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The Effects of Daily Read Alouds on Comprehension Acquisition in a Montessori Early  
Childhood Setting

Submitted on May 20, 2021

in fulfillment of the requirements for the MAED Degree

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to examine the effects of chapter book read alouds on young children's comprehension in a Montessori setting. Children participated in discussion and a retell activity while I read a chapter book aloud during the lunch period over of three weeks. This helped me gather data on the effects of the children's comprehension and understanding of the story over a period of time. Seven children between the ages of five and six years participated in this study. All of these children attend a private Montessori school in a midwestern metropolitan area and attend the school Monday through Friday until at least 3pm each day. Data showed that the discussion and activity implemented in the study assisted children in their understanding of the chapter book over a period of time, even though there were some inconsistencies in the data gathered. The action plan includes changes in times of day read alouds are implemented, changes in number of days read alouds are implemented, and emphasis on story sequencing when retelling a story.

*Keywords:* read aloud, comprehension, Montessori, early childhood

During a student teaching experience in a Montessori classroom in March 2020, I observed the lead teacher conduct a chapter book read aloud with her older students each day. These older children were between 4.5-6 years of age. In my experiences as a child, I remember chapter book read alouds conducted by my Montessori teacher between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Yet these children in the Montessori environment were much younger. I could not help but wonder how the children themselves were experiencing the material. Did they understand the material? What were they taking away from the story that was read? How does the children's understanding of the story change if the chapter book isn't read every single day? Dr. Montessori observed and concluded that during the 3-6 year old subplane of development, children go through an explosion of language development based on experiences in their environment. Traditional preschool and early elementary research on read alouds have been reported, but what is different about Montessori? I also wanted to get a glimpse at where children's understanding of story is currently at prior to the intervention since I was a new teacher. Once data is collected, I can develop a plan for how to support children's reading comprehension

In October 2020, I began working at a Montessori school in a Midwestern Metropolitan area. I am an AMI primary assistant teacher at the school and this is my first year working here. There is one children's house at the school with a total of twenty- seven children enrolled between thirty-three months and six years of age. It is a mostly white school with one child of color. Children attend this school Monday through Friday either half days, full days, or extended days. I conducted several chapter book read aloud sessions with these children over a period of three weeks with seven of the twenty-seven children in the class who were between five and six years old. All of these children attend the school full days Children of this age group are further

along in their literacy and social development to be able to participate in an intervention like this. In this group of 7 children, four were boys and three were girls.

### Theoretical Framework

This research uses Montessori's theory of the sensitive period for language. There are four sensitive periods within a child's absorbent mind during the first plane of development (birth-six years of age). Montessori defined the absorbent mind as the brain having a "sponge like" capacity to take in necessary information from one's environment in order to create themselves. Within this absorbent mind, there are four sensitive periods where a first plane child's development is more rapid. A child is intrinsically motivated to a particular activity and exhibits spontaneous concentration when engaged in an activity that matches a particular sensitivity (Hoffman, 2019). The four sensitive periods are, the sensitive period for refinement of the senses, refinement of movement, language and order. Through Montessori's observations, she discovered that humans possess a neural structure that enables language acquisition (Fabri & Fortuna, 2020).

Language becomes a part of the child's life from the time they are in the womb. They hear and absorb the information unconsciously. During the first three years of a child's life, they are absorbing the language around them as a beginning to forming words of their own. A child mimics what they hear, beginning with babbling and eventually speaking clear words. Between the ages of 3 to 6 years, a child's language becomes more refined. They have the opportunity to hear and repeat words and sounds in their environment.

Montessori discovered the important role the environment plays in supporting neural/cerebral development, and in promoting learning through motivation (Fabri & Fortuna, 2020) This holds true for the development of spoken language and understanding of new words. If a child is in an environment where new language is all around them, they are internally

motivated to learn new words and what they mean. According to Montessori, it is not the duty of the adult to teach language, but rather help children develop confidence in their own abilities, knowledge of the world, and ability to organize what is in the mind (Feez, 2010). Montessori supports this by saying “The curiosity which these questions awaken has led to the making of careful studies of language development, as it can be observed in actual children. I say development, not teaching, for the mother does not teach her child language. It develops naturally like a spontaneous creation” (Montessori, 1967, pg. 111). The sensitive period for language highlights the connection between what a child is hearing being read aloud to them, and their ability to understand that information. This is the concept I wanted to take a deeper look into in my research.

### Literature Review

Read alouds are a way that educators try to enhance reading development. Child’s early literacy experiences are the foundation for oral language and social skills (Mantei & Kervin, 2018). The purpose of this action research project was to take a deeper dive into understanding how intentional questioning used during read alouds impact a child’s ability to comprehend a story. The literature reviewed includes background knowledge on the history of reading aloud and storytelling in early childhood environments, particularly Montessori. It also features the work that has been done on the subject of reading aloud to children. The following topics are reviewed below: reading comprehension, planning read alouds, and why implementing strategies is important.

Reading comprehension is the ability for one to make meaning out of what they are reading. To understand what they are reading and make sense out of it. Whether that’s being able to connect the story to their own lives or come up with new ideas while reading the material.

“Children rely on prior knowledge to construct meaning about what they listen to” (Morrow, Frietag, & Gambrell, 2009, pg. 49). Through examination of the existing literature, a recurring theme that came up with the notion that many comprehension activities are not prioritized in literacy instruction because teachers are not provided the necessary training for it. In most cases, early literacy continues to focus on phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and increasing vocabulary in number and complexity (Fischer et al, 2001).

