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**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PARENTS AND STUDENTS ENGAGE  
IN A COLLABORATIVE BOOK CLUB?**

By

Samantha Dulude

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Education  
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of  
Masters in Reading Education

at

Rowan University  
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Valarie Lee



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## **Abstract**

Samantha Dulude  
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PARENTS AND STUDENTS ENGAGE  
IN A COLLABORATIVE BOOK CLUB?

2014/2015

Valarie Lee, Ph.D.  
Master of Arts in Reading Education

This qualitative study investigates the potential benefits of students and their parents engaging in a collaborative book club using various texts and reader response activities. The parents and students completed a pre and post survey describing their literacy interests and engagement. Parents read various books with their children. Both parent and their child discussed the stories through a blog page and reader response activities. Narrative analysis was utilized and various themes surfaced from the data. For example: Character traits, parent-child interaction and bonding, and the value of reader response activities.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

"How about this one" and "one more please," those are the words parents hear as they are about to tuck their little one into bed. A snapshot of the room shows a young child running to the book shelf choosing a favorite book so mom or dad could read it to them about five times. Each time its just as exciting as the first. They know the book inside and out, and continue to love it anyway. "This is my favorite part, mommy," the time parents and children read together allows children to truly get lost in a book without standardized tests. Book clubs allow for just pure reading for enjoyment. It was noted by Trelease (2006) that reading together is the most effective advertisement for the pleasures of reading. Trelease (2006) continues to express that fifteen minutes of reading together exposes students to a positive role model, new information, the pleasure of reading, and fully textured lives outside their own family lives.

Reading is a essential to lifelong learning and success. A main goal of many teachers is to provide a learning environment that fosters students' reading skills while building a love of reading. Being literate improves function in society and increases opportunities for personal growth and career (Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997). As educators we strive to improve the reading achievement of all our students. Reading with children allows knowledge to filter into their young minds. When I think of my transitional first grade students I think of story time as: Listening to stories, telling stories, acting out stories, learning how to read stories and creating their own stories. Children can begin to develop the skills necessary to become lifelong readers. As parents of various school

ages students, preschoolers, elementary, middle, and high school aged children, we have the tools to create memories that will last a lifetime. With that being said, engaging in family literacy and reading aloud to our children, we are instilling in them a lifelong love of reading.

The advantages of reading with our children are limitless. Bonding between parent and child is one advantage that occurs every time they sit together and read. The important bonding that naturally occurs when reading with children along with conversing with them regarding text content and illustrations serves to create the life-long interest in reading that nourishes the brain and satisfies the soul while helping to cement the parent and child relationship, (Trelease, 2006, p. 28). Cook-Cottone (2004) asserts that "Efficacy lies within the process by which literacy is learned and shared within the family. While different in many ways, all of these programs share family involvement in the learning process. That is, the families make the difference" (p. 208). Marrying the home/school relationship will help students build vocabulary, comprehension strategies, as well as expose children to cognitive strategies such as predicating, summarizing, inferring, questioning, connecting, analyzing, and synthesizing.

Another advantage is modeling reading fluency and language development. Along with reading comprehension skills, expanding vocabularies, and providing opportunities for critical thinking. "There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island." Walt Disney

## **Purpose Statement**

Literature researchers and teachers are reporting that book clubs with parents, students, and teachers discussing stories and informational texts creates a space for young readers to consider and discuss the ideas and themes inherent in children's literature (Trelease, 1989). Reading with children in a small group setting allows for socio-psychological benefits, socio-linguistic benefits language development, improved comprehension skills, vocabulary growth, and various opportunities to respond to texts critically. An article titled, *The Benefits of Kids Book Clubs* by PBS (2005) tells us, book clubs provide an enjoyable and easy way for children to develop many literacy skills, such as fluency, new vocabulary words, new ideas and concepts. In addition, through the discussion that takes place at book club meetings children will develop a deeper understanding of books, along with considering others' perspectives on the same book while analyzing the books they read. Book clubs can help children develop important language skills. Simply by reading and participating in a book club with their children, parents can provide important language and literacy models for their children. "Research indicates that reading prepares the mind, nurtures the spirit and educates the soul. It is one of the most influential factors which parents and teachers can offer children," (Wan, 2000, p. 6). Wan further notes, "Reading aloud to young children offers them a legacy of cognizance and creativity. Story-reading plays an important role in children's learning" (Wan, 2000, p. 6).

Jim Trelease, international literacy expert and author of the book *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (2006), reported that, "One of the cheapest, simplest, and oldest tools of

teaching was being promoted as a better teaching tool than anything else in the home or classroom” (Trelease, 2006, p. 3). Reading with children at an early age develops a deeper level of comprehension in their reading. Serafini and Moses (2014) note, reading aloud with children’s literature allows for opportunities to model and scaffold the development of young readers’ reading abilities. "Parents and teachers can demonstrate proficient reading through think- alouds making available their questioning and meaning-making strategies during the act of reading" (Serafini and Moses, 2014 p. 467).

Book groups offer a venue to bring the lone act of reading, into a social circle. According to Kris Cannon, from Great Schools, mentions students "at any age, being in a book club teaches kids valuable skills such as reading for understanding, relating reading to personal experience, how to participate in a discussion by taking turns and respecting the opinion of others." In addition, she notes, kids get to build friendships with other book lovers and read books they might not have chosen to read on their own because everyone in the group has to agree on what book to read. It is important to recognize the importance of creating a critical literate community.

John Guthrie, a literacy theorist, has reported significantly on reading engagement. He states, “Engaged readers are typically higher achievers than less engaged readers” (Guthrie, 2004, p. 1). Engaged reading can easily be adopted at home as parents and children read together. Louise Rosenblatt (1978), noted literacy theorist and author of the Transactional/Reader Response Theory, shared with us that all readers have individualized reading experiences because each reader has unique background schema. Rosenblatt proclaimed that readers make connections to the text while reading that can affect their meaning-making from an aesthetic or efferent stance (Tracey and Morrow,

2006, p. 54). As a result, the child's connections and responses to the text can be efferent or aesthetic, two distinct meaning-making responses proposed by Rosenblatt. These responses help students encounter complex texts more confidently. Both Guthrie's stance on reading engagement with Rosenblatt's Transactional/Reader Response Theory, shed light on Guthrie's statement, "Expertise spirals upward mainly with engaged participation." (Guthrie, 2004 p. 8)

The purpose of this study is to investigate what happens when parents and students engage in a collaborative book club and reader's response activities. Lev Vygotsky, the theorist who created Social Development Theory, was an advocate of Social Constructivism. He argued that learning is a social and collaborative activity where people create meaning through their interactions with one another. Engaging in a book club with parents their children create the perfect mix for social interaction to take place and cognition to develop. Vygotsky (1989) believed that learning does not just take place within the individual. Along with Vygotsky's theory, parents are advocates for creating a learning environment where students are active participants in the creation of their own knowledge. According to Great Schools, "book clubs for children serve the same purposes that book clubs for adults do — they become a vehicle for excellent conversations about books. Reading is a social activity and we love talking about what we read. Book clubs are 'grown-up' and encourage students to form opinions about what they read, and express and support these opinions with peers. They light that fire to read more, to find out more." (p.1)

## **Statement of Research Problem and Question**

Teachers bear witness to a lack of reading at home for pleasure. Research clearly describes the benefits of book clubs with primary students and their parents. This type of social interaction should begin as soon as first grade. Therefore, my teacher inquiry question is, "What happens when parents and students engage in a collaborative book club and reader's response activities."

