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The Impact Of Self-Assessment On Student Engagement During Independent Reading

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THE IMPACT OF SELF-ASSESSMENT ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT DURING
INDEPENDENT READING

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of a self-assessment rubric on a students' ability to self-monitor and self-regulate engaged reading behaviors. The research attempts to answer the following question: What impact does self-assessment have on the engagement of second-grade students during Independent Reading? Using an action research design, data was collected using a pretest and posttest, weekly engagement assessments, field notes and pre/post interviews. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected over a period of six weeks on Mondays and Wednesdays during Independent Reading. Student-participants included seven second-grade students and their classroom teacher as a teacher-participant. The student-participants varied in achievement, race and socio-economic status. The setting for the study was a rural, Title I public school in central South Carolina. The participant-researcher analyzed the data collected and found that self-assessment had a positive impact on student engagement during Independent Reading.

Keywords: action research, engagement, independent reading, self-assessment, second-graders, self-monitor, self-regulate, metacognition

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CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Increased volume of engaged reading has been recognized as key to increasing reading achievement for all students and for developing life-long reading habits (Allington, 2014; Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Snow et al., 1998). As such, Independent Reading has become a common structure in elementary classrooms aimed at allowing students daily time to engage in sustained, self-directed reading practice. However, ensuring that all students are actively engaged as readers during this time can be challenging. Thus, finding ways to foster the development of engaged, self-directed readers within classrooms of students who vary in ability and interest continues to be a common challenge among teachers of reading.

Current practices among teachers for increasing student accountability and engagement during Independent Reading at X Elementary include the use of reading logs and response journals. These tools do not go far in addressing the behavioral, cognitive and emotional activities that are critical to student engagement in reading (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Therefore, the present action research intends to investigate self-assessment as an additional method for increasing student engagement during Independent Reading. Self-assessment as a type of formative assessment supports the development of self-regulated learners of all abilities and backgrounds (Afflerbach, 2016). A rubric designed to allow students to reflect on their own cognitive, emotional

and behavioral activity during Independent Reading may help students develop a more heightened awareness of their own engagement. Students may be able to begin to internalize these aspects of engagement and become more self-regulating as readers. Information provided on self-assessment rubrics may also allow teachers to pinpoint and respond to specific behaviors that could be affecting a student's engagement during Independent Reading. Action research is grounded in cyclical reflection with the intent to improve classroom practice (Mertler, 2014). As such, action research provides the appropriate framework through which to investigate self-assessment as a possible tool for increasing student engagement during Independent Reading.

In this study, Independent Reading is represented as a daily block of time allotted for students to engage in self-directed reading practice. The block reflects a workshop framework that consists of a focused mini-lesson, practice time and opportunity for sharing. The workshop framework embodies a gradual-release model for instruction. Independent Reading is a classroom structure that emphasizes student choice, teacher scaffolding, high-accuracy practice and a wide range of texts available in the classroom that reflect diverse student interests and abilities (Sanden, 2011). Student engagement is recognized as the immersion of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in a task. While motivation is demonstrated by involvement and attitudes about reading, engagement in reading refers to the students' ability to be productive and strategic readers that comprehend what is read (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). Self-assessment is defined as a student's ability to judge or critique their accomplishment of learning goals. Furthermore, student self-assessment refers to a student's ability to plan for reading, set goals, monitor their own progress and overcome obstacles strategically while reading. In

this study, students will use a rubric to reflect on their own behavioral, cognitive and affective engagement during Independent Reading. (Afflerbach, 2014).

Statement of the Problem of Practice

Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) explained that “those involved in action research generally want to solve some kind of day-to-day immediate problem” (p. 589). As stated above, the identified problem of practice for the present action research involves a close examination of student engagement during daily Independent Reading time within a second-grade classroom. Students within second-grade classrooms at X Elementary School are required to engage in sustained, self-directed reading practice daily. Mrs. H, a second-grade teacher at X Elementary School, has noted that it is often difficult to ensure that all students are actively engaged as readers during Independent Reading time. For example, Mrs. H has identified and observed many off-task, avoidance behaviors during Independent Reading among students. Mrs. H has noted that redirecting students during Independent Reading time prevents her from being able to conference with individual students or provide instruction to small groups of students.

Rather than offering instruction, the teacher-participant in the present study often finds herself “policing” students’ off-task reading behaviors. These off-task behaviors noted by Mrs. H closely resemble the continuum of reading engagement developed by Kelly and Clausen-Grace (2009). The engagement continuum describes categories of readers who demonstrate various levels of engagement within the classroom. The categories of readers include: (a) fake readers; (b) compliant readers; (c) wannabe readers; and (d) bookworms. Because of the identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for the

present study, Mrs. H is actively seeking ways to increase student engagement and to improve students' self-directed reading behaviors.

Mrs. H cites that she readily makes time and resources available for students to read during the school day, but she often feels this is wasted time because she believes many children are not authentically engaged in their reading. Topping, Samuels, and Paul (2007) found that increasing the quantity of reading time within the school day is not as effective as increasing the quality of reading practice for students. Mrs. H has explored many strategies to improve the quality of reading practice and for increasing student engagement during Independent Reading time, including: conferencing, reading logs, reading incentive programs, reading journals, high quality literature choices, sharing, explicit modeling of strategies, and modeling of engaged reading behaviors. Topping, Samuels, and Paul cited many of these same strategies as effective for supporting the quality of reading practice during Independent Reading. In addition to these steps, Mrs. H recognizes the need for students to monitor their own reading practice and behaviors. Thus, she is interested in exploring tools that will support students in becoming self-directed readers.

Research Question

What impact does self-assessment have on the engagement of second-grade students during Independent Reading?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research project is to implement a self-assessment model in a second-grade reading class in a Title I school for students to reach higher levels of engagement during Independent Reading. The present action research study

aims to investigate self-assessment as an additional tool that can be used by classroom teachers to foster the development of engaged, self-directed readers despite their perceived status of reading ability. The development of self-regulated behaviors also aligns with the South Carolina College and Career ready standards for second-grade English Language Arts that require students to “read and respond according to task and purpose to become self-directed, critical readers and thinkers” (SCDE, 2015a).

For the purpose of this study, Independent Reading is defined as a daily block of time allotted for students to engage in self-directed reading practice (Sanden, 2011). Moreover, engagement is defined as the immersion of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in a task (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). In this study, the researcher monitored behavioral indicators of reading engagement described by Kelly and Clausen-Grace (2009). The behavioral indicators are exemplified by students who are eager to read and who are less likely to be distracted when given time and opportunity to read. These students are referred to by the researchers as “bookworms.” More specific behavioral indicators of engagement include eyes on text, eyes scanning lines of text and illustrations, page turning at reasonable rate, appropriate physical responses to text and limited off-task behaviors during reading.

Methodology

Action Research Methodology

Mertler (2014) outlined a model for action research that involves four stages: *planning, acting, developing, and reflecting*. While action research is recognized as a cyclical process and not linear, the four stages provided a framework for conducting and explaining this action research project. Mertler (2014) outlined the characteristics of

action research that distinguish it from other traditional forms of scientific research.

These characteristics include the understanding that action research is a process which: improves education, involves educators working together to improve practice, is participative, is practical and relevant, develops critical self-reflection of one's teaching, is cyclical and is a justification of one's teaching practices

Researching the impact of self-assessment on student engagement during Independent Reading is practical and relevant in that it will potentially add to a teacher's repertoire of strategies to enhance student engagement. Increased engagement in reading correlates with increased comprehension and thus students will have increased potential to achieve in reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, Schafer, & Huang, 2001). Increasing student engagement during Independent Reading time is critical to ensure that time allotted for reading practice is not wasted with continued disengaged patterns of reading behavior.

Additionally, this study aligns with principles of action research in that it requires the collaboration and active participation of educators to critically analyze and systematically address an identified problem of practice within the classroom. The results help to justify or amend current teaching practices that impact student engagement in reading. The results may not only have immediate impact for instruction, but may also lead to future related investigations that have the potential to impact student learning and achievement.

Research Site

The present action research study was conducted at X Elementary School, a Title I public school in Sumter, South Carolina. The school-wide student population for the

2015-2016 school year was approximately 800 students. X Elementary is located within the X School District which has been designated as a Title I school district with over 80% of students from low-income homes. Approximately 58% of these students are identified as African American, 36% are identified as White and 6% are identified as Other (NCES, 2016). On the State assessment for English Language Arts (ELA) in 2015, approximately 61% of students in grades 3-5 scored proficient in English and 21% of students scored proficient in reading (SCDE, 2016). Teachers believe one cause for concern that contributes to the low percentage of students scoring as proficient in reading, is the lack of time children spend in engaged reading at school and at home.

Participants

The participant-researcher is a reading coach at X Elementary. The primary role of the reading coach within X Elementary is to support the implementation of best practices in literacy in Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. This action research focused on a single second-grade classroom. The participant-researcher worked collaboratively with Mrs. H, a second-grade teacher for this action research. Mrs. H is referred to as teacher-participant. Student-participants included seven student subjects in a classroom of 22 second-grade students of varied reading abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.

Sources of Data Used

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach that involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data related to reading engagement. Utilizing both types of data created a more complete picture of student's behaviors and beliefs about reading and reading engagement. During a study period of six weeks, the

researcher monitored student reading engagement using descriptive field notes and an engagement inventory. A self-assessment rubric was used by the students weekly to have them reflect on their own behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. The observations over time were examined both individually and as a group to reveal any changes in the display of engaged reading behaviors.

Quantitative data. Quantitative data was collected throughout this study. An initial pretest of reading engagement was conducted using the Serravallo Engagement Inventory (SEI) tool. The SEI provides the means to code student behavior during Independent Reading. The codes can then be used to calculate the percentage of time each individual student demonstrated engaged reading behaviors. The same tool can be used to calculate rates of engagement for both individual students and a whole class. This SEI tool was used weekly for six weeks as a quantitative way to gather data revealing students' reading engagement during Independent Reading. The SEI was also used to collect a pretest baseline before the six-week period in which the self-assessment rubric was introduced.

Qualitative data. Qualitative data was collected in several ways. The participant-researcher conducted structured interviews of both the student-participants and the teacher-participant to investigate any predispositions about reading or reading engagement that might impact their level of reading engagement or involvement in the study. Additionally, the participant-researcher spent one class period weekly recording field notes during Independent Reading. The participant-researcher collected field notes that described observations about student-teacher interactions during Independent Reading conferences. The field notes also included descriptive observations of student

behaviors during Independent Reading. These field notes helped to further illuminate reading behaviors that might not be captured using the SEI. Post-interviews with both the student-participants and teacher-participant also provided an opportunity to gain any final insights into the beliefs and attitudes about reading and reading engagement. An additional source of qualitative data included the self-assessments that students completed over the course of the six-week study. These rubrics helped to reveal any changes in reading engagement attitudes and behaviors that the students themselves may have reported throughout the study.

Significance of the Study

Currently, self-assessment is an unexplored type of formative assessment within classrooms at X Elementary school. Teachers in grades K-5 model expectations for Independent Reading, set purposes for reading and seek to hold students accountable for their Independent Reading practice. Requiring students to become self-directed readers requires teachers to provide opportunities for students to reflect and assess themselves as readers. This research study provides an opportunity to investigate what impact self-assessment may have on the development of engaged readers in Mrs. H's second-grade class. Ultimately, increasing the volume of engaged reading practice for students through self-assessment may have a positive impact on student achievement (Allington, 2014; Anderson et al., 1988; Snow et al., 1998).

Limitations of the Study

Possible limitations to this study include a limited number of participants being observed within a unique classroom setting. This study involved the monitoring of seven students during Independent Reading to investigate what impact self-assessment may

have on the reading engagement of these students. African American males were not sufficiently represented in this study due to the frequency of pull-out services which limited their availability for participation and observation in this study. Due to the limited number of subjects, generalizations to larger populations of students may not be made. Additional limitations include the difficult nature of observing and measuring student engagement in reading. As reading is a cognitive activity, researchers must rely on overt behaviors as general indicators of a students' level of engagement. These behaviors may at times be misinterpreted or misleading in terms of being indicative of a student's true level of behavioral, emotional or cognitive engagement.

Dissertation Overview

In the following chapters, an expansive literature view of related constructs will be presented, a detailed description of the research methodology used for the study is included, findings from the data analysis are explained and conclusions from the study are shared. A definition of the terms is provided at the end of Chapter One.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were identified as relevant to this study and were specifically defined through a review of related literature.

1. **Engagement:** The immersion of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in a task. While motivation is demonstrated by involvement and attitudes about reading, engagement in reading refers to the students' ability to be productive and strategic readers that comprehend what is read (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). More specific behavioral indicators of engagement include eyes on text, eyes scanning

- lines of text and illustrations, page turning at a reasonable rate, appropriate physical responses to text and limited off-task behaviors during reading.
2. **Independent Reading:** A daily block of time allotted for students to engage in self-directed reading practice. The block reflects a workshop framework that consists of focused mini-lesson, practice time and opportunity for sharing. The workshop framework embodies a gradual-release model for instruction. Independent Reading is an opportunity to read model that emphasizes student choice, teacher scaffolding, high-accuracy practice and a wide range of texts available in the classroom that reflect diverse student interests and abilities (Sanden, 2011).
 3. **Metacognition:** A higher-order thinking process that requires an individual to monitor or reflect their own learning process. Commonly identified by teachers as “thinking about one’s thinking” in reading. In this research, students are encouraged to think metacognitively in terms of their own behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement (McMillan & Hall, 2008; Shunk, 2004; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).
 4. **Self-Assessment:** A student’s ability to judge or critique their accomplishment of learning goals. In reading, student self-assessment refers to a student’s ability to plan for reading, set goals, monitor their own progress and overcome obstacles strategically while reading. In this study, students will use a checklist to reflect on their own behavioral, cognitive and affective engagement during Independent Reading. (Afflerbach, 2014).

5. **Self-Efficacy:** A student's belief in their ability to complete a task or goal and the value ascribed by students to the completion of a task or goal. In reading, self-efficacy refers to a student's beliefs about themselves as a reader in terms of their attitudes and abilities in reading (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Schunk 2004).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Context

The purposes and practices associated with learning to read in America have evolved throughout our nation's history. Social and political influences have shaped the atmosphere of the school experience and can even be reflected in the materials used to teach reading. A major shift in the perceived importance of learning to read in America will be evident within the discussion of historical contexts in this literature review. The early emphasis of learning to read to fulfill religious and moral obligations has transformed into a contemporary mandate for young children to read proficiently to reach high academic standards.

Learning to Read in America

Monaghan's (2005) account of learning to read in colonial America emerged from her own personal inquiry into why and how the approach to teaching reading had changed throughout our nation's past. She described how learning to read the Bible in colonial New England was an effort to save the souls of colonialists. As communities grew, laws were passed to require the teaching of reading to children. The teaching of writing was viewed as more difficult and was often the domain of the male teacher. Likewise, some Native Americans and African American slaves were taught to read, but forbidden from writing.

Early materials used to teach reading emphasized an alphabetic approach where readers were taught to pronounce words but less attention was paid to comprehension. Writing was introduced as a tool for commerce and form was considered paramount, while composition was rarely taught or encouraged. A shift occurred during the 18th century with the emergence of the ideas of John Locke, that children were blank slates and not inherently sinful. Thus, books were created to entice children to read and some were sold for children's reading pleasure. The attitudes of writing also began to change, wherein children were taught principles of composition. Monaghan accounts how the purposes of reading and writing toward the Revolutionary period emerged to challenge authority and spread political ideas. Although the purposes of learning to read and write were not always for the enrichment of the individual, Monaghan observed that the traditions of reading and writing that were passed through generations demonstrated how important literacy was to the development of a new nation.

Spring (2014) shared similar accounts of the nature of learning to read and write throughout America's complicated past. Spring explained that in colonial America "people were taught to read and write so they could obey the laws of the state and religion" (p. 13). Despite this broad practice, some in colonial America argued that "intellectual freedom could be achieved only by separating schools from religious government" (p. 13). The colonial reading and writing schools emphasized instruction with religious and moral contexts. The *New England Primer* was the principal text for instruction that stressed memorization and submission to religious authority. Another widely used text for instruction after the Revolutionary war was Noah Webster's spelling

book which was intended to “develop an American language, and create a unified national spirit” as well as teach reading and writing (p. 50).

There has been strong criticism of the use of reading and writing instructional methods that were of a moral, religious or political nature throughout American history. Robert Molesworth objected to the use of colonial schooling “to create obedient and submissive citizens” (Spring, 2014, p. 32). Molesworth feared that in history “when religion linked arms with government, religious doctrines were used to justify tyranny” (p. 32). Similarly, Thomas Jefferson envisioned a new nation where “education should provide the average citizen with the tools of reading and writing and that political beliefs would formed through the exercise of reason” (p. 54). Jefferson believed education could have a conferring status on an individual, propelling them forward in life to new social status. He advocated for a tuition-free education for both males and females that included reading, writing, basic math and an introduction to historical studies.

Horace Mann advocated for the creation of a common school system where children were to receive a “common moral education” based on biblical principles that would serve to “eliminate crime and corruption in society” (Spring, 2014, p. 84). In Mann’s view, social revolution was best accomplished through the education of the youth. Another major contribution to the evolution of a publicly funded education was Mann’s arguments as to why all tax payers should contribute to the funding of the public education of all citizens. He recognized that an educated public had economic benefits to all citizens in that the investment in human capital “increases the wealth of the entire community” (p. 87).

The emergence of The McGuffey Readers in the late 19th century resembled earlier instructional texts in that it “contained numerous moral lessons designed to teach appropriate behavior in a developing industrial society” (Spring, 2014, p. 154). Though women dominated the role of educator during this time, females were still vastly underrepresented in school literature. Each story and poem included in the reader was accompanied by a spelling list, featured words and related questions. The goal of the texts was to “teach reading and, like the general goal of the common school, to impart moral lessons” (p. 155).

The Education of Minorities

The story of the education of minorities in America illustrates how learning to read was a privilege from which some were excluded based on race, gender, nationality or ethnicity. Withholding education and depriving individuals from access to the tools for learning to read, became an act of social warfare meant to sustain the dominance of the white, Protestant faith and people in America.

As immigrants from Ireland sought refuge from the devastation of the potato famine, their desperate need for basic survival made them easy to exploit in terms of labor. Additionally, their strong Catholic beliefs were a threat to the dominant Protestant culture of the time, and thus, "Catholics felt excluded from the common schools and found it necessary to establish their own system of public schools" (Spring, 2014, p. 110). This conflict of ideas regarding religious education not only interfered with equality in education, but also led to social unrest and violence.

