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Reading Engagement in an Elementary Setting as Enhanced by Choice, Social Collaboration, and Self-Perception

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READING ENGAGEMENT IN AN ELEMENTARY SETTING AS ENHANCED BY
CHOICE, SOCIAL COLLABORATION, AND SELF-PERCEPTION

by

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A team of highly qualified and industrious teachers and specialists are sitting around the conference table discussing the best way to support the struggling readers in their school. This is a collaborative meeting in which professionals discuss multiple environmental, instructional, or curriculum changes to be made for students who participate in the Title I reading program in order to help them succeed. These students are part of a reading intervention because their fluency and accuracy scores place them in the lowest twentieth percentile in their grade level.

The meeting begins with a statement from the literacy specialist, “we need to look closely at Juan, because he is failing to make adequate growth in the areas of fluency and accuracy as measured by DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) progress monitoring over a six-week period. This is true even with intensified instruction and an additional 30-minutes of intervention, for a total of 60-minutes each day in addition to the core reading program. A palpable sigh of frustrated discouragement floats through the room. Juan’s reading teacher comments, “I can only do so much to help him learn, he is disengaged, and I cannot seem to get him to care about reading.” The intervention teacher agrees, and adds, “I don’t know if there is more that can be done until he starts to pay attention and engage with the content during the lesson; he does not seem to be able to employ any of the strategies I teach him.”

These professionals are determined and are doing admirable work to help students learn how to read, but there are a percentage of students who do not benefit from the extra support and services. As I observe this situation, I question the narrow parameters of measurements currently

employed by reading teachers to determine adequate growth in reading achievement. The criterion used to determine achievement are phonemic awareness, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and comprehension, yet I hear teachers describing students' lack of engagement as a very real factor in students' reading success. Improving engagement in reading for this student is not discussed in detail at this meeting because these teachers do not have an intervention that addresses it. As a community of reading teachers, we need to reconsider reading achievement as we strategically address the Big Five Areas of Reading (<http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org>) in our literacy program by including reading engagement as a component to our instruction.

The National Reading Panel (2013) stated that the best approach to reading instruction is one that incorporates explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, methods to improve fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension. In our district, we take this mandate seriously when we plan our instruction and choose our curriculum. Systematically, we teach explicit phonics in order to build fluency and accuracy. We believe that as students acquire the necessary foundational skills for reading they will advance as skilled producers and consumers of literacy. Ambitiously, we address the skills required in the Big Five Areas of Reading: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency and Comprehension, but we do not have an intervention to address engagement in reading as a strategy to build students' motivation and higher-level comprehension skills.

Factors in Students' Engagement and Motivation to Read

In this research, I examined ways in which I could address engagement with reading for struggling students to see if, in addition to strong skills-based instruction would make a difference for these learners. In an effort to begin looking at engagement as it relates to

comprehension, it might be helpful to examine the pillars of reading described by the National Reading Panel in a different light.

In her book, *Comprehension from the Ground Up*, Taberski (2011), critically evaluated the five pillars from the National Reading Panel as a skewed metaphor that reduced comprehension to a pillar when in reality it is what reading is all about. This reduction oversimplifies primary reading programs and does not allow for more nuanced and subtle influences. Although Taberski would agree that the five pillars are all important aspects of solid literacy instruction, she would say that there are other facets of literacy instruction that should not be sidelined as we consider teaching students how to read, including factors that contribute to motivation and engagement.

In her version of the pillars or “Big Five Areas” of reading, Taberski (2011) contends that comprehension should be regarded as the overarching goal of reading supported by the pillars of accurate and fluent reading, background knowledge, oral language and vocabulary, reading/writing connections, and repertoire of strategies. These pillars are supported by foundational elements of time to read, write, and talk, which are experiences and skills that cultivate children’s comprehension. Taberski writes, “these experiences should bring children one step closer to becoming motivated, confident, self-improving readers, who automatically call up appropriate strategies when they sense their connection to a book’s meaning is faltering” (p. 6). Taberski’s vision inspired me: I wanted my program to produce these confident, motivated and self-managing readers. Motivation to read can be described as the values, beliefs and behaviors surrounding reading for an individual (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). In addition to

ensuring a solid foundation built around the skills of reading, I believe it is essential for educators to attend to the idea of increasing student motivation to read.

Cambria and Guthrie (2010) wrote,

“You can certainly ignore motivation if you choose. But if you do, you may be neglecting the most important part of reading. There are two sides to reading. On one side are the skills, which include phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary and simple comprehension. On the other side is the will to read. A good reader has both skill and will.” (p. 16)

According to Cambria & Guthrie (2010), a reader who possesses the will to read is interested in reading because s/he enjoys it, and is dedicated to reading because there is a personal or academic value placed on it. This kind of reader is confident about reading because of past success with it. It is necessary to consider the components that drive the motivation to read in order to examine how we can help our students be engaged and motivated readers.