## **Story of the Question**

As primary school teacher, I am interested in promoting reading with my T-1 students through social interaction with their parents and peers. I have noticed during various assessments that when asked if they read at home with someone or alone the answers were "no" and "sometimes." These answers may be attributed to many factors. One explanation that I have heard, "No one will read with me." Others have said, "I don't know how to read." Yet another reason is "I don't have many books at home to read." Whatever the explanation, my T-1 students are missing out on wonderful opportunities to develop their reading abilities and explore a wide range of interesting texts and engaging activities while enjoying quality time with family and peers. I have realized since September that my students love to interact with various stories. The discussions that evolve and the questions that are asked enhance their understanding and open their minds to the limitless possibilities.

Motivation to read is an important component for beginning readers. Edmunds and Bausterman (2006) state, the social aspect that comes with book clubs is a key factor that influences motivation. Students are more likely to read when someone reads to them

or they share reading experiences; involvement of others when reading has a positive impact on students' reading development. Children with opportunities to discuss books they were reading were encouraged to read more. Strommen and Mates (2004) contend that discussions about books allow students to view reading as a part of their social life as they explore their own and others' reading experiences. Peer interactions motivate students to read by allowing them to relate reading to their age-related experiences.

My interest in book clubs is rooted in two different literary events during my life as a student and an elementary school teacher. Watching my fourth graders interact with a novel seemed painful. At that time they read and responded to questions with minimal social interaction. It was uneventful and meaningless. As a student, I was a struggling reader and when asked to engage in the process of reading and answering questions I couldn't help but get lost in everything but the information I was reading. Needless to say, it wasn't until I became a teacher that the benefits of peer engagement during reading took hold for me. I was introduced to literature circles about half way through my second year teaching fourth grade. That was the moment reading changed for my students and myself. The excitement shined through each time it was literature time. The conversations the ensued were mature and thought-provoking. Students had different roles that they shared and interacted through. In order to support students' critical thinking and understanding while reading, discussing, responding, and reflecting upon the novels, I created a social atmosphere that allowed respect for peers and an opportunity to create their own knowledge. During these social interactions, reading comprehension skills such as inferring, predicting, connections, and author's purpose as

well as vocabulary were significantly enhanced. Literacy circles greatly contributed to my students' literacy engagement and knowledge acquisition.

My teacher research project focuses on parents and students reading collaboratively and responding to various texts through discussion, questioning, reader response activities, and blogging. The books that have been chosen for our book clubs are entertaining and will get my students thinking critically. My intent is to expose my students and their parents to quality texts, authors, and experiences so that reading together will become a welcomed and honored practice in their homes.

Vygotsky (1978) tells us:

"Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and with his peers.... learning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. Thus learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions." (p. 90)

Reading engagement and motivations takes strategic planning. Teachers and parents together have the ability to excite children to read, listen and discuss stories. It is up to us to show them what we can learn as we read and discuss various texts. Dr. Seuss tells us, "Think left think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try!"



## **Collaborative Book Clubs with Parents and Students**

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the teacher inquiry project, a purpose statement for it, a statement of the research problem and question, and the story of the question. Chapter 2 is the literature review that supports the wisdom and benefits of reading aloud to children at home. Chapter 3 provides demographic information and the research design. The information presented in the research design includes the purpose of the research, a rationale for conducting qualitative research, the teacher inquiry procedure, data collection and analysis procedures, and the resources being used along with the support and collaboration of my students and their parents to conduct this inquiry. Chapter 4 presents the data collected, its analysis, and a discussion of the conclusive evidence gathered during this inquiry. Lastly, Chapter 5 offers a summary of this experience.

## Chapter 2

"You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child."  
Dr. Seuss

### Statement of Research Problem and Question

Teachers are recognize the lack of reading engagement at home especially when they request that reading take place for varied reasons. Research clearly depicts the benefits of reading with children, to children, and listening to children read at home. Parents and their children engaging in a book club can help the reading development of students beginning in the early elementary years. In addition, book clubs may provide parents and children with a way to explore and discuss difficult topics in a safe way. Therefore, my teacher inquiry question is, "What happens when parents and students engage in a collaborative book club and reader's response activities?"

### Introduction

This study sets out to discover what happens when parents and students are invited to collaborate in a book club and reader response activities using various books. Chapter II is geared toward examining research and literature associated with the importance of parents and students collaborating together at home and in school. Mui and Anderson state, "Most teachers and other educators recognize that homes and families can be powerful sites for literacy learning" (p. 240). PBS tells us, book clubs provide an enjoyable and easy way for children to develop many literacy skills, such as fluency, new vocabulary words, new ideas and concepts. In addition, PBS also states, through the discussion that takes place at book club meetings children will develop a deeper understanding of books, along with considering others' perspectives on the same

book while analyzing the books they read. PBS (2005) mentions, book clubs can help children develop important language skills. Also, book clubs help students practice turn-taking, make predictions and solve problems. Simply by reading and participating in a book club with their children, parents can provide important language and literacy models for their children.

The first section of this literature review discusses the benefits of books clubs involving teachers, students, and their parents. The second section discusses the reading benefits and theory associated with book clubs and students as they become lifelong learners. The third section addresses the motivational benefits of bonding the parent and child's engagement during a book club.

### **Benefits of Book Clubs**

As students enter school and begin to be engulfed into various texts, there is a great need for collaboration, response, and engagement in order to build a strong foundation of reading in and out of the home. There is also a need for students to collaborate with parents, peers, and teachers in a positive atmosphere. According to Merriam Webster, "book clubs are a group of people who meet to talk about the books they are reading." "Book Clubs" are generally a more social, less academic way to explore comprehension and meaning while learning from the insights of others. Heller (2006) states, Children might feel special, almost "grown up," if they belonged to a club where books were read and responded to in a risk-free environment. The goal is for them to reach a deeper level of comprehension in their reading while exploring different genres, such as fiction, nonfiction and poems. Book groups offer a venue to bring the lone act of reading, into a social circle. According to Kris Cannon, from Great Schools,

mentions students "at any age, being involved a book club teaches kids valuable skills such as reading for understanding, relating reading to personal experience, how to participate in a discussion by taking turns and respecting the opinion of others." In addition, she notes, kids get to build friendships with other book lovers and read books they might not have chosen to read on their own because everyone in the group has to agree on what book to read. It is important to recognize the importance of creating a critical literate community. Posting questions that are critical and using them to analyze a text is the ultimate goal for students. Brennan (2006) stated, exploring various perspectives from different characters can help students connect to various issues that are important for growth in society.

### **Reading Benefits and Theory Associated with Book Clubs**

As teachers focus on today's technical advanced students, it is hard to ignore how technology takes hold of the developing reader. In today's technological age, literacy education must be central (Heller, 2006). Theory and research translate into best classroom practice. Heller (2006) states, that although basic concepts of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension are needed, reading and writing are complex, interactive, and social events. It was noted by various students that they do not engage in any form of reading at home, this response seems disturbing. Research helps teachers develop lessons based on best practices. The idea of organizing small-group literature discussions wasn't new, but essential for developing readers. Kathryn Au focus on teachers of Hawaiian children but feels all educators might benefit from reflecting upon what is essential (books) and what is optional (conventional rules classroom talk) for learning to read (Au & Kawakami, 1985 p. 406).