### Importance of Planning

Read alouds are one of the most important activities required for reading success (McCaffery & Hisrich, 2017). Edwards, Baker, et al., 2016, states that “Read alouds can be used to provide a context for engaging motivating topics and provide visual mental models of the comprehension process for elementary grade students who struggle with reading or those known to have a learning disability” (p. 283). Much research supports read alouds implemented in classrooms with children as young as 3 years old. Some research contradicts this by saying there is a modest relationship between parent-child read alouds in preschool and in later first grade reading achievement (Mcgee & Schickedanz, 2007). Overall, however, research has supported read alouds in the classroom, which indicates a need for careful planning on how to teach them. A survey done recording teachers’ read aloud practices showed that 50-70% of teachers do not plan for a read aloud session (McCaffery & Hisrich, 2017). Mainly read alouds are conducted for enjoyment on the spot without implementation strategies. A study done in Sweden shows that read alouds were conducted once a day and rarely planned (Damber, 2015). “We found indications that read alouds were handled as a routine activity, which does not attract the preschool teacher’s thoughts or pedagogical ambitions to any extent” (Damber, 2015, pg. 274).

Data from the study showed that read alouds were more of a routine activity, done during transition times of the day, whereas follow up dialogue and activity was not.

A major benefit to planning read alouds is the opportunity to implement into a lesson plan. Implementing discussion allows students to demonstrate their comprehension and for teachers to evaluate it. Collins, 2016, reported a study done on two school districts where discussion was implemented on half the read aloud sessions with children. The same book was read aloud multiple times over three weeks. The hypothesis was that prompting children to engage in inferential thinking would foster their understanding of high demand queries and generalizes this thinking to new questions about the book. In other words, strategies supporting inferential thinking will support children's comprehension of the material. The study's results supported this hypothesis, showing that highly cognitive discussion, such as inferential thinking, positively affects children's comprehension of the material (Collins, 2016).

### Questioning and Discussion

The types of questioning implemented during read alouds play a role in how a child will respond. Implementing questioning that results in dialogic thinking and conversation will allow the child to understand what is happening in the story during the read aloud. Deshmukh et al., 2019, studied the significance of examining how children interact and respond with teachers during shared book readings. Different types of questions were asked, which elicited either yes/no answers or answers with more detail from children. The questions that began with \*WH\*, standing for who, what, where and why were easier for children to answer. The children's answers were longer and supported critical thinking because the questions elicited that response (Deshmukh et al. 2019).

To expand upon the questioning strategy used in early childhood, McGee & Schickedanz, 2007, used interactive read aloud techniques to support children in engaging with the same story across three days. This technique begins with the teacher taking on a more active role the first day reading the text and making comments. Children actively listened and sometimes commented. The second day, the children participated more verbally answering questions and commenting more frequently. The third day, the children take on a fully active role in reconstructing the story with the teachers guidance (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). This study with repeated read alouds, demonstrates how children's participation changes across time, while using a reading strategy. Horst et al., 2019, used repeated read alouds over a period of 5 days while implementing the SEEDS strategy. SEEDS stands for Sensitivity (look, listen, and be aware of each child's thoughts and needs), Encouragement (using intentional affirmations to create a supportive learning environment), Education (embed in daily learning activities/reading skills such as phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension), Development of skills through doing (hands on activities), and Self-image support (interactions to support a child's feeling of being respected and capable) (Horst et al, 2019). The strategy in itself enhances the practice of dialogic reading in a way that is structured, emotionally supportive, and intentional to increase children's language and literacy development in key areas (Horst et al, 2019). Using the SEEDS method was shown to be engaging and exciting for the children as the teacher enforced repeated read alouds. After doing research, I want to find out more about children's understanding of literacy in the Montessori education setting.

### Methodology

The purpose for this intervention is how to support reading comprehension development through strategic based questioning during read alouds in a Montessori setting. To begin my

intervention, I wanted to find out what children understood after I read aloud a picture book. During the first week of the four- week intervention, I read one picture book a day to the children. The titles of these books can be found in Appendix B. I invited all seven children to a gathering at 10:00am by a classroom mat. This is also known in Montessori as a working mat where children place various materials. See Appendix A for a photo of the Montessori working mat. During lunchtime, on the same day, I sat with the same group of children and asked them what they remembered about the picture book that was read to them and recorded their responses.

During the second week of the intervention, I began reading the chapter book *Stuart Little* by E.B. White. These read alouds occurred three days a week for three weeks every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. I sat with the group of children during lunchtime each of those days and read approximately 15 pages aloud. There were a series of questions I asked the children before and during the read aloud with responses recorded on a form titled Discussion Questions and Responses (see Appendix C). There was also a 5 Finger Retell Activity (see Appendix D) conducted during each section I supported the children in completing after each read aloud. This allowed the children to identify and familiarize themselves with key elements in each section that the book including character and setting. The activity is described below.

#### Data Tools

Four data tools were used for the intervention. The first data collection tool was a list of Discussion Questions that were asked of the children before and during each read aloud of the chapter book. Some of these questions were designed to elicit one-word responses from the children, and others were designed for longer more detailed responses. Questions asked at the beginning of each read aloud were about what the children remember from the previous day's

reading, as well as what they thought would happen in the present day's reading. My intent was to prompt discussion amongst the children with each other as well as with me. Also, to help the children think critically and track what was happening in the story over a period of time. See Appendix C for list of questions and the recorded responses.

