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**The Impact of Read Aloud with Socratic Discussion on the
Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills of the Elementary Student
Submitted on May 21, 2020 in fulfillment of final requirements for
the MAED degree Lesley Kirk Saint Catherine University St. Paul,**

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Date _____

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Abstract

This study aims to uncover a link between read aloud with Socratic discussion and its impact on literacy and critical thinking skills. In researching this relationship, both quantitative and qualitative data tools were used. Participants in the study included 60 students from a charter Montessori school in the Southwest United States ranging from grade 1 to 6. Students participated in a six-week intervention. The intervention included a 60-minute read aloud with Socratic discussion session conducted twice a week. The findings indicate that there is a general increase in literacy and reading comprehension skills. In addition, the study was also shown to have a significant impact on individual participation and critical thinking skills as it relates to themes of the book. The conclusion of the study recommends more research with varied communities and book choices. In the future we must find ways to stimulate critical thinking skills in the elementary child using relatable themes and critical questioning.

Keywords: read aloud, Socratic discussion, critical thinking, literacy, reading comprehension, Montessori, elementary, literacy interventions

Listening is the act of hearing and comprehending information. Listening is a critical tool in attaining knowledge. Reading is the act of decoding letters to create words with meaning and ultimately gain knowledge and understanding from the words themselves, it is an essential tool for human cognition (Seidenberg, 2017). Knowledge is information or experiences internalized in a manner that is useful over an extended time. In this way, reading is also a critical aspect of one's ability to actively participate in one's learning. Internalizing information consists of incorporating and utilizing knowledge in a way that is unconscious or second nature (Strickland & Marrow, 2000). Reading and/or listening comprehension is the ability to understand and internalize the work as a whole and make connections concerning main idea, plot, characters and themes. The internalization and comprehension of knowledge is often difficult for the immature and developing minds of the elementary student (Seidenberg, 2017). Listening and reading do not always cause this internalization, and often comprehension skills must be taught, demonstrated, and monitored for knowledge to be stored and utilized efficiently.

According to Seidenberg, reading is one of the most complex skills humans are asked to achieve. He goes on to explain how reading is a fairly new phenomenon, occurring in its earliest form with the invention of writing approximately 5,000 years ago (2017). Even after this, the spoken word and oral traditions were still the means to convey legends, religious traditions, history and communication. Reading has become essential to succeed in Western Civilization as recently as the last century.

Listening, reading, and the internalization of knowledge has changed significantly over the last twenty years due to the widespread exposure and utilization of the internet as a means of accessing and acquiring knowledge. Gurdon (2019) cites a study at San Diego State University which revealed that between 2006 and 2016, the amount of time children spent online doubled

(p. 42). While this access to information has its advantages, it also means that children may no longer rely on books as a primary source of information. Literature, specifically fiction, engages students in character analysis, plot structure, and value systems in a way that cannot be duplicated by the high-speed information of the internet. The child's exposure to these value systems can "intensify their emotional awareness with amazing rapidity" (Gurdon, 2019). Reading also enables the child to listen and create pictures for themselves. This utilizes the imagination in a way that watching a video cannot. While students can learn about many things by Googling them or watching YouTube videos, many books or works of literature need focus and analysis to attain the optimal benefit. The optimal benefit being comprehension of both the details of the book as well as the underlying themes. Books like *The Little Prince*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Charlotte's Web* engage students with morals, complex messages and themes that need to be experienced through listening, discussing and questioning in order to be appreciated. These morals, messages and themes cannot be fully understood without children reading books and uncovering these lessons for themselves. These lessons involve the investment of the reader through careful contemplation and discussion. Reading aloud, whether it involves two people, a small group or an entire classroom, provides an opportunity for this discussion and contemplation, as well as exposure to the ideas of others. When questioning is incorporated into the reading process, students are forced to contemplate their own assessment of the situation. For example asking, "What would you do if you were this character?", "Do you think what they did was right?", "Why or why not?", "Why do you think this character chose to do this or what do you think they are thinking?" When students are questioned, they are also called upon to analyze the character and see differences in how they would handle a situation versus how someone in the book would handle

the situation. Perspective taking is important when understanding other characters. Learning to see other perspectives is important for emotional growth. Gurdon references a Yale study that found that literature can promote empathy, social perception and emotional intelligence (2019, p.187). Reading, questioning, and the process of character analysis can often help children understand themselves and their own decisions outside of external factors such as family values, cultural norms or even the teachers themselves. The process of getting a child to do the right thing not just because they may get in trouble, but because they know it is the right thing to do is difficult without empathy or emotional intelligence. Because the books can be so influential, book choice and themes are extremely important in classroom read alouds.