Au (1985) suggests, loosening their attempts to control how the children talked. The teachers described in this article were able to share control with them to collaborate with the children exploring stories and therefore in teaching and learning to read. Au and Kawakami constructed non-conventional ways to get students to comprehend a text. This is accomplished through small group instruction, where the teachers and students are in a partnership. This is the same partnership that is accomplished when you put parents, students, and teachers together in a collaborative book club. Like Au and her talk story, book clubs have children rambling narratives about personal experiences and valuable discussions. (Au & Kawakami, 1985) Book clubs motivate teachers to recognize the collaborative nature of responding by finding space for children to read, talk and work together.

According to Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), “Students’ reading amount and breadth contribute substantially to several valued aspects of their achievement and performance, such as reading achievement, world knowledge, and participation in society” (p. 420). Elementary school years are vital times in terms of affecting attitude and shaping lifelong reading habits, thus providing momentum for the study of effective reading methods to increase motivation and achievement. Whittingham and Huffman (2011) found that book clubs have a positive impact on students who are reluctant readers. Students who initially had the worst attitudes about reading showed the most positive movement regarding reading attitude after book club participation. According to Vannelli (2012), The Reading Survey portion of the MRP (Motivation to Read Profile) provided quantitative baseline data for students’ reading motivation prior to book club participation. The data from The Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey showed that

all six participants prior to the book club had a group median score of 59.33 and after book club participation the group median score was 66.77. This data indicates a positive change in the reading motivation of the six students after their participation of the book club. Whittingham and Huffman (2011) state that when struggling readers interact with positive peer role models in a book club setting, they experience more success. Book clubs have the potential to promote cognitive, social, and emotional growth. In order for book clubs to be successful, book club facilitators must be knowledgeable about children's literature and able to lead a discussion (Hill and Bean 2011, p. 9).

According to Quirk, Schwanenflugal, and Webb (2009), educators generally agree that motivation plays an important role in developing proficient reading skills among elementary children. Reading motivation initiates and guides reading behavior (Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997). Motivation is something students long for when they engage in an unfamiliar text. Engaged and motivated readers participate in social networks in the classroom and the community that helps build an avenue for understanding. Engagement and achievement are reciprocal (Guthrie, 2004). Engagement and achievement grow together Stanovich coined this as the "Matthew Effect." Guthrie (2004) states the young students who gain modicum of skill in reading are enabled to read more stories and books, with increased amounts of reading, students fluency and knowledge expand. The goal with this research is to combine engagement and achievement while building intrinsic motivation. Guthrie (2004) states, "the reading behaviors with extrinsic incentives are insufficient for sustained engagement" (p. 4). Intrinsic motivation is what the researcher is hoping to foster during our book club between both student and their parent. One goal is for the curiosity, involvement and desire to read to shine through.

Guthrie (2004) suggests allowing students an opportunity to be self-directed. Students need some type of input in order to not only gain an understanding but also to build a cooperative community. Also, it is important to recognize that most students love talking about themselves. Guthrie mentions that if there is no social interchange then students' cognitive efforts to read and understand evaporate quickly. Engaging in a book club with not only peers, but parents as well, will be a great recipe for diversity, students' self-direction and collaborative social structures. This mixture is necessary for successful comprehension and motivation to read. Guthrie (2004) points out that to increase the amount of engaged reading, teachers need to enable students to learn valuable content by using high-level reading strategies as they interact with significant reading material. A study conducted by Miller and Ogranovitch (2001) discovered, that out of eight Book Club members, three students' amount of enjoyment in pleasure reading increased, two of the students decreased, and three remained the same. It was also noted by Miller and Ogranovitch (2001) that two of the three students whose ratings remained the same indicated that their enjoyment surpassed the allotted scale so they chose the highest rating possible, which was equal to their pre- Book Club survey. "The teachers observed that throughout the year various book club members became more involved in the book discussions and activities by making connections between the books and their personal experiences" (Miller, Ogranovitch, 2001 p. 4).

### **Motivation and Bonding through Book Clubs**

Mui and Anderson (2008) state, "Most teachers and other educators recognize that homes and families can be powerful sites for literacy learning" (p. 240). Jacobi, Wittreich, and Hogue (2003) tell us, "Teachers know instinctively and through

experience that students whose parents/guardians value and actively support their education do better in school” (p. 11). Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla found that “students whose parents are actively involved in their learning perform better academically, have fewer discipline problems, have better attendance and homework completion, have more positive attitudes toward school, have higher graduation rates and have greater enrollment in college” (as cited in Jacobi, Wittreich, and Hogue, 2003, p. 11) The precious bonding that naturally occurs when reading aloud to children coupled with conversing with them regarding text content and illustrations serves to create the life-long interest in reading that nourishes the brain and satisfies the soul while helping to cement the parent/guardian and child relationship (Trelease, 2006, p. 28).

Cook-Cottone (2004) tells us in *Constructivism in Family Literacy Practices: Parents as Mentors*, that “It is now generally accepted that students’ reading performance is closely related to the family literacy environment” (p. 208). Many school districts and community libraries provide family literacy programs. Cook-Cottone (2004) asserts that “Efficacy lies within the process by which literacy is learned and shared within the family. While different in many ways, all of these programs share family involvement in the learning process. That is, the families make the difference” (p. 208).

Teachers know, the art of teaching requires wide-ranging techniques that are responsive to individual student capacities and needs (Heller, 2006). Investigating the power of Book Clubs, a student- centered management system where developmentally appropriate methods and materials support early literacy achievement. Most teachers are always looking for ways to motivate young children to extend their reading interests. The standards focus on the inclusion of complex text, genres of fiction, nonfiction, and



poetry, so why not expose students to a buffet of literature through a book club. Over time it has been noted that social constructivism is a highly effective method of teaching that all students can benefit from since collaboration and social interaction are incorporated (Powell and Kalina, 2009). Lev Vygotsky (1978), the theorist who created Social Development Theory, was an advocate of Social Constructivism. Vygotsky (1978) believed in social interaction and that it is an integral part of learning. It was noted in various readings that social constructivism is based on social interactions between students and a "critical thinking process." Vygotsky (1978) also believed that internalization of knowledge occurs more effectively when there is social interaction. Creating a book club will help create diverse experiences for all students that will allow them to collaborate with their parents and peers while constructing individual internalization of knowledge. Parents and teachers reading with their children in a unique situation create the perfect setting for social interaction to take place and cognition to develop. Wan (2000) shares with us that: Research indicates that reading prepares the mind, nurtures the spirit and educates the soul. It is one of the most influential factors which parents and teachers can offer children. Story-reading plays an important role in children's learning. (Wan, 2000, p. 6) Parents and teachers alike are in a position to exert influence in cultivating awareness, understanding, and sensitivity to historical and current events and practices that have adversely affected certain populations of people. They can teach social justice to their children so that social injustice ceases to exist. A question came about from investigating various articles, if emergent readers were part of an organized book club based on social interactions, how would they respond to the information they encountered?