The second data collection tool used was a Five Finger Retell Activity I supported the children in completing after the read aloud each day. I drew a large outline of my hand on a piece of drawing paper and labeled each finger an element of the section that was read aloud. The fingers were labeled as follows: character's featured, setting (*where* the section of the story took place), what happened at the beginning, middle, and end of each section. The children would raise their hand and describe each of the elements as it pertained to the section read aloud. The desired outcome of this activity was for children to get a deeper understanding of what is happening in the story over time. I also wanted to evaluate children's recall I implemented this activity for eight out of the nine read alouds of the chapter book.

The third data collection tool used was an Engagement Rubric (see Appendix E) that I created to note observations and evaluate the children's engagement during the read alouds each week. Though engagement can be a broad aspect to measure, there were signs that told me the children were more engaged on certain days than others. Were the children sitting in their seats the whole time or getting up many times? Were the children side talking with each other while I was reading or listening to the read aloud and participating in the activity? What does it mean if they were doing both? This data collection tool would help me identify if the children were engaged in the material from what I could physically observe.

The final data collection tool used was a list of Final Questions (see Appendix F) I asked the children after we finished reading *Stuart Little*. These questions covered the whole book, as

opposed to sections of the book read each day. This method of data collecting was done on the final day of the read aloud without the Five Finger Retell activity. These questions are designed to evaluate how the children comprehended the book as a whole after thinking through the discussion questions and participating in the Five Finger Retell activity.

### Qualitative & Quantitative Data

The data collected by the above data tools can be most closely identified as qualitative data. This type of data is gathered most often from open-ended survey questions, interviews or focus groups. It is not as descriptive, which allows for the collection of data in numerical form. One of my data collection tools, the Five Finger Retell Activity, allowed me to analyze the data more quantitatively. I measured the frequency of the children's participation in different parts of the activity. When the child raised their hand to give a thought of character, setting, beginning, middle and end of the section read, I would make a tally mark. Then I counted how many tally marks by each child total and then count how many marks by each story element (character, setting, beginning, middle, end). Since this intervention was audio recorded, I made sure to say each child's name aloud as they raised their hand so I could identify who said what. The discussion questions and responses identify as qualitative data as there was no frequency of events to put into a numerical form. They allowed for more open-ended answers. The questions asked after all the read aloud sessions on the last day also qualify as quantitative data, since there wasn't any information to be able to put into numerical form. The engagement rubric allowed me to make observational notes about physical engagement, on a scale, during the intervention so the data that results from it is more qualitative. Knowing the types of data being collected allowed me to begin analyzing it once the intervention was complete.

## Data Analysis

The purpose of this research and intervention is how to support comprehension development through strategic based questioning during read alouds in a Montessori setting. Both quantitative and qualitative data tools, were used to find out how children's comprehension was affected by a chapter book read aloud over a period of time.

### Week 1 Responses To Picture Books

#### Day 1 Week 1

Name	Response
Child B	1. The dad came back with news that they had a new neighbor 2. I have a question about the prairie, if they moved to the prairie or they were born there (Missed this information, joined the gathering late)
Child A	1. When they danced
Child F	1. I liked the picture when the girl ran in and climbed on and it reminded me of Tigger from Winnie the Pooh
Child C	1. When they built the house
Child D	
Child E	
Child G	1. The little puppy and the girl who had red hair like mine 2. They stayed at grandpa and grandmas

#### Day 2 Week 1

Name	Response
Child B	1. When the babies were laying on the bed 2. I really liked when they ate breakfast 3. I never take Marcus (pet fish) out of the house
Child A	1. When they had the party
Child F	1. That their bulldog was in one picture but not the others
Child C	1. The dancing
Child D	1. When she was running the fire 2. I think the dog stayed home 3. When it was too cold for the dog
Child E	1. When they put on the prettiest dress

Child G	1. The babies, the sleighbells and the dancing
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## Day 3 Week 1

Name	Response
Child B	1. I think the king was the shape shifter and I also remember when the girl didn't get the king when he shaped shifted into a boy.
Child A	1. I think the king and the good girl got married
Child F	1. That the good girl was the queen but the bad girl was the servant
Child C	
Child D	
Child E	
Child G	1. That the good girl found a snake and the bad girl was a serpent 2. When the girl was bad, she cried to her good girl side