Reading aloud to children exposes them to many types of literature, including the types that may be inaccessible due to varying reading levels, especially at the lower elementary levels. This is possible because speech and reading are different in a fundamental way. Speech contains phonology, the sound pattern of language (Seidenberg, 2017). When children begin to read, they have no way to insert phonology patterns, even ones they have already acquired in early language, without read aloud. Seidenberg contends that phonology is essential for successfully interpreting language in context (2017). In addition, most children have a much higher listening language level than reading language level (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). These two factors make reading aloud a much more efficient way to teach comprehension. Reading to students enables all students to learn from the literature on a more equitable level. Discussion, and asking relevant questions, assists with making pertinent connections and ultimately aids in understanding. Reading as a community provides an opportunity for both practices. Review during these sessions is an excellent opportunity to check for understanding, ask essential questions, and engage the children in discussion with one another.

The Socratic discussion uses open-ended, exploratory conversations centered around a text to promote critical thinking. When Socrates began to practice these types of conversations in Ancient Greece, he aimed to encourage critical and independent thinking skills among the people of Greece to create a more enlightened community (Chorzempa & Lapidus, 2009). Critical thinking goes beyond situations involving clearly defined opposing principles or issues. It enables the students to make connections outside that which is explicitly stated by the author and allows them to incorporate prior knowledge and experience. In addition, Socratic discussion encourages the students to develop an opinion outside of following social rules, and instead develop a personal sense of right and wrong.

Reading to children is practiced by many elementary educators. Furthermore, many educators practice some form of discussion, usually in a literature circle format where children have read the text on their own and then come together to discuss. This study seeks to incorporate these two practices in a way that is more inclusive of all students and utilizes listening, reading, and internalization to capitalize on the opportunity for students to learn from the thoughts and feelings of their peers. Reading aloud also provides an occasion to introduce literature that children would not necessarily choose to read but could expose them to beneficial content. Discussions with the students during this time not only helps them understand the book but also enables them to interpret the text more effectively in the future thus allowing them to benefit from literature read on their own.

The purpose of this action research study was to evaluate the impact of read aloud with Socratic discussion on the literacy and critical thinking skills of the elementary student. Aspects evaluated included participation, understanding, relevant questioning, as well as comprehension, written expression, and overall interest in literature, evaluated pre and post-study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens used for this research is based on the constructivist movement outlined by Vygotsky's social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that social learning precedes development. The social interaction between the students and teachers during read aloud and discussion meets the requirements of this social interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978), reading books in the student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as well as asking questions that challenge and stimulate the analytical skills of the student, can enable students to move beyond what they can learn on their own and extend the capabilities of the student under the guidance of peers, mentors and teachers. When reading becomes part of the culture, the culture can have a positive influence on the students. People use tools from culture to mediate their environments in a way that leads to higher level thinking (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky was born in Russia and died young due to tuberculosis. Despite his short career, he uncovered the importance of social and cognitive development and how they support and assist each other in the development of the child (Mooney, 2013). Similar to the methodology of this research, he thought research should be qualitative (observation) and quantitative (test scores). He did not subscribe to the analysis that abilities are based on intelligence tests (Mooney, 2013). Vygotsky made a connection between thought and language that the research will observe in several ways. Hearing the written word combines several skills that enable imprinting to occur in the higher-level processes in the brain, connecting language with meaning in several different contexts (Vygotsky, 1987). This is the lens utilized in the read aloud and accompanying discussion of the unknown vocabulary, abstract ideas, or unidentifiable emotions.

Based on Vygotsky's theories of constructivism, abstract analysis is possible if it takes place in the ZPD. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development is an important concept of

Vygotsky's theories and is one that will be observed and tested in this research. Vygotsky contended that children should be taught at the "ceiling" or thresholds of their capability (Karpov, 2014). He believed they worked more independently and experienced more growth in the ZPD. This method "awakens and rouses to life those processes which are ready to develop that are in the zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.71). While many believe that children are not capable of certain abstract thought, they may, in fact be ready for abstract knowledge if scaffolded correctly (Karpov, 2014). Engaging children in a read aloud and discussion at the thresholds of their ZPD will test this theory.