In the case of African Americans, the idea that schools could be separate but equal was challenged by a close study of school conditions. In some cases, African

Americans were denied any type of academic education. In other cases, African Americans were offered an inferior education that was purposed more toward acculturating them and delineating their African heritage and customs, rather than empowering them. The hostility of whites to the African American children who sought out equal education caused many groups to attempt to establish their own schools. This segregation, though willful at times, “resulted in unequal funding of schools” and ultimately in “unequal educational opportunities” (Spring, 2014, p. 117). Abolitionists like David Walker, concluded that segregation in areas like Boston "was a conspiracy by whites to keep blacks in a state of ignorance" (p. 120). The illusion of separate-but-equal schooling remained until the twentieth century, securing the cultural dominance of Protestant white groups over African Americans.

Armor (2006) explained that *Brown v. Board of Education* brought an end to the legally sanctioned segregation of schools in 1954, but did not eradicate the existence of segregated schools altogether. Many schools in the United States remained segregated after that time due to housing and the separation of races geographically. States would continue to develop plans to purposefully integrate schools through busing and other means to improve racial balance. While states and school district grapple with continuing to ensure that schools remain equitable and integrated across racial lines, the achievement gap between black and white students becomes a focus for educators and policy makers. Armor argued that the achievement gap is caused by “family influences before school even starts” (p. 45). Thus, the achievement gap between white and black students has become not only a catalyst for changes in education policy, but for broader social action as well.

The historical account of the education of Native Americans reveals a devastating irony. Some Native Americans believed that the key to the preservation of their lands and cultures was to educate themselves. They believed education was “necessary for protecting their interests against the continual attempts by the U.S. government to expand its territorial control” (Spring, 2014, p. 124). Ironically, the education of Native Americans by missionaries was intended to “civilize” and convert them to reject their own cultural heritage and embrace the culture of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism (p. 129). Spring stated that “Native Americans had simply asked for literacy, but they received an education designed to bring about their cultural and religious conversion” (p. 131). Ultimately, the Native American culture and lands would either be overtaken by the school or by the sword.

The story of the role of women in the American education system can be looked at from two lenses. One could account that women gained access to education by using their domestic authority and their assumed moral superiority to their advantage. Nevertheless, one could argue that women were exploited on the same basis. Women were educated for the sole intent of educating others, not for advancing their own personal interests. Women were particularly favorable teachers because, “They could be hired at lower wages than men” (Spring, 2014, p. 141). Women were also favored based on the “belief in the inherent moral character of females” (p. 142). Women also had a “narrow range of opportunities,” which provided a “stabilizing influence” (p. 145). Although misguided and shortsighted, these beliefs were the first steps in securing quality educational opportunities for women.

A Nation at Risk

The conditions and purposes for learning to read in America during the 20th century are best understood through the lens of the policies and legislation that impacted the American education system. One such policy includes the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. Spring (2014) explained that the report blamed schools for the America's shortcomings in a competitive global market. The resulting policies "focused on improving schools for global economic competition" (p. 425). The report called for states to "increase academic standards, improve the quality of teachers, and reform the curriculum" (p. 430). Reforms also included accountability systems that used high-stakes testing to determine school quality and effectiveness.

No Child Left Behind

The reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was heralded as the No Child Left Behind legislation. Spring (2014) stated, "This legislation nationalized federal accountability standards for the purpose of educating global workers" (p. 440). The legislation made provisions for the use of funds "for improved educational programs for children designated as educationally deprived" (p. 374). This legislation required that all students conform to federal standards regardless of race, background, or socioeconomic status. Spring argued that No Child Left Behind favored a monocultural society above a pluralistic society.

Allington (2012) observed that hundreds of millions of dollars spent under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have had very little significant impact on improving the reading proficiency of students in the early grades. Allington argued that NCLB wasn't designed to raise reading scores but rather to increase the privatization of public

education. He observed that the NCLB was designed by policy makers who had little to no classroom teaching experience and misjudged that greater accountability would lead to increased achievement. Allington noted that little research was consulted when designing NCLB. The lack of adequate research resulted in schools implementing reading programs over the past 10 years that are not supported by reliable research.

Read to Succeed Legislation

The South Carolina Legislature passed a law known as the Read to Succeed Act. (NCTE, 2014). The Read to Succeed Act is purposed to increase the number of students reading proficiently on grade-level. The law features several actions to support his goal: additional endorsement and training for all reading teachers, district and school reading plans, interventions for struggling readers, summer reading camps, community supports and a third-grade retention law. The third-grade retention law requires that students reading significantly below level by the end of third-grade will automatically qualify for retention.

The Read to Succeed Act reflects a movement in the United States to accomplish school-based reform through state regulated policies. This movement is often recognized and largely supported through the K-3 Reading Policy established by the non-profit Foundation for Excellence in Education (FEE, 2016). The foundation argues, based on evidence from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2011) that 90% of high-school dropouts are struggling readers in the third-grade. Using this and other supporting evidence, the K-3 Reading Policy emphasizes the need for reforms that draw attention and support to early literacy classroom instruction and intervention practices. The goal of this initiative is to reduce or eliminate the number of students not reading proficiently by the end of

third-grade. Students that are recognized as lacking proficiency are provided extra support through classroom interventions, summer reading programs and an additional year of third-grade instruction. The pressures placed upon early grades teachers to produce proficient readers has influenced the researcher's decision to select third grade students and teachers as participants in this action research study.

Theoretical Base

Self-assessment as a tool to increase motivation, reading engagement and ultimately student achievement is grounded in three key theories: cognitive and constructivist theories of learning and motivation, metacognition theory and self-efficacy theory (McMillan & Hall, 2008). This action research is also grounded in many of the guiding principles that can be found in both the Learner Centered and Social Efficiency curriculum ideologies. (Schiro, 2013)

Cognitive and Constructivist Theories of Learning and Motivation

Jean Piaget (2003) laid the groundwork for the theoretical basis of a constructivist classroom. Within a constructivist classroom students are allowed opportunities to reflect on their own learning and become active in the learning process. Shepard (2001) explained that student self-monitoring of learning and thinking is key to the construction of knowledge that is the basis for the cognitive and constructivist theory of learning and motivation. This theory holds that students construct new knowledge by engaging in reflective practice before, during and after encounters with new knowledge and learning experiences. For example, students are self-evaluating what is known, unknown and learned to evaluate, organize and analyze new information. Through self-assessment,

learning becomes more meaningful to the individual learner and increases student motivation and confidence.

Dweck (1996) identified two types of learning goals that make-up a goal-theory perspective on self-assessment and student motivation; mastery goals and performance goals. Mastery goals require students to focus on a task, make a plan of action for completing the task thereby allowing the student to reach mastery through self-reflection and self-monitoring of their own progress. While pursuing a mastery goal, students become immersed in the task and will continually check their own progress.

Performance goals are different in that they are more focused on the product than the process. A students' journey toward a standard of proficiency is overlooked in the pursuit of performance goals, and only the ultimate success or failure of the student to attain a high standard is valued. These types of performance goal experiences tend to discourage and hinder student motivation. Self-assessment is key in the mastery goal learning theory and allows the learning process to be more internal and meaningful to the learner.

Metacognition

Metacognition theory “involves the capacity to monitor, evaluate, and know what to do to improve performance” (McMillan & Hall, 2008, p.43). Metacognition requires the development of skills that allow the student to check for understanding, predict outcomes, plan activities, manage time and switch learning activities autonomously. These skills are teachable and have been shown to increase achievement (Shunk 2004). The development of metacognitive capacities has also been linked with the emergence of self-control. Sodian and Frith (2008) argued that the study of metacognitive theory

provides a framework for studying executive processes, like self-control. The authors argued that “self-control implies self-reflection and self-reflection transforms the way in which learning occurs” (p. 112). Sodian and Frith also argued that the field of metacognitive research is largely focused on “the importance of knowledge about the mental domain for school-based learning” (p. 112). The authors cite several studies that suggest links between school achievement and the early training and development of executive processes and metacognitive skills. These studies are compelling for educators in that they promote the need for the explicit teaching and fostering of these behaviors as early as preschool.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy theory is based on the belief that positive self-perceptions about one’s ability to learn increases motivation and in turn, increases the potential for high achievement (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Schunk 2004). Self-efficacy is not only the belief that one can complete a task successfully, but also the perceived value of performing the task well. Increased self-efficacy is shown to drive individuals to persist through challenges when accomplishing a task. Beliefs of self-efficacy also increase the likelihood that an individual will set increasingly higher learning goals for themselves. Individuals with strong self-efficacy beliefs also tend to also seek out continued learning opportunities beyond what is required or expected (Brophy, 2004; Schunk, 1995).

Learner Centered Ideology

Schiro (2013) explained that teachers within the Learner Centered ideology have three critical roles including “observer and diagnostician of learners, provider of the environment for learning and the facilitator of learning” (p. 137). The teacher is

influenced more by the needs and interests of the individual, than objectives that are arbitrarily imposed on the student. To discover these evolving needs and interests, the teacher is engaged in “ongoing reflective evaluation and analytical assessment of each student” (p. 138). The information gleaned from these observations directly impacts the nature of the physical and affective learning environment created by the teacher. The developed understanding of the learner and the creation of a supportive learning environment then sets the stage for meaningful and relevant learning experiences that will engage students.

Many of the attributes of a Learner Centered classroom as described by Schiro (2013) have been encouraged in the Read to Succeed trainings that the participant-researcher of this study has facilitated with teachers at X Elementary School. In the trainings, teachers are encouraged to collect information about student interests, needs and abilities and to ensure that those interests are reflected in classroom libraries. Teachers are encouraged to create a physical classroom environment that is diverse in materials, encourages collaboration, reflects the students’ thinking and allows for whole group and small group interactions among students. The physical evidence of these practices includes more expansive classroom libraries, comfortable spaces for reading outside of the student desk, group tables, large group carpet areas, student created charts and student artifacts. Teachers are encouraged to allow the classroom to evolve from a blank canvas to a representation of the diversity, thoughts and growth of students. The Learner Centered ideology views the teacher as the “travel agent” that “helps the child go where the child wants to go” (p. 139). In teaching reading, this means providing the

resources and opportunities for the child to engage in the type of reading experiences that engage their innate desire to learn and grow as an individual.

The critical difference between other curriculum ideologies in contrast to the *Learner Centered* ideology is the focus on the learner. The learner appears secondary in other ideologies, whereas the learner is the catalyst for curriculum design and purpose within the Learner Centered ideology. The key distinction is that the Learner Centered educator and curriculum are responsive rather than prescriptive. Schiro (2013) stated that “learner centered educators are concerned less with knowledge than with learning and growth” (p. 143). Additionally, the learner centered educator “emphasizes the learning person rather than the knowledge” (p. 144). This responsive approach to the varying needs and interests of a body of students can pose significant challenges for a teacher. Learner Centered educators must be skilled and “must be able to spontaneously respond to children” (p. 140).

Independent Reading as a classroom structure is reflective of many of the guiding principles of the Learner Centered curriculum ideology. Independent Reading is a Learner Centered structure for reading practice that is highly responsive to the needs of the individual learner. The reading material and instruction is personalized to the needs and interests of the individual child. Children are encouraged to take active roles in their own goal-setting and develop critical self-directed behaviors for reading that are suited to translate into life-long reading behaviors outside of the classroom experiences. The Independent Reading structure requires teachers to “deemphasize” their role as “deliverer of knowledge” (p. 123). During Independent Reading students are “allowed to participate in determining their own growth, education and life” (p. 124).

Social Efficiency Ideology

The Social Efficiency ideology is often rejected by progressive educators based on it being prescriptive and not responsive to the needs of the individual learner or the context of learning. However, Schiro (2013) explained that teachers within the Social Efficiency ideology are encouraged to be “knowledgeable of the students and the curriculum so that appropriate help can be given to the students as needed” (p. 93). Where the teacher lacks control, is in the idea that “teachers are not to question the ends or means of the curriculum or implements their own ends” (p. 93). This action research study describes the attempts of educators to use responsive, learner centered practices to meet the rigorous, standardized demands prescribed by the state adopted curriculum and legislation in English Language Arts.

The role of the teacher within the Social Efficiency Ideology is best understood through the examination of terminal and progressive objectives. Terminal objectives are the “ends of the curriculum and the standards that indicate when the ends have been met” (Schiro, 2013, p. 66). Progressive objectives are the “specific behavioral objectives that collectively specify the step-by-step changes in learners that transform them from incompetence to competence” (p. 66). In our current educational system, the terminal objectives are those represented in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate (SCDE, 2015a). The progressive objectives are more akin to the standards that are outlined in each content area or grade level. The terminal objectives serve the greater good of the society and educators “acting as agents of society, must determine the needs of society” (p. 67). The progressive objectives represent the steps to accomplish what society

demands and expert educators must “determine the most efficient way of producing it” (p. 67).

Other Related Constructs

The research question for this action research study involves the complex interactions between the constructs of reading volume, *Independent Reading*, reading engagement and self-assessment. To understand how these constructs interact in complex ways to support student literacy learning requires the extensive investigation of both the primary and secondary sources related to each.

Reading Volume

This action research study seeks to increase reading volume by increasing student engagement during *Independent Reading* time. Volume in reading is defined as a combination of the amount of time students spend reading in addition to the words they encounter while reading (Allington, 2014; Guthrie, 2004). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that an increase in the volume of reading practice results in increased achievement for readers.

Guthrie (2004) reported that there is a strong correlation between the volume of reading and reading achievement. Guthrie’s argument for the increased amount of reading practice for students rests largely on the examination of other specialized occupations in fields of sports or music. In these specialized field, it is often the amount of dedicated practice that leads to proficiency. Guthrie notes that experts often spend 500% more time performing their skills than novices. This observation supports his assumption that it is difficult to conceive of any skill domain in which increased practice would not lead to increase proficiency.

Guthrie, Schafer, and Huang (2001) examined the effects of students' amount of engaged reading on student achievement as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. They found that amount of engaged reading practice significantly predicted student achievement when after the variable of parental education was statistically controlled. The findings of the study led to the authors making several recommendations for policy and practice in teaching reading. The authors stated that "engaged reading should be viewed as a valued outcome of instructional activity" (p. 160). Additionally, the authors believed that opportunity to read models should be imbedded into all reading programs that encourages student choice and meaningful discussion of texts. The authors noted that students across all demographics benefited from increased opportunity to read in the classroom.

Taylor, Presley, and Pearson (2000) found that increased time spent in reading independently was a distinct characteristic of the most effective schools in contrast to least effective schools where students spent less time reading independently. The study involved careful observation of fourteen schools from across the country ranging in grades from kindergarten to third-grade. The researchers compared pretest and posttest data in addition to extensive observation of classroom activities.

A report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2009) found evidence to support the belief that increased volume of reading equates to increased achievement. Fourth grade students who completed the 2009 NAEP assessment were asked to report information about their reading habits both at school and at home. The report found that students who read five or fewer pages every day scored lower than those students who read more. Likewise, students who read for pleasure nearly every day

scored higher than those read for pleasure less often. The results also demonstrated that students who were provided time to read almost every day in the classroom scored higher than students who were given less time.

Stanovich (1986) conducted a synthesis of research regarding contrasts in reading ability. His conclusion is summarized in his observation of the “Matthew effect” (p. 380). The Matthew effect is represented in a rich-get-richer and poor-get-poorer effect on reading ability. The effect suggests that students who develop more sophisticated reading abilities and habits continue to excel based on their increased success in reading practice both in quality and quantity. In contrast, those that have less-developed reading abilities will read less and thus, achieve less. As time progresses the achievement gap between the weak and strong reader grows at an accelerated rate, making it increasingly more difficult for struggling readers to “catch-up” with their higher achieving peers.

Nagy and Anderson (1984) estimated that avid readers in the middle grades read more than 10,000,000 words per year. Adversely, average performing students read approximately 1,000,000 words and trailing behind were some students reading as few as 100,000 words annually. The number of words read were directly correlated to the corresponding differences in student reading achievement. The avid readers were found to not only excel in reading, but also in writing. The increased volume of reading had reciprocated into increased writing skills evident in spelling and grammar.

The impact of increased reading practice on comprehension skills was investigated in a study conducted by Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, and Cox (1999). While actively investigating the broader effects of intervention on reading achievement, the researchers examined reading amount and its correlation with reading achievement. The

researchers found that reading amount was a predictor of conceptual learning from multiple texts. The researchers concluded that increased reading practice, led to greater proficiency employing strategic comprehension strategies which in turn leads to increased achievement.

Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990) also found evidence to support to positive impact that increased volume has on reading comprehension skills. In a study of intermediate-level students, the amount of time spent in silent reading during class each day and the relationship to reading growth was examined. The researchers concluded that increased time spent reading during the school day during independent silent reading led to improved reading proficiency.

Shelfbine (2000) also reported that increased reading volume can also have positive effects in terms of general knowledge and understanding of the world. Shelfbine argued that wide and voluminous reading habits also lead to increased verbal ability and increased achievement. Bridges (2014) explained the phenomenon that occurs when increased reading practice also positively impacts verbal and writing abilities with the adage that “a rising tide lifts all boats” (p. 11). Bridges stated that avid readers also know more about spelling, punctuation and grammar because “every time we open the pages of a book, we simultaneously get a lesson effective writing” (p. 11). Immersion in reading is in fact an immersion in language and writing through print on the page. Bridges made the sweeping statement that “if we did nothing in school but invite our students to read and expand their volume of reading they would come out ahead” (p. 11).

Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) found similar evidence to support that increased reading practice can have a corresponding positive impact on vocabulary

development. The study sought to conclude whether print exposure led to gains in vocabulary development in upper level elementary students. The students were given a Title Recognition Test and were asked to identify reading materials that were familiar to them. The results of the test were then compared with word-level assessments. The researchers concluded that print exposure was indeed a reliable predictor of vocabulary knowledge.

The impact of extensive reading practice on the acquisition and development of vocabulary was also demonstrated in a study of middle grades students by Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987). The researchers sought to illuminate this connection by investigating the ways in which students encounter new vocabulary in regular reading practice. In the study, students who read text containing target vocabulary knew more difficult words than those that did not. This exercise proved that readers acquire vocabulary knowledge through normal reading practices. The authors believe that those who read for extended periods of time are also more likely to encounter new vocabulary in multiple contexts thereby gaining exposure to broader vocabulary knowledge with deeper understanding.

Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) observed that students who are ardent readers tend to score higher on a broad range of tests. Calkins recommends that standards-based reading instruction needs to include time for students to engage in a significant amount of reading practice. Also critical to this time spent reading is the inclusion of regular feedback from the teacher. Calkins argued that the reading program must support all types of readers by allowing each student the opportunity to build reading habits that resemble those of readers outside of school. Calkins believed that the

common thread of all strong readers, is their more extensive and regular habits of reading practice.