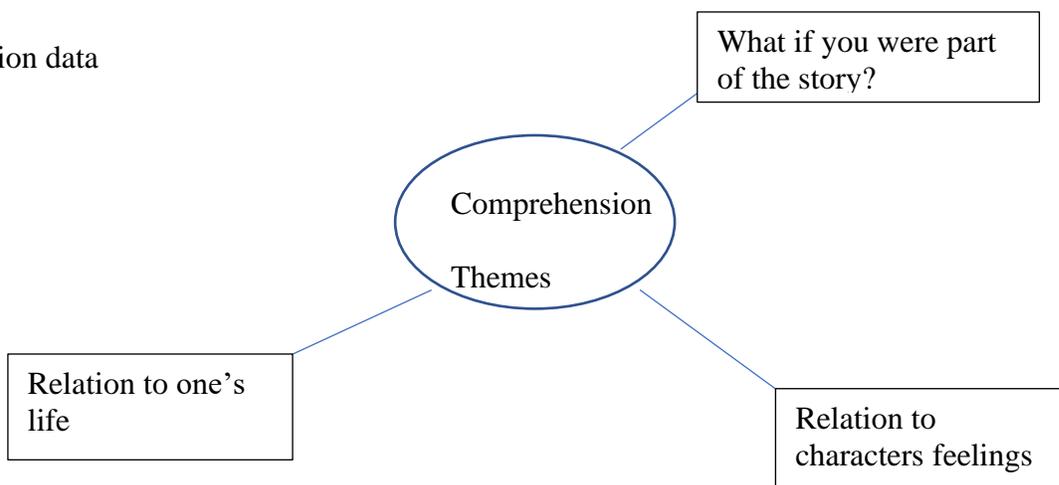
## Day 4 Week 1

Name	Response
Child B	1. She wanted to be peter pan and everybody voted for her and she got to be peter pan 2. Well I watched shows that have peter pan in it like jack and the neverland pirates. I remember in some of them I watched there was Tinkerbell
Child A	1. That the girl wanted to be peter pan but they said no
Child F	1. I remember that she said she felt like she could fly back home 2. The story reminded me of how spiderman wasn't really spiderman, he was peter parker
Child C	1. After the big show she would be a ballerina
Child D	
Child E	1. That she wanted to be peter pan
Child G	1. That the girl wanted to be peter pan

Responses from week one of the intervention, before reading the chapter book varied, yet these responses indicated an ability to recall and connect to their own lives. For example, child E said on the first day of the first week "I liked the picture when the girl ran in and climbed, it

reminded me of Tigger from Winnie the Pooh”. This was an example of a child making a connection to something they saw in the story to another piece of fiction-based material from their own lives. Another example of this is when child B said on the fourth day, “Well I have watched shows that have Peter Pan in it, like Jack and the Neverland Pirates” referring to a part of the picture book *Amazing Grace*, by Mary Hoffman. On the first day, child B asked a question about a part of the story that they had missed. This child had joined the gathering for the read aloud a few minutes after the rest of the children. They were able to recognize they may have been missing information because a part of the story sequence didn’t make sense to them. Child B said on the first day “I have a question about the prairie if the family moved to the prairie or were they born there?” These are just some of the patterns I noticed from the first week of the intervention, gathering children’s comprehension from picture books pre-chapter book read aloud.

Discussion question data



To gather data about the children’s comprehension while reading aloud the chapter book *Stuart Little* by E.B. White I created a list of Discussion Questions, found in Appendix C. I asked these questions to the children before and during each read aloud. The responses from the children were also varied, though there were common themes I discovered. One theme I recognized was

that children would talk about what they would do if they were a part of the story. Child F said during week 3 “If the boat started to crack in half I would grab the steering wheel and screw it on and take the boat bottom apart and make a small boat.” While as adults, this may be hard to understand, the child was able to picture in his head a plan for how he would contribute to a part of the story. This indicated to me that the child was focused and taking in information about the story. Child C also had a response relating to the same theme “I would put a rocket on the bottom and blast off out of the water onto the shore.” Many responses seen as to how the child themselves would react if they were part of the story.

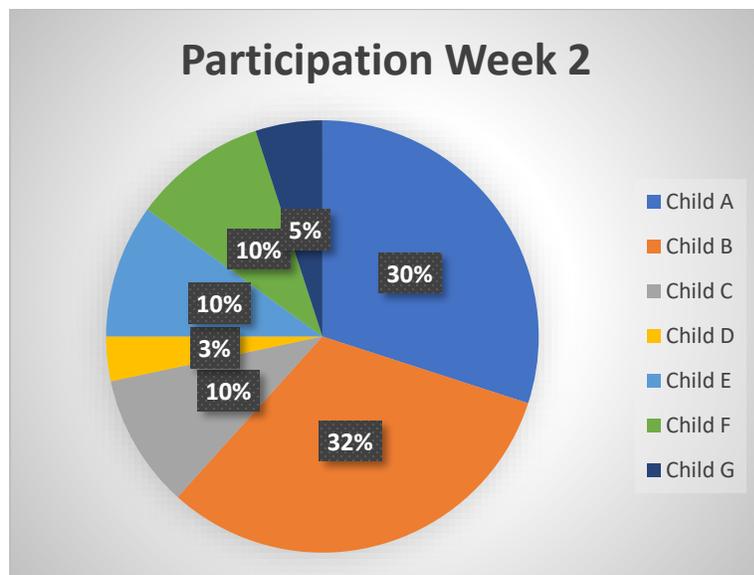
Another common theme that I discovered amongst the discussion question responses to *Stuart Little*, is the children relating segments of the story to their own lives. Similarly, to when they did so after the picture book read alouds the first week. When reading the segment about the boat Stuart was on called “The Wasp”, several students associated wasp with insect instead of the name of the boat. Child B commented during the second week “One time I got stung by a wasp and didn’t even cry and that was my second time I got stung.” There was misunderstanding in what “the wasp” was referring to in the book, but the student was able to connect wasp as an insect and talk about a time they were injured by one. Another child also talked about wasps as being dangerous to them because “they sting you”.

Being able to look into how characters in a story might feel is another theme that I discovered from the discussion question responses. Child B, during the second week, made a recall and a guess, about how Stuart might feel in a part of the story. “Remember when Stuart was wrapped up in the curtain, I think it felt awkward for him.” Though I did not ask this child why Stuart might feel the way he did, I could see that they were making predictions about how the character might feel. Child F also made a comment during the second week about how brave

one of the other characters must have been feeling when rescuing Stuart “Margalo went bravely into the garbage truck and took out Stuart and brought him home and Ms. Little made a treat for Margalo.” The themes described above are signs that some of the students were thinking about and comprehending the story as it was read aloud over a period of time. Participation in reading activities is another way to discover if comprehension is occurring.