Recognizing that students need choices in order to be motivated and engaged in the learning process, response journals allows students to not only choose their activity, but include personal reactions to questions about, and reflections on what has been read. It was noted by Shinneman Fulps and Young (1991) that kindergarten and first grade students can respond to a story according to their ability. For example, a response can include illustrations, scribbles, random letters and invented spellings. Book clubs are geared to get students excited about reading various texts on unique topics. Responding to texts can vary and students can have choices. The formats and responses will depend on what is requested from the teacher. Responding to literature is a way to get students thinking about the text. Students should have a variety of formats to choose from, which enables them to be in control of their learning. One way to respond is through kinesthetic activities such as acting out the story or parts of the story. Another is through charting and conferring with peers. Shinneman-Fulps (1991) cites several research studies which have favored written responses over reading alone as a study technique.

Louise Rosenblatt (1978), author of the Transactional/Reader Response Theory, extends the application of Schema Theory to the field of reading to include an individual's unique experience interacting with a text (Tracey and Morrow, 2006, p.54). "The notion that all readers have individualized reading experiences because each reader has unique background schemas forms the cornerstone of Rosenblatt's Transactional/Reader Response Theory" (Tracey and Morrow, 2006, p. 55). As a result, the child's connections and responses to the text can be efferent or aesthetic, two distinct meaning-making responses proposed by Rosenblatt. These responses help students

encounter complex texts more confidently. Tracey and Morrow (2006) share, efferent meaning-making requires readers to personally disengage when reading, to obtain facts. Important in efferent reading response is what remains *after* the reading the understanding that is acquired, the inferences made, the conclusions developed, the opinions generated. Aesthetic meaning-making is subjective and personal... What readers are “living through”—what they see, hear, and feel—as they interact with the text is important. Rosenblatt calls this process of selecting ideas, sensations, feelings, and images and making something unique and personal with them “the literary evocation.” Above all, students need opportunities to stretch their reading abilities but also to experience the satisfaction of pleasure of easy, fun reading. As readers put what was read into their own words, they take ownership of what was read. The ownership and increased understanding result in better test results. There are a variety of formats that readers may choose to use when responding to their reading texts. It is important to remember that response journals allow for different interpretations of text depending on what the readers bring to the reading (Shinneman-Fulps and Young, 1991 p. 110). According to Debbie Miller (2013), readers bring together their background knowledge and their evolving understanding of the book to create a complete and original understanding of the text. If teachers choose to use questions or prompts to direct students' responses, then they should be broad and open-ended. The questions are posed to encourage students to develop their own meaning rather than my desired interpretation (Shinnerman-Fulps and Young, 1991).

Engaging in topics that encourage the understanding of social justice issues will enable students to build a solid understanding of the issues discussed. Teachers should

try and communicate and model the values that they would like their students to gain when working together in the classroom. Respect and valuing one another's differences are a couple of issues young students struggle with when working together. Building a positive community is the key to success. It is imperative for teachers to create a critical literate community that pose questions that are critical and using those questions to analyze a text. Brennan (2006) states, exploring various perspectives from different characters can help students connect to issues some people are facing today. It is important for educators to help prepare literate individuals for the 21st century. Teachers can do more than teach them how to decode and comprehend texts. What is needed now is a critical understanding of language as a cultural resource that can be used to understand the systems of domination. One teacher from an empirical study used story time as a way to begin opening up spaces for building critical literacy awareness in her classroom. (Brennan, 2006). It was also observed in the same classroom that book discussions in the class were beginning to be characterized by the inclusion of inter-textual connections and references to multiple perspectives.

The preceding literature has provided evidence of the importance of students engaging in book clubs and the socio-psychological benefits associated with it. The nurturing and parent bonding that occurs during reading time at home compliments and supports a child's motivation and desire to read more often. In addition, parents can also expose their children to, as well as practice, cognitive strategies such as predicating, summarizing, inferring, questioning, connecting, analyzing, and synthesizing in a relaxed and comfortable setting. Although parents may not realize these are important

comprehension skills as such, they can, through discussion and conversation of the text, cultivate and practice these skills naturally.

## **Conclusion**

After reviewing the literature it is clear that, Book Clubs have a positive motivating impact on a child's reading development. Hill (2012) discovered that, weekly Book Club groups made it possible to connect balanced literacy practices situated in the state regulated curriculum, while fulfilling the pacing guide requirements. Hill (2012) also revealed:

"Collaboration revealed the possibility of connecting the rigid reading curriculum to real world contexts. Students responded meaningfully, upon accessing the supplemental authentic literature. The students demonstrated readiness for academic discourse about literature." (p. 107)

Allowing students the opportunity to engage in a Book Club nurtures and develops a child's socio-psychological well-being, socio-linguistic acquisition of language, speaking and listening vocabularies, reading comprehension skills, critical thinking abilities, and of greatest importance, positions children to be life-long readers. Parents will have the opportunity to bond with their children, enjoy rich conversations, expand their speaking and listening vocabularies, strengthen reading comprehension skills, develop an awareness of social justice, and continue to add to their flight to life-long reading.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design/Methodology

This study is a qualitative study. The definition of qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It aims to gain a deep understanding of a specific event, rather than a surface description of a large sample population. It strives to provide an explicit rendering of a structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants. Qualitative research allows the meaning of the inquiry to emerge from the participants. Finally, it aims to get a better understanding through first hand experience, truthful reporting, and quotations of actual conversations along with understanding how the participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how their meaning influences their behavior. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009)

This teacher inquiry is best evaluated by Qualitative research because it will allow me to gain a deeper understanding of how collaborative book clubs with parents and children can motivate, engage, and broaden literacy pattern from the participants. Through teacher research, the intention is to work collaboratively in an inquiry community to question, evaluate, and consider change for teaching pedagogies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The qualitative research paradigm allows for both the teacher to act as both facilitator and researcher, making the benefits and responsibilities valuable. Methodological Triangulation makes use of multiple qualitative methods used to examine this research. Teacher researcher is a balancing act that marries hands on examination and quiet observation (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Qualitative research is one that is hard and requires planning. During this study, I be able to use actual responses, reflections, and parent/child conversations during my study.

As a Transitional First Grade teacher, I have been interested in encouraging reading with my students. This encouragement doesn't end in our classroom, but extends to the home as well. During the past six years, I have asked my students if they read texts at home, and the answer is usually "no" or "sometimes." The students participating in this study had similar answers to the same question. These answers may be attributed to many factors. One explanation that I have heard is, "no one will read to me" or "I don't really like to read." Another explanation is, "I don't know how to read yet." Regardless of the explanation my students express about not reading at home is impacting various opportunities that are important in developing their reading abilities while exploring a wide range of interesting themes and texts. It has been observed that my students enjoy being read to and socializing about books as a whole group. My teacher research study will enable parents and children to read, socially interact, and respond to texts through questioning, reader response activities, and discussions. The books that have been chosen contain issues of acceptance, fairness, and character. My main goal is to expose my students and their parents to variety of texts, while helping them experience reading as a social endeavor that can continue in the home.