Interest

According to the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (2010), interest in reading predicts students reading comprehension. To examine this phenomenon, this study looked at data from 64 countries. These data suggest students who enjoy reading score significantly better in comprehension than their peers who report lower reading enjoyment. Students who are higher achievers in reading are consistently more implicitly motivated to read and are more engaged in reading activities (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999). A study performed by Guthrie, Schafer, and Huang (2001) revealed that reading engagement is more of a predictor of reading achievement than even parental background. This means that students who

are moderately engaged, but whose mother's education is low showed significantly higher achievement than disengaged students from a family with higher levels of education. This illustrates that engagement can be more impactful on performance than other factors that we also know support student achievement, such as parental education. This research indicates that if a student is not motivated to read, s/he will not spend enough time engaged in the process of reading and may not reach his/her full literacy potential. Without the skills of reading comprehension and the motivation for reading to learn, students' academic progress is limited (Alvermann & Earle, as cited in Guthrie, et al., 2004). Therefore, it is implied that if students read more, they will enlarge their academic vocabulary, build important background knowledge, and improve comprehension skills (Guthrie et al., 2001). Increasing student interest in reading to help them read more should be considered a key factor in reading achievement. Providing choice as a motivational support is one way that educators can improve student interest in reading (Guthrie, Lutz & Ho, 2013). In addition to interest, confidence should be considered as another important component of motivation.

Confidence

When students are successful and feel confident to take risks that encourage growth in their abilities, they are destined to achieve more. A student's belief in himself and his abilities is more closely linked to achievement than any other motivation. A confident student is willing to tackle new challenges and invest time and energy to learning tasks because s/he expects to succeed (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Every success builds on the last to create a confident and motivated reader. Teachers support this success by offering texts to students that they can read with accuracy and understanding. When a student knows they are reading with fluency and with

understanding they gain confidence, which is an important component to increased motivation (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). With interest and confidence in mind as important aspects of motivation, it is necessary to better understand how teachers can use these factors to support more dedicated and capable readers.

Dedication

A student can be temporarily absorbed in reading because something has become relevant to them or because they want to know more about a certain topic. This could be called situational interest, and may not lead to increased achievement because it does not stimulate intrinsic motivation. In contrast, a dedicated reader will read even when they are not interested in the topic because they see personal or academic value in what they are trying to learn. Three key signs of dedicated readers are that they persist, plan, and place a priority on their reading because they know that they do not improve by accident, and they want to be successful in school (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). This description of persistence in planning is necessary to building confident, self-improving readers.

Cambria & Guthrie (2010) argue that these components are synergistic and work together to propel students forward. Interest and confidence contribute to dedication, which is the factor that increases achievement. Interest or confidence alone will not increase achievement unless students harness it into dedication (p. 20). This dedication is required in order for a student to be able to achieve at higher levels; this is especially critical as the content grows more complicated and the texts students read grow more complex. Students need to utilize effective strategies to maintain engagement and confidence as readers in order to read for meaning and achieve at higher levels.

Statement of the Problem

It is a concern for professionals to invest time and energy into improving students' reading abilities, while not adequately considering motivation/engagement as an essential part of students' reading needs. Particular populations of students in my school were not improving, even after participating in intense interventions. The gap between the grade level text being used in the reading program and students' reading ability made it difficult for these students to read with understanding. This is why I examined student engagement and inquired into how it could build confidence and interest in reading for elementary students. I believed this would potentially shape student dedication and expand their comprehension strategies.

Here are two examples of students who struggle with reading that this study addressed:

Bethany is a third-grade student who speaks English as a second language. She did not attend kindergarten, but has been in the same school since first grade. She has participated in Title I reading interventions every year and has always struggled to keep up with her peers in reading. Over the years she has made very little growth in her fluency and accuracy skills, despite intense and focused direct instruction with phonics. At the end of third grade, Bethany's reading skills are similar to a middle of the year first grade student. Her teachers complain that she is distracted and sometimes distracts others with her behavior. When Bethany was offered a book from her intervention teacher at the end of the year she said, "I don't like books, I am not a good reader."

Adam is a fourth-grade student who has participated in Title I reading interventions his entire elementary career. He has made slow growth in fluency and accuracy over the years, but only at half the rate he needs to in order to catch up to the grade level benchmark. His teachers

describe him as unmotivated and distracted. He does not get into trouble, but is often found gazing in a direction other than his book. He requires his teacher to check in frequently for understanding. He will practice reading as long as he has the support and attention of his teacher, but when she walks away he loses focus on his reading. His skill with reading is over one year behind the expectations for his grade level. His teacher thinks if he would care more and try harder he would make more progress in reading.