Studies also suggest that reading programs that encourage time for Independent Reading practice are more effective at increasing student achievement than traditional programs. Krashen (2004) conducted a meta-analysis that compared 54 programs that encouraged free reading. The traditional programs tended to favor direct instruction across multiple domains of literacy knowledge. The result was conclusive, that the clear majority of students who participated in reading programs that encouraged free reading did as well or better than students in traditional reading programs. Over time, the results revealed that the free-reading programs were consistently superior to traditional programs in terms of student achievement.

Independent Reading

The significant challenge facing educational researchers who seek to investigate the nature and effectiveness of Independent Reading is the varying manifestation of this structure within classrooms. Many teachers who profess to employ Independent Reading as a routine part of their classroom literacy practice have developed their own interpretations of related routines, procedures and methodologies. For this reason, further clarification is needed to appropriately define Independent Reading as a classroom practice both for the benefit of researchers and practitioners.

Not only is Independent Reading implemented in multiple forms within classrooms, it is also commonly represented by different terminology. Structures and practices that allow for students to engage in regular Independent Reading practice within the classrooms like Independent Reading are also referred to as free reading, voluntary

reading, silent reading, sustained silent reading and recreational reading. A search of resources using these terms, helps to illuminate a broader body of work investigating the effects of allowing students time for reading practice during the school day. There are conflicting results of studies that seek to investigate possible benefits of Independent Reading as a regular classroom structure. The unevenness of outcomes may be directly related to the lack of clarity among educators and researchers regarding the forms and functions of Independent Reading within classrooms.

The National Reading Panel (NRP) conducted a synthesis of available studies that investigated the impact of increased time spent reading on student reading achievement. As a result of this review, the panel recommended Independent Reading as practice to be included in reading programs. However, the NRP report (NRP, 2000) did not go as far as to provide a clear description of the Independent Reading model recommended. Instead, the panel called for further clarification on Independent Reading programs in use. It is important to note that the Independent Reading models represented in the NRP synthesis included Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and similar programs. Many of these programs are in stark contrast to the gradual release, responsive teaching model for Independent Reading that will be explored in this literature review.

Sanden (2011) recognized that to fully investigate and value *Independent Reading* as a classroom structure, unification around the meaning of the term would be necessary. Sanden observed that “the ways that Independent Reading is utilized in real practice vary so much as to defy clear guidelines for effective implementation” (p. 1). In Sanden’s experience, the ambiguous nature of Independent Reading resulted in mixed perceptions about the benefits and importance of similar structures within classrooms. Sanden sought

to create a unified understanding of Independent Reading by investigating the perspectives and practices of highly effective teachers who routinely engage the structure within their classrooms. In a qualitative study, Sanden investigated teachers' understandings of Independent Reading through teacher interviews, student interviews, classroom observations, teacher surveys and classroom artifacts. Commonalities among the beliefs and practices of eight highly effective teachers formed a conceptual framework for implementing Independent Reading effectively in classrooms as a component of literacy instruction. The principal qualities of effective Independent Reading structures as identified by Sanden's study include "ongoing teacher guidance, a focus on student learning and a foundation in student needs" (p. iv).

Sanden (2012) used the findings from the investigation of highly effective teachers to make recommendations to teachers who wish to implement or refine Independent Reading as a daily classroom literacy practice. Sanden argued that it is essential to do more than provide children with time to read in the classroom. For students to receive the benefit of reading practice within the classroom teachers need also to include adult support, embedded instruction and a student focus. These features are the markings of an Independent Reading structure that promotes growth for readers of varying abilities and interests.

Like Sanden's (2011) analysis of the practices of highly-effective teachers during Independent Reading, Allington and Johnston (2001) researched the practices of exemplary fourth-grade teachers. The researchers concluded that independent readers are most successful in classrooms where teachers promote thoughtful literacy. The teachers examined were selected based on a wealth of recommendations and from various persons

in administrative and university leadership. The teachers were observed over at least 10 full instructional days during which researchers made detailed recordings and documentation of classroom practices and activities. These teachers demonstrated the ability to produce students who not only performed well on standardized tests, but also “who demonstrated dramatic improvements in their literature conversations” (p. 465). A key characteristic of these classrooms was the “extensive student engagement in reading and writing activities across the curriculum and across the school day” (p. 464).

Allington and Gabriel (2012) outlined six elements of effective reading instruction that should be a part of daily reading and writing instruction for teachers in the elementary grades. The authors argued that these elements “don’t require much time or money—just educators’ decisions to put them in place” (p.10). These daily practices include: every child reads something he or she chooses, every child reads accurately, every child reads something he or she understands, every child writes about something meaningful, every child talks with peers about reading and writing and every child listens to a fluent adult read aloud. Most of these elements are also present within the Independent Reading model described by Sanden (2011). Independent Reading as a classroom structure includes student choice in reading materials, encourages the increased volume of high-success reading practice and provides supportive structures that scaffold students’ use of strategic behavior in reading for accuracy and comprehension.

Allington and Gabriel (2012) observed that while many classrooms lack the six elements of effective reading instruction, it is not difficult “to find the time and resources to implement them” (p. 14). The authors argued that teachers should eliminate all worksheets and used the money saved to purchase extensive classroom libraries and use

the time saved for self-selected reading and self-selected writing practices. Allington and Gabriel also argued that banning test preparation materials would provide the time and resources needed to implement more effective practices in reading and writing. The authors also noted that struggling readers are less likely than their peers to participate in high-quality instructional practices. These students are often assigned to specialized classes with prescriptive programs that do not support or encourage high volumes of successful reading practice. The authors believed that struggling readers should have as much or more opportunity to engage in these authentic literacy practices as their more successful or higher achieving classmates.

Pearson and Gallagher (1983) recommend that reading teachers employ a gradual release of responsibility model. Within this model teacher incrementally shift the responsibility of making meaning from the teacher to the student and then cycling back again. Each cycle allows exploration and introduction of increasingly complex texts through which to employ newly acquired and introduced strategies. For this gradual shift to occur students require a range of high-interest reading materials of varying text complexities. Students also require extensive time to read and regular support from skillful teachers who have sufficient means for monitoring progress. Teachers provide instructional support by guiding students through increasingly complex texts using sophisticated strategies for comprehension. This gradual release model places a unique emphasis on the responsibility of the teacher to facilitate and propel students toward higher levels of proficiency. This framework has become the guiding principle for teachers seeking to implement an effective Independent Reading Structure.

Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, and Smith (2008) concluded that an Independent Reading model known as scaffolded silent reading students led to an increase in academic reading achievement. Through this model of in-school reading practice, student gains in reading exceeded the national averages. Students demonstrated a 43% average increase in ideas recalled which revealed a significant increase in comprehension skills.

Foorman et al. (2006) conducted a study of over 1,200 first and second-graders and their teachers. The researchers identified the ways in which students spend instructional time which included oral language, grammar, vocabulary, letter recognition, word work and text reading. These components of instruction were examined in relation to the end of year reading achievement scores. The singular variable that served to predict improved achievement was time spent on text reading. Similarly, Allington (2011) stated that an examination of the most successful reading interventions reveals that two-thirds of the intervention block is spent either reading or rereading texts.

Reutzel and Juth (2014) reviewed the characteristics of effective silent reading fluency instruction and practice. The authors identified the chief characteristics of highly engaged readers as “the ability to read from self-selected texts, for extended periods of time, focusing on key ideas, all the while self-regulating attention away from distractions and toward remaining immersed in reading the text” (p. 29). The authors likewise identified the major challenges that prohibit students from achieving high levels of engagement as how students select texts, time on task, student accountability, lack of talk about text and teacher engagement. The authors make recommendations for how to combat the influences that interfere with engaged reading.

Reutzel and Juth (2014) make the case that to be highly engaged students must choose texts of high interest and appropriate difficulty. The authors cite that poor text selection behaviors results in negative reading attitudes and disengagement. Additionally, teachers must “allocate sufficient reading time during the day as well as hold students accountable for reading practice time” (p. 31). Accountability measures such as reading logs, reader response notebooks and anecdotal notes are cited as effective. The authors also argue that students who have a purpose for reading and know they will be expected to talk about what they read, are more likely to be engaged. In breaking with more traditional models of silent reading time, the researchers argued that teachers should be more active in conferring with students during reading time.

Considering these findings, Reutzel and Juth (2014) recommend that teachers implement four core evidence-based components that support silent reading fluency in elementary grades. The four components are allocated practice time, supportive classroom environments, engaged reading and teacher scaffolds and instruction. The authors argued that daily, regular practice extending for twenty minutes or more would be an improvement for most students in terms of time provided for reading practice. Supportive classroom environments must include a library that is furnished, inviting, organized and contains at least 300 books that are diverse in genre and complexity. Reutzel and Juth state that the most critical way to motivate readers is to allow choice in reading material. Additional methods for increasing motivation include feedback, incentives and social interactions around texts. Finally, the authors state the importance of teacher scaffolds and instruction as a critical part of silent reading practice. Scaffolds

and instruction may come in the form of strategy lessons, procedural lessons and frequent responsive individual conferences with students.

Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) cited an initiative by Gay Ivey and Peter Johnston to implement guided reading as the sole reading instruction offered to students in a high-needs middle school in Virginia. During Independent Reading students were spending large amounts of time reading predominantly novels. The students began to demonstrate increased motivation to read and became deeply immersed and engaged in their reading. Although the state emphasis in Virginia rested mostly on non-fiction, students could demonstrate significant improvement on state tests through their extensive reading practice of fiction. Practitioners attributed this increase in achievement to the simple fact that students had not been reading at all prior to the implementation of Independent Reading and now they were.

Reading Engagement

This action research study seeks to investigate the methods and benefits of improving student engagement in reading. Unrau and Quirk (2014) analyzed a body of literature and research surrounding the constructs of reading motivation and reading engagement to clarify these often-confused conceptions that have significant implications for literacy learning. The authors identify the differences in the two constructs and show how understanding the distinctions can “deepen our understanding of their uniqueness and interplay” (p. 260). The researchers believed that the “blurring” of the meanings of these two construction leads to “their imprecise application and measurement” (p. 260). They believed that clarifying the constructs would be beneficial to “practitioners and researchers applying and investigating these two constructs” (p. 260). The clearest

understanding of the distinctions between motivation and engagement is observable in their active manifestations. Unrau and Quirk state that:

Engagement manifests as involvement in some activity, such as reading. In the context of a reader preparing to read, motivation would include the reader's self-perceived reading competency, value attributed to reading tasks, and ability to succeed given the reading task presented. Engagement, on the other hand, would include indicators of action in and interaction with the environment, such as number of words read, evidence of comprehension, and actual strategies used in the reading process. Engagement entails relationship and some form of fit between the reader and the environment. (p. 264)

Unrau and Quirk (2014) found engagement has three components: (a) affective engagement, (b) behavioral engagement, and (c) cognitive engagement. Affective engagement is described as the "emotions that students experience in classroom settings" (p. 265). Behavioral engagement is described as "positive conduct, involvement in academic tasks, and participation in school-related activities" (p. 266). Cognitive engagement is understood as "investment in learning" or "strategic approaches to learning" (p. 266). Measures associated with cognitive engagement tend to focus on students' use of metacognitive and strategy use. The literature also suggests that teacher support is a strong predictor of all other facets of engagement. In terms of reading engagement, the authors cited Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) as developing the reading engagement perspective that is most frequently used to study motivation in reading.

Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) explained that engaged readers can coordinate cognition (both in terms of knowledge and strategies) within a context that is sensitive to

students' motivational needs such as goals, wishes, and intentions. In their reading engagement perspective “motivation is the foundational process for reading engagement and is a major contributor...to disengagement from reading” (p. 405). The model seeks to explain how instructional, motivational and engagement variable can work together to impact reading outcomes. The instructional context within their model of reading development include: (a) teacher involvement, (b) evaluation, (c) interesting texts, (d) real-world interactions, (e) autonomy support, and (f) learning and knowledge goals. Within this model, instruction itself is not the key predictor of student success, but rather the extent to which students are engaged.

There are multiple dimensions to reading motivation within Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) engagement model of reading development: (a) goals, (b) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, (c) self-efficacy, and (d) social motivation. Their perspective on reading engagement supported the idea that motivation is complex, is subject to change and inspires readers to read. Motivation is also key to the students' use of cognitive processes during reading as they seek to purposefully make meaning from texts.

Guthrie has contributed to a large body of work that investigates the process and benefits of increasing student literacy engagement. In Guthrie's (1996) article “Educational Contexts for Engagement in Literacy,” he shares his personal vision for literacy engagement, explanations for its importance and recommendations to teachers for how an engaging literacy classroom can be created. Guthrie explained that reading engagement is essentially motivation to read. However, motivation that leads to life-long continued engagement as a reader includes involvement, curiosity and social motivations. Mere compliance is a motivation that does not sustain long-term literacy development.

Guthrie stated that "when children internalize a variety of personal goals for literacy activity, such as involvement, curiosity, social interchange, emotional satisfaction, and self-efficacy, they become self-determining" (p. 433). Guthrie's view of literacy engagement represents a shift in perspective on engagement as it "depicts the learner as possessing a variety of motivations to gain conceptual understanding by using cognitive competencies and participating in a diversity of social exchanges" (p. 434). This complex view of engagement in literacy brings nuanced understanding to the challenges of increasing student engagement and implications for the resulting benefits to students as individuals.

Guthrie (1996) argued that literacy engagement is important because "it links traditional notions of cognitive competence" to a learner's personal needs, motivations and to "the potential of literacy as an avenue for gaining knowledge" (p. 436). He notes that teaching reading as a simple cognitive competency has proven ineffective for increasing students' achievement or promoting literacy as a tool for "personal growth and participation in society" (p. 436). Guthrie described classrooms that foster literacy engagement contain instructional dimensions that are observational, conceptual, self-directed, strategic, collaborative, self-expressive, and coherent. In Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) these dimensions are distributed over time, not all at once. Guthrie described hazards that often interfere with the CORI approach to literacy learning. He cautions teachers not to work alone, seek out formulas to follow or over-reliance on materials to educate for literacy engagement. Ultimately, Guthrie believes that if the learning context supports motivational goals of involvement, curiosity, social

interaction, challenge, and enhancement of self-efficacy into school activities, students will become “intensively engaged” (p. 436).

Wigfield et al. (2008) conducted a study to determine what impact instruction in cognitive strategies would have on student engagement during reading. The researchers implemented a Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) program that instructed students both in cognitive and motivation processes in reading. The first finding of the study suggested that reading engagement and reading comprehension were correlated. The second finding was that students experiencing the CORI had increased comprehension, strategy use and reading engagement than students in other more traditional programs. The third and most suggestive finding was that the impact on comprehension was mediated by the level of engagement of readers. Essentially, engagement was a more powerful influence on achievement than the instruction itself. Therefore, if an increase in engagement was noted, an increase in comprehension also occurred. If an increase in engagement was not noted, then neither would there be an increase in comprehension or strategy use. This study underscores the impact of engagement on a student's ability to achieve in reading.

Carey, Howard, and Leftwich (2013) conducted an action research study to investigate the impact of conferencing, teacher modeling and student choice on student engagement during Independent Reading. The purpose was to increase engagement during Independent Reading for 32 fourth-grade and 26 seventh-grade science students. Before the study, the students demonstrated many off-task reading behaviors such as staring at books, flipping through pages and browsing bookshelves. One contributing factor was that only half of students were initially able to locate a book at their level

which may have affected the students' ability to engage during Independent Reading. During the treatment phase teacher conferencing with students was conducted once a week during the daily reading block. Students also engaged in book talks with peers during this time. The teacher modeled appropriate reading behaviors, strategies for comprehension and allowed students choice in their reading materials. The results of the study showed that the off-task behaviors of staring at books and flipping through pages had significantly decreased. The researchers determined that teacher conferencing, modeling reading behaviors and student choice had a positive impact on students' reading engagement.

Scraw, Flowerday, and Reisetter (1998) conducted a study to investigate the effect of choice on cognitive and affective reading engagement in college students. The experiment found that “unrestricted choice heightened favorable affective perceptions of the reading experience engagement” (p. 705). However, the results did not demonstrate an effect on cognitive measures of engagement. Choice increased the enjoyment of reading for the students in the study but did not interfere with one's ability to comprehend what was read. The limits of the study's implications for younger children were noted by the researchers. The researcher posed that “choice given on a regular basis over a long period may have an important cumulative effect that was not examined in the present research” (p. 712). Plausibly, this cumulative effect may show that choice has an impact on cognitive engagement. The researchers cited the need for further study to prove this theory.

Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, and Rosseet (2012) examined the relationships between elementary students' recreational and academic reading motivation, reading

frequency, engagement and comprehension. The researchers used a questionnaire that was designed to measure recreational and academic reading motivation based on self-determination theory. Self-determination theory seeks to differentiate between two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. The study intended to fill a need for further examination of children's reason for reading. The results revealed that recreational, autonomous reading motivation is associated with more positive reading behavior and better performance. Autonomous reading motivation in the study refers to students "engaging in reading activities for their own enjoyment or because of their perceived personal significance and meaning" (p. 1015). The authors claim that the implications of this study include that "interventions aiming at fostering reading motivation" should "especially focus on enhancing autonomous reasons for reading" (p. 1019).

Pflaum and Bishop (2002) conducted a study investigating middle school students' perceptions of reading engagement. The students participated in private, semi-structured interviews during the school day in which they could reflect orally and through drawings about their school experiences with reading. The researchers found that students spoke most warmly about two kinds of reading: teacher read-alouds and silent, Independent Reading. The students shared common experiences in Independent Reading. The students' comments and illustrations revealed the students perceived this time as quiet, calming and free of distractions where they can get "lost" in a book. The students commented positively on being able to read what they wanted and not having any assignments to complete. The researchers concluded that "choice, pursuing personal preferences, quiet, and not having to write were conditions that led to these students' engagement in silent reading" (p. 207).

Weigh (2014) conducted a qualitative research study that investigated self-selected reading as a tool for increasing students' engagement with text in terms of deeper meaning. Weigh argued that textbook reading and skill-based reading encourages literal comprehension that tends to focus on surface thinking rather than deep, internal engagement and transaction with the text. To support this belief, Weigh analyzed a series of student responses to self-selected texts to determine what type of response was elicited by reading self-selected materials. The researcher found that student responses from self-selected texts included self-expression, goal reflection, analysis of author's craft, creativity and connection to significant events in text. These types of responses reflect a deeper, more personal engagement with the text.

Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009) developed a continuum that reflects the varying levels of reading engagement among students within the classroom. The authors argued that "knowing more about students' habits allows the teacher to differentiate Independent Reading to meet everyone's needs" (p. 313). The categories on the continuum include: fake readers, challenged readers, unrealistic or wannabe readers, compliant readers, stuck-in-a-genre readers and bookworms. The continuum shows the correlation between the level of student independence and the level of teacher support required to support each reader. The more independent a student is, the less teacher support is required. The less independent a student is, the more teacher support is required.

