23 for Lunch and Reading… Please: How Book Clubs and Book Choice Affect a Student’s Reading

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Abstract

Did you ever stop and wonder; why is he spinning that eraser instead of reading? Or, did you ever think to yourself, why did she just sigh so loudly when I asked her to take out a book for a few moments? In this Inquiry, I explore these common wonderings and much more in hopes of sparking student interest in independent reading, book choice, and book clubs for all!

Context

Currently I am an intern at Panorama Village Elementary School in a second grade classroom. This building is made up of three third grade classrooms, two second grade classrooms, three first grade classrooms, and two kindergarten classrooms. Four of these classrooms are located in the buildings cluster (a six class open space design), which is also where my classroom is located. This building also contains a Library, all-purpose room, music education classroom, art education classroom, an ESL classroom, a learning support classroom, a Title I classroom, and an RTI classroom.

My second grade classroom for the year is made up of 23 students. Out of these 23 students, 13 are male and 10 are female. The classroom has a great amount of academic, behavioral, and social differences. Specifically, I would like to discuss their academic areas by using their reading performance and levels as a comparison.

The majority of my class is at an average reading level. Even though this is only one subject area, I feel that I can represent these students in this way because they are generally average students in all subject areas. Reading is also my area of emphasis for this Inquiry project and therefore relates to my rationale. The students in my classroom range from proficient in some subject areas to basic in other areas. The majority of my class is meeting benchmark skills for second grade. Exactly six students are at an advance reading level and exactly five students are at a below basic reading level.
Within this classroom, consistent with the State College Area School District, there is an integrated language arts and social studies curriculum. The students read books that coincide with the thematic unit they are studying. Thus far the students in my classroom have read texts within the Living and Harmony Unit, the Pioneer Unit, and the Prehistoric Life Unit. They are beginning to read texts within the Land of Make Believe Unit. The students read these texts in a small group setting four out of the five days of the week in their leveled guided reading center. The book choice for each group is based on fitting the students’ levels. On occasion other books within the thematic unit are read aloud and discussed in a whole group setting by a teacher with participation from the students.

When the students are not reading books chosen by a teacher in the classroom they choose the books themselves from the classroom library or school library. One day a week the students go to Library and are permitted to choose two books at their current reading level and one book of their choice. Four out of the five days of the week students independently choose books from the classroom library and read them at their desks during the Sustained Silent Reading Center. The classroom library is leveled and therefore the students are only permitted to choose books out of the basket that contains books from their current reading level. They also choose books from these baskets to read to their book buddies on Fridays.

**Main Wondering**

The big question that I hoped to answer throughout my Inquiry was: *In addition to structured guided reading with leveled reading books, what effect will providing my students with an opportunity to choose books based on interest have on their motivation to read and their performance as fluent readers?*

Throughout my Inquiry I wanted to find ways to increase interest and positive experiences in regards to reading within my classroom. I had observed my students on a regular basis during the Sustained Silent Reading Center. Many of my students were often off task and therefore distracting the other students. Problems also have occurred
with students reading all of the books in their assigned basket, no books being in their assigned basket, or the desire to read a book in a different basket. When I considered all of these aspects along with my prior knowledge and feelings about the topic, I decided that I wanted to find a way to provide my students with an opportunity to have free book choice, to see what effects this would have on their motivation and performance as fluent readers. After a great amount of discussion with my mentors and peers I decided that the best way for me to allot this free choice would be through the implementation of student book clubs.

Book clubs took place during the school day at lunchtime. The students would go up to the cafeteria, bring their trays down to the classroom, eat their lunches and then begin reading their books. Each student had a book and each child had the opportunity to read if he or she desired. Sometimes while the students were finishing their lunches, I would read a chapter to them and they would listen. As soon as a student finished he or she would take over and then I would just observe. The students did most of the reading and led most of the conversation.

As I pursued my Inquiry further, I began to develop a list of sub wonderings that coincided with my main wondering and the data I had been collecting. These wonderings are as follows:

- **What types of books would students choose?**
- **How might their interest help them decode the words in the book and allow them to read and comprehend the story?**
- **What effect will finding a particular genre of interest have on my students?**
- **What effects will book clubs have on peer relationships in my classroom?**

**Data Collection**

All through my Inquiry project I used various methods to collect data. These methods include: parent surveys, student surveys, student interviews, personal reflections, anecdotal notes and systematic observation. To better explain my collection process I will break up the process into before, during and after.
Before

A. Initial Parent Survey: Appendix A

At the start of my Inquiry, I sent home a parent survey to gather baseline data that I hoped would aid me in the formation of book clubs. I also was hoping to gather insight into some of my students “at home” reading habits.

B. Student Survey: Appendix B

As a first step in forming book clubs I needed to find out what types of books my students were interested in. To do that, I gave them this survey verbally but they filled it out independently.

C. Initial Student Interviews: Appendix C

After gathering the results of my parent and student surveys I still had a few more questions for some of my students pertaining to book clubs. I based these questions off of their responses in their survey so that I could place them in the book club that was the best fit for them.

During

D. Personal Reflections: Appendix D

Each day after meeting with one of my book clubs I would sit down and write a reflection about what occurred. I recorded my feelings and observations about the meeting and also specific student actions and comments. I included a few samples of the types of reflections I wrote each day.

E. Systematic Observation: Appendix E

After observing my students continuous off task behavior during the Sustained Silent Reading Center I decided that it would be beneficial to see what effects book choice had on this behavior. I systematically recorded their off tasks behaviors for three days while
they were choosing from the leveled classroom library and then again for three days when they had the opportunity of free choice from the classroom library.

