Mia also approached a conference stating she did not know one of the words in her book and she noticed that it was in the title too (personal communication, December 19, 2018). I told her the word was *sea* and explained the term *sea* was another word for *ocean*. With that assistance, she was able to read the entire text.

Pictures and letter sounds. Other support that I provided during conferences was having students use pictures and beginning sounds to solve unknown words in leveled texts. I did this with any word that could be solved using the beginning sound and picture clues. When Dominique, Ashton, and Lizbeth encountered an unknown word they just stopped. I then asked the students to look at the beginning letter and then produce its

sound. After they did this, I asked them to search the picture for clues. Students progressed with transferring this support from one text to another at various levels.

Ashton and Lizbeth both required support in their first conferences with me reading a leveled text to use the beginning sound to solve unknown words. When reading *My Dad*, Lizbeth stopped at the word *cook* and made no verbal attempt to solve the word. I asked her the initial letter and its sound and then she was able to figure out the word. I reminded her of this strategy at the end of the text. On my next conference with her, she read *The Little Red Hen*. She got stuck on the words *help, did*, and *not*. For each word, she independently tried using the initial sound. While the strategy did not work for these words, her attempts demonstrated that she remembered one way to solve an unknown word.

The first leveled text that I observed Ashton read was *The Birds*. During my observation, I noted in my teacher research journal that, "Ashton was looking at the pictures and pointing at the words. He was not reading aloud" (journal entry, December 5, 2018). I conferred with him that day after the observation and asked him to read the text aloud. He was reading every page as, "A bird is a bird." I modeled using the initial sound and picture clue to figure out the word *duck*. He was able to solve the word *goose* with my assistance. He needed reminding to solve subsequent words *crow* and *robin* using the initial sounds of the words. While the strategy did not help him solve the words because he did not know the vocabulary, I reminded Ashton that he should at least try the strategy to help him think of what the words might be. In my last conference with him, he read the book *Spiders*. He read "See that spider with the /h/-/h/." He studied the picture for a

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minute and came up with the correct word, *hair.* Like Lizbeth, he demonstrated growth with using the strategy independently.

Dominique read a teacher-produced text about community helpers. She said *worker* for *farmer*. She stopped, noticing something was not right, but did not verbalize what was wrong with the word. I asked her to look for the beginning letter, which she found. I then prompted her to produce its sound /f/ and use the picture to solve the word. On her second attempt, she figured it out. She then encountered another word she did not know, *crossing guard*. I asked her, "How could you figure that out?" and she replied, "Letters." I needed to walk her through how to use the word's beginning sound and picture clues again. When she read a teacher-produced version of *The Gingerbread Man*, she said *boy* for *man* and guessed *door* for *farmer's wife*. She needed me to point out the errors and walk her through solving them with the initial sound. I only observed Dominique read two leveled texts, but by the end of the study it was clear that she still needed support with the strategy to solve unknown words.

Maurcel and Jerome both attempted to solve unknown words by using letter sounds; however, they relied overly on the word, ignoring the picture when attempting to solve unknown words. For instance, Maurcel encountered the word *smooch* in *The Frog Princess* and made the /s/ sound for the word *smooch*, but did not look at the picture. As soon as I prompted him to use the picture, he solved the word. In my last conference with him, I reminded him of the importance of the pictures. He read *Firefighters Are Heroes*. The words *dress*, *spray*, and *save* were difficult for him, but after attempting the initial sound he used the pictures to help him attempt the words. Jerome tried to sound out each unknown word without using other strategies. When he read Charlesworth's (2015c) *The*

Princess and the Pea he attempted to sound out every unknown word sound-by-sound. Some of his unsuccessful attempts were *girl* and *mattress*. I showed him that picture clues can sometimes help solve unknown words. In the next conference with him, he read *Little Kittens.* The text had the pattern, "Little kittens love to…" He attempted the first word by trying to sound out *ride* and was not using the picture. I reminded him that pictures could help. He was then able to successfully read the rest of the text.

Read using the pictures. The final major topic in conferences was modeling how to use the pictures to read familiar and unfamiliar books. Some students did not know how to begin reading a text that they did not know. I showed the students how they could look at the pictures to get a sense of what was going on. For unfamiliar books, I modeled what reading using the pictures would sound like and then gave the students an opportunity to try it out while I was still there to provide feedback. Four out of five students showed improvement with this after conferring with them.

Ashton, Lizbeth, and Destiny did not seem to know how begin reading one of their books. Ashton and Destiny looked at their books making a few inaudible lips movements while looking through the pages. Lizbeth stared at the first page of *Cinderella* in silence. Once I modeled how to tell what I was seeing on the pages, Destiny and Ashton were able to do the same. When reading *Wacky Wednesday*, Destiny even connected some of the pages into a story. Lizbeth was still reluctant to read the book. She tried one line, "They found a bird." I asked her questions to help her read more such as, "So who do you think that guy is?" and "What else do you see?" but she shrugged her shoulders at each question. I modeled once more before ending the conference.