Kelly and Clausen-Grace (2009) provide descriptions and teaching implications for each category of reader. The fake reader rarely ever reads and requires teacher check-ins and conferring. Challenged readers find reading difficult and often read below level. These readers need frequent feedback and support in finding just-right books. Unrealistic

or wannabe readers switch books often because they choose books that are usually too hard for them and thus, rarely enjoy reading. These readers need advice on book selection and support for sticking with texts. Compliant readers read because they are told to and do not think much about reading outside of school. These readers need an atmosphere that celebrates and encourages reading as well as direction in discovering new and interesting genres. The “does nonfiction count?” readers crave information and are disengaged without access to nonfiction books (p. 315). These readers need access to a large collection of non-fiction books and reading materials at their instructional level. The “I can, but I don’t want to readers” are capable of locating books that are at their instructional level but lack the zeal for reading (p. 317). This category of readers needs support in find books of high interest to increase engagement. The “stuck in a genre” readers will often read willingly, but only in a select genre or series of books (p. 317). Teacher should gently lead and encourage these students into new but similar reading genres or series. Finally, the authors identify the bookworms as book fanatics that will be eager to read, even when they are not supposed to. Bookworms need continued encouragement and opportunities to stop and reflect openly on what they are reading.

The authors Kelley-Clausen and Grace (2010) stated that these recommendations for readers of different categories are intended to increase student engagement in reading practice. They believe that teacher actions can result in a student moving in directions across the continuum toward more independent and self-sustaining reading habits. The authors argued that by “noticing each reader’s level of engagement, determining needs and differentiating the support provided to each student,” *Independent Reading* and student engagement will improve.

Gambrell (2011) outlined seven rules of engagement that are key for practitioners to consider when crafting instructional approach to teaching reading that fosters the development of highly engaged readers. Gambrell argued that decoding and comprehension instruction is not sufficient. For readers to reach their full potential they must also be motivated to read. The author defines motivation as “the likelihood of engaging in reading or choosing to read” (p. 172). Gambrell’s approach to student engagement is like that of Guthrie and Wigfield’s (2000) engagement model of reading development. Gambrell (2011) stated that “engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read for a variety of personal goals, strategic in their reading behaviors, knowledgeable in their construction of new understandings from text, and socially interactive about the reading of text” (p. 173).

The seven rules of engagement outlined by Gambrell (2011) begin with the understanding that students are more motivated to read when tasks are relevant to their own lives. Gambrell also held that students are motivated to read when reading materials made available to students are diverse and plentiful. The author stated that students are motivated when they are given ample time for reading practice. Students are also more motivated when they have choice in what they read and when they complete literacy tasks. Gambrell cited that students are motivated when they can interact with other students and individuals about what they were reading. Motivation for reading increases when students have texts that advance but do not overwhelm readers in terms of difficulty. Gambrell’s final rule of engagement said that students are engaged when the incentives for reading correspond to the value and importance of reading. These incentives are found in teacher feedback, genuine praise and scaffolding. Additionally,

Gambrell cited evidence that extrinsic rewards for reading are found to undermine students' intrinsic motivations to read. While tangible rewards can be effective motivators, studies cited by Gambrell show that when those related to reading behaviors, it supports intrinsic motivations. The author also encourages teachers to keep classroom libraries vibrant and updated to attract students to the idea and enjoyment of reading.

Brozo and Flynt (2008) outlined six evidence-based principles for motivating students to read content area related texts: elevating self-efficacy, engendering interest in new learning, connecting outside with inside school literacies, making an abundance of texts available, expanding choices and options and structuring collaboration for motivation. The authors encouraged teachers to create conditions for learning that reinforce a students' belief in their ability to be successful in reading. Brozo and Flynt cite that one way to increase this sense of self-efficacy is to generate interest in new content to be presented. Like the ideas presented by Gambrell (2011), the author encouraged teachers to provide students access to ample books, time and choice when reading. Also, the authors stress the importance of collaboration and interaction with others to motivate students to read in the content areas.

Virgil (1994) made the argument that by allowing students more time and choice in school reading experiences, teachers can help students overcome their resistance and apathetic attitude towards reading. Virgil states that shifting attitudes about reading is critical in improving student reading engagement. Virgil views allow children the time to read and choice of what to read is not only a tool for increasing student achievement, but it is also a matter of social justice. Virgil argued that if teachers want children to develop into autonomous, responsible, self-confident individuals then “teachers must lay down

their textbooks” (p. 53). Virgil states that by making time for pleasure reading and providing choice to readers, teachers can shift student attitudes about reading “and thereby take giant steps toward undoing some of the injustices committed against their students” by more imposing methods of reading instruction (p. 54).

Sanacore (1992) also argued that to increase student engagement in reading, teachers must present reading to students in a way that encourages a love for reading that translates into a life-long reading habit. Sanacore stated that accountability trends in education place students at risk for failing to become lifelong readers as choice and time for reading practice is taken away. The author made the case that cluttering the classroom with interesting reading materials and providing large blocks of time for choice reading are critical for promoting life-long reading habits among students.

Serravallo (2014a) seeks to shift perceptions and habits relating to reading assessment in her book *The Literacy Teacher’s Playbook: Four Steps for Turning Assessment Data into Goal-Directed Instruction*. The four-part protocol seeks to help teachers know their students as individual learners and “make purposeful evidence-based decisions for cross-curricular reading and writing instruction” (p. 1). The first step includes collecting data in the form of student artifacts, not in the traditional sense of purely quantitative or standardized forms. One of the integral sources of data Serravallo encourages teachers to explore includes data relating to student engagement. Serravallo defines engagement as “a reader’s motivation and desire to read and her ability to read for sustained amounts of time” (p. 3). She chooses engagement as the first lens to investigate based on the understanding that for students to improve, “they must read for long-stretches of time, with just-right material, enjoying their texts” (p. 3). Serravallo

encourages the use of book logs and inventories as useful sources of data relating to engagement. Additionally, she developed a measure referred to as the Serravallo Engagement Inventory.

The Serravallo Engagement Inventory (SEI) is described as a “kid-watching tool to quantitatively discover time on task and observable reading behaviors” (Serravallo, 2014a, p. 5). The SEI provides a systematic way to observe and record student behaviors while reading independently for an extended period. Teachers can use the SEI to record observable behaviors such as avoidance behaviors, distractibility, frequency of writing about reading and signals of engaged reading. Serravallo encourages teachers to develop their own system of recording behaviors to apply to the inventory template.

Serravallo (2014a) stated that the inventory gives the teacher “helpful information about the student’s behaviors during Independent Reading” (p. 30). The inventory helps to reveal if a student has trouble with engagement and what behaviors may interfere with an individual child’s ability to sustain engagement. A teacher can mine the inventory for information that reveals stamina, signs of disengagement, sources of distraction and patterns in reading behaviors. Serravallo encouraged teachers to use the SEI to explore student strengths and possibilities for growth in the domain of reading engagement.

The final two steps of Serravallo’s four step protocol include setting goals and creating an action plan based on information collected and analyzed related to the individual student (Serravallo, 2014a). The goals and plan can be shared with students and supported through ongoing conferring with the teacher, small group strategy lessons and partnerships with other students. Serravallo argued that student data related to student reading engagement in conjunction with data collected exploring reading fluency,

print work/decoding, reading comprehension and conversation can assist teachers in better understanding, supporting and instructing the students who puzzle teachers most. These puzzling students may include the struggling student, the high-achieving student or the one who isn't progressing. Serravallo's approach holds that that this work is never done. The cycle of collecting data, analyzing it, formulating goals and creating a plan is never done, and provides a structure that encourages continued growth for both students and teachers.

Self-Assessment

Afflerbach (2014) stated that the intention of reading instruction is to support the development of successful, independent readers. He believed at the heart of independence is a student's ability to self-assess. Teachers expect that once comprehension strategies, decoding strategies and critical reading skills are taught, that the students will initiate such strategies appropriately and use them independently. Guthrie believes that these expectations are all related to metacognition, a form of self-assessment. Self-assessment requires that students "plan their reading, set goals, gauge their ongoing progress at constructing meaning" as well as be cautious about potential obstacles, navigate them and "get back on track" (p. 30). Successful self-assessment builds a sense of self-efficacy that helps them to navigate future learning and reading experiences with increased enthusiasm. Afflerbach argued that the "awareness that comes from regular self-assessment may also contribute to students' social development" (p. 31).

Afflerbach (2014) offers checklists as a scaffolding tool for building self-assessment routines and practices. He argued that "with practice and experience, students

can be comfortable using the items on the checklist and begin to use them independently” (p. 31). Afflerbach observed that successful readers grow the ability to self-assess internally and automatically. The goal of reading teachers should be to foster the development of metacognitive awareness students. Such an awareness will allow student to “read more texts more successfully” (p. 31).

McMillan and Hearn (2008) observed that “in the current era of standards-based education, student self-assessment stands along in its promise of improved student motivation and engagement” (p. 40). The authors believed that when correctly implemented, student self-assessment increases students’ intrinsic motivation which leads to “a mastery goal orientation and more meaningful learning” (p. 40). The authors argued that because of the increase in a student’s internal efforts, improvement in student performance would be observable in the classroom and on standardized assessments.

The authors explained self-assessment as a process by which students “monitor and evaluate the quality of their thinking and behavior when learning” (McMillan & Hearn, 2008, p. 40). Additionally, self-assessment involves a process by which students “identify strategies that improve their understanding and skills” (p.40). The authors conceptualize self-assessment as a cyclical process of self-monitoring, self-evaluation and identification and implementation of instructional correctives as needed. First, self-monitoring allows students pay close attention to what they are doing in comparison to external standards. Secondly, self-judgment requires students to monitor their own progress toward a target or performance goal. And finally, students choose subsequent learning goals to extend their own learning. Once students have identified the appropriate goals for furthering their learning, the cycle can begin again. Self-assessment

is viewed by the authors as a critical component of formative assessment practices that provide feedback to students to enhance performance during the learning process.

McMillan and Hearn (2008) encourage teachers to support students in developing self-assessment processes that develop “an awareness of which metacognitive strategies to use and when to use them” (p. 45). Student self-assessment requires teachers to establish clear learning targets and criteria, opportunities for self-evaluation and opportunities for reflection. The authors argued that these steps will accomplish two critical goals “improved student self-efficacy and confidence to learn” (p. 49).

Roskos and Newman (2012) identified self-assessment as a critical component of effective formative assessment practices that improve and inform classroom instruction. The authors argued that “if learning is to take hold—the teacher has to hand over her cognitive work to the student who, in turn, needs to assume responsibility for getting it right” (p. 536). This requires students to go “meta” and begin to monitor his or her own “strategies and performance” (p. 536). Roskos and Newman argued that while other forms of assessment are superficial, this reflective practice is more meaningful and productive. For students to take on this responsibility, the authors believed that teachers would have to provide opportunities for self-assessment regularly in the classroom, especially in reading. Teachers need to encourage students to “set goals, peer review, self-evaluate and hold themselves accountable” (p. 536).

Afflerbach (1995) described how self-assessment was used to effectively improve student performance in literacy-related practices in a school that served a high population of second language students in the early grades. The school's position on assessment, was that it permeated every school day. Assessment informed teachers of not only what

students have learned but also what they were prepared to learn. The teachers within the school used information gained through assessments to drive instructional decisions rather than a prescriptive curriculum. Long range plans, short range plans and daily lessons were informed by on-going assessments. The teachers often used self-assessment or goal-setting interviews with student to gain “insight into the child’s perspective” of themselves as a learner (p. 623). The responses offered by students alerted teachers to obstacles for learning and insights into how the students perceived themselves as learners. Teachers within the school believed that making children a part of the assessment process allowed them “to take control of their own learning” and teachers could serve as merely facilitators (p. 623).

Rock and Thead (2007) investigated the effects of a strategic self-monitoring intervention on academic engagement of students. The students were taught to use the strategy during independent math and reading work. The intervention strategies utilized were designed to help chronically disengaged students take control of their learning. The intervention demonstrated positive effects for enhancing the academic performance of students through attention to disengaged behaviors and responsive instructional efforts. These findings were shown for students with and without disabilities.

Desautel (2009) conducted a study to explore what practices led to self-reflection and promoted metacognitive development in young children. The author believed that promoting student awareness of learning tasks and awareness of themselves as learners would increase motivation and student performance. The instruction designed to promote metacognitive skills and habits included goal setting, language prompts, written self-reflections and oral conversations. The author found these practices had positive effects

on student performance but also came to acquire new understandings regarding ways in which to instill metacognitive behaviors among students. The author found that making metacognition both an intra- and interpersonal matter made the process more impactful. Goal-setting as a communal activity gave students a spirit of accountability with a larger audience with additional sources of motivation and encouragement. Desautel began to ponder what “potential for developing metacognition in an academic sense lies in tapping metacognitive knowledge in another schema, such as social relations” (p. 14).

Serravallo (2016) created a self-assessment tool for allowing students to reflect on their own reading life and behaviors as it relates to engagement, print work, fluency, conversation, writing and comprehension. The self-reflection tool is designed to support students in determining appropriate goals for themselves in critical dimensions that support literacy learning. The intent of the tools is not to evaluate students, but to allow them to self-reflect and take an active role in directing their future practice and growth as a reader. The aspects of engagement the students are encouraged to reflect on include: the ability to get settled to read, the ability to read without distraction, the ability to find good fit books and the ability to examine their own attitudes about reading.

Summary

The body of research presented in this literature review demonstrates that investigating ways of increasing student engagement in reading is a worthwhile endeavor for practitioners and researchers in education. Providing the opportunity for students to engage in purposeful, self-directed reading practice has shown to benefit all students regardless of ability or demographics (Guthrie et al., 2001). Opportunities to engage in successful, self-directed reading practice within the school day are of unique importance

to students who may lack adequate support and resources in the home (Allington, 2012). Self-assessment as a tool to increase student engagement in reading practice not only positions students to achieve more in reading, but also to take an active role in developing personal reading habits that will extend beyond the classroom (Afflerbach, 2014). This research aims to empower students to take ownership of their own reading life and limit the occurrence of second-grade teachers imposing directives for reading practice on to students in the classroom. Increasing student engagement in reading through self-assessment has the potential not only to increase student achievement in reading, but also to foster the development of thoughtful, life-long readers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The correlation between students spending large amounts of time in engaged reading practice and increased achievement in reading is widely documented in educational research (Allington, 2014; Anderson et al., 1998; Snow et al., 1998). The impact of reading volume on reading achievement for students has led to the wide use of Independent Reading time as a regular classroom structure. One major obstacle that teachers face in the implementation of Independent Reading is the challenge to ensure that all students are engaged as readers during this time. The South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts require that students not only “read independently” but also that students “become self-directed, critical readers and thinkers” (SCDE, 2015a). For students to develop as independent readers who are also self-directed, they must have the opportunity to self-monitor and self-reflect on their own reading practices. The demand for students to become self-directed readers requires that teachers look outside the traditional forms of imposed teacher led assessment and acquire assessment practices that enfranchise students in the assessment process.

Problem of Practice

Teachers at X Elementary School recognize the importance of allowing students time to read independently in the regular school day. One such teacher is Mrs. H, a second-grade teacher with 12 years of teaching experience. Independent Reading has become a daily structure in her classroom that allows students to engage in self-directed

reading practice. Students are given choice in reading materials that they select from a well-supplied classroom library. Within the library students find a range of texts that vary in genre and complexity. Students can visit the classroom and school library weekly. Students are instructed to select books that are of interest to them and that are “just-right” for their reading practice. “Just-right” books are recognized as books that are not too challenging and not too easy. Students are encouraged to select books in which they can read most of the words and understand the meaning or purpose of the text. Students begin the year spending 10-15 minutes a day reading independently and gradually increase their stamina to read for as much as 30-40 minutes a day.

During Independent Reading time, the teacher will confer with readers in small groups or individually to provide differentiated instruction in reading strategies or to check-in with students on their current reading practice and goals. For the teacher to maximize the use of Independent Reading time for small group or individualized instruction, it is imperative that the rest of the class remained engaged in their reading practice. If students become disengaged in their reading during Independent Reading time, it detracts from the ability of other students to sustain engagement in reading and requires the teacher to stop instruction in small groups and redirect the disengaged students. For Independent Reading time to be valuable for both reading practice and differentiated instruction, the students must be self-directed in their independent reading.

Mrs. H. finds that some students in her classroom have a particularly difficult time staying engaged during Independent Reading. She has noted disengaged behaviors such as talking to other students, looking around the room, flipping pages and other off-task behaviors. She has taken time to conference with these students and re-examine

routines and procedures for Independent Reading. As a reading coach, Mrs. H has solicited my help in addressing the challenge of helping her students stay engaged during Independent Reading time.

Research Question

What impact does self-assessment have on the engagement of second-grade students during Independent Reading time?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research is to determine what impact the introduction of a self-assessment rubric may have on the reading engagement of second-grade students during Independent Reading in a Title I school. The study seeks to investigate self-assessment as an additional tool that may be used by teachers to assist in fostering the development of engaged, self-directed readers in the classroom. The development of self-regulated behaviors also aligns with the South Carolina College and Career ready standards that require students to “become self-directed, critical readers and thinkers” (SCDE, 2015a).

Action Research Design

Action research is defined by Nolen and Putten (2007) as “a practical yet systematic research method that enables teachers to investigate their own teaching and their students’ learning” (p. 401). In the past 20 years, action research has become recognized as a more effective means of professional development and has helped to redefine teaching as an inquiry centered practice. The increased use of action research methods in the teaching profession has empowered educators to examine and analyze their own practices to develop a deeper understanding of themselves, their students and

the field of education. The findings associated with action research inspire educators to make meaningful changes that can have an immediate positive impact on classroom teaching and learning. The personal nature of action research fosters relevant and practical shifts in pedagogy, “bridging the gap between research and day-to-day applications” (Nolen & Putten, p. 401).

Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun (2102) stated that the primary purpose of action research is to “improve practice in the short term as well as to inform larger issues” (p. 590). The authors also identified five advantages of doing action research, rather than more traditional types of research. First, Fraenkel et al. argued that action research can be done by almost any professional, at any school, at any grade level about almost any problem. Secondly, action research can improve teaching practices, increasing teacher effectiveness but also helping educators “understand and apply the research findings of others” (p. 590). Third, action research can help teacher modify and improve their own strategies and techniques. Fourth, action research allows teachers to identify problems systematically and address them purposefully. Lastly, the nature of action research assists with community building, strengthening the collaboration of educators in pursuit of improving teaching and learning practices.