F. Anecdotal Notes: Appendix D

Along with recording students’ comments throughout the day, I also recorded their specific comments in my personal reflections. I recorded comments pertaining to book choice and book clubs. Samples of these can be viewed in my personal reflection appendix.

After

G. Final Parent Survey: Appendix F

In this survey I asked parents to record specific comments. I wanted to know what their child told them about book clubs if anything at all. I also asked the parents to tell me if they noticed any changes in their students’ reading habits over the past month.

H. Student Interviews: Appendix G

To gather my students opinions and thoughts about the book clubs after we finished reading the books I interviewed my students. I randomly chose two students from each book group and asked them the same set of questions.

Data Analysis

To form book clubs for my students that best met their needs and wants I had to analyze my data at different parts throughout my Inquiry. I analyzed data in the beginning to form my book clubs, throughout to help make sure my book clubs were best meeting the needs of my students, and then after to help establish claims.

Before

A. Initial Parent Survey, Student Surveys and Student Interviews

It was essential that I analyzed this data prior to implementing the class book clubs because I wanted to make sure my students were in the book club that was the best
fit for them. When looking at my data from each of these different sources I found the student surveys and student interviews to be most useful. My parent surveys gave me a look into my students “at home” reading habits but they were not as useful for forming book clubs. This surprised me but was informative; my students opinions on book choice and favorite genre’s were different than what their parents thought they would pick.

Once I noticed this difference, I decided to focus primarily on the student surveys. As shown in, Appendix H, my students chose five different genres’ to be their favorite genre to read. I also had four students who chose to mark other in the genre category and wrote in a different type of book. These different types included, extreme, action, and comic books. From this data, I knew that I needed to limit the students to four different groups to make the groups manageable by me and to best fit within our weekly schedule. This led to my student interviews.

It was important to me that my students were in a book club that they wanted to be in. Therefore, I was worried at first that because I needed to limit the book groups that some of my students might be unhappy. Fortunately, when I interviewed individual students and mentioned the idea of implementing book clubs, their favorite genre seemed to change. Attached, as Appendix I, is a graph that shows what my book clubs ended up looking like after student interviews. The book clubs were narrowed down to Fantasy, Sports, Animal Fiction, and Funny.

After narrowing the book clubs down, I still had a large group of students in two of my groups. I was worried that this would pose a problem when trying to find enough books for each student. I wanted all of the students to have their own copy of the book so I decided to see if the students wanted to split in two. I presented them with four different Fantasy book choices and let them decide which one they would rather read. The students ended up agreeing on two books and split themselves in two. I used this same method for my other three book clubs. They were presented with four different book choices and were able to compromise as a group as to which book they would read. My Sports group remained large but we were able to locate enough copies of the book and therefore this worked out.
During

B. Personal Reflections and Anecdotal Notes

In order to be sure that the book clubs were successful I wanted to reflect each day on my feelings, observations, and specific student comments and interactions during our lunchtime book clubs. I used these reflections to analyze what was occurring day to day in my book club meetings. By doing this I found that my students voiced a great deal that they were happy to be meeting. They were thrilled about meeting during lunch, ecstatic about being with their friends, and very excited about the book they were reading (see Appendix D).

After

C. Systematic Observation

I collected my systematic observation data simultaneously with the occurrence of book clubs. However, I did not stop to analyze this data until after book clubs had ended. What I was hoping to reveal was the amount of off task behavior during sustained silent reading when the students were reading books at their level as opposed to the off task behaviors when the students were reading any book of their choice.

To analyze this data I decided that it would be the most beneficial to look at it generally. Therefore, I counted and tallied how many times I recorded my students engaging in behaviors other than reading. When observing I looked for students who were sitting at their desks with a book but not reading, students who were talking to themselves or other students, students who were engaged in conversations with each other, students who were not in their seat, and students who were talking to me. Over a three-day period, at two different times during this Inquiry, either my PDA or I recorded this data. We both also included comments about certain instances in which the students were engaging in the off task behavior but doing something specific. My findings for students’ off task behaviors while reading leveled books are as follows:

1. Number of times students observed not reading—94
2. Number of times students observed talking—10
3. Number of times students observed engaging in a conversation—17
4. Number of times students observed not in their seat—95
5. Number of times students observed talking to me—5

My findings for students’ off task behaviors when given the opportunity to choose books freely are as follows:

1. Number of times students observed not reading—43
2. Number of times students observed talking—21
3. Number of times students observed engaging in a conversation—11
4. Number of times students observed not in their seat—90
5. Number of times students observed talking to me—0

The main implication I am taking away from this data is the fact that, while my students were sitting at their desks with a book, the amount of times they were observed not reading decreased by more than half. The other off task behaviors seemed to occur at the same or close to the same rate.

D. Final Parent Survey

To analyze the parent surveys I sat down with a highlighter and pen to highlight specific comments and record and tally the yes and no responses. As shown in Appendix J, 13 of the 20 families surveyed said their child mentioned book clubs, and 14 of the 20 families surveyed said they noticed a difference in their child’s reading habits over the past month. Ten of these 20 families could recall specific comments that their child made pertaining to book clubs and 17 of the 20 families listed specific comments about what they did or did not notice in their child’s reading habits.

The comments about whether the child mentioned book clubs were all positive comments. For example one parent wrote, “He really likes them because you don’t have to eat in the crowded lunch room. You eat in the room and read books.” Another parent wrote, “I think she said she got to do a lot of reading last week and was happy about that.” If the comment was not a positive comment about how the student felt about book clubs, it was a comment about what book they were reading, what group they were in, or when the book club met.
When I analyzed the comments about the differences in their child’s reading habits over the past month I found very thorough and also positive results. Three of the parents wrote that the children are challenging themselves and attempting to read higher-level books. Eight of the parents wrote that they noticed an increase in the amount of time spent reading. Two of the parents noted an increased interest in Library books and different types of books. Four of the parents stated that they noticed an increase in independence when it comes to reading. Parents also wrote that he or she noticed an improvement in re-telling performance, an increase in recording his or her reading, or word recognition skills are improving. Lastly, I had two parents note that they noticed that their child is becoming a more fluent reader.