Review of the Literature

The literature review provides necessary prior study to obtain a foundation on which to not only conduct further research but also to stabilize the framework for future standards of Montessori pedagogy. Beyond Montessori and education as a whole this information is essential as it relates to the topic of not only Vygotsky's theories, but also the importance of literacy. Literacy refers to the many ways in which language is presented, not just the written variation that one would read individually, but exposure in general to literature and the practice of analysis. It is critical to present literature and practice analysis as children bring more prior knowledge and complex mental processes to reading than was thought earlier (Anderson, 1985).

Creating a culture of readers is difficult in the age of distraction from electronics and social media (Gurdon, 2019). Educators differ in their opinions of how to help students become readers (Anderson, 1985). Many educational standards require comprehension to be demonstrated but are vague when it comes to the measurement of those standards. Most of these methods require a certain level of reading proficiency and fluency to even be practiced. For example, some reading comprehension activities like those found in SRA (Science Research

Associates) individualized reading programs, require a student to read a short story and then engage in a series of activities that focus on main idea, order of events and vocabulary. Students who are not proficient or fluent readers are left out of this process. While these practices seem logical, most reading comprehension methods used in elementary schools are not backed by any real science (Schwartz, 2019). Reading aloud incorporates more students into the process, including those with disabilities or reading obstacles like dyslexia. Reading aloud with questioning and discussion allows for overcoming insecurities to assist even low readers to gain confidence in their ideas and exposure to literature they cannot yet read (Esquith, 2007). Gurdon, an advocate for reading aloud, argues that this act is more of an art form. “A miraculous alchemy takes place when one person reads to another, one that converts the ordinary stuff of life – a book a voice, a place to sit and a bit of time – into astonishing fuel for the heart, the mind and the imagination” (2019, p.xiii). As children progress through the grades, reading becomes a necessary tool for research, learning and content-based knowledge. The task is in contrast to time they take to read for curiosity or enjoyment, pleasure reading. Reading for pleasure, either aloud or privately, can have a significant impact on vocabulary and comprehension, but more importantly, it can aid young people in making connections and understanding their world from multiple perspectives, including making associations with characters that will eventually affect their decision-making process (Esquith, 2007). Some children engage in pleasure reading with little or no prompting while some children express no interest in the activity. Reading aloud can not only spark interest but provide exposure that facilitates interest. In 2000, The National Association for the Education of Young Children determined that reading aloud is the foundation for literacy development, stating, “It is the single most important activity for reading success” (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). Ellis (2019) explained that it is the responsibility of the

adults in the lives of children to model and scaffold the process of reading to spark a passion for it. In addition, she explains that reading is also a way for educators to build relationships, rapport and gain insight with students.

Socratic seminars and discussion groups have different parameters for different educational levels. In general, these groups include a great deal of analysis and discussion. According to Chorzempa and Lapidus (2009), Socratic seminars are exploratory in nature and include discussions based on a text to inspire understanding and new ideas. According to Garvey and Stangroom (2013), Socrates himself subscribed to the philosophy that in order to be virtuous one must be able to define virtue, and that takes discussion and analytical thought. When Socrates began his discussions, he only asked open ended questions based on fundamental beliefs and the assumption that self-discovery is dependent on independent and analytical thought (Magee, 1998). The Socratic discussion research by Chorzempa and Lapidus (2009) and Cruchet (2017) relied on students reading the text on their own, and therefore were restricted to proficient readers.

The methodology for Socratic discussion is as old as philosophy itself, but the process can be attributed to Vygotsky. Vygotsky's methods focus mostly on the adult mediation and the importance of guiding (Karpov, 2014). It is important to note that those who previously tried this method with elementary students highlight something that neither Vygotsky or Socrates expanded on, and that is building an environment of trust between the students prior to beginning the process. In the study by Chorzempa and Lapidus (2009), children were prepared to participate in the Socratic discussions by engaging in trust and awareness games to create an environment where the students could freely express their feelings without feeling insecure or fearing humiliation. The participants, both students and researchers, practiced constructive

feedback methods and engaged other students directly. Fear can be an obstacle to this discussion. Trust is important in the act of freedom of expression with young people. Esquith (2007) explains that fear is transcended by trust that is built through positive and patient responses in both questioning and discussion. In the Cruchet (2017) study involving 2nd grade students, the questioning was scaffolded closely at first and then loosened after specific modeling. In both studies, referenced above, the necessity of the preparation of the reading guide is important to the success of the research. Also, both studies found children made connections between actual situations in their own lives and situations in the books they were reading as evident in their writings and discussion. Cruchet (2017) found the ideas and diplomatic discussion skills were also transferable across the content areas within the classroom, seeing a connection during a math lesson where one student expressed the following, “I agree with Leo that a place value chart might work, but I think that the vertical way would be faster.” This interaction was similar to the skills utilized and earned in their open discussions.