### **Procedure of the Study**

As I begin my study, my first step is to create a question that allows for deep inquiry and discovery that erodes from the research. Shagoury and Power (2012), state that "teachers with a research frame of mind are open, too, to exploring the surprises that pop up in our teaching lives" (p. 20). It is common not to start out with a specific, clearly formulated question. Once my question is formed, I have to submit an application to the

Institutional Review board at Rowan University to obtain approval for research. Next, permission slips were distributed to parents. These forms outlined the study and sought parent approval. Students in my T-1 class as well as a parent were invited to participate in a collaborative book club. Including parents in the study will help me gain more knowledge of family literacy. Parent-Child books clubs offer an avenue for conversation and communication. Parents and students bond and share various experiences with books without judgment. In addition, the books will enable students to create their own meaning of the texts. Nine out of the twelve students returned their slips along with eight of their parents granting permission to participate in the study. All research will be conducted through online blogging and face-to-face meeting conducted in Mrs. Dulude's classroom setting in room 12. The data was gathered over a four week period during November of 2014.

During week one, parents and students were given the book, *Leaf Trouble* by Jonathan Emmett. Before reading the book the students and their parents made some predictions about the story using our Kidblog page. Then, parents and students were encouraged to read the book together at home. They had different stopping points for discussion and blogging. These stopping points helped students think critically about the text. In the middle of the book was a stop sign so parents and students could discuss their thoughts using the blog page. Parents and students were asked to discuss if one of the characters was being a good friend and if so how. They were asked to use text evidence. Then, we met face-to-face for a whole group discussion and interactive activity. Parents, students, and teacher met in room twelve at Thomas Jefferson School. The room was set up in a circle for whole group discussion. We used a question cube with question words:



who, what, where, when, how, and why to discuss the story. Students and parents were asked to identify one idea the author wanted us to learn from this story. We also discussed the story using reader response questions:

- One thing new I learned is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I was in the story I would have \_\_\_\_\_.
- "Is there a character that you can relate with? "How do you think the character feels?"

After our discussion, parents and students created a tree that shows two hands working together learning something new. This is the theme that derived from our discussions.

In week two, students were introduced to another story called *The Gingerbread Cookie Mystery* by Judy Katschke. Again, parents and students were asked to use our blog page to make predictions about the story. They were also encouraged to read the story together. They had to stop on page 11 and discuss "how the snowflake cookie disappeared," using the blog page. We then met face-to-face for our whole group discussion. We began our discussion in our whole group setting where we discussed the story in depth using various questions:

- Who were the main characters in the story?
- Where did the story take place?
- What was the problem in the story?
- How was the problem solved?

- If you could change the ending what would happen to the snowflake cookie?
- Did any part of the story puzzle you or made you ask questions?
- What surprised you in this story?
- Did you connect this story to another story?
- What would you change about the book?

After the discussion, the parents and students worked together in a small group and went on a Gingerbread Man Hunt. They had to work together and use clues to find the Gingerbread Man. When they returned, we discussed how working together helped us solve our problem "better."

In week three, students and parents were asked to read *Taking Turns* by Maribeth Boelts. Students were asked to read this story to their parents. Parents and students generated questions about the story using the question cube (see Appendix A). After the story they were asked to blog about the author's purpose for writing this story. Again, we met face-to-face to discuss the story. This meeting, the story was cut apart, mixed-up and placed in a pocket chart. The students and parents discussed the story and then took turns putting the story in sequence order. Upon completion, the students and their parents answered the question: Why is it important to take turns? The answers were discussed and placed on a bulletin board.

After parents and students read each book with their children, they completed a reflection worksheet by responding to the following questions:

- What is your overall reaction to your reading time?
- Did your child say anything remarkable during the reading of the book?
- Is there anything you would do differently the next time you read together?  
(i.e. Ask more questions, provide more background knowledge, etc.)

Parents and students were also encouraged to complete a post survey. This survey was used to compare parents and students thoughts at the beginning of our book club to last session of our book club.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected in various ways. Using multiple sources of data collection will allow me to answer the questions I set forth to discover. Data collection needs to have a purpose because "data without a purpose is lifeless." Parent and child engaged in a pre and post literacy survey. The surveys focused on the reading habits between the child and their parents. My second source was anecdotal notes. Nine students were observed in the classroom in three different reading engagements. Additionally, each student was observed individually in each of the three literacy engagements, noting their participation and engagement behaviors in our whole group sessions. Students reader responses to our blogging sessions and face-to-face meetings were evaluated. Parent participation with their child was also observed through all three sources.

## **Data Analysis**

A narrative analysis was used to discuss the responses of the parent surveys for pre and post participation in this qualitative teacher inquiry project. Additionally, narrative analysis was used to discuss student responses from our blogging page. The analysis used direct quotes from the parent and student observations that present their views of their interactions with each other during this literacy venture. Lastly, my teacher journal will be used to add insights into the reading engagement of the parents and students involved in this study.

## **Context**

Located in southwestern New Jersey, Washington Township is a community of approximately 48,400 residents. The township itself encompasses about 25 square miles bordering the neighboring communities of Glassboro, Pitman, Blackwood, and Monroe Township.

Education is highly regarded in this community. The Washington Township School District is served by the Board of Education. This board is elected by the township voters and provides educational services to approximately 8,800 students. The school district operates 11 schools including one early childhood center servicing kindergarten and preschool school students, six elementary schools for grades one through five, three middle schools for grades six through eight, and one high school complex for grades nine through twelve. The mission of the Washington Township Public Schools is to provide a safe educational environment for all students to attain the skills and knowledge specified in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at

all grade levels so as to ensure their full participation in our global society as responsible, self-directed, and civic-minded citizens. (Retrieved from Board of Education/ Mission/Beliefs @ [www.wtps.org](http://www.wtps.org)-Home Page).

Additionally, the board of education acknowledges nine beliefs. These beliefs are all associated a child centered philosophy. Although there were many beliefs that take hold in my classroom, the following beliefs motivated my book club course:

- All people have equal intrinsic worth.
- Individuals are life-long learners.
- Every child can learn and succeed.
- Learning occurs in a safe, secure, and disciplined environment.
- The child's well-being is the foremost consideration in decision-making.
- Higher expectations yield higher results.
- Excellence is achievable and always worth the investment.
- Schools are most effective when there is a shared commitment among the home, school, and business communities.

(Retrieved from Board of Education/ Mission/Beliefs @ [www.wtps.org](http://www.wtps.org)-Home Page)

This research inquiry will involve students who attend Thomas Jefferson School. Thomas Jefferson services approximately 500 students in grades T-1 through fifth grade, about 70-75 of whom are classified as having special needs. With the exception of the two classrooms that are self-contained special education classrooms, the students that are classified at Thomas Jefferson School are fully mainstreamed in the general education classrooms and adhere to the district's core content standards-aligned curriculums. Teachers and administrators abide by the modifications and accommodations that are necessary for successful participation and achievement for each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Twelve Transitional First Grade students have been invited in this teacher research inquiry. They are the students who make up the Transitional First Grade classroom at Thomas Jefferson School. The classroom has one teacher and one assistant. The question being investigated is: What happens when parents and students engage in a collaborative book club and reader's response activities?

### **Support and Collaboration**

This teacher inquiry seeks to discover what happens when parents and students are invited to engage in reading selected texts in a collaborative setting. The reading of the various texts will take place at home. The response activities will take place in technical setting with the use of our kidblog page, and in a whole group setting which is in the classroom at Thomas Jefferson School. I will rely on the support and collaboration of parents, students, and teacher in the classroom.