#### Five Finger Retell Activity participation

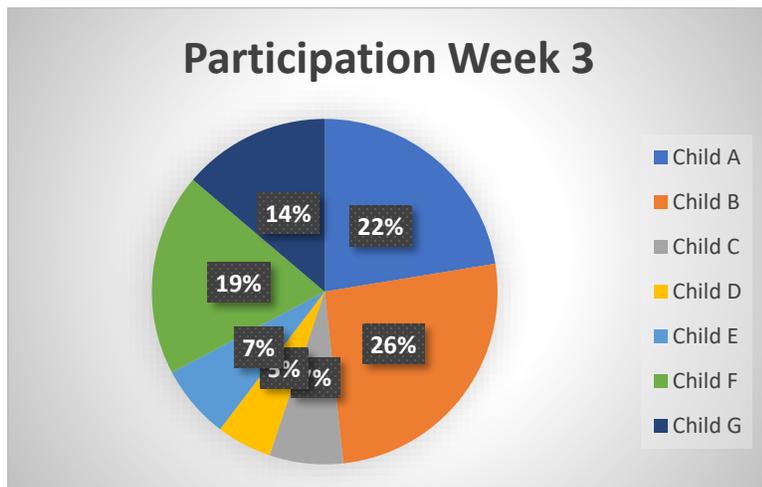
During the Five Finger Retell Activity, I measured each child’s comprehension by how much they raised their hand and participated in the activity week by week. There are patterns amongst each child’s participation significant to note. When the students raised their hand to contribute to the Five Finger Retell Activity, it gave the children an opportunity to share their ideas, and an opportunity for me to see what the students were understanding. Below are pie charts indicating an increase or decrease in students participation during the three weeks.



*Figure 1.* Students Participation During Week 2.

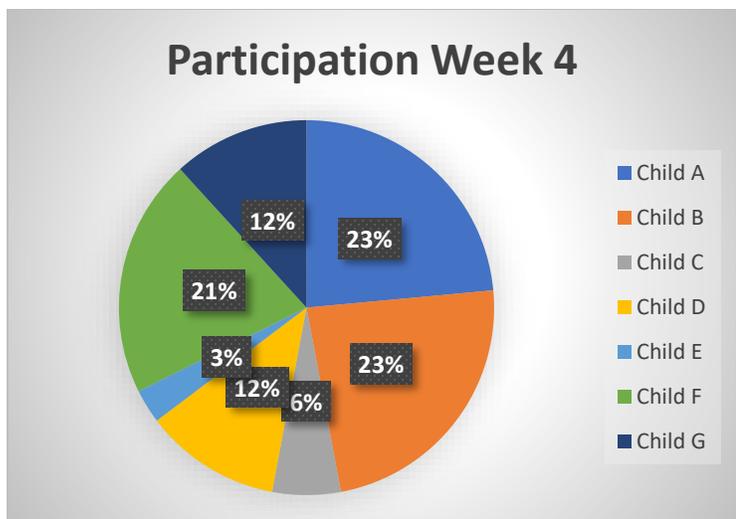
Participation during the first week indicates child A and B making up two thirds of the participation amongst all of the children. The rest of the children made up the other third of the

participation. Child F and C made up 20% of the participation amongst the other children, child D making up the least amount of participation. This information gives me the first indication of understanding amongst each of the students which will provide a baseline for comparison amongst participation during the other two weeks.



*Figure 2.* Students Participation During Week 3.

Week 3 data indicates child A and B making up only half of the participation amongst the whole group of children, compared to two thirds above. Child A and B's participation each decreased This is a result of increased participation and therefore understanding from child F from 10% the second week to 19% the third week. It is also a result of increased participation from child G from 5% the second week to 14% the third week. Data from this week shows variance in increase and decrease in participation from different children.



*Figure 3.* Students Participation During Week 4.

Overall, participation from week 3 to week 4 didn't change much. Child A and child B still made up half of the participation as they did the previous week. They had equal amounts of participation, yet child B's participation decreased slightly while child A's participation increased slightly. The slight increase in participation doesn't give a ton of information about whether their understanding of the story increased or decreased, except that their participation was greatest amongst all the children. Child F's participation increased slightly which shows overall he had an increase in understanding over the 3 week period. Though child D had low participation amongst the children, it is clear that his understanding increased even just a little over the three weeks.

An important note when it comes to the 5 Finger Retell Activity data is that sometimes I noticed students had a challenging time stating exactly when an event happened during the section of the story read. There are three fingers on the five finger retell activity that are labeled beginning, middle, and end. Sometimes the students would get the timing of an event mixed up, thinking it happened in the middle of the section when it really happened towards the end. It is to my knowledge that story sequence understanding is just beginning for these students, so knowing

this will help me in my plan of action. Story sequencing activities will help support these students in their understanding of what happens when in a story whether that's from a chapter book or picture book read aloud.

### Engagement Rubric

An Engagement Rubric was created and used to measure childrens engagement. There were several signs that showed engagement during the discussion questions and five finger retell activity, or lack thereof. Below is the engagement rubric with data after the four weeks.

Stuart Little |

Research question: How does asking questions, as part of a read aloud, impact a child's ability to comprehend information?