Parents also displayed their positive feelings about the differences in their child’s reading habits through the comments they wrote. For example, one parent wrote, “C has been bringing home books that weigh almost as much as she does, like “Harry Potter.” Some of the books are only slightly above her reading skill but she is trying to read them. She has even brought home books that we have here at home.” Another parent wrote, “E has spent more time as of recently reading to herself and to us. One night she probably spent an hour reading an Ivy and Bean book aloud.”

E. Final Student Interviews

I wanted to conduct student interviews to find out how my students felt about book clubs after we finished reading the books. I randomly chose two students from each group to interview. I ended up interviewing 10 of the 23 students in my classroom. I asked these students if they liked their book, what they liked best about book clubs, what they did not like about book clubs, what they would want to change, and if I should continue book clubs in wherever I end up teaching next year. For almost all of the questions the response was unanimous. All of the students like their book and could give reasons why, all of the students liked book clubs and either said they liked being with their friends, eating in the classroom, or reading good books the best, and all of the students said I should continue book clubs in my classroom next year.

Two students told me specific things they disliked and would want to change. One students said that he did not like that they were not allowed to be noisy during book clubs
and that if he could change anything he would only read sports books about hockey. The second student said that he did not like that some of the people in his group were slower readers than him and that if he could change anything it would be the people in his group.

**Claims and Evidence**

After analyzing my data and discussing my findings with others I believe that I can make several claims. These claims are as follows:

**Claim #1**: Book clubs are most effective when the students have a say in the placement.

**Evidence**: Student surveys, student interviews, and my observations and reflections of the book club meetings provide evidence that supports this claim. When I originally surveyed my students to try and find out what book genre they would consider being their favorite I received a set of results. These results, as shown in Appendix H, displayed that for my 23 students, their favorite genre’s were Fantasy, Sports, Animal Fiction, Funny, Mystery, and four of my students wrote other genre’s on their survey. However, when I presented the students with the idea of forming book clubs, during student interviews, nine out of these 23 students changed their mind about their book genre. During the interviews I asked the students, “Would you rather be in a book club that read _____ books (the genre they marked on their survey) or _____ books (a different genre that I either had observed them reading or they marked in some other way on their survey, i.e. favorite author, favorite book, etc.)? These nine students all changed to a genre that was different than the one they circled on their survey.

Then, when I formed the book clubs based on student interviews and surveys, and the students saw these book clubs formed or saw the book options presented, four of the 23 students changed their mind again about which book club they wanted to be in. The students either decided that they would not be happy reading one of the books chosen for that specific genre or that they would be happier in a group that included more of their friends. If I would not have provided the students with these options they would have
remained in the original genre grouping I created as apposed to the final genre grouping I created based on direct student input, shown in *Appendix I*.

Through my personal observations and reflections I consistently observed my students enjoying their book club. They were always smiling, laughing, and reading, and when I asked them how they thought book clubs were going, they always told me positive things. Therefore, my final book club groupings seemed to be the best fit for my students. This might not have been the case if I had formed them using only the initial student survey data.

**Claim 2**: The use of book clubs enhances the interest in reading throughout the day.

**Evidence**: From the moment book clubs began, I saw a drastic increase in my students’ interest about reading their book club books and meeting with their book clubs. I recorded anecdotal notes based on the comments my students made and reflected about the increase in interest level in my personal reflections. Two very consistent comments that I recorded numerous times were my students asking, “when will we meet next and when will we read more?” If I did not write the schedule of book clubs on the board, my students would ask me every single day about when they were meeting with me. Even when I was not in school, my mentor would tell me that my students still would ask, “Who is meeting with Miss Stunz today?” This displayed to me a great amount of interest in book clubs and reading their book club books throughout the school day.

My mentor and I were not the only ones who heard about book clubs. After analyzing my final parent survey data, I found that 13 of the 20 families surveyed said that their child mentioned book clubs to them. Then of these 20 families, ten could also record specific comments their students made about the book clubs. This data proves to me that the students were not only displaying their interest in book clubs during the school day but when they were at home as well.

**Claim 3**: Positive experiences will arise from implementing book clubs for students and teachers alike.
Evidence: Through student interviews, parent surveys, and personal reflections, I have found strong evidence to support this claim.

During my student interviews I asked the students about their book club books and also asked for their feelings about book clubs. All of the students said that they liked their book and would read more books by that same author or in that same series. All of the students also were able to tell me something they liked best about book clubs. One example is of a girl in the Funny group. She told me she was reading Marvin Redpost Kidnapped at Birth and that she thought the book was interesting. Then when I asked her what she liked best about book clubs she said, “You can eat down in the classroom, you can be with your friends, and you can read really cool books.” Another example is of a boy in one of the Fantasy groups. He told me he was reading The Time Warp Trio: The Not-So-Jolly Roger. When I asked him if he liked it he said yes. Then when I asked him why he said, “Because I like really adventurous stories so it’s just a really good match for me, it’s a really good series.” I then asked him if he would read more books in this series and he said yes and that he already checked one out of the library. Then when I asked him what he liked best about book clubs he said, “That we all get to eat lunch down here and talk about the book and read it, it’s really fun.” Both of these students along with all of the other students displayed to me that they had positive feelings and experiences with book clubs.