The current literature reflects smaller group research and discussion groups. Socratic discussion groups involving the whole class are not as frequently studied. Incorporating the large group read aloud with Socratic discussion has not been tested in many of the publications reviewed. This literature will inspire the research, but the parameters will be varied and reveal results on a different scale.

Methodology

This study utilized a combination of read aloud and Socratic discussion sessions to assess the impact on the literacy and critical thinking skills of the elementary student. This study

utilized qualitative measurements including observation journals, participation checklists, and quantitative data including Star Reading assessments and pre and post-survey results.

The population for this action research study were Montessori students enrolled in both lower and upper elementary at a charter school in the southwestern region of the United States. The sample size included 30 lower elementary students and 30 upper elementary students. The sample included 30 boys and 30 girls.

Students were administered a Star reading test before and after the study. The Star reading test measures reading fluency and comprehension skills based on reading a passage and choosing an answer from a series of multiple choices. The assessment was 30 questions in length. It is a computer-based assessment that measures several aspects of literacy including grade equivalency (GE), scaled score (SS), percentile rank (PR), and Instructional reading level (IRL). Scaled score is useful for comparing student performance over time and across grades. Grade equivalency is a measurement based on the scores of children of the same grade nationally. A scaled score is calculated based on the difficulty of questions and the number of correct responses. Because the same range is used for all students, scaled scores can be used to compare student performance across grade levels. Star Reading scaled scores range from 0 to 1400. Norm-referenced scores are derived from the scaled score. Percentile rank is a norm-referenced score that provides a measure of a student's reading ability compared to other students in the same grade nationally. The percentile rank score, which ranges from 1 to 99, indicates the percentage of other students nationally who obtained scores equal to or lower than the score of a particular student. For example, a student with a percentile rank score of 85 performed as well as or better than 85 percent of other students in the same grade. Instructional reading level (IRL) is calculated after a student completes a Star Reading test; it is a criterion-referenced score that is

the highest reading level at which a student is 80% proficient (or higher) at comprehending material without assistance. Research has found that this level of comprehension corresponds to being at least 90–98% proficient at recognizing words; Star Reading does not directly assess word recognition. IRL scores are Pre-Primer (PP), Primer (P), grades 1.0 through 12.9, and Post-High School (PHS).

The pre and post survey (Appendix B) contained 8 questions. Each question was given 0-3 points based (Appendix E) on the complexity of their answers for a total of 24 points possible. These scores were compared pre and post-test to assess literacy and critical thinking skills.

Daily observations were taken to look for patterns or evidence of the themes and characters in the book being referenced or talked about during the day outside the reading sessions. General observations accounting for overall changes in engagement, focus or routine were also noted. In addition, a participation observation log was tallied during every session and then modified when reviewing the recording. The log's purpose was to measure overall engagement during the sessions.

The study itself took the form of twice weekly, hour-long, read aloud with Socratic discussion sessions utilizing a book chosen for its theme and relatability. The lower elementary students (grades 1-3) utilized the book Wonder by R.J. Palacio and the upper elementary students (grades 4-6) utilized Crash by Jerry Spinelli. Both books deal with bullying and being perceived as different by one's peers, one from the point of view of the bullied (Wonder) and one from the point of view of the bully (Crash). These books were chosen to assess if the students could understand themes from literary situations and then relate them to their own lives. The researcher read to the students with frequent pausing to ask asked open ended questions such as, "What do you think he meant when he said that?", "How would you have handled this situation?", "Would

you want to be friends with this character, why or why not?" The students used this time to explain and talk with each other about their different points of view and then the reading continued. Students also had time to ask their own questions and discuss major themes in further depth. The researcher asked questions relating to characters, plot, vocabulary and underlying themes. She also called on those who did not raise their hand to check for understanding and assist the students with focus. The researcher video recorded these sessions so that an accurate assessment could be made concerning participation. For six weeks, the researcher observed the responses at the beginning, middle and end of the intervention to assess for skill development in the process. The upper elementary class finished their book and the lower elementary class did not quite finish but concluded with all major themes and topics addressed sufficiently.