Engagement Assessment as a group scale:

5-All children participated in discussion & activity, sat in seat the whole period, eyes on me while listening

1- None of the children participated in discussion & activity, none sat in seat the whole period, moved about eyes wandered the whole time

#### Week 1

5	4	3	2	1
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#### Week 2

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

#### Week 3

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

#### Week 4

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

The physical engagement of a group of children isn't always so clear to measure. There are signs that say that a child may not be engaged in the activity or discussion, such as eyes wandering.

However, eyes wandering could be a sign that a child has a thought in their head and they express their thinking with wandering eyes.

From the engagement rubric above, it is clear that physical engagement was slightly lower amongst the students the third and fourth weeks, compared to the first and second weeks of the intervention. There are several signs of disengagement I noted throughout the intervention. One of the signs was childrens heads turning in the opposite direction from me as well as side talking with each other. These were frequent occurrences where I had to remind the child (politely) to turn around and stay with me. Three of the four weeks of the intervention took place during lunchtime. Children sat at their own table next to each other and the tables were arranged in a circle close to my table. The children were allowed to eat while they listened to *Stuart Little* and during the Five Finger Retell Activity that followed While the staff and myself tried to keep the children as close to me as possible, there was still activity from the rest of the class around these children during lunch such as loud talking and moving around the room. The second week of the intervention, which was the first week reading aloud the chapter book, I had to experiment with seating of these seven children, eventually bringing them close enough together where there was space between them, but they could stay focused on me as much as possible. Though I did not know what the nature of side conversations were, I gave polite reminders that I was reading aloud or that another child was talking. Other signs I noticed that there was disengagement was when our sessions would continue to run while other children were cleaning up their tables, signaling the end of the lunch period. The children part of the read aloud group would ask if they could clean up as well. I let them know that they may clean up as soon as I gave a signal that determined the end of the session that they could clean up their tables. The engagement rubric allowed me to evaluate how engaged the children were in the discussion and activities as a whole. The child's participation in the 5 finger retell activity as well as their responses to

discussion questions allowed me to evaluate what specifically the children were understanding as a result of being engaged.

Post discussion questions data

Student	Answer
<b>Child B</b>	Question 1: A good person Question 3: By getting Ms. Littles ring Question 4: Margalo ran away Stuart tried to follow her Question 5: King of the world
<b>Child E</b>	Question 1: A good mouse Question 2: Snowbell.
<b>Child D</b>	Question 5: Boss of the world
<b>Child F</b>	Question 1: He is a mouse Question 2: They didn't get along, they weren't friends Question 3: Getting the car Question 4: To find Margalo Question 5: King of the world
<b>Child C</b>	Question 1: He was a substitute teacher
<b>Child G</b>	Question 3: By finding Margalo Question 4: To find Margalo

The data that I got from the questions I asked on the final day of reading *Stuart Little* gave me an understanding of how children understood the book as a whole. Some of the questions were more basic than others, but one of the questions asked the children to describe Stuart in three words. Here is a list of the responses I got from some of the children on that question

Child A: He is tiny

Child E: A good mouse

Child B: A good person

Child F: He is a mouse

Child C: He was a substitute teacher

To know how to describe Stuart, one has to have an understanding of his place in the story. The response from child C in particular shows me that this child remembers a role that Stuart played specifically at one point in the story. When child B and child E responded with “a good person” or “a good mouse”, the three words used were not as specific as in child C’s response, but still answered the question of *describe Stuart in three words*. Question 4 on the list asked “Why did Stuart run away from home?” which required a knowledge of events that happened in the story. Child B’s response was “Margalo ran away, Stuart tried to follow her” This response demonstrated the understanding from the child of what was happening in the story that caused Stuart to run away.

Based on the data that I have collected; I find myself having more questions than answers on children’s comprehension during read alouds. The purpose of this study was to find out how to support comprehension development through strategic based questioning during read alouds. My research question is how do chapter book read alouds affect a child’s comprehension? Much of my data collection supported the intervention process that I completed, with most students showing signs of comprehending the material. I still wonder did the children show an increase in their comprehension or a decrease? That is a question I am still left with which will help me plan out my next steps of action.

#### Action Plan

Based on the data that I have collected; it is clear that the children as a group were participating and most importantly comprehending information from the chapter book read

aloud. The discussion and activities supported the children in their quest for understanding. The findings from the data suggest that more activities and discussion should continue along with future read alouds, whether it is from a picture book or a chapter book. The practice of critical thinking and considering other peoples thoughts and ideas is a useful skill that young children can begin practicing in early childhood.

I will continue to read chapter books aloud to a group of children in a Montessori classroom. I want to expand the number of children who I read aloud to, as there are more five and six-year-old children than was included in this study. Chapter books have more content for children to take in and understand than picture books. The children in this study enjoyed hearing a longer story over a period of time and were able and excited to make their own predictions about what would happen next. Even when *Stuart Little* ended with questions still left about what happens next. My plan is to read a new chapter book every month to the children, as it took about 3 weeks to read *Stuart Little* in its entirety.

Another part of the plan is to change the timing of the read alouds. During this study, the chapter book read alouds were conducted during lunchtime, as it was fitting for the circumstances at the school. My data showed that this is a time where lots of activity and conversation from the rest of the class is occurring around these children, and they often get distracted. Seating arrangement changes helped a little, but the challenge was still there to keep children focused on me and on each other throughout the activity. When I observed the chapter book read aloud during my student teaching a year ago, the teacher read aloud to a group of students after lunch/recess. This was after eating and lots of movement, so the children were more relaxed and able to focus on the story. The teacher only had to bring their attention back every so often. It is what I want to achieve with a group of children, improving their focus and

concentration. I will conduct my chapter book read alouds after the lunch/recess period in hopes that the timing improves children's concentration.