Chapter IV presents the data collected, its analysis, and a discussion of the conclusive evidence gathered during this inquiry.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Data Analysis Introduction**

"What happens when parents and students engage in a collaborative book club and reader's response activities?" In addition, these findings will also address the sub-question, "How do reader response exercises support the understanding of a text and the author's purpose?" This chapter begins with an analysis of the parent and student pre-survey. This chapter begins with an analysis of the parent pre-literacy survey, analysis of students work, parent/student blog responses, and teacher journal entries. Next, an analysis of the parent post participation survey is presented. Finally, a summary is provided connecting the data collected with the concept map themes presented in Chapter II.

Three main themes emerged throughout this teacher inquiry. They are awareness of character traits, connecting to the text, parent-child-peer interaction and bonding, and the effectiveness of reader response exercises.

### **Revisiting the Study**

Nine Transitional First grade students and their parents were invited to participate in this teacher inquiry. Nine parents gave permission and were requested to complete a pre-participation literacy survey. During the five week period, each student and a parent were expected to read three books based on seasonal themes with each other at home. The books were sent home and parent and child were asked to blog about predictions they had. Then, they were asked to read the text together stopping half way through to discuss character traits. This discussion was completed through our blog page and reader



response questions using our small response journals. Additionally, parents and students were requested to meet face-to-face to discuss the story and engage in hands on activities based on the author's purpose. After each story was read and the questions were discussed, the materials were kept for future readings. After completing all three literacy experiences, the parents completed a post-literacy survey. Only five out of nine parents returned this survey.

### **Awareness of Character Traits**

The student response journals and the blogging discussions provided students with the opportunity to express various thoughts about the characters. One student, Jimmy, who read *Leaf Trouble* shared and remarked, "Blossom is being a good friend because she is helping. She helped Pip put the leaves in a big pile." Jimmy's Mom thought that "Blossom is being a good friend because she was supportive. Pip saw a problem and Blossom pointed out what she noticed about the problem (that the leaves were falling for days)." This same student, when referring to *The Gingerbread Cookie Mystery*, stated, "I think Ms. Fickel is nice because she told the kids that they were making gingerbread houses and they were happy." Jimmy's brother, Michael, read it with them and had more of visual comments to answer the questions. Michael said, "She wears glasses and has a Christmas clock. She's a beautiful teacher."

Remarkably, another student, Nicky, who read the book *Leaf Trouble* made a similar comment saying, "Blossom is being a good friend because she helped Pip pick up the leaves." When asked what they would have done if they were in the story, most students responded with, "I would help Pip pick up the leaves and put them back on the

tree to make him happy." One student, Samantha responded, "If I was in the story I would show Pip other trees so he understood that leaves fall off trees in the fall."

Samantha also offered thoughts on the students who were helpful to Ms. Fickel in *The Gingerbread Cookie Mystery*, saying, "I would work with my friends to find the missing cookie." Cadence wrote that, "I would have helped Ms. Fickel solve the cookie mystery by asking my friends if they know where it went." Another student, Ruby, after reading *Taking Turns*, stated, "If I was in this story, I would let my friends go first."

All of the reflections and statements from the students' previous statements indicate that they recognize character traits. The students have opened their eyes and consciences to the importance of working together. These students are putting themselves in the stories, thinking of the roles of the protagonists, and walking in the footsteps of the protagonists. The students have recognized the importance of working together. The selected books read by the students in this teacher inquiry have helped them to think critically about character traits so that they may be better able to recognize positive character traits in the future. Participation in this study has generated more parent/student interest in reading additional books revolving around character education.

### **Parent-Child Interaction and Bonding**

As parents and children were reading together they discussed personal connections and positive character traits. After reading together *The Gingerbread Cookie Mystery*, Thomas' parent said, "We connected to this book because we lost the star to our tree and we worked together to find it." Also, that same parent commented about the book *Taking Turns* stating, "It is great to discuss the importance of letting others go first."

Another parent wrote me a note, after reading *Leaf Trouble*, saying, “Please let us know if we are responding to the blog page correctly. We are enjoying this! When is our next book coming home?” When asked to write about their overall reaction to this experience, she said, “I was concerned that we wouldn't have time to engage in both the blog and response journals, but it has really helped Thomas and I communicate about the books more critically.” This statement reveals that Thomas and the parent engaged in deep conversation regarding the content of this book. The parent needed to “jump start” the conversation about the books helping him discover various points the author was trying to portray. After reading the third book selection, *Taking Turns*, Thomas’s parent wrote, “Another story that helped Thomas understand the importance of being a good friend. This has helped Thomas communicate better at home with his siblings and friends in the neighborhood.” Once again, Thomas and the parent bonded in a special way because Thomas needed to rely on them to obtain the understanding of the author's purpose and the importance of taking turns and being a good friend.

Danny's parent, after having read and discussed *Leaf Trouble*, said, “We thought that if Blossom didn't help Pip, he wouldn't have been able to pick up all the leaves. Also, Blossom is like Eva (Danny's sister) because she helps him with his chores at home.” This statement reveals that Danny and the parent engaged in a discussion about friendship among the family and how important it is to lend a helping hand. When conversations about subjects that a child most likely does not have any previous experience with take place, the child needs constant reinforcement it is essential for the parent to make sense of the author's purpose.

## **The Effectiveness of Reader Response Exercises**

Reader response activities are beneficial to students. It is imperative for students to connect to the characters and events of a story, while asking questions, and making inferences. Comprehension will be enhanced by reflecting and responding to the texts. This practice needs to not only be modeled, but encouraged and promoted. The effectiveness of reader response exercises on the part of the children and their parents is often negatively impacted by what could be described as a circle of "I don't know." Some of the students that are part of the Transitional First grade classroom had a difficult time with explaining themselves through written expression. Students often have great ideas but labor due to writing skills. The parents were encouraged to scribe for their children at times. Thinking about "I don't know," Gianna's parent, when asked to write what she will do differently since participating in book club said, "I plan on asking more questions and more in-depth. She was happy and engaged while we read the story and talked about it, but Gianna did not want to write down her responses." It should be noted that Gianna shared valuable responses at the face-to-face meetings. It should also be noted that many of the students did not write their responses in their response journals. They did however share their responses at the face-to-face meetings. Although I explained the directions multiple times to the parents and the children, many relied on our meetings to answer the questions. When asked "Do you think the blog page was a valuable way to communicate about the books?" all parents responded "Yes." Three out of the nine parents mentioned, "It was hard to find the time to blog about the books." Book clubs can impact families in a variety of ways. Finding the time to engage in response activities can present difficulty in some homes. Parents may find it difficult for a multitude of reasons. Some may have to

go to work or have late meetings. Others may have to take older siblings to sport practices, music or dance lessons, or other obligations. It is possible that taking the time to read the book club books and complete the response activities can be difficult to engage upon at home due to different factors. For example, the TV might be on, siblings could be asking for help with their homework, and younger children may simply be creating a fuss. All of these factors cause distractions. Jimmy's parents made me realize how valuable the face-to-face meetings are because she stated, "It gave Jimmy and I time together without all the home distractions."

Parents and children engaging in a book club has allowed for one-on-one time. Some parents felt book clubs have given them the bonding time they once had with their young children. Thankfully, the books and themes that derived in this study have generated greater interest in reading together. Several of the students have asked me to have "teacher and me time" in class, these requests confirm the student's interest in being read to and validates the research and literacy benefits discussed in this study. Teachers and librarians can promote family literacy by working collegially to provide the necessary supports to parents/guardians.