Some students attempted to decode words when reading unknown texts. I explained in my conferences with these students that books without a leveled sticker would be difficult to read using the words. Maurcel attempted to read *Owen* and *The Candy Witch* by decoding some words when he started off. I reminded him that with some books he needed to use the pictures. All he needed was this reminder and he was able to do this. Jerome also tried decoding as he read *The Tooth Book*. He knew some of the words in the text, so he tried to read them all conventionally on the first few pages. I modeled how to use the pictures to read instead. On his next attempt, he continued to attend to the print and try to decode unknown words. After modeling a second time, he began reading the text using the pictures. Lizbeth selected the unfamiliar text, *I Will Try*, for a conference. She tried to conventionally read it by reading words she knew and decoding others. She was able to read some lines conventionally and accurately, but she struggled frequently because there were many words she did not know. Even with reminders to use the pictures and provide less focus on the words, she still tried sounding out known words throughout the entire text.

Conclusion

After analyzing my observations, teacher-student conference recordings, and my notes in my teacher research journal, I found four trends with how students read based on the type of text they selected: familiar, unfamiliar, or leveled text. These trends were conventionality and prosody of language, comprehension strategies and skills, concepts about print, and teacher support.

I found that students attempted to read familiar texts using similar prosody to the way they heard the text read to them. They typically remembered repeated phrases or the

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syntax of the story when they read. When reading these texts, students relied on the pictures to guide them through the story. Once they began reading familiar texts, students needed very little teacher support. They typically read these texts confidently and with enthusiasm.

Students were not always certain with how to read unfamiliar texts. Some students were unwilling to start reading without teacher support and others attempted to read the texts conventionally. After teacher modeling and support, most students were able to read texts using the pictures. When students did read these texts, they typically started off naming objects or characters' or objects' actions. As they progressed through the text or when they read the text again, their language became more detailed. Despite not being able to read the words, students were able make inferences about the texts they read and identify some of their main ideas using the texts' illustrations.

As with unfamiliar texts, students needed support with leveled texts often because they did not know sight words in their texts' patterns or did not know vocabulary words in their texts. The support they required included being told sight words and vocabulary words that they would not be able to figure out on their own. Students did attempt to read these texts conventionally, so other support included strategies to solve unknown words. Chapter Five presents conclusions of the study, implications for teachers and researchers, and the study's limitations.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Summary of the Findings

For five weeks, students engaged in independent reading as part of their reading workshop framework. Within that five-week period, students selected a variety of books from the classroom library including familiar, unfamiliar, and leveled texts to add to their book boxes. I observed students as they read, conferred with them, and reflected on observations and one-to-one conferences in my teacher research journal. My observations, one-to-one conferences, and teacher research journal provided triangulated data that suggests trends with how emergent readers interact with texts during independent reading. The data suggests that students interact with familiar, unfamiliar, and leveled texts differently based on the conventionality and prosody of language they use, the comprehension skills and strategies they use to make meaning, the print concepts they apply, and the type of support they need. I also found trends within the support that students need to navigate through texts including: reading sight words in text patterns, utilizing word solving strategies, and reading using the pictures.

My data suggests that students seemed the most comfortable with reading familiar texts. Students read this type of text using similar syntax and prosody to how they have heard the texts read to them. While students did not read the texts conventionally, they often remembered and incorporated repeated lines in texts in their reading of them. When the texts did not contain repeated lines, students used similar syntax to that of the texts along with the pictures to guide their reading. Finally, the data suggests that the students needed little support to read these texts.

The data implies that students need more support to read unfamiliar texts than familiar ones. Students were sometimes unwilling to begin to read these texts because they did not know how to read them. Students also tended to try to read these texts conventionally, even though the texts were much higher than their independent reading levels. I provided teacher support to these students during one-to-one conferences to show them how to read using a text's pictures. Students were typically successful with this strategy after practicing it with teacher feedback. Despite not being able to read these texts conventionally, students were observed making inferences about characters' actions, characters' behaviors, and events in books using the illustrations.

Most students read one or more leveled texts conventionally without difficulty. As students read these texts, they utilized one-to-one correspondence to track print as they read. Many students even attempted to self-correct when their oral reading was not synchronized with their tracking. The students typically demonstrated a good understanding of the texts they read by recalling key details from the texts and the texts' main ideas.

Some students had difficulty reading leveled texts because they did not know a key sight word in the text's pattern, despite the text being considered on their reading level. Similarly, students encountered vocabulary words that they did not know in their nonfiction, leveled texts that they could not solve without teacher support. In my one-to-one conferences with students, I told the students these sight words and vocabulary words, so that they could practice reading them in their current texts and would be familiar with them in future texts.