As explained in the evidence for Claim 2, the parent surveys also displayed to me that book clubs were mentioned at home. Through the comments they wrote on the survey it also showed me that they heard positive comments about book clubs from their children at home. One parent simply wrote, “She said she really liked it.” Another parent wrote, “He enjoyed reading Extreme Sports. He also says he had fun reading as a group.” These comments along with the others showed me that positive experiences with book clubs were also discussed at home.

Lastly, through my own personal reflections I found that book clubs evoked positive feelings and experiences for me as well. I frequently wrote about how I enjoyed seeing the students smiling and laughing. I also talked about how it was nice to see students helping each other and to see students interact with one another who might not normally interact otherwise. Also, I can say that even though I gave up my lunch every
day to meet with the students for book clubs, I would do it again every day for the rest of the year. I have built a stronger relationship with each one of my students through book clubs and this has made me feel more confident and happy. I feel as if I know these students in a different way now and I believe that I am now better able to meet their needs as a teacher. I enjoyed book clubs greatly!

**Claim 4:** Book clubs are a tool for teachers and parents to communicate on the development of their children as fluent readers.

**Evidence:** This claim is not one that I originally thought would transpire through my Inquiry. However, through analysis of my parent surveys, this became evident. On my family survey I asked the families if they noticed a difference in their child’s reading habits over the past month. By habits I meant, amount of time, types of books, etc. I left it very open for parent interpretation of the differences he or she noticed. When I got the surveys back from the parents and began to analyze them I found that 17 of the 20 families surveyed listed specific comments about what differences they did or did not notice. Fourteen of these 20 families said they noticed a difference whereas three of the 20 families said they did not. The families that said they did not notice a difference wrote that their child already read a great amount and they believed that was the reason for not noticing any difference. The families that did say they noticed a different wrote specific comments pertaining to what reading habits were different.

If you refer to the earlier part of this paper where I discussed **Data Analysis** I listed in depth the specifics of what my parents noticed. Overall they commented on eight different areas of reading behaviors: higher level reading, amount of time, interest, independence, re-telling, recording, fluency, and word recognition. One parent wrote, “He is now willing to read alone and then tell the whole story to me in his own words.” A second parent wrote, “He has been reading more lately for his own entertainment. Simply picking up a book on his own to read when he has some extra time.”

Without the implementation of book clubs and the fact that I sent parent surveys home, I would have never known the parents take on their child’s reading habits. Through these surveys I was able to find what parents were noticing in their child’s
reading habits and use that to compare it with what I, as their student teacher, am noticing. I will also share this data with my mentor teacher and she too can compare it to the reading habits she has observed. A parent may have noticed that their child picked up a new reading strategy and by telling us we could focus more on this strategy during guided reading to help it develop properly. Book clubs opened up a new line of communication between teachers and parents to compare viewpoints and work towards helping the child become a fluent reader.

**Claim 5:** Having the opportunity to make a book choice without concern for leveling, increased the amount of concentrated reading time.

**Evidence:** Through systematic observation, I had the opportunity to observe my students off task behaviors during sustained silent reading time. My PDA and I observed three different groups for 15-minute periods over the course of three days while they were choosing books from the classroom library that were at their level. I then did this same thing again but gave the students free choice of the classroom library books. Most of the data I collected did not change. For example, my students spent about the same amount of time out of their seats either getting a drink, going to the bathroom, or choosing a book at the classroom library. However, my PDA and I did notice that when we observed the students during free book choice the majority of their time out of their seats was spent at the classroom library, not doing other things. They also spent about the same amount of time talking to a peer when they peer was reading, engaging in full conversations with peers, and talking to me. However, there was one major difference that I noticed through analysis of the systematic observation data.

I found that when my students were at their desks, with a book in hand, their on task reading time increased by half when they had free choice of books. We recorded that when my students were at their desks with a silent reading book that they chose from their leveled basket, they were off-task 94 times over the course of three days. That is 94 times out of a possible 720 times (if each one of my students was on task for the full 15 minutes for three days). When my students were given the opportunity to choose any
book in the classroom library, they were off-task only 43 times. That data proves to me that their concentrated reading time increased with book choice.

**Reflection and Future Practices**

Through this Inquiry I learned a great deal about my students, my self, and how I see myself using book clubs in my classroom for the remainder of the year and in my future classrooms.

This process gave me the opportunity to go on a journey with my students. They had never been in a book club before, just as I had never led a book club before. It began with my students thinking about what types of books they like. Then it grew to be about more, as my students thought about what type of book club they would be the happiest in and what type of book would be the best for them. They had the opportunity to think about books as stories, with titles and characters, as opposed to concentrating on whether the book is the right level for them or not. We had discussions and meetings over lunch. I saw a different side of my students, one that is not always obvious throughout the school day. We laughed together and learned a great deal about one another. I read and they read. I listened to them read with pirate expressions, accents of a Duchess, and voices of a seven-year-old girl who wants to be a farmer. They read with enthusiasm, excitement, and sheer enjoyment with what they were reading. I saw their eyes sparkle when we got to exciting parts, I heard comments about our next reading time, and I even had students threaten to check the book out of the library because they could not just wait to read some more! I learned that my students truly do love to be with their friends, eat lunch in the classroom, and read amazing books!

Through book clubs I had the chance to relive my love for literature and the different genres. I was not limited to one genre; I had the luxury of exploring them all. I learned of new authors and new series all by student choice. I found that students are just as good at finding good books as teachers may be, if not better. I developed a professional relationship with the school Librarian and his assistant, and even witnessed how strong the connection among all of the district’s libraries truly is. I found that I can make book clubs happen. I have the love for literature I always thought I had, the
commitment to help my students find a love for reading, and the dedication to my students that was necessary to make book clubs a success.