For the purposes of my action research, I used the Mertler (2014) model for action research which includes four major stages: *planning*, *acting*, *developing* and *reflecting*. This chapter outlines the methodologies that are used to address the following research question: what impact does self-assessment have on the engagement of second-grade students during Independent Reading time? My action research also reflects a collaborative inquiry that involves the cooperation of a second-grade classroom teacher

who shares an interest in investigating ways to increase student engagement during Independent Reading. Throughout the research process we endeavored to learn more about our craft as educators, our students as learners and how self-assessment may affect the ability of our students to grow as engaged, self-directed and proficient readers.

Setting and Time Frame of Study

The present action research study was conducted at X Elementary School, a Title I public school in Sumter, South Carolina. The student population for the 2017-2018 school year was approximately 800 students. X Elementary is located within the X School District which has been designated as a Title I school district with over 80% of students from low-income homes. Approximately 58% of these students are identified as African American, 36% are identified as White, and 6% are identified as other. (NCES, 2016) On the State assessment for English Language Arts (ELA) in 2015 approximately 61% of students in grades 3-5 scored proficient in English and 21% of students scored proficient in reading (SCDE, 2016). (To protect the identity of the participants and settings, pseudonyms will be used throughout the study.)

This study occurred in a second-grade classroom within the fourth quarter grading period of the 2017-2018 school year. Although the class consisted of 23 students, seven students were targeted specifically throughout the data collection period. The data was collected over a six-week period. As the participant-researcher, I collected data on Monday and Wednesdays during the Independent Reading block that occurs between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m.

Participant-Researcher

I have served as the reading coach for X Elementary School since the 2014-2015 school year. I support approximately 60 teachers ranging from grades Pre-K to fifth grade, as well as special education and special services teachers. My role as a reading coach includes planning with teachers, facilitating professional development, modeling lessons for teachers, assisting with assessment practices, observing classrooms and analyzing data for monitoring student progress and improving instruction. My responsibilities include facilitating the Read to Succeed Endorsement courses required by the South Carolina State Department of Education for all certified elementary teachers and administrators. I am required to facilitate monthly class meetings, lead small group professional learning communities, observe course-related lessons and review course-related assignments. I also spend a significant amount of time observing classroom reading instruction, modeling for teachers, conferencing with teachers, providing feedback and sharing resources that will benefit teaching and learning. As a reading coach, I also engage in coaching cycles. During coaching cycles, I collaborate with specific teachers for an extended period to support planning and instruction related to reading practice. The cycles are often initiated by teacher inquiries or to support new or struggling teachers.

In previous roles, I have served as a classroom teacher in the first, second and third-grades. I have also served as Reading Recovery and small-group early reading interventionist. My qualifications for these roles include National Board Certification in Early and Middle Literacy, Reading Recovery Certification and I have also recently completed the requirements for the Literacy Coach Endorsement.

Teacher-Participant

The teacher-participant for this action research study is a second-grade classroom teacher who will be referred to as Mrs. H. Mrs. H has been a classroom teacher for 13 years. She has experience in teaching fifth, third, and second grades. Mrs. H has been teaching second grade for five years. This year Mrs. H was named our school's Distinguished Literacy Teacher of the Year. She demonstrates a commitment toward supporting the needs of all readers in the classroom and her efforts produce outstanding growth and achievement among the students in her classroom. This year more than 80% of her students met or exceeded their goals in the Measures of Academic Progress testing. It is Mrs. H's commitment to excellence in literacy instruction in the classroom and her continued efforts to improve her craft that made her an ideal partner for this action research study.

In my previous partnerships with Mrs. H, we have collaborated on the identification of struggling readers, progress monitoring and designing supportive interventions in the classroom. She routinely seeks out support and advice in these areas. She has demonstrated a commitment to allowing children time to engage in sustained reading practice with books of choice daily in her classroom's Independent Reading time. In the last few years she has spent considerable time expanding her classroom library and establishing routines and procedures that allow children to maximize the time and potential impact of Independent Reading. It is her desire to ensure that all students are actively engaged during Independent Reading that has inspired this action research study.

Student-Participants

Mrs. H has a classroom of 24 students consisting of 12 boys and 12 girls. At the beginning of the year, 11 out of the 24 students were identified as being below grade level in reading. Approximately 10 of the students also qualified for daily small-group reading intervention outside of the classroom. The racial composition of the class consisted of 13 African American Students, 1 Asian Pacific student, and 10 Caucasian students. Five students in Mrs. H's class have an Individualized Education Plan for reading and receive services outside of the regular classroom. Four students in her class are also served outside of the regular classroom for speech and language disabilities. The frequent pull-out services of reading intervention, speech services and resources services for reading pose challenges to the daily planning and scheduling for Mrs. H's class.

For the purposes of this study, seven students were selected to be subjects for observation and data collection. These students were selected based on the teacher's perception and concerns about reading engagement, as well as their availability in the classroom. The students selected were not subjected to regular pull-out services and received the clear majority of their instructional support from Mrs. H in the regular classroom. The student-participants include five females and two males. Three of the females are African American and two are Caucasian. One male student is white and the other is Asian Pacific.

Jane is a child in a single-parent family. She appears to have a difficult time staying focused in the classroom. Jane is an on-level reader.

Ariel appears to be a very timid and quiet student. She entered second-grade significantly below level in reading. After a year of support from the classroom teacher and interventionist, she now reads on-level.

Andy appears to be a creative and self-confident student. He is a good writer and is always creating stories with unique story lines. Andy is an on-level reader.

Karen reads on grade level. She appears to have a pleasant disposition and is very confident in all subjects.

Mary appears to be a very creative and artistic student. She is an above-level reader. She prefers to read Junie B Jones and Magic Tree House books.

Sam's is an above-level reader. Sam is also a very gifted artist and appears to take a lot of pride in his drawing and artwork.

Hannah receives speech services and requires glasses to see far away. Hannah began reading below grade level at the beginning of the year but received intervention in reading for the first part of the year. She is now reading on grade level.

Data Collection Instruments

Serravallo Engagement Inventory

For the purposes of this action research the researcher collected quantitative data using a behavioral inventory. The Serravallo Engagement Inventory (SEI) provided a system for recording student reading engagement behaviors and calculating the percentage of time a student spends demonstrating engaged reading behaviors during Independent Reading (See Appendix A). To administer the assessment the observer scanned the participants every five minutes. The behaviors observed were then coded and recorded at five-minute intervals. The codes were revised to suit the behaviors

observed. If a child was demonstrating on-task reading behaviors such as looking at print, turning pages at a reasonable rate and even responding or reacting to what is read, the behavior was coded with a check-mark indicating on-task reading behavior. Other off-task behaviors are coded accordingly; W for looking out window, OT for off-task or talking, CB for choosing books, FR for fake reading, LA for looking around, PB for playing with books and BR for buddy reading.

This instrument allowed the observer to not only describe and code the observable behaviors of students while reading systematically, but also organized the data in such a way that the researcher could calculate the percentage of time a student or class demonstrated observable behaviors of engagement. The instruments also revealed at what time intervals students demonstrated differing levels of engagement. The versatility and adaptability of this tool made it ideal for observing in a dynamic classroom setting and allowed the observer to accommodate codes to match the environment. It additionally provided both qualitative data in the form of behavior descriptions and quantitative data in the form of numeric percentages of on-task engaged reading behaviors. The SEI is limited by its ability to only record observable engaged reading behaviors. The tool is unable to truly code and identify internal cognitive activity that is also essential to engaged reading.

Interviews

At the onset and conclusion of this data collection, the participant-researcher also conducted interviews with the student and teacher participants. The interviews were structured in that the questions were predetermined by the participant-researcher. Schmuck (1997) explained that interviews allow the researcher to “probe further and ask

for clarification in a participant's response" (p. 134). For the purposes of this action research, the interview questions were designed to reveal any predispositions or attitudes about reading and reading engagement that might help to illuminate the cause of any observable on-task or off-task reading engagement behaviors. The pre-interview questions with the teacher included questions such as: Describe independent reading in your classroom. How do you feel about the engagement of readers in your classroom during Independent Reading? What do you feel are the greatest obstacles to student engagement in reading? What tools or strategies do you use to encourage or monitor student engagement during Independent Reading? What are your feelings and beliefs about student self-assessment?

The pre-interview questions for students included: How do you feel about reading? How do you feel about Independent Reading in your classroom? Is it easy for you to get distracted during Independent Reading? Why? What do you think will help you stay engaged or on-task during Independent Reading?

The post-interview questions for student-participants and the teacher-participant included questions that might further reveal any impact the self-assessment rubric had on their development of self-directed reading behaviors as well as any changes in attitudes or perceptions of reading that came because of this study. The teacher interview questions specifically helped to lead the way toward specific action steps that may come because of this research.

Field Notes

Field notes were also additional sources of qualitative data for this action research study. The field notes were observations of the student-teacher interactions during

engagement conferences and additional descriptions of behaviors observed by the participant-researcher. These field notes helped to clarify any of the behaviors coded on the Serravallo Engagement Inventory that require further explanation or description. Furthermore, the field notes contained any comments or insights provided by the student-participants or the teacher-participant throughout the study.

Self-Assessment Rubric

In this study, the self-assessment rubric that the student-participants completed served as both a treatment and an additional source of data for the teacher-participant and participant-researcher to consider. The self-assessment rubric allowed the student-participant to reflect on the nature of their cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement during Independent Reading. The students rated their own behavior using an emoji-like scale. The three rating criteria were a smiley face signifying positive rating, straight face signifying semi-positive rating and a frowning face signifying a negative rating. Although the students were rating themselves, this data proved helpful to the teacher in addressing areas of engagement with the students. Additionally, the ratings allowed the participant-researcher to see how the students' perceptions of their own levels of engagement might differ from what is observed.

Procedure

Initially the participant-researcher collected both student assent and consent forms from all participants. The participant-researcher also secured permission to conduct the study from the local school district and school principal. The six-week data collection began with pre-interviews conducted with the seven student-participants and teacher-participant. These interviews helped to reveal predispositions and attitudes from the

participant about Independent Reading, self-assessment and reading in general. The participant-researcher also completed the Serravallo Engagement Inventory during an Independent Reading block on the Wednesday prior to introducing the self-assessment rubric to students. This data served as the pretest, baseline data for the study.

For six weeks following the pre-interviews and pretest data collection, the students were given a self-assessment rubric to complete at the end of the Independent Reading block on Mondays and Wednesdays. On the first Monday, the participant-researcher explained the self-assessment rubric to the student-participants and made sure they understood the process and the rating scale. As the student-participants became more familiar with the self-assessment rubric, they completed the rubric independently at the end of Independent Reading on Mondays and Wednesdays. The items on the self-assessment rubric required the student-participants to reflect on their own emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement during that corresponding Independent Reading block. The rubrics were collected and reviewed by the participant-researcher every Monday and Wednesday.

On each Wednesday of the six-week period that the students use the self-assessment rubric the participant-researcher administered the Serravallo Engagement Inventory and carefully observed and coded the behavior of the seven student-participants in 5 minute intervals for a total of 25 minutes. Following the administration of the Serravallo Engagement Inventory, the participant-researcher analyzed the data and determined the percentage of time each individual student demonstrated engaged reading behaviors.

On each Monday of the six-week period following the introduction of the self-assessment rubric, the teacher-participant conferenced with the student-participants concerning the ratings the students assigned on their individual self-assessment rubrics. The teacher-participant conferenced with each student-participant about the positive ratings they gave themselves, the ratings that may need improvement, and what goals for engagement the student would like to make. The teacher-participant recorded these goals for each student weekly. The participant-researcher recorded field notes regarding these conferences including teacher and student responses. The teacher-participant was asked to reflect on these conferences by responding to the following questions: What did you learn about your students as readers during conferences today? Did anything surprise you? How will the information you collected impact your teaching going forward?

Throughout the six-week period that the student-participants used the self-assessment rubric, the participant-researcher added their own observations, noticing and wonderings to the field notes concerning the study. Additionally, the teacher-participant had the opportunity to contribute her own thoughts and wonderings about the study and data collected through open communication with the participant-researcher.

Following the six-week period that the student-participants used the self-assessment rubric, the participant-researcher conducted post-interviews with both the teacher-participant and student-participant. These interviews highlighted any changes in attitudes toward reading, reading engagement or self-assessment that came because of the use of the self-assessment rubric.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

This action research sought to identify what impact self-assessment may have on the reading engagement of second-graders during Independent Reading. Quantitatively, a descriptive statistical approach allowed the researcher to “simplify, summarize, and organize” the larger amount of data that was collected on student engagement (Mertler, 2014, p. 169).

Using the results of the Serravallo Engagement Inventory, the researcher computed the percentage of time each student demonstrated engaged reading behaviors during an Independent Reading block for each week. This percentage for each of the seven students was organized into a single table that contained the averages for all seven students over seven total weeks of data collection using the Serravallo Engagement Inventory. This table arrangement allowed any changes over time in engagement percentages for individual students or the seven students as a group to be easily viewed and interpreted.

Using the results of the self-assessment rubrics, the participant-researcher converted each rating from individual students into a numeric value. The positive ratings on the self-assessment rubric had a value of two, the semi-positive rating had a value of one and the negative rating had a value of zero. After converting these ratings to values the researcher added up the total sum for each student-participant on every day that the rubric was completed. The sums of the values for each student’s self-assessment rubric were placed in a table. This table contained daily sums for each child. The table

arrangement illustrated how students perceived their own engagement over the period of six weeks that the self-assessment was completed. An increase in the sum indicated a more positive self-perception while a decrease indicated a less-positive self-perception.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The field notes and interviews both served as sources of qualitative data for analysis in this study. Following the seven-week data collection period, the participant-researcher carefully examined and reviewed all field notes and interviews. The pre- and post-interviews conducted with the student-participants revealed any changes in attitudes or perceptions about reading, reading engagement or self-assessment as described by the students themselves. The pre- and post-interviews conducted with teacher-participants revealed if there was any change in attitudes about reading, reading engagement or self-assessment as described by the teacher-participant.

The field notes collected by the participant-researcher throughout the data collection period helped to reveal any description of conditions or behaviors that were not fully captured using the Serravallo Engagement Inventory. Additionally, the field notes were examined to reveal any patterns in thoughts, attitudes, questions or emerging ideas that may arise unexpectedly throughout the study. Any repetitions of ideas or behaviors were carefully examined to illustrate any themes emerging in the study.

Plan for Reflecting with Participants on Data

The nature of the relationship between the participant-researcher and teacher-participant requires a highly collaborative reflective orientation toward the data collected. Once the qualitative data from the Serravallo Engagement Inventory and self-assessment rubrics was collected and organized into tables, the participant-researcher presented the

tables to the teacher-participant. The data was examined for any visible patterns among individual students and among the larger group. The analysis determined what changes occurred as illustrated by the data and what inferences we can make from these changes about the students' level of engagement and self-perceptions of engagement.

In addition to reviewing the quantitative data tables, the teacher-participant and participant-researcher examined the field notes and summaries of the field notes for evidence that supported or contested the findings presented in the quantitative data tables. The researchers summarized these observations into major findings. The major findings surmised any important conclusions drawn from the analysis of all data.

Plan for Devising an Action Plan

Once the major findings from data analysis were established, the teacher-participant and participant-researcher considered next steps. The next steps will provide opportunities for both continued efforts and inquiry into improving reading engagement for students in the teacher-participant's classroom. Additionally, the next steps may provide opportunities to share these findings with a larger audience of potential stakeholders.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

This study examined the impact of self-assessment on student engagement during Independent Reading in a second-grade classroom. A small group of second-grade students (n=7) participated in the voluntary study for a total of six weeks during their regular Independent Reading time. In this study, I served as the participant-researcher and the classroom teacher served as the teacher-participant. The activities and data collection took place during the daily Independent Reading block within the classroom setting. As the problem of practice, the participant-researcher and teacher-participant were jointly concerned about the level of engagement among students during Independent Reading. Action research is defined by Nolen and Putten (2007) as “a practical yet systematic research method that enables teachers to investigate their own teaching and their students’ learning” (p. 401). As such, action research provides the appropriate context through which to investigate and address concerns like student reading engagement that impact student learning in the classroom.

A mixed-methods approach was applied to the collection and analysis of data for this action research study. The nature of reading engagement as a complex activity is difficult to precisely measure and observe. Thus, a mixed-methods design provides a more complete picture of engagement and related behaviors for the researchers to investigate. The study employed a self-assessment rubric that was completed twice weekly for a period of six weeks by each student-participant. The rubric allowed the

students to self-assess on behavioral, emotional and cognitive activity that relate to reading engagement. The teacher-participant and participant-researcher collaborated on the rubric criteria. The study also consisted of the administration of the Serravallo Engagement Inventory (SEI) once weekly and teacher-student conferences once weekly. In addition, student pre/post interviews were conducted as well as teacher pre/post interviews. Field notes of classroom observations were collected throughout the study by the participant-researcher. The study population consisted of a group of seven second-grade students of varied reading abilities and backgrounds. These students attended a Title I elementary school located in central South Carolina. This chapter provides a summary of the findings.

Research Questions

What impact does self-assessment have on the engagement of second-grade students during Independent Reading?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use a self-assessment rubric as a tool to potentially improve student reading engagement and build self-directed reading behaviors among students.

Findings of the Study and Interpretations of the Results

Three prevalent themes emerged after carefully reviewing the data. The first theme can be characterized as a general positive impact on reading engagement. The second theme emerged indicating obstacles to reading engagement. The third theme revealed that students expressed a positive inclination toward self-assessment as a classroom practice.

Theme One: Positive Impact on Reading Engagement

Pretest and Posttest SEI

The first notable theme emerging from the data collected was the improvement in the display of engaged reading behaviors as observed and coded by the participant-researcher on the SEI. The SEI was administered once as a pretest baseline and then weekly for the following six weeks. The comparison of the initial pretest and the final SEI administration indicated that five students demonstrated an increase in engaged reading behaviors, one student showed no change and one student showed a decrease.

Among the five students that demonstrated growth Jane, Ariel and Hannah each increased 60% in their display of engaged reading behaviors. Karen and Mary each showed a 40% and 20% increase respectively. Andy showed a small 20% decline. It is important to note that his initial pretest score of 100% would leave Andy no opportunity to increase and that his decrease of 20% was only a slight decline to 80%. The students who demonstrated gains of 60% had an initial score of 20% which provided a significant opportunity for improvement.