I plan to change the frequency of the days that I do my chapter book read aloud. Data shows that children remember what was read aloud if there aren't as many days in between where there isn't a read aloud. I conducted the *Stuart Little* read aloud three days a week for three weeks. This allowed me to stretch out the read aloud over a period of three weeks, plus one week prior for the pre comprehension picture book read alouds. Reading aloud more often, such as four or five days a week, allows for schedule consistency, which children thrive on. Children are also more likely to remember what happened in the previous day's reading if there is not as much time between read alouds. My plan is to read aloud the chapter book 4 days a week with a follow up activity every other day just to break it up.

Finally, I support and will plan the use of discussion and activities in chapter book read alouds. Overall, implementing these supported children's understanding of the story over time, whether or not their answers to questions were long or short. I plan to use the 5 finger retell activity with all the children in the group, but implementing more emphasis about story sequence. Sometimes the children's timing of events was off, such as saying an event in the story happened in the middle when it happened more towards the end. One way to support story sequencing is by laminating picture cards, attaching Velcro, and putting them on a fabric board. We could start with a fairytale that all children are familiar with, such as Cinderella, and create picture cards of what happens in the beginning, middle, and end. The children take turns placing the cards in their correct spots. There are many other activities that can help support story sequencing for young children. It is a reading skill that I want to support each child in developing.

There is more research to be done in the area of reading comprehension in young children. There are more studies that can be done in the focus of children's concentration during read alouds. More discussion can be had on why children exhibit certain behaviors during read alouds or even while reading silently to themselves. Children's literacy development has a wide variety of topics that can be investigated. One topic that is particularly interesting to me and bounces off the research and intervention that I have already done is, what types of chapter book literature are children able to focus on and comprehend more easily than others? *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White compared to *Mr. Poppers Penguins* by Richard Atwater? What would the children take away and relate to in each of those stories, one compared to the next? The research done on children's literacy development will teach us as instructors how to help children serve themselves and advocate for their interest and understanding. For a future study, there could be studies done on the three types of comprehension, text to text connections, text to self-connections, and text to world connections. Children have demonstrated some of this already and it would be interesting to take a deeper dive into this as children grow.

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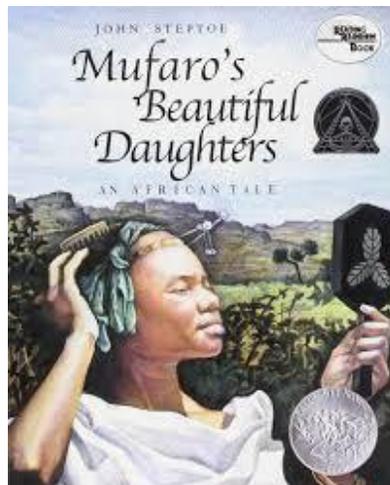
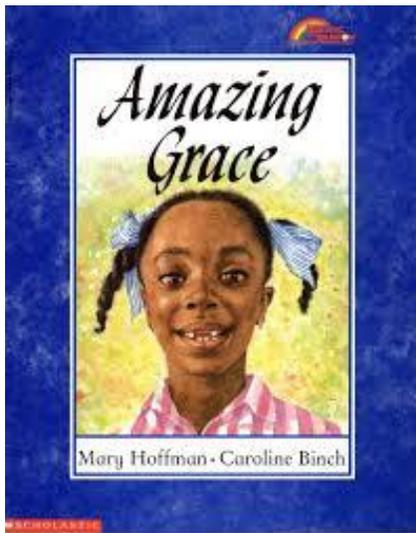
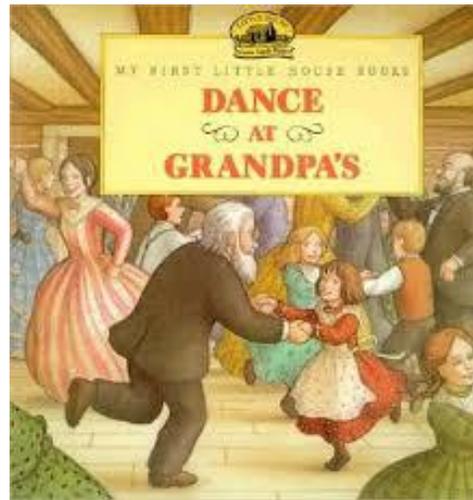
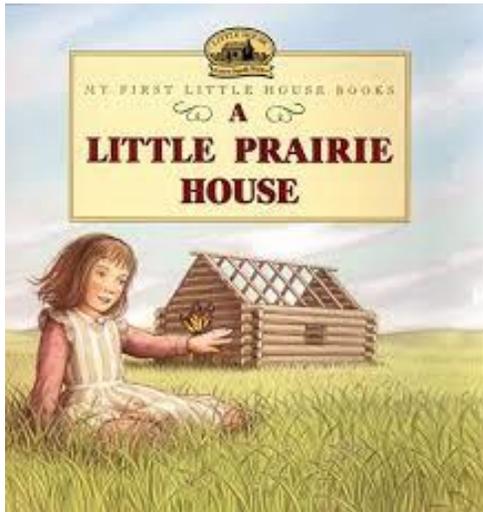
## Appendix A

## Picture Of A Montessori Working Mat



Appendix B

Picture Books Read Aloud-Week 1



## Appendix C

### Stuart Little Discussion Questions

#### Questions before reading:

1. What happened yesterday, where did we leave off? (ask each day before reading the next chapter)
2. We talked about what happened in yesterday's chapter, who has thoughts about what will happen when we read today's chapter?