Analysis of the Data

The purpose of this study was to study the impact of reading aloud with Socratic discussion on the literacy and critical thinking skills of elementary student. The students from grade 1-6 were evaluated based on several data tools, both quantitative and qualitative. The data tools utilized include, a teacher daily reflection, Star Reading scores, a participation log, and a pre and post survey.

The subjects for this study consisted of 60 students from a Montessori charter school in the Southwestern United States. 30 of the students were lower elementary students (grades 1-3) and 30 were upper elementary students (grades 4-6). 30 of the participants were female and 30 were male.

Connections between reading and literature as well as a writing assessment were measured with a pre and post questionnaire that included 8 survey questions about books, friendship, and perspectives on the world. While some questions such as, “What is your favorite book?” and “What is your favorite character from a book?” were designed to measure exposure to literature, other questions were developed to assess the student’s ability to answer logically and in complete sentences. The vocabulary utilized and the depth of the answer measured critical thinking skills. Each answer was given 1-3 points for a total of 24 points possible. Points were determined by a rubric (appendix E) containing requirements including conventions, advanced synonyms for basic words (i.e. good, nice, big, little), evidence of critical thought or going above and beyond what was asked. For example, students were asked to, “name qualities that make someone a good friend.” One student wrote: “They are nice and play with me.” This student received 1 point for writing a complete sentence but 0 points for vocabulary and 0 points for critical thinking. Another student wrote: “I feel that a good friend should be kind and have something in common with me. I like friends who play soccer at PE because that is my favorite sport.” This student received 3 points for answering in a complete sentence with a synonym for nice (kind) and additional information such as common interests and empathy, that demonstrated critical thinking. The findings were better than I anticipated with 47 of the 60 students showing

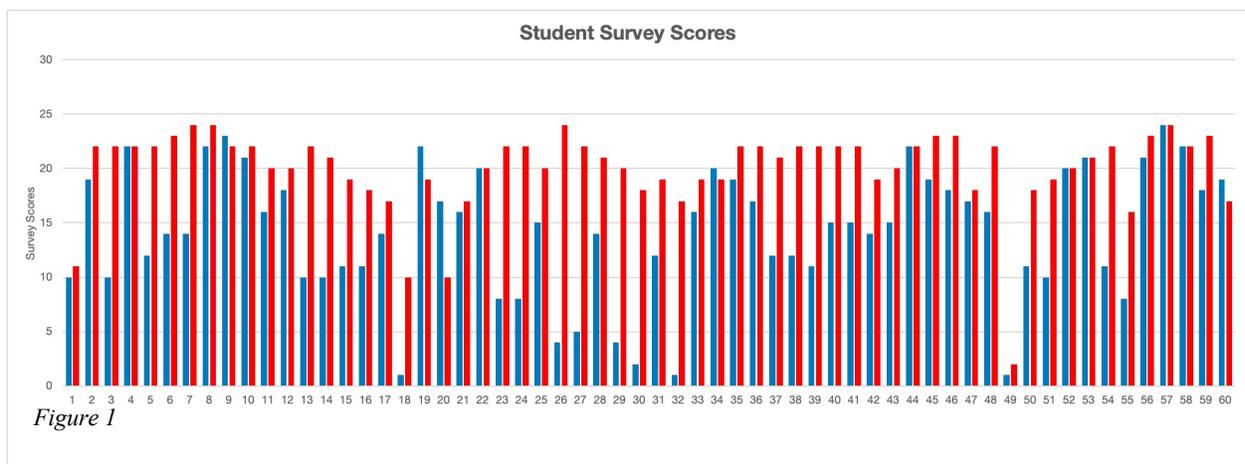


Figure 1

and increase in their survey scores. Figure 1 above illustrates the change from pre-survey to post-survey.