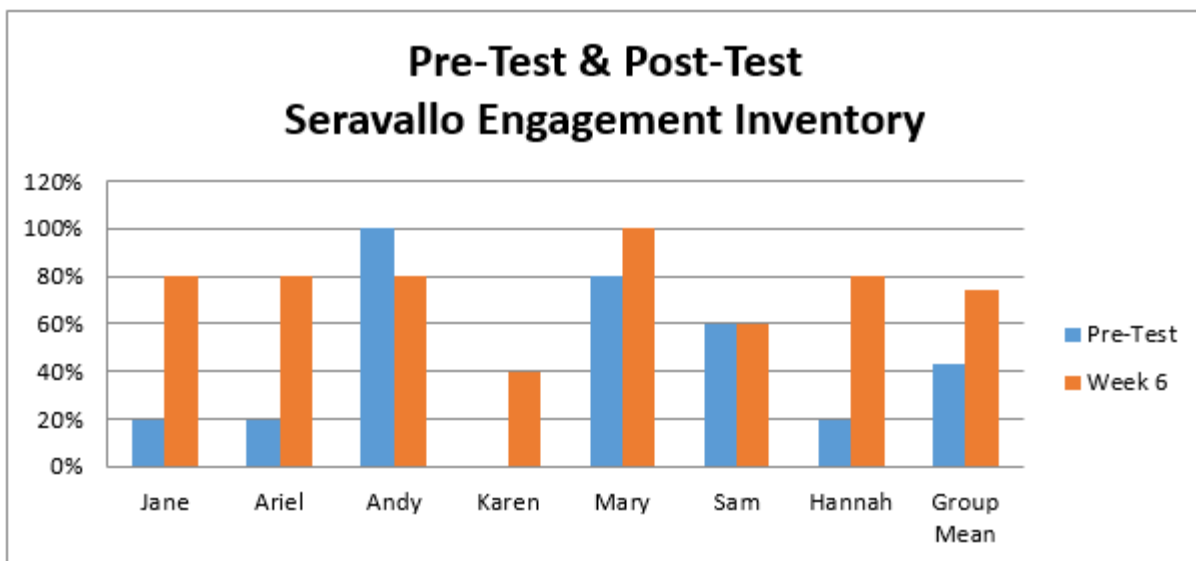


Figure 4.1. Pretest/Posttest Serravallo Engagement Inventory scores.

Considering gains in the mean group scores for the participants on the SEI, the mean group score for the pretest was 43%; the mean group score for the posttest was 74%. The mean group growth from pretest to posttest was 21%. The pretest range of scores stretched from 0% to 100%. The range for the posttest stretched from 40% to 100% for a total range 60%. There was a total difference of 40% when comparing the pretest and posttest ranges. To ensure the score continuity, the participant-researcher adhered to the same coding conventions and procedures for all administrations of the SEI. These conventions and procedures include using consistent coding abbreviations for behaviors observed and making specific observations of each student-participant at strict 5 minute intervals. During the administration of the SEI, neither the participant-researcher nor teacher-participant would redirect students who were off-task to ensure a more accurate observation of self-directed reading engagement behaviors.

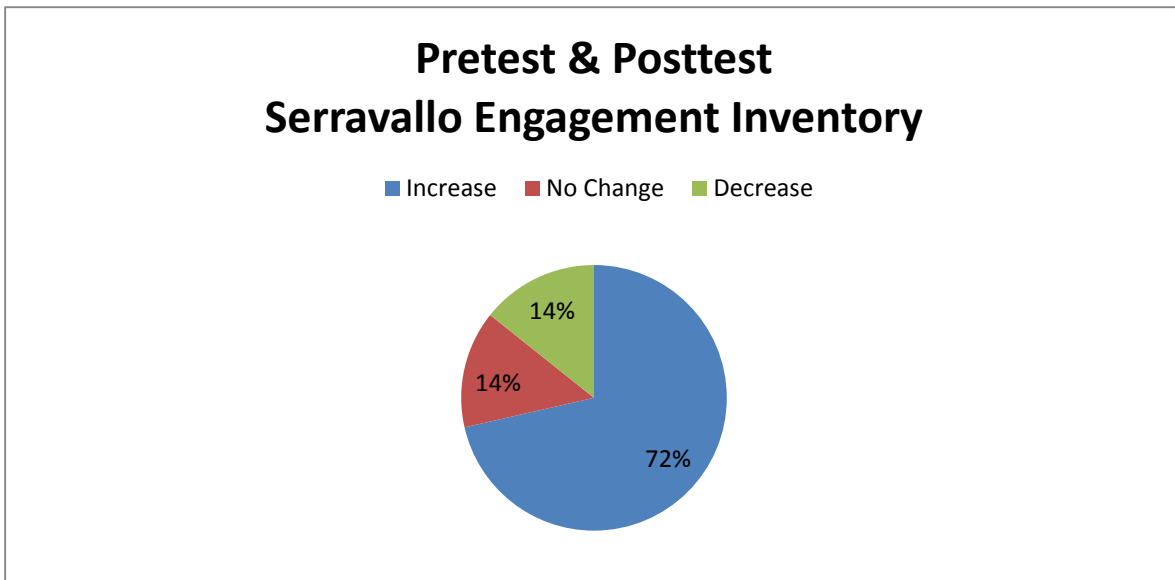


Figure 4.2. Pretest/Posttest change in scores.

Weekly SEI Scores

The participant-researcher also found upon reflecting on weekly SEI scores, there appeared to be additional evidence to support a gradual increase in reading engagement over the period of six weeks. The data collected from weeks one through three and weeks four through six were separated and means were found for each respective half of the data collection period. In a comparison of the student mean scores from the two halves, the participant-researcher found that six students demonstrated an increase in engaged reading behaviors. One student, Andy, demonstrated no gains and no students showed a decrease in engaged reading behaviors from the first half of data collection in comparison to the second half. The means from weeks one through three ranged from 33% to 87% while the means from the second half ranged from 47% to 100%. The group mean increased from 60% in the first half to 74% in the last half of data collection.

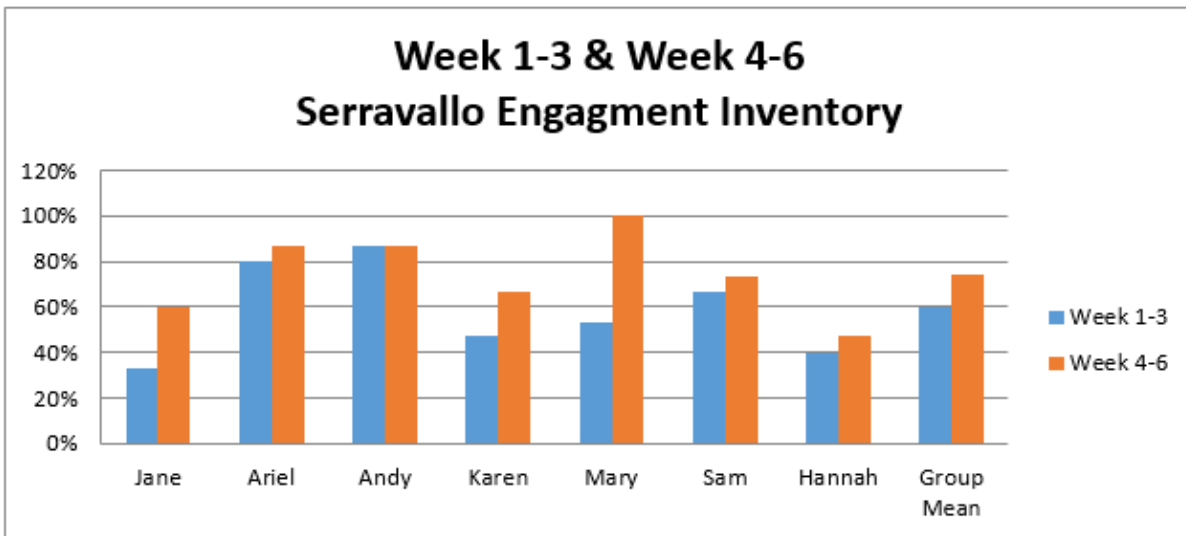


Figure 4.3. Weekly SEI score means.

The comparison of means from each half of the data collection period is important to consider. Simply comparing the pretest and posttest only captures two specific periods while looking at the mean scores across the six weeks of data collections provides a more

complete picture of what changes took place in student reading behaviors over time. Both the pre- and posttest SEI data comparison, along with the weekly SEI data demonstrate a clear and consistent picture of increased engaged reading behaviors being displayed during Independent Reading across the data collection period. This gradual increase also indicates that the use of the self-assessment rubric becomes more impactful on student engagement with additional time and use.

Field Notes, SEI Observations, and Interviews

During the post-interview with the teacher-participant, she noted that she too had observed an increase in student engagement during Independent Reading throughout the course of the data collection period. She stated “I think the rubric helped them focus because it gave them more accountability for reading and purpose”.

Upon closer reflection on the coding of the SEI, there were some notable changes in behaviors that were observed and coded throughout the data collection period. There were four principal categories of off-task behaviors that were observed: off task miscellaneous, looking around, playing with books and looking at the teacher. The off-task miscellaneous category consisted of behaviors like being out of their desk, playing with their hair, fiddling with pencils, appearing to sleep, going to the bathroom or just general off-task behavior that was not reading related.

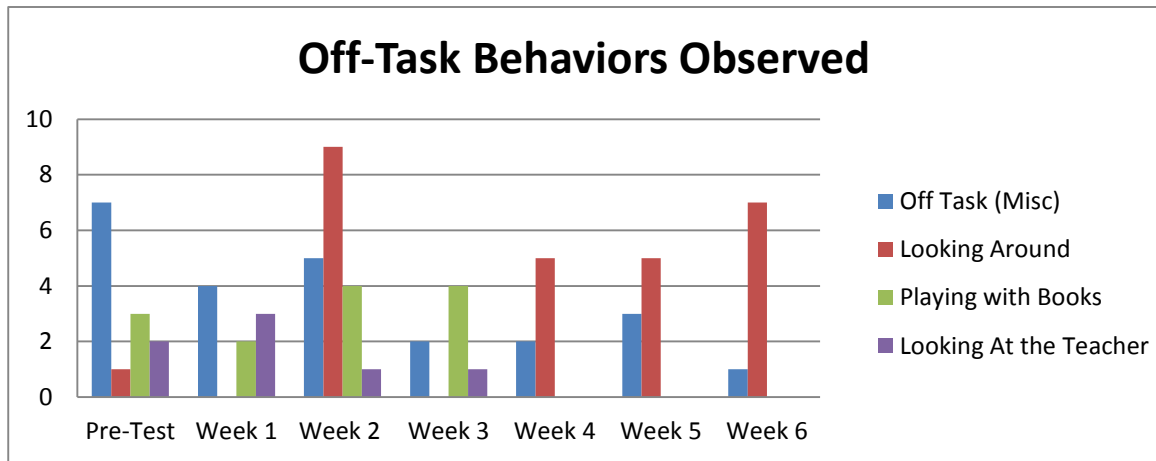


Figure 4.4. Off-Task behaviors observed on SEL.

Most notably, in the last three weeks of data collection, two categories of off-task behavior were no longer evident. Both playing with books and looking at the teacher were not observed during Independent Reading in the last three weeks. This may indicate that students were more engaged in the types of books they were selecting during the last few weeks and were not tempted to play with the books, but were rather interested in reading them. Also, the fact that no students were observed looking at the teacher during Independent Reading may signal that they were no longer concerned with the presence of the participant-researcher in the classroom and were more confident of what was being expected of them during that time. The students did not seem to need to check with the teacher for validation or redirection either verbally or non-verbally.

One category of off-task behaviors remained significant throughout the data collection period. Looking around the room was a common off-task behavior observed throughout the data collection period. The participant-researcher found upon further analysis that on weeks two and six when looking around the room was most often observed, there were frequent and significant classroom interruptions on these occasions. These classroom interruptions included phone calls to the classroom, special education

teachers picking up or dropping off students, as well as visitors coming to the classroom to either speak with the teacher or deliver materials. It appeared that Jane, Karen and Hannah were most susceptible to looking around the room as a type of off-task behavior during Independent Reading.

Theme One Summary

An analysis of the multiple sources of data collected in this study indicated that student-participants demonstrated a general increase in engaged reading behavior throughout the course of the study. The SEI pretest/posttest comparison revealed an increase in engaged reading behavior for 5 of the 7 participants. The SEI mean scores from the first three weeks in comparison to the last three weeks of data collection indicated that 6 of the 7 participants showed increases in their engaged reading behaviors. A close analysis of the types of behaviors observed throughout the study revealed that playing with books and looking at the teacher had both decreased significantly over time. At the end of the study, the teacher-participant also noted a general increase in student engagement during Independent Reading. The collective findings from both quantitative and qualitative data support the conclusion that the use of the self-assessment rubric contributed to a general positive impact on student engagement during Independent Reading.

Theme Two: Obstacles to Reading Engagement

Throughout the study, it became apparent to the participant-researcher and teacher-participant that the students were using the rubric as a tool through which to self-identify engaged and disengaged reading patterns through reflective practice. Weekly, the teacher-participant would meet with students to reflect on areas of behavioral,

cognitive and emotional engagement they felt were strong and those that they felt needed improvement. Using the rubric criteria, the students had the opportunity to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses as a reader. Patterns in student responses began to emerge revealing three distinct categories of distractors. The three categories of obstacles to student engagement during Independent Reading are categorized as classroom distractors, unmet physiological needs and limited book choice. These categories are represented in a visual model of obstacles to student engagement in reading (See Figure 4.5).

Obstacles to Engagement

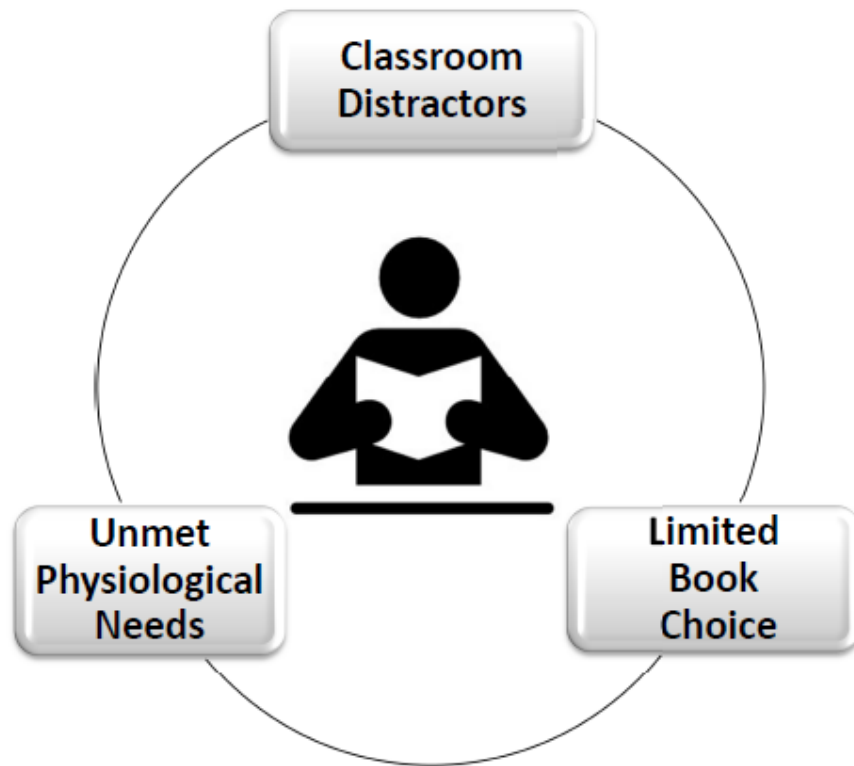


Figure 4.5. Obstacles to engagement.

Classroom Distractors

During conferences with the teacher-participant, students would often cite environmental factors within the classroom that seemed to hinder their ability to sustain engaged reading for an extended period. During week three, Jane cited that the noise in the hallway was distracting and that “kids are talking and playing and distracting.” Karen also mentioned that students talking to her were very distracting. Hannah mentioned that the chairs were uncomfortable and that made it hard to read. She noted that turning the chair to the side made it more comfortable for her. During week four Sam also mentioned that it is difficult for him to focus on reading with a lot of students at his table. The noise of them all reading can sometimes be distracting. It was at this point in the data collection period that the teacher made some focused efforts to address these environmental concerns and distractors. The teacher-participant made some seating changes and decided to keep the door shut to minimize noise and distractions noted by several students.

By week four, Hannah still expressed concerns about being easily distracted when talking to other students around her. Hannah expressed that she would prefer to address this problem independently without assistance from the teacher. In this way, Hannah was deciding to be self-directed in resolving her difficulties with engagement. By week six, other students also noticed that they were easily distracted by other students around their tables and were making plans to either reposition their seats or move to another spot to resolve this problem. Uniquely, through self-assessment, students were involved in identifying obstacles to engagement and addressing these problems themselves without

punitive or corrective action from the teacher. This seemed to empower them to become more self-directed in their reading practice.

The participant-researcher also observed and noted in the field notes how environmental factors in the classroom were influencing student engagement during Independent Reading. Most notable, on week two, the teacher-participant had major disruptions in the classroom. Several other teachers came in to discuss the upcoming talent show and were planning together during this time. All the activity surrounding the teachers talking and planning became a major distractor and hindrance to student engagement. On this day, the class spent an average of 33% of the Independent Reading time displaying on-task reading behaviors. During that time, most were concerned about the activities involving the teachers and their conversations rather than reading. The participant-researcher became so concerned about the distraction that it almost seemed necessary to stop the Independent Reading session altogether. However, upon further reflection, the data collected during this time illustrated the importance of preserving a comfortable and quiet environment for students during Independent Reading time. The interruption in the classroom made a drastic impact on student engagement which underscores the importance of the environmental conditions in the classroom for sustained reading engagement.

Unmet Physiological Needs

One student demonstrated significant difficulty in sustaining reading engagement and often cited physiological factors. Beginning in week two, Jane mentioned that she felt easily distracted in her conference with the teacher. Jane noted that she doesn't get much sleep at night and that makes it hard to focus. On week three during conferences

Jane mentioned that her mom was going to be taking her to an “appointment” to help her stay focused. The teacher-participant later revealed that there has long been concern that this student may struggle with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The mother has said she is going to the doctor for a consult, but that has yet to happen. At the start of conferencing in week five, Jane was asleep and had to be woken up. In other weeks during Independent Reading she had also pulled her jacket over her head and gone to sleep. Jane said that she couldn’t remember what time she went to bed the night before. On week six, Jane was asleep again before the start of conferences. She noted that she shares a bed with her cousin and often doesn’t sleep well. She was reluctant for the teacher to talk to mom about this distraction.

Similarly, Mary reported on week two that she had a medical problem that prevented her from staying in her seat due to frequent bathroom trips. These instances underscore that unmet physiological needs can interfere with a student’s ability to sustain reading engagement in the classroom. Jane’s personal lack of sleep and the challenges she has staying focused cause her to have a daily struggle with engagement in reading and in other contexts. The teacher-participant added that Jane has had difficulty staying on task throughout the school day for most of the year. Jane’s mother has expressed a desire to see the doctor for these concerns, but said that transportation to a specialist would be too difficult.