In my future classroom, based on student suggestion in their interviews, and my own feelings, I will set up book clubs. I will use the same type of beginning process so that I can be sure that my students find themselves in a club that is right for them. I would like to also have the book clubs meet occasionally during lunch but not all of the time. Ideally I would like to find a time to work book clubs into my daily or weekly schedule. I want to find a time to regularly have book club meetings that eventually could be run solely by the students. I strongly believe that even in second grade, if we did book clubs for a long enough time period, they could manage their own meetings. I had a few groups who seemed to have a knack for this management right from the beginning, and other groups who seemed to develop this knack slowly over time. Knowing this, I hope to eventually get my students to the point where they can run book clubs and the book clubs could meet at the same times in different parts of the room.

For the rest of the year in my classroom now, I plan on continuing book clubs. I want to discuss with my mentor teacher a way to keep these going but not always during lunchtime. The students love them and all want to know what their next book is going to be. I see that love and enjoyment for reading, and because of that, I need to find a way to keep it going. Maybe, if my students keep progressing and soon learn how to manage a book club meeting without me, we could find a time of day for all of the groups to meet at once in different parts of the room. Either way, I will continue them, at least for one more book. Through everything I have learned, I truly believe that book clubs are a tool that can be used to help students develop a love for reading, or find that love that always existed inside and just needed to be brought out.
Appendix A

Name:_________________________    Date:___________

Parent Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I greatly appreciate your help and cooperation.

1. **In addition** to your child’s reading homework how much would you say your child reads at home on a weekly basis?
   
   0 to 30 minutes    30 minutes to 1 hour    1 to 2 hours    Greater than 2 hours

2. Does your child prefer to read independently or with an adult?
   
   Independently    With an adult

3. If your child is reading with an adult, does your child prefer to read or does he or she prefer to be read to?
   
   To read    To be read to

4. If your child is reading with an adult and they finish a book, how likely are they to want to read another book?
   
   Highly likely    Somewhat likely    Unlikely

5. When your child is reading at home, who chooses the book?
   
   Adult    Child

6. When your child chooses a book what genre (type) of book is his or her typical choice? For example: Fantasy, Biography, Poetry, Sports, etc.
   
   __________________________________________________________

7. Does your child have a favorite author? If so please write his or her name.
   
   __________________________________________________________

10. Is there a genre (type) of book that your child does not like to read?
    
    If yes, please write the genre: ____________________________________________
    
    Please include any comments on the back!
Appendix B

Name:_________________________    Date:___________

Student Survey ☺

1. What is your all time favorite book?
   _____________________________________________

2. What is your favorite type of book to read? Circle your answer.
   Fantasy  Sports  Animal  Mystery  Poetry
   Funny  Science Social Studies  Biography
   If your favorite type of book is not listed here please write your favorite type.
   _____________________________________________

3. Do you have a favorite author?
   If you do, please write his or her name: _________________________________

4. Do you have a favorite book series?
   If you do, please write the name of the series ____________________________

5. Has there ever been a book that you wanted to read but couldn’t?
   Yes  No
   If yes, what was the title of the book? _________________________________
   Why couldn’t you read it? ____________________________________________

6. If number 1 is the best, number 5 is in the middle, and number 10 is the best, how much do you like to read? Circle your answer.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Which do you like more, to be read to or to read to yourself?
   To be read to    To read to myself

8. What is your favorite read aloud book from home or from school?
   _____________________________________________
Appendix C

Questions for Students

(Ask these questions to the students they apply too)

1. Would you rather be in a book club that reads ________ books or _________ books?

2. What type of ________ books do you mean when you say ________ is your favorite genre?

3. Your all time favorite book is a ________ genre but you circled ________ as your favorite genre. What genre would you rather read in a book club?
Appendix D

Book Club Reflections

March 2, 2009-Funny

Today I met with the Funny group. We began reading the book Marvin Redpost: Kidnapped at Birth? The girls seemed to enjoy themselves and laughed at many of the lines in the story. We began by doing a webbing activity in which I wrote the words: Marvin, King, red hair, kidnapped, and missing, on the board. Then the students had to make predictions about how those words related and would occur in the story. The girls had fun with this and each had a different idea. The students discussed this while they were eating. Then, while the girls were finishing up their lunch, I read them the first chapter. After a few of the girls finished they began taking turns reading the second chapter. By the end all of the girls except for one had finished their lunch and read a part.

Comments: “Are there any more of these books? “Why?” “Because I want to read more of it!” – said with a smile!

March 3, 2009-Fantasy

Today I met with the Fantasy group. This group is divided in two. One group is reading The Secrets of Droon Series: The Hidden Stairs and the Magic Carpet. The other group is reading The Time Warp Trio Series: The Not-So-Jolly Roger. I used the same sort of web activity that I did with the first group on the first day. This group made fantastic predictions and had so many ideas about how the words related. Both groups, even with different stories and different words, had a good time trying to figure out what would occur in the story and what the words meant to the story.

I began reading with the Secrets of Droon group. While they were finishing up lunch I read the first chapter to them. Then, once they finished eating, the students began reading to each other. I left this group and then went to the other group. Here, the students were still eating so I read the first chapter to them. Once I finished the first chapter, they also took over reading.

I was very impressed with both of these groups and their ability to pretty much manage the clubs independently. The students reading the Secrets of Droon Series began reading in a Kind of the Mountain style with no direction from me at all. The group reading the Time Warp Trio series were taking turns reading around in a circle. I was pleased that both groups understood that it was important that each student had a chance to read. Both groups also seemed to enjoy their books greatly and were upset when we could not keep reading.

Comments: “I am going to go to the Library and check this book out so I can see what happens next.” “I checked them all out at our Library.” “Then I will have to go to the Schlow Library.”