The written responses and reflections in this study, when viewed through a "I don't know" lens, represents real time engagement. Guthrie's and Rosenblatt's stances on reading engagement and reader response are valuable for teachers and parents to incorporate so that students are relating to texts and comprehension is supported.

### **Pre and Post Participation Literacy Survey Results**

Eight parents participated in the pre-survey and the results were:

**Pre reading parent survey.** The pre-survey indicated that parents read with their children and enjoy the experience (see Appendix B). The children explore a variety of genres through the books they bring home from their school library. All parents feel participating in a book club will help encourage their children to read more at home. A few families are members of the local library, and the others would like to become members. All parents indicated they were interested in participating in a book club and responding in writing to the content of each book.

Three of the nine parents completed the post-participation survey and the results were:

**Post reading parent survey.** The post-survey indicated that the parents and students enjoyed this experience (see Appendix C). The parents discovered ways to help their children discover the author's purpose as well as various ways to discuss a story. Additionally, the parents felt that their children are excited about reading. Both parents and children were surprised to realize how their children can connect with the characters in the story and learn about character education. In addition, other family members joined in on the reading of these books. The survey responses indicate that both written and oral responses by both children and parents aided in critical thinking and enjoying the books. Half of the parents found it difficult to blog. However, they all felt it was a great way to communicate about the book with others. Also, all families felt that they would ask more questions and use reader response activities to help their children understand stories.

## **Summary of Data Analysis**

The data collected tells me that many positive results occur when parents and students are invited to attend a collaborative book club. A unique bonding happens as a result of reading together because children will need to rely on their parents to answer questions, explain concepts, and discuss the events of the story. This engagement allows children to give their parents moments to cherish by their curiosities. Book clubs present opportunities for language development and vocabulary expansion. While listening to stories and viewing illustrations, children will be able to infer meaning, discover the author's purpose, make and confirm predictions, as well as develop other reading comprehension skills. Book clubs connect readers, books, and families along with gaining new information. Mem Fox stated, "The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading. It isn't achieved by the book alone, nor by the child alone, nor by the adult who is reading aloud, it is the relationship winding between all three, bringing them together in easy harmony (Fox, 2008, p. 10).

Chapter Five presents a summary of the findings, the conclusions of the study, and the implications and limitations for the study.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary**

As my research comes to a close, I found that implementing a collaborative book club allows students to bond with their parents while interacting with their peers about various texts. To begin with, during this four week period parents, children and peers interacted with each other in various ways. Book clubs, whether engaging in discussion through blogging or face-to-face, promotes an atmosphere for bonding to occur naturally. In this study, collaborating and bonding were crucial elements. The students could relate to the protagonists and many of the situations they experienced. In order for students to investigate texts more deeply, parents were encouraged to build the response gap as well as the interaction between student and book.

Through book club, parents and children had the opportunity to develop and practice conversation skills and develop verbal expression through critical thinking. The texts used in this study and the protagonists featured in them gave students the opportunity for dialogue, language development, and arousing consciences. Parents and their children experienced and benefited from the experiences in the texts.

Continuing, another benefit that was acquired by the children was the opportunity to practice, establish and enhance comprehension skills. Listening comprehension, predicting, and critical thinking were comprehension skills the texts were able to model. Through critical thinking, students were able to identify character traits as well as the importance of interacting with others to achieve a goal.



Focusing on critical thinking, students were able to identify themes within the texts through reader response activities. Using response journals as well as blogging provided the children with an opportunity to react to story events and express their ideas and viewpoints in writing. Student responses were brief.

Additionally, parents were able to participate in the response activities. This exercise was beneficial to the students since it provided them with a model of different responses. The energy and bonding was apparent during the responses.

Lastly, motivation to read more at home was the guide to my inquiry. Motivation to participate in this study was expressed by parents giving their consent. In addition, parents and students completed a pre-survey, response questions, and a post survey. Most parents even a two parents who at first opted not to participate in book club have inquired about our next book club meeting.

With regard to the student's motivation to read various books, I have to note that all nine students asked me to read books to them during Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time in class. One student wanted me to *The Gingerbread Cookie Mystery* to the whole class. One family thanked me for creating this book club. Engagement and motivation were clearly present.

## **Conclusions**

This study and its results confirm what research in the literacy field states that collaborative book clubs is beneficial for parents and children. It was stated by Whittingham and Huffman (2011) that book clubs have a positive impact on students who are reluctant readers. Students who initially had the worst attitudes about reading

showed the most positive movement regarding reading attitude after book club participation. Children benefit from the closeness, comfort, and security of having a parent share their time with them. As parents and students engage in reading together they ultimately create a lifelong love of reading.

Cook-Cottone (2004) mentioned that, "It is now generally accepted that students' reading performance is closely related to the family literacy environment" (p. 208). Reading with children allows for a variety of comprehension skills to be implemented and developed. Response to text and critical thinking was activated. My research was ignited from different interactive reading behaviors discussed by Morrow (1990). The behaviors that went unnoticed were able to maintain positive interactive outcomes for young children's future reading success. The behaviors that were documented during the data collection were questioning, responses, directing discussions, and sharing personal reactions to various texts (cited in DeBruin-Parecki, 2009, p. 386). These behaviors were expected to support the reading comprehension skills of primary elementary students.

Additionally, these transitional first grade students experienced multiple opportunities to engage in social learning. Referring back to Vygotsky's theory, the T-1 students in this study were exposed to social factors that enhanced their cognitive development. The children were able to develop cognitively from the social interactions through guided learning within the zone of proximal development. The children and their partners co-construct knowledge through the discussions and response activities. Students at this level are curious and actively involved in their own learning.

Vygotsky (1978) tells us, much important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a skillful tutor. The tutor may model behaviors and provide verbal instructions for the child. As the child seeks understanding, the actions or instructions provided by the parent/teacher the child can internalize the information, using it to guide their own performance. From a social constructivist perspective, the action is an important unit of study because the teacher/parent and student co-construct classroom activity (Au, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Limitations**

Two limitations revealed themselves throughout this teacher inquiry. The first limitation involved the time frame designated for conducting this study. This particular five-week event was initially negatively impacted by the date it began. For example, this study was on target to begin in October, but in reality it began in November. This was a shorter amount of time to gather important data from this study. Also, previously scheduled days off from school interrupted the continuity of it. In addition, the major element of this study was to engage in face-to-face meetings so parents, students, and teacher can discuss various texts freely. Since one of the data collection tools was teacher observations, face-to-face meetings were extremely important. The holidays had an effect on this study as well. It was difficult to gather all data before a major holiday so that organizing and analyzing the data could take place over the holiday so that deadlines could be met.

Another limitation was the misunderstanding, at times, of the directions needed to blog. The discussions the students were to engage in was crucial to the narrative analysis

of this study. The parents and students seem to respond to the blogging questions, but did not respond to each other. On other occasions two parents and students did not blog at all. Even though directions were given and explained multiple times to the students and their parents, they were misunderstood. If this teacher inquiry were extended or repeated in the future, I would model what blogging looks like and provide examples of previous blog transactions to assist all involved.