Participation was assessed using a log sheet (Appendix A). The log sheet was used to tally participation in the task based on the students' ability to demonstrate three specific forms of engagement during the session: raising their hand, answering appropriately, and commenting appropriately. Students received one tally each time they completed any of these tasks during the discussion. Each student was included in twelve discussions and there was no limit to how many tallies each student could receive for each discussion. Students did not need to raise their hand to participate. Students were also called on randomly to check for comprehension and listening skills. The results, while not as significant as the surveys, showed an increase in overall participation from week 1 to week 6. 60 percent of students increased their participation by 10

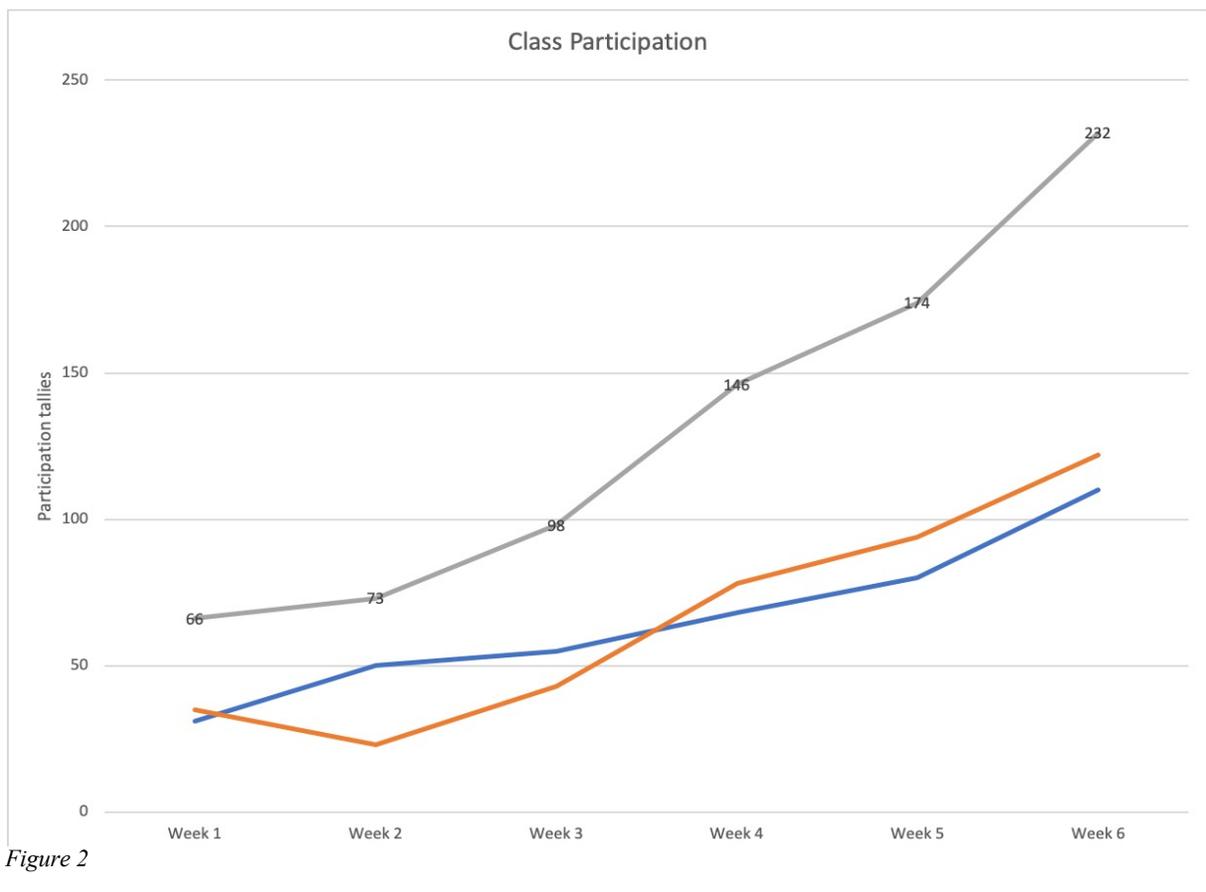


Figure 2

percent or more by week 6. Ten percent saw a forty percent increase from week 1 to week 6, Overall participation (Figure 2) increased by over 3 times the participation on week 1 to week 3.

A teacher reflection tool was used to find patterns and anomalies in the discussions. It was also used to notate the use of vocabulary, character references and/or situations referenced in the book or discussion outside of the research discussions. Most notable of the teacher observations are the amount of time students are overheard talking about the book or the Socratic discussion topics outside of the read aloud time. While this was more significant in the lower elementary, the upper elementary also referenced the book on several actions as well as some of the most notable characters. Those characters were also listed in at least 14 answers of the post action research (AR) survey. Over the course of the 6-week read aloud sessions, 17 lower elementary students and 5 upper students were observed talking about the book outside of class. On two separate occasions, lower elementary students were observed engaging in debate about the themes of the book.