April 1, 2009-Sports

Today during lunch I met with the sports group. The students finished their lunches quickly today and wanted to begin reading. I started reading and then as the students completely finished they took over. We finished the chapter on motocross and started the next chapter on
base-jumping. When we turned to the part about base-jumping, the students ohhh’d and ahhhh’d. I left this group today to read with my other student in the sports group who has been reading independently. He reads well but was happy to have the teacher attention. The other group seemed to manage fine. I took some video of both groups while they were reading today. It was a good day for them today. I want to meet with the individual boy once this week yet and possibly the whole sports group again at some point. One of my students was missing (ZG).

April 2, 2009-Fantasy

Group 1: Today I met with this group during lunch. I started out reading but before I really could get started two of my students were taken away by the school psychologist (JC and MG). The other two students work very well together though and I knew they would have no problem reading the book and working as a club independently. After I read the first three pages, I then left this group and went to the other fantasy group. When I came back to this group they were on the last two pages. They finished the book today! When I asked them if they liked it they said yes, they liked it a lot. I told them that we would still meet one more time next week to talk about the book and bring it to a close. They seemed very happy about this.

Group 2: I also met with this group today at lunch. This group usually takes a longer time eating so I let them eat while I started with the other group. When I got to this group there were a few students finishing eating, so I began to read. After about two pages, one of my students asked to take over. I let him and he read a few pages, then another student joined in. They seemed to be on a roll so at this point I left to film both groups in action. This group finished two chapters today and has one chapter to go. Therefore I will meet with the Fantasy group (both groups), one more time next week.

April 3, 2009-Funny

Today I met with the funny group at lunch. We read almost three chapters. I stopped them with about 5 minutes left to take their trays up and we had three pages remaining in the whole book. They really wanted to finish reading but I stopped them at a cliffhanger part so I know they will be excited to read next week. They found out that Marvin’s blood type matched the Kings’, and that is where I ended. The students were very engaged in the story and they read most of the time. I read the first chapter while they finished eating, then they read the remaining one and three quarters of a chapter.
Appendix F

Dear Family,

I am wrapping up the final week of my Inquiry Project and would truly appreciate your help in answering a few questions. Please return this form by Monday April 6, 2009.

1. Has your child mentioned book clubs?

   Yes  No

   If yes, can you recall any specific comments they made about the book clubs?  
   If so, please write them below.

2. Have you seen any difference in your child’s reading habits over the past month? (types of book, amount of time, interest in reading, etc.)

   Yes  No

   If yes, please explain.

I truly appreciate all of your help! Keep on reading!

Thanks so much,
Stephanie Stunz
Appendix G

Interview Questions

1. Can you please start by just telling me your name and what book group you were in?
2. What book did you read?
3. Did you like your book? Why?
4. Would you read more books by this author or in this series (if applies)?
5. Would you still consider this genre to be your favorite genre?
6. What did you like best about book clubs?
7. What did you like least about book clubs?
8. Is there anything you would like to change about book clubs? If so, what?
9. Do you recommend I do this next year in my classroom wherever I end up? Why?
Appendix K

Stephanie Stunz
Inquiry Brief
Cynthia Cowan
February 28, 2009

Inquiry Brief

Context

Currently I am an intern at Panorama Village Elementary School in a second grade classroom. This building is made up of three third grade classrooms, two second grade classrooms, three first grade classrooms, and two kindergarten classrooms. Four of these classrooms are located in the buildings cluster, which is also where my classroom is located. This building also contains a Library, all-purpose room, music education classroom, art education classroom, an ESL classroom, a learning support classroom, a Title I classroom, and an RTI classroom.

My second grade classroom for the year is made up of 24 students. Out of these 24 students, 14 are male and 10 are female. The classroom has a great amount of academic, behavioral, and social differences. Specifically, I would like to discuss their academic areas by using their reading performance and levels as a comparison.

The majority of my class is at an average reading level. Even though this is only one subject area, I feel that I can represent these students in this way because they are generally average students in all subject areas. Reading is also my area of emphasis for this Inquiry project and therefore relates to my rationale. The students in my classroom range from proficient in some subject areas to basic in other areas. The majority of my class is meeting benchmark skills for second grade. Exactly six students are at an advance reading level and exactly five students are at a below basic reading level.

Within this classroom, consistent with the State College Area School District, there is an integrated language arts and social studies curriculum. The students read books that coincide with the thematic unit they are studying. Thus far the students in my classroom have read texts within the Living and Harmony Unit and the Pioneer Unit. They are beginning to read texts within the Prehistoric Life Unit and they will finish the
year reading texts within the Land of Make Believe Unit. The students read these texts in a small group setting four out of the five days of the week in their leveled guided reading center. The book choice for each group is based on fitting the students’ levels. On occasion other books within the thematic unit are read aloud and discussed in a whole group setting by a teacher with participation from the students.

When the students are not reading books chosen by a teacher in the classroom they choose the books themselves from the classroom library or school library. One day a week the students go to Library and are permitted to choose two books at their current reading level and one book of their choice. Four out of the five days of the week students independently choose books from the classroom library and read them at their desks during the Sustained Silent Reading Center. The classroom library is leveled and therefore the students are only permitted to choose books out of the basket that contains books from their current reading level. They also choose books from these baskets to read to their book buddies on Fridays.

**Rationale**

This above information directly relates to the rationale behind my inquiry. Through my experiences in classes, other classrooms, and this classroom, I began to wonder about student book choice and its effects on student reading motivation and performance.