Conclusions of the Study

In this study students read texts conventionally that were on their independent level and texts unconventionally that they could not read yet. Collins and Glover (2015) and Sulzby (1985) contend that students build language and practice using appropriate intonation when they read familiar texts. Collins and Glover (2015) also posit that when children read familiar texts they use texts' pictures for comprehension and engage in problem-solving skills such as self-correction when their reading does not match what is occurring in the illustrations. In this study, I found that students approached familiar texts confidently. The emergent, kindergarten readers all tended to read texts with a high level of familiarity that would fall into higher levels of language use according to both Sulzby's and Glover and Collin's leveling. They used some repeated lines in the texts, read accurately content-wise, and used the syntax of the texts to guide their reading. They also heavily relied on the pictures for comprehension.

Many students were hesitant to read unfamiliar texts in this study. When they did begin to read them independently, they tended to start off by naming objects or characters' or objects' actions. This was a common behavior that Collins and Glover found within their levels of language progression with unfamiliar texts. Martinez and Teale (1988) found that students tended to browse unfamiliar texts without reading them. In this study, I observed similar behavior with some students, but noticed that students' reluctance was alleviated when I provided encouragement and modeling. This suggests that emergent readers need to be explicitly taught how to interact with unfamiliar texts before they attempt to do it independently.

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Most students struggled to read one or more leveled texts, despite the texts being on their independent reading level and the lowest level of texts. Fountas and Pinnell (2007) contend that students have an independent, instructional, and frustration level. In this study, I found that by not knowing just one word, a text would be considered on a student's frustration level because the word was on every page. By checking in with students during one-to-one conferences and providing unknown sight words, students were able to read texts that initially gave them difficulty. This suggests the importance of teacher-support with emergent readers.

Students often needed support in my study to read leveled texts that they selected for other reasons as well. They lacked a large repertoire of word solving strategies to navigate through some texts. In other texts, they did not know vocabulary terms and without words solving strategies, they were unable to figure them out. I found that conferring with my students helped them read texts that they had previously abandoned or were unable to read independently. This finding is in line with existing research that suggests that teachers' support to students during independent reading helps them develop into more proficient, confident, and engaged readers (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007; Trudell, 2007).

Limitations

The first limitation with this study was that within the short time period, five weeks, it was difficult to confer with the study participants along with nonparticipants to gather ample data for each student. The sample size of students was quite large for the small amount of time. I only had time to observe or confer with two to three students

daily, so I had to extend independent reading time in order to get enough data on each child.

Another limitation was that the students were given the choice of which type of text to read: familiar, unfamiliar, or leveled. I observed students reading from their book boxes naturally, meaning I did not choose the type of texts students read. This resulted in limited data for some students with their interactions with a type or types of text. Some students were not observed reading a type of text within the study. A focus on a specific type of text would have provided more in-depth data on the language, comprehension strategies, and concepts about print emergent readers use for that type of text. This could have also produced more data about how students use one-to-one conferences to change or influence their reading behaviors and interactions with a specific type of text over time.

Thirdly, the Concepts About Print observation task (Clay, 2008) provided information about skills students possessed to interact conventionally with texts; however, it did not yield information that was needed to determine students' independent reading levels. Pre-assessments such as a sight word list or running record would have provided more relevant information needed to match students to appropriate leveled texts.

Finally, the students determined whether or not they were familiar with a text. Unless I had read the text to the class, I could not be certain that students' statements of familiarity of texts were accurate. Furthermore, if a student was familiar with a text, I was unable to determine how many times he or she had heard the text read.

Implications for the Study

My study has implications for educators who are interested in incorporating independent reading in their classrooms with young students as well as for researchers.

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First, for educators, independent reading develops young students' perception that they are readers no matter their level of word knowledge. By providing students with different types of texts (familiar, unfamiliar, and leveled texts), students begin to learn how to navigate through any text.

Another implication for educators is that teacher support to students during independent reading fosters students' confidence and growth as readers with a variety of texts. With one-to-one conferencing, students can discover how to navigate through different types of texts and get immediate feedback for their approximations. Furthermore, educators can determine skills and strategies that their students need to develop in order progress into more proficient readers with a specific type of text.

For future teacher researchers, more research is needed to determine how teachers can support students with a variety of texts including familiar, unfamiliar, and leveled texts. Research is also needed to determine the benefits of emergent readers reading each type of text during independent reading.