### **Implications for the Field**

The results of this study and its implications could be improved and advanced if more time was allocated to engage collaborative book clubs. Also, it would be beneficial to provide various exemplars of blogging and reader response activities. In doing so, the directions for completing the written requirements would be better understood. Teachers and students will be able to have a constant flow of communication with the use of blogging. Introducing blogging early in the year will have long term benefits for all. Students and the teacher will be able to understand different perspectives of texts while building a respect of opinions. In addition, blogging is a great tool for introducing and discussing mentor texts. This will allow students an opportunity to grasp new concepts. Also, exposing students to reader response questions through blogging can enhance their writing. Teachers will be able to model the expectations while engaging in rich conversations.

In the future, one way to motivate students to increase their interest in blogging and to write more detailed responses and/or their reader responses is to capitalize on their interest in technology using computers. It would be beneficial to introduce blogging to

students prior beginning the book club. Of course, this method of responding is predicated on families having computers and internet access.

The use of theme-centered books within the classroom could be integrated to complement character development lessons. The benefits of implementing texts with character traits will enable students to understand positive behaviors. Also, creating lessons with texts about character traits can encourage students to collaborate more compassionately. It doesn't have to stop within the classroom, various books containing identified themes could be sent home to be read and investigated with parents providing socio-psychological support.

Additionally, conducting pre and post-interviews with parents and students would provide additional insights into the motivation and engagement of all parties participating in the book club. This can also give administrators an idea of what students are lacking and how they can make positive changes. Promoting parent/student bonding through book clubs and other social encounters will enable parents to not only be a positive part of the learning experience, but an active part as well. Students benefit from their parents being interested in their learning. Lastly, lengthening the time of the study would enable different themes to be explored and provide opportunities to promote critical literacy extension endeavors.

## **Closing**

After reviewing the literature surrounding the use of book clubs and reader response activities in the classroom, I found that my study was beneficial to the students because it helped expose them to various texts and different reader response activities in a

way they would have otherwise not been exposed to through the typical Transitional First Grade curriculum. The support presented in this study validates the benefits of collaborative book clubs involving parents and their children. Using various books based on different themes promote curiosity and critical thinking, are supported by illustrations, and can be read, discussed and reflected upon. Children can experience a special bonding to their parents while reading collaboratively. In conclusion, participating in a collaborative book club provides children and their parents the priceless opportunity to build a love of reading.

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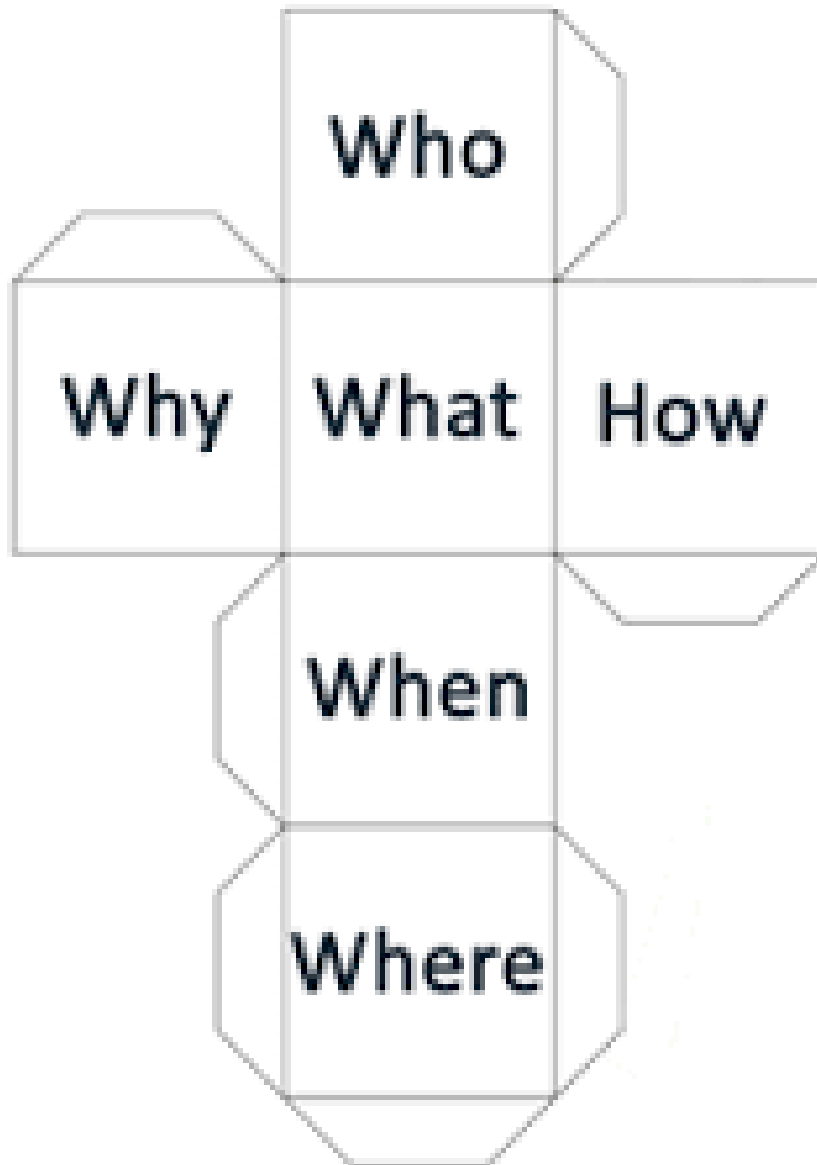


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**Appendix A**

Question Cube



**Appendix B**  
Pre-Survey

How much does your child enjoy reading?	62% A lot	37% A Little
How often to you read?	88% Everyday	1% said once or twice a week
What kinds of books do you and your child read?	Highest result was fiction	Lowest was non-fiction
Who does the reading?	100% Parent and Child	
Do you like to read with your child?	100% Yes	
How do you encourage your child to read?	100% read to them	
Do you and your child sit together and read the library books he/she brings home from school?	100% Yes	
Do you belong to the Margaret E. Heggan Free Public Library?	62% Yes	37% No
If not, would you be interested in becoming a member?	100% Yes	
Have you and your child been part of a book club?	100% No	
Do you think book clubs are a way to encourage reading at home?	100% Yes	
Would you ask your child's teacher or school librarian for a book recommendation?	100% Yes	
Have you ever considered writing about your thoughts, feelings, questions, or reactions to the book you are reading with your child?	100% No	

**Appendix C**  
Post-Survey

Post-Survey

Have you enjoyed this literacy experience with your child?	100% Yes	
Do you think participating in book club has made your child read together more?	99% Said Yes	1% said About the same
Do you feel your child was engaged and excited about the books and book club?	100% Yes	
Do you feel your child has gained an understanding of the different traits that an author can portray within a story?	100% Yes	
When you read with your child do you plan on discussing the books differently, for example using reader response questions or question cubes?	100% Yes	
Do you think our blog page was a great way to communicate about the book?	100% Yes	
Was it difficult to find time to blog with your child?	50% Yes	50% No
Was it difficult to find time to read to your child?	100% No	
Did any other family members join in on the reading experiences?	60% Yes	40% No
What would you do differently since participating in a book club?	"Be more in-depth"	"Use reader response activities to help my child understand books."
Would you like to continue with the book club?	100% Yes	