One particular professor presented educational information on the instructional choices of leveling or not leveling student books. I credit most of my learning about teaching reading and using engaging read alouds to her because she really helped me in this area. One thing that she talked a lot about and as a class we discussed a great deal, was not leveling books, what could be the benefits? She did not tell us but she had us think about it and complete readings on it and discuss it as a class. By doing this, I found it to be something that I might believe in, something that I would at least like to research more and maybe try in my classroom.

Along with that, I have also observed my students on a regular basis during the SSR center. A few of my students are often off task and therefore distracting the other students. Problems also have occurred with students reading all of the books in their assigned basket, no books being in their assigned basket, or the desire to read a book in a
different basket. Through all of these experiences there are many things I discovered and many things I am still questioning. One particular aspect that I have learned, noticed, and still wonder about is that certain kids need different things. Maybe not leveling books and allowing students to read based on choice would be beneficial for some students. Even if this only proves to be true for one student, that is one student who might be helped, and even if only one student might be helped, the inquiry into the topic would prove to be important. A quote from Franki Sibberson and Karen Szymbusiak in their book *Still Learning to Read* that helps fuel my passion for this inquiry is as follows, “We worry that our children will not choose books because they are interesting or challenging, but simply because they are the “right” level. Students sometimes define reading as “getting through a book at my level” rather than enjoying and understanding great texts.” The latter part of that quote I have witnessed firsthand and desire to inquire more about it.

Throughout my inquiry I hope to find ways that may help my students discover a love for reading. I may discover that if my students find a book or genre of books that suits them perfectly they may also find motivation to continue reading and read more. I may find that this will boost student performance or even achievement. There is also the chance that I may not find any relationship between book choice and increased motivation and reading performance but it is still a topic I wish to explore and delve deeper into.

**Main Wondering**

The big question that I hope to answer throughout my Inquiry is: In addition to structured guided reading with leveled reading books, what effect will providing my students with an opportunity to choose books based on interest have on their motivation to read and their performance as fluent readers?

**Sub-Wonderings**

Underlying these question I have a list of sub questions. These questions are as follows:

- What types of books would students choose?
- How might they develop the sense of choosing good-fit books on their own?
- How might their interest help them decode the words in the book and allow them to read and comprehend the story?
- How might my students use their peers, who may be at a higher reading level, to
help work through difficult texts?

- What effect will finding a particular genre of interest have on my students?
- What effects will book clubs have on peer relationships in my classroom?

Data Collection

After considering these questions I began to think about ways in which I could collect baseline data. I thought my first step would be to talk to the parents of the students who know their child the best and then proceed to talk to the students who know themselves the best. For the parents I developed a survey that discussed book choice, book interest, how much reading occurs, and who prefers to read the adult or the child. The student survey addressed book choice, book interest, preference on who reads, and how much they like to read. After I received both of these documents back I began to organize the data into graphs and then analyze the findings. The parent data was easy to analyze but I had some difficulty with the student data and therefore needed to also conduct a few short interviews. These interviews mainly addressed book interest. I wanted to be sure I had my student’s main interest recorded to help me accurately organize the book clubs, my overall intervention model.

Along with these types of data I have recorded anecdotal notes and observations. To be sure that my data was accurate on how much my students liked to read, I had a peer come into the classroom and complete a quick survey for me. I had asked my student this question through a survey but it was not anonymous. I was sitting right with them as they filled out the questions. I observed my students changing answers and got the feeling that they were trying to please me. It was my hope that if another teacher who they were familiar with but also not as worried about pleasing delivered the survey, they would answer more honestly. I would also like to pay attention more closely to the SSR Time to record the occurrence of off task behaviors. Lastly, I intend to gather my students running record scores when my mentor teacher completes them as a baseline for the reading performances.

Proposed Timeline

I have sketched out my proposed and ideal timeline for this inquiry development and process. This timeline is as follows:

Week 1- February 16:
• Peer interview students
• Record more anecdotal notes
• Talk with Dustin Brackbill, the school librarian, about how he would organize book clubs
• Choose books
• Gather enough books needed for the book clubs

Week 2- February 23
• Finalize grouping
• Finish choosing books
• Gather enough books needed for the book clubs
• Continue organizing data and finalizing bar graphs and charts

Week 3- March 2
• Observe off task behavior during SSR time
• Collect Running Record data
• Begin book clubs
• Take notes during all book club meetings
• Interviewing and discussing book clubs with students
• Data organization should be finalized

Week 4- Spring break

Week 5- March 16
• Continue book clubs
• Continue taking notes during all book club meetings
• Continue interviewing and discussing book clubs with students

Week 6- March 23
• Continue book clubs
• Consider where you are at in book clubs thus far- is there more that can be done, can the books be discussed more in depth, how is motivation and enjoyment, what else can I do to increase motivation
• Organize activities based on all observations collected from the three prior weeks
Week 7- March 30

- Continue book clubs
- Possibly organize a “choice week”—this meaning that during SSR time students can choose any book rather than just books in their level
- Monitor students during SSR time—record off task behaviors
- At the end of the week either conduct interviews or a whole group survey to discuss how the students felt about being able to choose any book during SSR time
- Analyze what occurred during this week—were there problems, were there benefits, how were the students behaviors, etc.
- Begin working on final inquiry paper

Week 8- April 6

- Continue book clubs
- Re-distribute parent surveys and ask for them to be returned by Friday—possibly include some questions about book clubs (for example, did they hear about the book clubs, did the students present the book clubs positively or negatively?)
- Re-conduct student surveys by Friday
- Possibly complete more running records
- Interview students if necessary
- Design and possibly distribute this week a survey for students or interview for students about their feelings on book clubs—how much did they enjoy them, what did they like/didn’t like, what would they change, would they like to continue them
- Finish final inquiry paper
- Begin preparation for the Inquiry Conference