#### Stuart Little discussion/comprehension questions **during** read aloud

Pages 1-15 Day 1- Why did Stuart go down the drain when nobody else could? How did the family feel when Stuart recovered the ring? What did Stuart do to help around the house? Is there anything you do to help around your house like Stuart does?

Pages 16-30 Day 2- Who is Snowbell? What are he and Stuart arguing about? Have you argued about something like this before? What did the Little's do to find out where Stuart was? Any other ideas you have for finding Stuart if you were a part of the story?

Pages 31-45 Day 3- What was the Wasp owners plan? How do you feel about the wasp and what would you do? Can you tell me about the sailboat race accident and what caused it?

Pages 46-60 Day 4- What happened to Stuart because he stayed in the refrigerator? What did the family do to help Stuart when he was sick? What does your family do to help you when you are sick? Who is Margalo and how did she get into the Little's house?

Pages 61-75 Day 5- How did Margalo save Stuarts life? How do you think Stuart felt, Why? Where did Margalo go after reading the note? Why did she go there?

Pages 76-90 Day 6- Why did Stuart run away? What did Mr. Carey tell Stuart he needed for his journey? What job did Stuart take for a day? Why? How do you feel when a substitute is in the room?

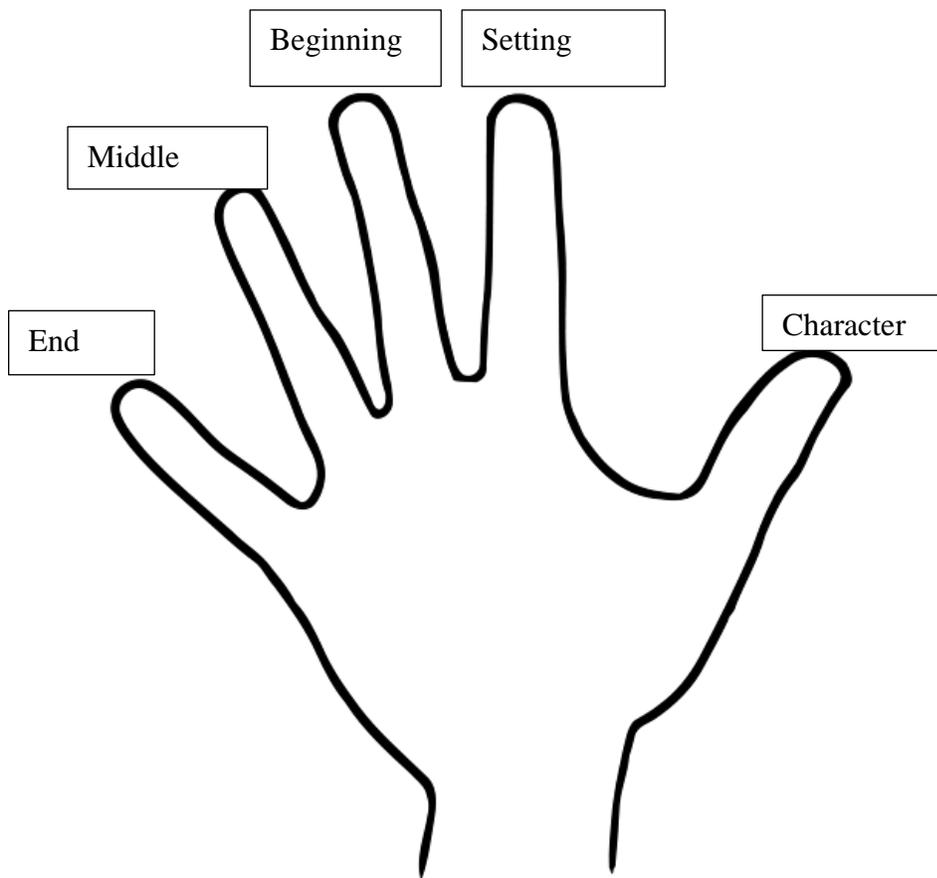
Pages 91-105 Day 7- What was wrong with Ms. Gunderson? What laws did the class come up with? What rules can you think of for the class? Why was Stuart in Ames crossing? What do you think Sarsaparilla is made of?

Pages 106-120 Day 8- Why did Stuart keep changing his shirt? Why did Stuart want a canoe? What have you used a canoe for? What do you think happened to the canoe?

Pages 121-131 Day 9- What did Harriet offer Stuart on the twig? What would you have done if you were in this kind of trouble like Stuart? How did Stuart feel as he left Ames crossing? Do you think Stuart will find Margalo?

Appendix D

Five Finger Retell Activity



Appendix E  
Engagement Rubric

Stuart Little

Research question: How does asking questions, as part of a read aloud, impact a child's ability to comprehend information?

Engagement Assessment as a group scale:

**5**-All children participated in discussion & activity, sat in seat the whole period, eyes on me while listening

**1**- None of the children participated in discussion & activity, none sat in seat the whole period, moved about eyes wandered the whole time

Week 1

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Week 2

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Week 3

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Week 4

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

## Appendix F

### Final Read Aloud questions

#### Stuart Little-Final questions quiz

1. Describe Stuart in 3 words?
2. What is the name of the Little's pet cat?
3. How did Stuart help his parents in the house?
4. Why did Stuart run away from home?
5. What name did Stuart use when he was the substitute teacher?