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☐ Sand	**CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT SCORE SHEET**		
☐ Stones			
☐ Moon		Date: _____	
☐ Shoes			

Name: _____   Age: _____   TEST SCORE: [/24]

Recorder: _____   Date of Birth: _____   STANINE GROUP: [ ]

PAGE	SCORE		ITEM	COMMENT
Cover		1.	Front of book	
2/3		2.	Print contains message	
4/5		3.	Where to start	
4/5		4.	Which way to go	
4/5		5.	Return sweep to left	
4/5		6.	Word-by-word matching	
6		7.	First and last concept	
7		8.	Bottom of picture	
8/9		9.	Begins 'The' (*Sand*) Begins 'I' (*Stones*) Begins 'I' (*Moon*) Begins 'Leaves' (*Shoes*) bottom line, then top, OR turns book	
10/11		10.	Line order altered	
12/13		11.	Left page before right	
12/13		12.	One change in word order	
12/13		13.	One change in letter order	
14/15		14.	One change in letter order	
14/15		15.	Meaning of a question mark	
16/17		16.	Meaning of full stop (period)	
16/17		17.	Meaning of comma	
16/17		18.	Meaning of quotation marks	
16/17		19.	Locate: m h (*Sand*); t b (*Stones*); m i (*Moon*); m i (*Shoes*)	
18/19		20.	Reversible words 'was', 'on'	
20		21.	One letter: two letters	
20		22.	One word: two words	
20		23.	First and last letter of word	
20		24.	Capital letter	

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Book Selection Chart

Rowan University

Student_____

Codes: Familiar (F), Unfamiliar (UF), and Level Reader (LR)

Book Bin Names	Coded Books Selected	F Total	UF Total	LR Total
Level A				
Level B				
Level C				
Level D				
Level E				
Level F				
ABC				
Counting				
Math				
Folk Tales				
Fairy Tales				
Dinosaur				
Farm				
Insects				
Animals				
Nonfiction				
Fiction				
Biography				
Curious George				
Dr. Seuss				
Mo Willems				
Eric Carle				
Holidays				
Weather				
Seasons				
Birds				
Jobs				
School				
Pets				
Our Favorites				
Transportation				

Version: November 2018

Appendix C

Students' Independent Text Selections

Candua, B. (2015). *Disney's Cinderella*. Glendale, CA: Disney Press.

Charlesworth, L. (2015a). *Firefighters are heroes*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Charlesworth, L. (2015b). *The frog prince*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Charlesworth, L. (2015c). The *princess and the pea*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Charlesworth, L. (2015d). *A visit to the doctor*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Charlesworth, L. (2016). *The little red hen.* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

De La Touche, G. (1983). *The princess and the pea.* London: Grandreams Limited.

Dibble, T. (2011). *Hammerhead sharks.* King of Prussia, PA: American Reading Company.

Henkes, K. (1993). *Owen*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Holden, P. (2006). *What is quiet?* Auckland, New Zealand: Red Rocket Readers.

Holden, P. (2011). *Sea life*. Auckland, New Zealand: Red Rocket Readers.

Ives, A. (2011). *Birds*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Judy O Productions, Inc. (2006). *Disney's Aladdin*. Maitland, FL: Advance Publishers, L.C.

Jo, A. (n.d.). *The picnic*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill School Division.

Kroll, S. (1979). *The candy witch.* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Janovitz, M. (2012). *I will try.* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Larkin, B. (2001). *Forest animals.* West Chester, PA: Books for a Cause, Inc.

Larkin, B. (2003). *At the waterpark*. West Chester, PA: Books for a Cause, Inc.

Leonard, M. (1990). *The three little pigs.* Parsippany, NJ: Modern Curriculum Press, Inc.

LeSeig, T. (1974). *Wacky Wednesday*. New York, NY: Random House Children's Books.

LeSeig, T. (1981). *The tooth book*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.

Litwin, E. (1999). *Pete the Cat: Rocking in my school shoes*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Litwin, E. (2008). *Pete the Cat: I love my white shoes*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Matthews, A.P. (2011). *Flowers*. Huntington Beach, CA: Pacific Learning.

Martin, B. Jr. (2009). *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?* New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Martin, B. & Archambualt, J. (1989). *Chicka chicka boom boom.* New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.

McMullan, K. & McMullan, J. (2012). *I'm fast!* New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Ortiz, S. (n.d.). *Pre-Decodable 8: My dad*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Inc.

Seuss. (1960). *Green eggs and ham*. New York, NY: Random House.

Shannon, D. (1998). *No David!* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Shannon, D. (1999). *David goes to school*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Shannon, D. (2002). *David in trouble*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Sinclair, K. (2010). *Animals! animals!.* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Solins, M. (1997). *Little kittens*. Parsippany, NJ: Modern Curriculum Press.

Sturges, P. (2004). *I love school.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt School Publishers.

Taylor, T. (2010). *Jumping spiders*. King of Prussia, PA: American Reading Company.

Thomas, A. (2010). *Sea animals.* New York, NY: Scholastic. Inc.