Week 9- April 13

- Continue book clubs
- Work on finalizing anything and everything for Inquiry
- Work on preparing for inquiry conference
Week 10- April 20

- Continue book clubs
- Finalize anything and everything for Inquiry
- Finish preparing for inquiry conference
Appendix L

Stephanie Stunz
Annotated Bibliography
Cynthia Cowan
February 18, 2009

Annotated Bibliography


   a. This website, Education World, contains a multitude of resources for educators. Within this website I found this article about Carol Ann Tomlinson. The article is written in an interview format as an employee for Education World interviews her. Tomlinson is an avid supporter and believer in differentiated instruction. She has become an expert on the topic, writes books and professional journals on the topic, and helps struggling teachers across the United States to find ways to incorporate differentiated instruction into their daily routines and lessons. Throughout the interview she discusses and defines differentiated instruction. She also addresses issues such as, how do students respond, how can you tell if a classroom is differentiated, how do you defend this concept when some might say it is too difficult to incorporate, advice for teachers, and much more.


   a. In the chapter entitled reading found within this book the author begins by telling the story of a kindergarten teacher and her success with teaching reading. The author then goes on to discuss what reading is, which she describes as constructing meaning or making sense of print. She then talks about the ways that this may be facilitated by a teacher. The author also discusses the topics of what reading does and readers workshop in depth.

a. This chapter begins by discussing common characteristics of reading development including independent reading, read alouds, response groups, guided reading, and strategy lessons. The author discusses how each of these has special powers but also particular limitations. The rest of the chapter goes on to discuss the specific details and importance of reading workshop in grades kindergarten through eight.


a. This source is a research project submitted as a requirement for a masters degree of the Arts in Teaching and Leadership. The problems they researched at two different schools include: poor decoding skills, lack of practice time, low motivation to read, inability to identify with authors or characters, and limited access to books appropriate to their level. They then addressed the problem in a variety of ways including: student attitude surveys, teacher questionnaires, and implementations. The implementations include: weekly reading parties, specific skill instructions, practice making connections between text and self, and offering a variety of high-interest books at a students independent level. They also focused on the importance and increase of student choice in literature. The researches also included project objectives and solution statements. Along with the documentation of the entire research project, there are also copies of the surveys used, pie charts, graphs, and samples of the activities completed in the schools.


a. In this chapter the authors begin by discussing importance of knowing your students. It is suggested that within the first five or six weeks of school you create literacy profiles of each one of your students through interviews, surveys, observations, running records, miscue analysis, anecdotal notes, and informal assessment. The chapter goes on to discuss grouping in depth. It is recommended not to group solely by ability and to keep grouping flexible/dynamic by varying types of groups and students who participate in these groups. The different types of groups mentioned include: interest based, activities/projects after reading, skill, and need based. The authors also mention grouping by ability but again suggest if this is the case to keep them flexible and change monthly. The chapter comes to a close by reminding the reader to not group students until you know them.

   a. This is a research agenda. The article is a brief look at what the researchers will pursue for inquiry. It outlines their basic thoughts, wonderings, and areas that they wish to research; all of these areas concern reading. The researches are associated with the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA). The researchers plan to explore readers and text, home and school, and policy and profession. The article discusses which areas they find to be important and how they might go about researching them.


   a. In this article a mother tells the story of her eight-year-old daughter’s experience with reading. The family moved to a new country where the daughter would have to read a new language. The writer of this article, who is the parent and a researcher, uses ethnography to examine the struggles of her child’s ability to read decodable text in a second language. The article discusses the importance of good book choice, pleasurable literature, purposeful engagement, and student choice.


   a. The first part of this chapter focuses on assessment in guided comprehension. It discusses connections to state assessments, guided comprehension profiles, and then leads into linking assessment and leveled texts. When linking the two, the author discusses finding the students independent and instructional level and also having the student conduct a self-evaluation afterwards. After this is completed, the text states, that it is then time to choose the right texts for the students. Lastly, the chapter discusses organization of books for students to choose and suggests either using classroom book baskets arranged
by author, series, content, or approximate reading level, or using individual book baskets in which students keep books that they would like to read.


   a. This chapter begins by the authors discussing their own classrooms and how they use readers’ workshop. They then go on to stress the importance of knowing your students well and how individual conferences may help this. After providing this opening the chapter begins discussing leveling and grouping more in depth. The authors find running records to be valuable but see it as only one way of gaining knowledge about your students. They state and provide examples that some students may receive the same score on a running record but may have very different needs. Knowing this and also knowing your students is their start but the chapter also discusses the importance of students knowing themselves as readers too. After this section of the chapter is completed, grouping takes the main and final focus. The authors discuss the significance in focusing on the individual student rather than just a small group. The end of the chapter is set up to discuss thinking through grouping for whole group, small group, and individual settings with an emphasis on making sure groupings are flexible. The chapter comes to a close by providing the reader with an example of one reading strategy that may need to be taught and how it can be taught in different group settings, and also presenting the reader with the “threads of learning.” This chapter also provides skill strategies and insights into what these authors do in their own classrooms.


   a. This book in a nutshell discusses the ins and outs of leveling books and advice on how to go beyond these books. The authors provide the reader with real-life examples and effects of leveling, case studies, strategies, articles by experts in the field, minilessons, literature suggestions and support, to provide students with books that are a good fit but also exactly what the students want to be reading. The book is written as a challenge to teachers to move past putting books in baskets labeled A to Z and find other ways to help and support the developing readers in our classrooms.


   a. This is an online interactive website that the State College Area School District recently became involved with. The website is great for librarians, teachers, students, and any individual interested in children’s literature and/or
reading. The website highlights author programs, book guides, book readings, author websites, and an educator area.