Finally, Star Reading tests provided quantitative data as evidence of overall growth during the study. Increases were observed (Figures 4-6) in most areas including, significant change in overall percentile rank and scaled scores. The results for grades 1-3 (Figure 5) and for grades 4-6 (Figure 6) saw small differences in overall impact. Estimated oral fluency increases showed a benefit for students struggling with speed and fluency.

Star Reading Results	Pre AR	Post AR	Change
Percentile Rank	63.3	66.1	+2.8
Grade Equivalency	4.18	4.68	+.5
Est. Oral Fluency (Only for 1-4 grades)	108.7	119.7	+11
Instructional Reading level	3.6	4.3	+.7
Scaled Score	433	601	+168

Figure 3

Star Reading Results Lower Elementary	Pre AR	Post AR	Change
Percentile Rank	66.7	69.21	+2.51
Grade Equivalency	3.2	4.02	+.82
Est. Oral Fluency (Only for 2-5 grades)	90.93	103.89	+12.9
Instructional Reading level	2.82	3.49	+.67
Scaled Score	306	477	+171

Figure 4

Star Reading Results Upper Elementary	Pre AR	Post AR	Change
Percentile Rank	63.8	67.1	+3.3
Grade Equivalency	6	6.3	+.3
Est. Oral Fluency (Only for 2-5 grades)	144.7	155.21	+10.51
Instructional Reading level	5.34	6.14	+.8
Scaled Score	511	672	+161

Figure 5

The data collected measured changes in critical thinking skills as well as levels of participation. The data also measured awareness and mindfulness of the themes in other aspects of the school day.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to research the impact of read aloud with Socratic discussion on the literacy and critical thinking skills of the elementary student. The research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools including a pre and post survey, Star reading tests, a participation observation checklist and daily teacher observation forms. The data collected throughout the study indicates a positive improvement in literacy and critical thinking outcomes with both upper and lower elementary students.

Analysis of the data showed a 33% increase in read aloud participation over the course of the practice in both upper and lower elementary students. Participation included actions such as raising hands as well as offering appropriate responses (Appendix B). Children who did not volunteer, but instead were called upon, were also given a tally on this rubric if their answer was

appropriate and related to the topic. In the beginning of the research, discussion contained some inappropriate responses that may have, at least in the case for the upper grades, temporarily stunted the progression of the discussion and student participation dropped significantly at this time as shown on the graph in Figure 2. The researcher spoke with the class about the importance of understanding, trust and being open to new ideas and requested that anyone who was not willing to take the discussion seriously should and could exclude themselves at that time or later in private. The situation was improved from that point forward and all students remained in the intervention. Once the students had a week of practice with the routine, the discussions became lively and busy. Students who did not volunteer in the beginning began raising their hands by week 3. They asked when there would be more read alouds and requested to do them more often. Two separate parents noted, when saying their children were sick and not coming to school, that the students were so disappointed that they would miss the reading. One student even requested that his pull-out time for special education services be changed so he would not miss any of the read aloud time. The reading time was adjusted to start 30 minutes later to accommodate him, but he would still remind the teacher when he was leaving saying, "Don't start without me!"

Teacher observation forms revealed a great deal of discussion and contemplation outside of the intervention. These discussions were sometimes about the characters and sometimes related to a current situation that they were dealing with related to their own lives. For example, in week 5, upper elementary students on the playground were observed discussing if the changes described in the main character were realistic. The conversation led to further discussion as to whether people capable of changing an aspect of their personality? One student argued that mean people will always be mean, but another argued that mean people could become nice and that change was possible. In week 3, lower elementary students were overheard discussing the impact

that a disfiguring accident could have on their friendship. During a grammar work, a 7-year-old girl asked her friend, “Would you still like me if I was in an accident and I was ugly?” The response was not immediate but, after a short pause, her friend responded that she thought they would still be friends but was not sure because she gets “grossed out” easily. A boy working nearby chimed in that he would still like her because she would still be funny and nice, saying, “My grandma is kind of ugly, but I love her more than anything!” (observation log 02/18/20). The girl who first asked the question began laughing and her friend said, “That’s true (name), you would still be funny and nice.” They all had a good giggle about it and probably did not realize the complex conclusion they had reached. The issues confronted by the characters in the book Wonder, forced them use content that they read, relate it to their own lives, confront their prejudices and critically think about how they may handle hypothetical situations. These types of observations were usually made during the discussions themselves, but several times were observed during other parts of the school day.