Jane’s physiological needs impacted her engagement significantly as illustrated in the data collected over the six-week period. Her percentage of time demonstrating on-task behaviors ranged from 33% on average in the first three weeks and 60% in the last three weeks. In conferences, Jane demonstrated an awareness of her challenges and

willingness to identify and address them as she was able which may explain the gradual improvement in her level of engagement throughout the data collection period. Though she cannot singlehandedly amend these weak areas, she shows a willingness to develop strategies that may allow her cope in the classroom.

Limited Book Choice

Another significant pattern of obstacles to engagement as cited by students in conferences was the choice and availability of high-interest books in the classroom. In conferences, Andy mentioned that he didn't feel like a good reader when he reads independently. In week four, Andy also mentioned that he didn't like the books he was reading all that much. At this point the teacher-participant mentioned that she would be making efforts to expand the selection of texts available in her classroom library to appeal to a broader range of student interests.

In week 5, Sam mentioned that he would like more car books for Independent Reading. Also in week 5, Jane mentioned that she specifically liked Junie B. Jones books and that she thought those books would help her to stay engaged during Independent Reading. In week 6, Jane noted that her improvement in engagement was because she had been reading more Junie B Jones books and Berenstain Bear books that she enjoyed. It was during week five and six that Jane demonstrated her highest levels of reading engagement, 60% and 80% respectively. This increase suggests that high-interest books can be a critical factor in helping even the most distractible students stay engaged during Independent Reading.

In the pre- and post-interviews, students also indicated how their feelings about books impacted their levels of engagement. For example, Andy said in the post interview

that reading is fine “as long as I like what I’m reading”. Mary mentioned in the post interview that she has started to like Independent Reading more since she had “cooler” books to read. Mary stated, “In the beginning I never really liked Independent Reading but since we have good books and our class is pretty good at reading, I’m starting to fit in with Independent Reading”.

Summary of Theme Two

A review of qualitative data revealed a pattern of obstacles to student engagement that could be organized into three distinct categories: classroom distractors, unmet physiological needs and limited book choice. During conferences with the teacher, the students began to reflect on aspects of the classroom environment that made it difficult to sustain engaged reading practice. These obstacles in the classroom environment included noise from the hallway, noise from other students, disruptions in the classroom and the discomfort of chairs. The unmet physiological needs that presented obstacles to student engagement included hunger, lack of sleep or potential behavioral disabilities like ADD that interfere with a student’s ability to stay engaged while reading. The choice and availability of books was also noted on repeated occasions by several different student-participants as a potential obstacle to student engagement in reading. Students cited that it was difficult to stay engaged when there was a lack of high-interest texts available in the classroom. When books of high-interest were made available to students in the study, there was a corresponding increase in the observation of engaged reading behaviors during Independent Reading.

Theme Three: Positive Attitudes About Self-Assessment

One surprising pattern that emerged from the post-interviews with students was the positive attitudes students expressed about self-assessment as a classroom practice. When asked about the rubric in the post-interview Andy replied “I liked it, I loved it, pretty awesome”. Andy went on to say, “I could grade myself and teachers didn’t have to be like - Hey you’re not doing a good job. Sometimes teachers expect more than what kids do sometimes. I mean *our* teachers don’t do that but sometimes I get a little aggravated about my own grades so I like to grade myself sometimes”. However, when asked if the rubric helped him as an independent reader, Andy said “yeah, not really”.

In post-interviews Karen mentioned “I feel great about being confident and grading myself”. When asked what she thought about the rubric, Mary said “It was cool because I never did that before. It was just good that I got to judge myself and my reading because all the teachers are always judging me. Umm...like whenever the teachers do it...I’m like, why can’t we finally get little things like smiley faces.” When asked if the rubric helped him as an independent reader Sam replied “It helped me because whenever I draw things I learn, sometimes when I draw things, it makes me kinda learn more words, it’s weird.”

These responses revealed that students found the opportunity to assess themselves both novel and enjoyable. In the post-interview with the teacher-participant, she mentioned that she doesn’t use self-assessment in her classroom regularly but “making me do it was pretty good.” She explained “we tend to do it orally with feedback and hand signals but not on paper where they can track their own progress.” Regarding the rubrics, the teacher-participant felt like the students were mostly honest. She noted that the first

time using the rubrics they tended to give themselves more smiles, but when they realized they weren't being punished they began to be more honest and self-critical. She said this shift took place when the students realized "it was not in fact going in the grade book." The teacher-participant also noted that she wouldn't mind continuing to use the rubric next year on a smaller scale.

Summary of Theme Three

A review of qualitative data revealed that student-participants demonstrated an overall positive inclination toward self-assessment as a classroom practice. During the post interviews, student-participants stated that they like grading themselves rather than being judged by teachers. The teacher-participant felt that the students were mostly honest in their self-assessment and would continue to use it as a classroom practice. While there was not an overwhelming amount of data to support this theme, it is important to examine the practice of self-assessment in this study and its potential impact on student learning. The student-participants were surprisingly eager to offer insights on both traditional teacher directed assessment and self-assessment. The responses offered by the student-participants were both thoughtful and intriguing.

Interpretations of Results of the Study

The weekly SEI revealed general positive increases in engaged student reading behaviors for the six-week period of data collection. In comparing the pretest and posttest SEI, five students demonstrated an increase in engaged reading behaviors, one showed no change and one student showed a decline. When comparing the weekly SEI data, a gradual improvement in engaged reading behaviors was also evident. In comparing the first three weeks and last three weeks of data collection, six students

showed an increase in mean and one showed no change. It is important to note that the student who demonstrated no change, began the data collection period with a high engaged reading score of 100% and sustained high levels of engaged reading behaviors ranging from 60% to 100% for the duration of the study.

Upon further analysis of the off-task reading behaviors observed, there was a sharp decline in the observation of students playing with books and looking at the teacher from the first half of the data collection period in comparison with the last half. Off-task behaviors of looking around the room continued to be observed throughout the duration of the study. These instances seemed to correlate directly with instances of classroom interruptions during Independent Reading time. The positive impact of self-assessment on student engagement aligns with the findings of McMillan and Hearn (2008) that suggested self-assessment practices have the potential to increase student motivation in engagement in reading.

The review of field notes and student conferences revealed three distinct categories of distractors to reading engagement that were both observed and cited by students. These categories include classroom distractors, unmet physiological needs, and limited book choice. Early in the study, students noted that noises in the classroom, in the hallway and off-task behaviors of other students were significant obstacles to sustaining engagement during Independent Reading. Additionally, students mentioned the discomfort of their chairs and seating arrangement as being potential obstacles. The participant-researcher observed on days where students exhibited generally low reading engagement behaviors, there were several classroom interruptions that distracted students.

These observations underscore the importance of preserving a quiet and comfortable environment in the classroom to support student engagement during Independent Reading. Likewise, physiological distractors were a significant obstacle for students in reading engagement. Jane struggled with a lack of sleep and general difficulty staying on task or focused in the classroom. Despite these challenges, she could demonstrate an improvement in engagement when she was matched with books of high interest. This occurrence demonstrates the importance of high-interest books in sustaining reading engagement which leads to limited book choice as a category of obstacles to student engagement. Students cited feelings about the books they are reading as elements that impacted their own levels of engagement. This finding supports the wide body of research that underscores the importance of environment and book choice in student reading engagement (Reutzel & Juth, 2014; Carey, Howard, & Leftwich, 2013; Scraw, Flowerday, & Reisetter, 1998; Gambrell, 2011)

After the study, during post interviews, several students mentioned their own affinity for self-assessment in the classroom. Several students commented that they preferred to grade themselves and felt at times teachers were hard on them and grades made them feel inadequate. The opportunity to grade themselves using the self-assessment rubric was motivating and exciting for several of the students. Like the findings of Afflerbach (2014), the teacher-participant noted that over time the students acclimated to the rubrics and were more honest when they realized it would not be graded by a teacher. Without the threat of punitive or corrective measures, the students were more honest and self-critical about their engaged reading behaviors in the classroom.

The body of data collected throughout the study revealed that the use of self-assessment rubrics had a general positive impact on student engagement during Independent Reading. The body of evidence collected through field notes and interviews also revealed that students could become self-reflective and self-directed in identifying potential obstacles to reading engagement. The classroom teacher has a critical role in making sure the classroom environment is supportive of reading engagement and free from distractions. The parent and classroom teacher together are both vital in making sure the physiological needs of the student are met. These needs must be met for students to attend to the task of reading without feeling hungry, sleepy or otherwise unable physically to stay engaged. Lastly, the affective nature of reading engagement requires students to have books of interest and of appropriate complexity. The classroom teacher must be concerned with providing books which allow students to feel successful as a reader and interested in the content of what they are reading.

These findings support the idea that the student, teacher, and parent each have a role in supporting reading engagement and addressing obstacles to engagement. Removing these obstacles enables the child to sustain engagement in meaningful reading practice. Reading engagement is not only a matter of student control, but is a matter that requires the investment of all stakeholders who have an interest in the development and achievement of children as readers.

Conclusion

There is a large body of evidence in educational research that states increased volume of engaged reading practice has a positive impact on student achievement. (Allington, 2014; Anderson et al., 1988; Snow et al., 1998). However, using self-

assessment as a tool to increase student engagement is not well represented in literature or in classroom practice at X elementary school. This study sought to investigate self-assessment as a tool to increase student engagement during Independent Reading in a second-grade classroom. The sample size of students was small (n=7) but represented a body of students varied in background and ability. The group consisted of students who were both struggling and proficient readers. The group also consisted of students from different racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

The results of the study yielded the conclusion that giving students the opportunity to self-assess their own reading engagement can have an overall positive effect on the level of reading engagement observed during Independent Reading. The results showed that with the use of the rubric over a period of six weeks, students began to reflect more critically and directly on their strengths and weaknesses as it relates to emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement in reading. Students could identify what potential obstacles hindered their engagement and in some cases, took personal action to address these challenges. The ability to “monitor, evaluate, and know what to do to improve performance” (McMillan & Hall, 2008, p. 43) indicates the development of metacognitive abilities that are both teachable and have the potential to increase student achievement (Shunk, 2004).

While the intent of the study was to impact student engagement in reading through self-assessment, an unintended outcome of the study was a deeper understanding of the external obstacles that interfere with student engagement in the regular classroom. Through an analysis of student responses, the participant-researcher could identify three distinct categories of obstacles that often interfere with a student’s ability to sustain

engaged reading practice: classroom distractors, unmet physiological needs and limited book choice. While the students reflected on the inner systems of engagement through the rubric (emotional, cognitive and behavioral), they routinely referred to external obstacles that presented challenges to their engaged reading practice. A better understanding of these obstacles allowed the teacher-participant to improve classroom conditions for the students, intervene for physiological needs and make additional high-interest reading materials available in the classroom that would improve student engagement. The study illustrated the collaborative context through which reading engagement must be supported by multiple stakeholders including the student, teacher and parent.

Finally, the study provided an opportunity for both the student-participants and teacher-participant to explore the benefits of student self-assessment in reading. Both the students and teacher responded positively to the exercise and recognized its benefits in terms of increasing student motivation and supporting the development of self-directed reading behaviors in students. Thus, the teacher-participant may explore other areas in which to provide opportunities for students to reflect and self-assess their own learning.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing the volume of engaged reading practice is widely recognized as having a positive impact on student achievement in reading (Allington, 2014; Anderson et al., 1988; Snow et al., 1998). Thus, many classrooms have time dedicated to Independent Reading in the regular classroom. Students in the teacher-participant's second-grade classroom at X Elementary School struggle with staying engaged during their daily Independent Reading time. As an identified problem of practice, the teacher-participant has observed many off-task behaviors that prevent students from benefiting from the additional time to read self-selected books in the classroom. This study was designed to investigate what impact self-assessment may have on the engagement level of students during Independent Reading.

The participant-researcher is a literacy coach at X Elementary School. Through an action research model, the participant-researcher and teacher-participant collaborated to create a self-assessment rubric for students to use as a means of reflecting on their own emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement during Independent Reading. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data before, during and after the six-week period the self-assessment rubric was used. The data collection methods included the Serravallo Engagement Inventory (SEI), field notes, pre/post interviews and student responses on the self-assessment rubrics. All data sources were carefully reviewed and analyzed to determine what impact the use of self-

assessment rubrics would have on the engagement of students during Independent Reading in the second-grade classroom.

Research Questions

What impact does self-assessment have on the engagement of second-grade students during Independent Reading?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use a self-assessment rubric as a tool to potentially improve student reading engagement and build self-directed reading behaviors among students.

Summary and Implications of the Study

This action research study was designed to investigate the potential impact of self-assessment on student engagement during Independent Reading in a second-grade classroom. A total of seven students was selected as subjects for the study within the participant-researcher's classroom. These students were diverse in race, gender and achievement. The data collected over a period of six weeks was carefully reviewed and analyzed to detect patterns in student behavior and responses. The findings not only revealed a positive impact on student reading engagement, but also provided a context through which to gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of reading engagement. Additionally, the study provided an introduction for both the teacher and students to the previously underused practice of student self-assessment.

The sources of data collected included the SEI, pre/post interviews, field notes and student responses on the self-assessment rubrics. The SEI tool allowed the participant-researcher to code student behaviors during Independent Reading and

provided a percentage of time that each student demonstrated engaged reading behaviors during an Independent Reading session. The results of the pretest and posttest SEI comparison revealed that 72% of students demonstrated an increase in engaged student behaviors.

An analysis of the weekly SEI results determined when comparing the means of the first three weeks to the last three weeks, 86% of students demonstrated an increase in engaged reading behavior. The group mean from weeks one through three was 60% while the group mean from weeks three through six was 74%, which indicated an increase of fourteen percentage points. Only one student demonstrated no change in engagement through the comparison of means from the first three weeks to the last. This student began the study with an 87% mean score of engaged reading behaviors for the first three weeks. This rate of engagement was already significantly high in comparison to other classmates which may account for the lack of improvement over the course of the study. The SEI results also revealed that several observed off-task behaviors did not appear in the last three weeks of data collection. These off-task behaviors included playing with books and looking at the teacher.

Through careful analysis and reflection on field notes and interviews, the participant-researcher was also able to identify three distinct categories of obstacles to reading engagement in the classroom. The three categories include classroom distractors, unmet physiological needs and limited book choice. Throughout the study, students repeatedly referred to these elements as potential threats to sustained engagement during Independent Reading. These categories primarily represent external obstacles that are not completely within the realm of control for students in the classroom.

As students began to recognize and identify these obstacles, the teacher-participant could make certain adjustments and accommodations to the learning environment to increase student engagement. For example, the teacher kept the classroom door closed to minimize hallway noise and began to look for ways to supplement her classroom library with more high-interest books for students. While the self-assessment rubric required to students to reflect on inner systems of emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement in reading, these external obstacles began to surface as critically important to a student's ability to sustain engaged reading behaviors in the classroom. The emergence of these distractors that impact engagement, lend themselves to a more complete understanding of the complex systems that support student engagement in reading. These findings illustrate the importance of the collaborative effort between students, teachers and parents to support reading engagement.

Finally, the study provided an opportunity for both the student-participants and teacher-participant to explore student self-assessment as a classroom practice. The students reported through interviews that they felt motivated and encouraged by the opportunity to assess themselves. They cited a relief from the corrective and punitive actions from teachers and enjoyed having the opportunity to grade themselves. The teacher-participant believed that once the students realized they wouldn't be graded traditionally for their responses on the self-assessment rubric, they became more honest and self-critical about their own reading behaviors.

In terms of my specific practice as Reading Coach, this study provided the opportunity for me to develop the realization that action research is a natural part of my day-to-day responsibilities. Action research is the natural framework through which I

engage in regular collaboration with teachers to improve teaching and learning through a “practical yet systematic research method” (Nolen & Putten, 2007, p. 401). In this instance, the teacher-participant and I employed action research in a way that would “improve practice in the short term as well as to inform larger issues” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p. 590). In the short term, we could use self-assessment as an additional tool to investigate and improve self-assessment among students in Mrs. H’s second-grade classroom. In the long term, we have developed a deeper understanding of the nature of engagement that will allow us both to look more broadly and comprehensively at the structures for reading that are used in the second-grade classrooms and potentially in other classrooms as well.

By sharing our findings with stakeholders, we can renew our perspective on reading engagement and the value of improving reading engagement for increasing student achievement. Not only do we have a renewed appreciation for the importance of supporting reading engagement, but we also understand the value of self-assessment and its ability to foster the growth of self-directed readers who think critically about their own reading engagement and reading habits.

Limitations of the Study

The complex nature of reading and reading engagement posed certain challenges to the study that served as limitations to data collection and the precise analysis of the findings. Reading and reading engagement are largely in-the-head processes that are difficult for researchers to empirically observe or measure. For this reason, the researcher must look carefully to external signals that indicate if students are truly engaged in reading practice. This requires the researcher to discern between what

behaviors indicate on-task reading activity and what behaviors indicate off-task reading behavior. For this study, on-task reading behaviors included eyes on text, eyes scanning text appropriately, students turning pages at a reasonable rate, as well as responses or reactions to reading. Off-task behaviors were identified and coded: looking around, playing with books, looking at the teacher and other general off-task behaviors. As simply looking at print does not signal engagement, such behavior could lead to a false positive indicator of on-task engaged reading behavior.

Additionally, the sample size of students was specific to a teacher in a single classroom setting at one school. This limited sample of students prevents the results from being generalized to a larger population of students. In the spirit of action research, this study was more intended to address a day-to-day problem of practice within a single classroom setting. The study would have to be repeated in multiple settings and in a more randomized manner to produce generalizable results for other similar contexts.

The period of this study was limited to six weeks of data collection and was limited to two days on each of those six weeks. To further complicate the time frame, this study began in April, following Spring Break. Typically, during this time, teachers report more difficulty managing student behavior and engagement than in most other times of the year. This may have impacted the range of data collected during this study. The study extended into the month of May, which is usually a time of year when many events and celebrations tend to interfere with routines and trigger off-task behaviors. These interferences may have also impacted the level of engagement observed during this study.

During this study, the participant-researcher was present in the classroom to administer the SEI and to record field notes of student activity and student-teacher conferences. The presence of the participant-researcher may have been a distraction to students during Independent Reading near the beginning of the study as indicated in the codes recorded on the SEI during weeks one through three. During these weeks, students were often coded as “looking at the teacher.” During the final weeks of the study, these behaviors were not observed as often which may indicate the students became more accustomed to the presence and activities of the participant-researcher. The decrease in looking at the teacher as an off-task activity, may also account for some improvement in the reading engagement of students as shown throughout this study.