The results from the survey showed an overall increase in advanced vocabulary, correct conventions, and quality word choice (Figure 2). In addition, the characters were referenced in several of the post surveys. The average pre survey score was 14 and the average post survey score was 20 (Appendix E). The Star Reading results showed increases overall. Significant increases were evident in the areas of scaled scores, percentile and estimated oral fluency. Estimated oral fluency was particularly interesting because it was unexpected and may inspire further study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and resulting conclusions, four recommendations were made. Teachers should begin to or continue to read aloud to students. Based on the data, participation in

discussions, as defined in the participation log (appendix A), increases over time. The practice of read aloud with Socratic discussion included an increase in appropriate responses and overall focus as measured and observed in the daily teacher log. The discussions became more effective and in-depth when students saw other children engaging in the practice. The data directly correlates with Vygotsky's social learning theory. When teachers and peers are modeling and guiding children to listen and engage, an increase in critical thinking is possible under these circumstances. Because the practice can be linked to improvement, perhaps, in the future, older or more proficient readers could lead the discussion instead of the teacher. This practice could be a great way to establish mentorship and leadership for the older students and trust to the younger students. Exploring a reading mentor program would be a great way to expand this concept in the future. The last recommendation is further study on the effects of read aloud on the oral fluency of young readers. The result could prove a connection that could be valuable to students struggling with reading fluency. Additionally, students are making moral and ethical judgements based on some of the characters and discussion so teachers should be mindful to include a wide variety of books that reflect the diverse backgrounds of the children in their class.

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Appendix A

Daily Read Aloud Student Observation Log

Date _____ Time _____

Student Name	Raising hand	Answering appropriately	Commenting appropriately
EX. Jane	XXXX	XX	X

Comments:

Appendix B

Student AR Survey

Name _____

Date

What book do you want to read next?

Who is your favorite character from a book?

If you could write a book what would it be called?

If you could live anywhere, where would you live?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Who is your favorite person?

If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be?

Name qualities or things that make someone a good friend?

Appendix D



Student Diagnostic Report Enterprise Test

1

Printed Tuesday, July 16, 2019 12:00:47 PM

School: MEC

Test Date: May 13, 2019 9:14 AM

Test Time: 19 minutes 29 seconds

Report Options

Use Trend Score: Use trend score for student's suggested skills



Grade: 3

School Benchmark - Grade 3



STAR Reading Scores

SS: 497 (Scaled Score) Lexile® Measure: 650L	■ At/Above Benchmark	██████████ Scaled Score is based on the difficulty of questions and the number of correct responses. The Lexile® measure is a scaled score converted to the equivalent Lexile measure.
PR: 66 (Percentile Rank)		██████████ scored greater than 66% of students nationally in the same grade.
GE: 4.4 (Grade Equivalent)		██████████ test performance is comparable to that of an average fourth grader after the fourth month of the school year.
IRL: 4.1 (Instructional Reading Level)		██████████ would be best served by instructional materials prepared at the fourth grade level.
Est. ORF: 119 (Estimated Oral Reading Fluency)		██████████ can likely read 119 words per minute correctly on grade level appropriate text.

Domain Scores

<p>Literature Key Ideas and Details: 94 Craft and Structure: 93 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 95</p> <p>Informational Text Key Ideas and Details: 94 Craft and Structure: 92 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 93</p> <p>Foundational Skills Phonics and Word Recognition: 95 Fluency: 94</p> <p>Language Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 96</p>	Domain scores, ranging from 0-100, estimate ██████████ percent of mastery on skills in each domain at a third grade level.
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Reading Recommendation

<p>ZPD: 3.2-4.9 (Zone of Proximal Development)</p> <p>Lexile® Range: 550L-700L</p>	<p>██████████ ZPD identifies books at the right level to provide optimal reading challenge without frustration. Enter ██████████ ZPD in www.ARBookFind.com to find appropriate books.</p> <p>Lexile® range spans 100L below to 50L above an individual's Lexile measure, and is the optimal range for successful reading practice. A Lexile Measure <i>below</i> BR400L is reported for progress monitoring purposes only. A score below BR400L should not be used to match readers with text, therefore a Lexile range will not be reported.</p>
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Appendix E

Survey Rubric

Question Number	Does not answer the question 0pt	Does not use complete sentences 1pt	Developed and/or complex 2pt	Accomplished 3pt Makes connections in logic, expanded vocabulary, thoughtful language, complete sentences 3pt	total
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
Survey total					