While the results of the study indicate an improvement in student engagement following the use of the self-assessment rubric for six weeks, there are other variables that may have contributed to this increase. Some of the potential contributing factors to the apparent increase in student engagement might have been the presence of the participant-researcher in the classroom during Independent Reading on data collection days. Also, the introduction of a novel task itself may have contributed to an increase in the level of student engagement on the days the self-assessment rubric was used or introduced. Additionally, the knowledge that the students had of their own participation in a study might have inspired them to be more attentive and on-task throughout the study. However, the gradual increase in student reading engagement over time in the study also indicates that these external factors alone may not account for the change in student engagement as indicated by the analysis of results.

Action Plan

Because of the findings of the study, the teacher-participant has decided to continue to use self-assessment as a practice to help facilitate the growth of self-directed readers in her second-grade classroom. She did express the interest in possibly scaling down the rubric used in this study to a shorter version that students could complete as part of their classroom reading logs. The teacher-participant also expressed an interest in continuing to hold reading conferences with students on a more regular basis. She found their responses to be surprising and useful to her teaching as she could adjust the classroom environment that supported student engagement in reading. She noted that she was also able to learn more about her students as readers and about their reading interests through these one-on-one conferences.

The teacher-participant and participant-researcher plan to make the findings of this study available to other second-grade teachers. These findings will also be shared with teachers on other grade levels at X Elementary School. During the regular Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, the rubric will be shared along with the results from the data collected throughout the duration of the study. The rubric will be made available for other teachers to modify and implement as they see the need in their classrooms. As student engagement is a constant area of concern for teachers, the study will be a useful springboard through which to continue collaboration and future action research.

The findings of this research may also be valuable for stakeholders outside of the classroom. The results of this study illustrate the importance of supporting the physiological needs of students and building positive attitudes about reading inside and

outside of the classroom. Helping parents and the community understand reading engagement and how they also play a role in supporting reading engagement may also have an impact on students. For this purpose, these findings and other valuable information about reading volume and reading engagement collected in the literature review may be shared in a limited way with parents during parent workshops or in the school newsletter.

Suggestions for Future Research

Reading engagement is a challenging construct to accurately observe and involves complex processes that can be difficult to fully understand and measure. Therefore, reading engagement provides a rich and open field in which to inquire, investigate and improve professional practice as an educator. In future learning, the participant-researcher would like to extend this study into other classrooms and grade levels. It would be useful to compare the outcomes of this study in varying contexts to determine where self-assessment can be most helpful in improving student engagement during Independent Reading.

The effort to understand and improve reading engagement is a worthwhile endeavor in that it helps educators to preserve the practice of Independent Reading within the regular classroom. Preserving Independent Reading ensures that all students have equitable access to critical time and resources through which to increase their volume of engaged reading practice daily. Students who may not otherwise have time and access to appropriate reading materials outside of the home, are especially vulnerable to the consequences of teachers who do not allow students time to read during the regular school day. As a matter of ensuring that all students have this valuable time to read in the

classroom, educators must continue to investigate and respond to the needs of readers and support engaged reading practices.

Another valuable continuation of this study would be to investigate what impact self-assessment may have on other areas of student learning. The South Carolina State Standards for English Language Arts (2015) require all students to become self-directed readers. For these self-directed behaviors to develop, students must be given opportunities to become reflective thinkers and critically consider their own learning behaviors.

This study also revealed another troubling phenomenon regarding equity in education that could inspire future research and investigation. African American males in Mrs. H's classroom were under-represented in this study. Nearly every African American male student was unable to participate in this study due to the scheduling of pull-out services which interferes with their availability during the Independent Reading block. As a result, African American males students not only were unable to potentially benefit from this study, but they are also prevented the opportunity to engage in self-selected independent reading practice on a daily basis in the regular classroom. The impact of frequent pullout services on the quality of educational experiences offered to African American students and other at-risk populations of students, may be another potential opportunity for research connected to this study.

Conclusion

The development of self-directed reading habits is viewed as essential to the development of life-long reading habits that extend beyond the classroom experience (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2014; Allington, 2012). Thus, investigating self-assessment to

improve engagement is not simply an effort to improve achievement in reading, but it is also an effort to promote reading as a worthwhile and meaningful exercise for children. Within the context of a classroom, educators are supporting the development of a richer reading life for students. Students are daily building a reading life that will in time extend beyond the classroom. These reading lives will eventually allow students to employ reading in purposeful ways that serve them as individuals and the greater community. The aspirations for increased student achievement in reading extend beyond achievement scores and into a more authentic life experience as a reader.

Although this study was purposed to specifically investigate the impact of self-assessment on student reading engagement within the classroom, the researcher also gained a more developed understanding of the complex nature of reading engagement as a broader construct. The researcher gained a new perspective of how the external obstacles in the classroom are constantly interacting with inner aspects of a student's emotional, cognitive and behavioral reading engagement. This new learning supports the idea that fostering the development of purposeful, self-directed readers requires a collaborative effort of multiple stakeholders. Educators, parents and the students themselves have a role to play in the process of supporting reflective readers. Each stakeholder must commit to providing a supportive reading environment, attending to the physiological needs of students and ensuring that students maintain positive attitudes about reading and books. Perhaps through this study and further research, reading engagement will become a matter of concern for not only educators, but for all who take interest in the reading lives of children.

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Serravallo Engagement Inventory Coding Conventions:

- √ Student Reading – Exhibiting On-Task Engaged Reading Behaviors**
- T Student Looking at the Teacher**
- O Off-Task Behavior – General Off-Task Behavior**
- FR Fake Reading – Exhibiting Behaviors That Don't Support Engaged Reading**
- PB Playing with Books**
- CB Choosing Books in Book Boxes or Library for Extended Time**
- LA Looking Around the Room**
- BR Buddy Reading (Considered On-Task When Given Permission)**

APPENDIX B: PARENT CONSENT FORM

Dear Families,

Your child has been invited to join a research study to look at improving student engagement during Independent Reading. Please take whatever time you need to discuss the study with your family and friends, or anyone else you wish to. The decision to let your child join, or not to join, is up to you.

In this research study, we are investigating how student self-assessment may increase student engagement during Independent Reading.

Your child will be asked to complete a self-assessment rubric following Independent Reading time in the classroom. We think this will take him/her 2-3 minutes each day. The students will complete the rubric every day after Independent Reading time for a period of 6-8 weeks. Everyone in your child's class will be invited to participate. The classroom teacher and school-based reading coach will facilitate the study.

The investigators may stop the study or take your child out of the study at any time they judge it is in your child's best interest. They can do this without your consent. Your child can stop participating at any time. If your child stops he/she will not lose any benefits.

There are no harmful physical risks to your child as a result of this study.

It is reasonable to expect increased student engagement in Independent Reading time as a result of this study. However, we can't guarantee that your child will personally experience benefits from participating in this study. Others may benefit in the future from the information we find in this study.

Your child's name will not be used when data from this study are published. Every effort will be made to keep personal information confidential. Your child will be given a pseudonym and his/her true name will not appear on any documents.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child has the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is entitled, and it will not harm his/her relationship with the classroom teacher or reading coach. If your child decides to leave the study, the procedure is to notify the teacher as soon as possible verbally or by written note.

Please call me if you have questions or concerns about the study.

Jonnell Atkins

Reading Coach

Kingsbury Elementary School

803-775-6244

Jonnell.atkins@sumterschools.net

Permission for a Child to Participate in Research

As parent or legal guardian, I authorize my child to become a participant in this research study.

Child's Name _____

Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature _____

Date _____

Upon signing, the parent or legal guardian will receive a copy of this form, and the original will be held in the subject's research record.

APPENDIX C: STUDENT ASSENT FORM

I am willing to take part in the study called Self-Assessment and Student Engagement. I understand that the researchers from Kingsbury Elementary are hoping to improve student engagement during Independent Reading time. I understand that I will complete a self-assessment rubric daily for 6 - 8 weeks after Independent Reading time. The researchers will observe and assess student engagement when the study begins and when the study ends. This study will take place in my classroom and should take about 2 to 3 minutes of my time daily.

I am taking part because I want to. I have been told that I can stop at any time, and if I do not like a question, I do not have to answer it. No one will know my answers, including other classmates, teachers or administrators.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date: _____

Age: _____

APPENDIX D: READING ENGAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Name _____

Independent Reading Self-Assessment

Date						
I feel like a good reader when I read independently.						
I like the books I'm reading. They are interesting to me.						
I know strategies that help me with tricky words.						
I know strategies that help me understand what I read.						
I know how to choose books that are just right for me. They are not too hard or too easy.						
I spend the whole time reading. I don't spend time doing other things.						
I stay in a good, comfortable spot while reading. I don't get easily distracted.						

Key: YES!!	A Little	Not Really
		

APPENDIX E: RESULTS

Student	Pretest	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Mean
Jane	20%	40%	40%	20%	40%	60%	80%	43%
Ariel	20%	100%	40%	100%	80%	100%	80%	74%
Andy	100%	100%	60%	100%	80%	100%	80%	89%
Karen	0%	60%	20%	60%	80%	80%	40%	49%
Mary	80%	60%	20%	80%	100%	100%	100%	77%
Sam	60%	60%	40%	100%	80%	80%	60%	69%
Hannah	20%	80%	0%	Absent	40%	20%	80%	40%
Group Mean	43%	71%	31%	77%	71%	77%	74%	64%

Figure E.1
Student Weekly SEI Scores

Week 1-3 & Week 4-6 Serravallo Engagement Inventory

■ increase ■ no change ■ decrease

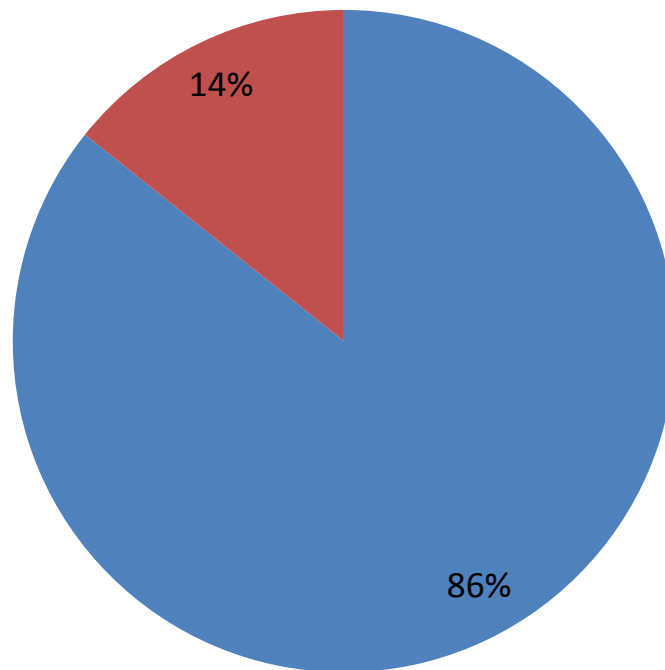


Figure E.2
Student Weekly SEI Scores

Code	Off Task Behaviors	PreTest	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
O	Off Task (Misc)	7	4	5	2	2	3	1
LA	Looking Around	1		9		5	5	7
PB	Playing with Books	3	2	4	4			
T	Looking At the Teacher	2	3	1	1			

Figure E.3
Off-Task Behaviors Observed

Student	9-Apr	11-Apr	16-Apr	18-Apr	23-Apr	25-Apr	30-Apr	2-May	7-May	14-May	15-May	16-May	Mean
Jane	12	14	9	8	7	13	11	14	8	14	7	14	11
Ariel	10	13	11	12	12	10	11	11	12	9	11		11
Andy	2	4	5	5	5	2	6	7	8	4	8	6	5
Karen	13	14	14	13	14	14	13	12	13	13	12	12	13
Mary	10	12	12	14	12	14	14	14	12	Ab-sent	14	14	13
Sam	10	13	11	13	14	14	14	13	14	13	13	13	13
Hannah	10	8	9	8	10	Ab-sent	8	8	6	10	11	11	9
Group Mean	10	11	10	10	11	11	11	11	10	11	11	12	11

Figure E.4
Self-Assessment Rubric Scores

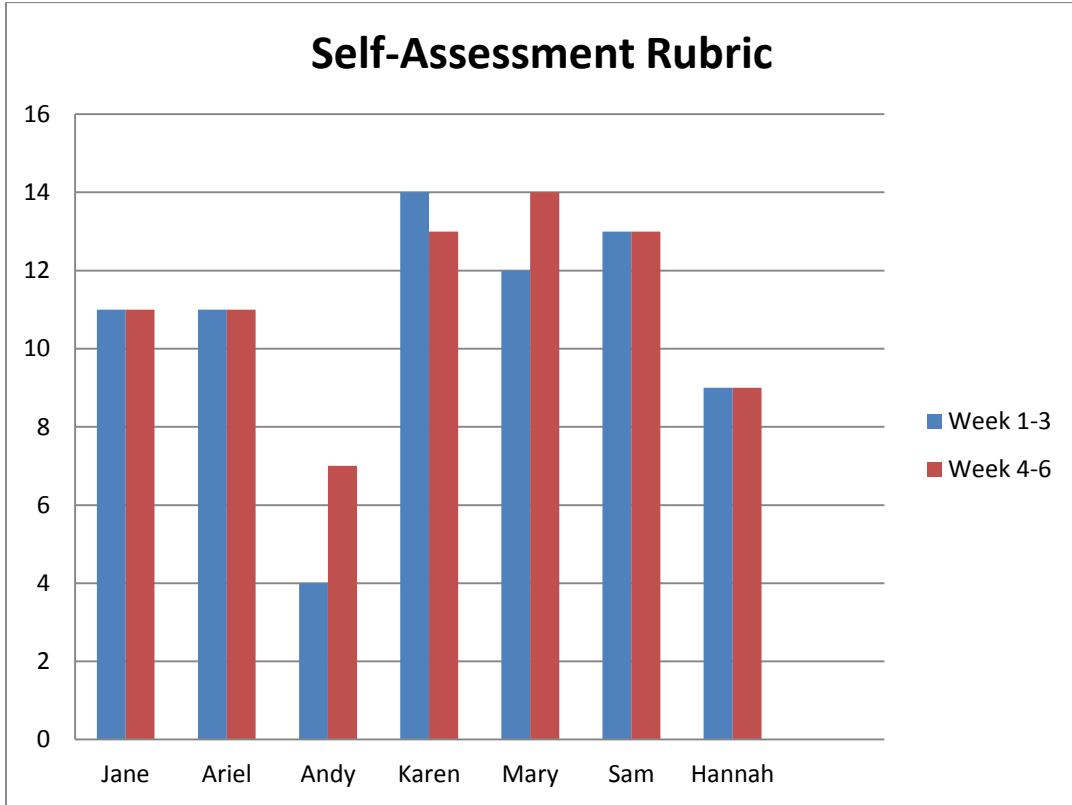


Figure E.5
Self-Assessment Rubric Scores: Weekly Comparison

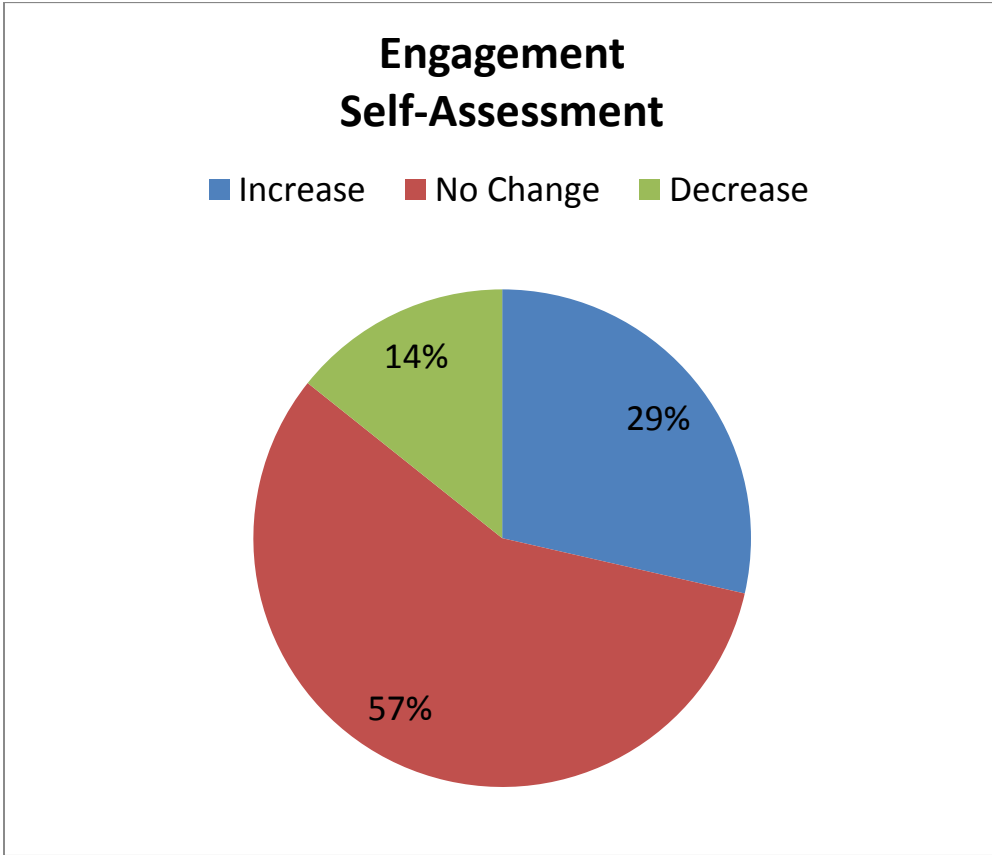


Figure E.6
Self-Assessment Rubric Scores

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEWS

Teacher Pre-Interview

Name _____

Date _____

Describe Independent Reading in your classroom?

How do you feel about the engagement of readers in your class during Independent Reading?

What do you feel are the greatest obstacles to student engagement in reading?

What tools or strategies do you use to encourage or monitor student engagement during Independent Reading?

What are your feelings and beliefs about student self-assessment?

Teacher Post-Interview

Name _____

Date _____

How do you feel about the engagement of readers in your class during Independent Reading?

What do you feel are the greatest obstacles to student engagement in reading?

Do you feel any of the tools we used would be helpful in the future to encourage or monitor student engagement during Independent Reading?

Have your feelings and beliefs about student self-assessment?

Any surprisings, new learning or wondering?

Student Pre-Interview

Student Name-

Date-

How do you feel about reading? (Tell me more)

How do you feel about Independent Reading in you classroom? (Tell me more)

Is it easy for you to get distracted during Independent Reading? Why? (Tell me more.)

What do you think would help you stay engaged or on-task during Independent Reading?

Student Post-Interview

Student Name-

Date-

How do you feel about reading? (TMM - Tell me more)

How do you feel about Independent Reading in your classroom? (Tell me more)

Is it easy for you to get distracted during Independent Reading? Why? (Tell me more.)

What do you think would help you stay engaged or on-task during Independent Reading?

What did you think about the rubric?

Do you think it helped you as an Independent Reader?