This study examined the nature of reading engagement for struggling first through fifth-grade readers who participated in a summer school literacy program. Students were invited to join this program based on DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) scores that place them in the lowest twentieth percentile of their grade level in the areas of fluency and accuracy, and also because they were integrated into a reading intervention during the 2014-15 school year.

The curriculum used during the school year prior to this study was a basal reading program that incorporated leveled readers and decodable readers with a skills-based phonics program. There was little to no time within this reading program for students to make choices about their reading and their own learning. According to Gambrell (2011), students are more likely to read when they have opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks. This study provided a learning environment during a summer literacy program in which students were allowed to choose their reading material along with their literacy extension activity. I purposefully designed this study to provide students with choice in their reading and give them access to high-interest text during a 45-minute literacy block each day. I believed that students' ability to choose high interest books could make a

discernable difference in their motivation to read, which is why I designed a literacy program that was distinctive from the regular program in terms of instructional strategies and data collection.

As the literacy specialist I was responsible to collect and monitor reading achievement data for the students who participated in the Title I reading program throughout the year. We used DIBELS as an assessment tool to measure the fluency and accuracy rates of students. I progress monitor the students who were in the Title I reading program every week with a focus on their movement toward the grade level benchmark for fluency and accuracy. I targeted achievement growth when I examined the performance of these students. For example, if a student was reading 20 words per minute and the grade level goal was 40 words per minute I measured average growth toward the goal over a period of time. Some students made growth but not adequate to keep up with the expectations of DIBELS, a standardized assessment with benchmark expectations for fluency and accuracy. As the benchmark standard for fluency and accuracy increased over the course of a school year, students' performance became greater when compared to their grade-level peers. The reading program has been designed in such a way that even if a student did not make ambitious growth toward their grade level goal, they were placed in a basal reading program with increasingly more difficult grade level text. These students may not have been able to successfully access this text, especially if they were already reading below grade level. In addition to difficult grade level texts, these students were offered easier skill-based, (usually less engaging) texts during the intervention. For the students who were in the Title I reading program there was a chasm between the grade level text they were asked to access in the core reading curriculum and their reading ability. This made it difficult for these students

to access this content and read for meaning. Additionally, because these students were reading at a level of frustration in the core-reading curriculum, they were placed in an intervention at their reading level.

From my perspective, the gap between what students could access in the core and the low-interest texts they were given during the intervention caused some students to be disengaged in their regular reading block and struggle with their self-perception as readers. As I observed students' boredom with intervention texts and their difficulty with the core-reading curriculum, I found this phenomenon frustrating to witness. Therefore in addition to offering solid research-based curriculum that focused on the skills of reading, I explored the advantage of building reading engagement for these students. I did this by offering students choice of text that was interesting to them at their reading level along with choice in the engagement activities used to share and understand their books.

When considering a theoretical framework for this study, Engagement Theory emerged as one of the key lenses through which I examined this phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework: Engagement Theory

According to Engagement Theory, engagement is the integration of motivations and strategies in literacy activities (Guthrie, et al., 1996). This perspective makes several claims about engagement in reading. Engaged reading refers to interaction with text that is simultaneously motivating, strategic, and correlated with reading comprehension. It is comprised of motivation and cognitive strategies, which can be increased by instructional practices. Finally, instructional frameworks that merge motivational and cognitive strategy support in reading increase engaged reading and comprehension (Guthrie, et al., 2004).

Within Engagement Theory there are several constructs of engagement: motivations for reading, motivations for strategy use in reading, and motivations for conceptual learning from text. Within the construct of motivations for reading, Guthrie et al. (2004) argue that engaged readers choose to read for a variety of purposes. These purposes might include enjoyment, to gain knowledge, or to interact with friends. Engaged readers are self-determining; they set goals for their purpose as they explore the content of what they read. Students can also internalize their goals for reading (Guthrie et al., 1996). When students are motivated to read because the content possesses personal significance, they are intrinsically motivated and attain higher-level strategies to access those texts. When examining the construct of motivation for strategy use in reading, it is expected that students who are intrinsically motivated to read will work independently, persevere when reading gets difficult, and show responsibility with regard to use of reading strategies (Guthrie et al., 1996). The third motivational construct is motivation for conceptual learning from text. When children want to read and use strategies in order to accomplish this goal, they are intrinsically motivated. Students who are intrinsically motivated to read yield higher levels of conceptual learning than those who are more extrinsically motivated. For example, rather than rote learning for a grade, these students read to develop understanding (Guthrie et al., 1996).

In another description of Engagement Theory, Gambrell (1996) says that engaged readers are motivated to read for many purposes; they are knowledgeable because they use information to develop understanding. Engaged readers are strategic because they use cognitive strategies to make meaning and they are socially interactive because they are able to communicate their learning to others. Engaged readers are motivated to read and therefore read frequently (Tracy &

Morrow, 2012). Engagement theory encourages educators to utilize strategies that increase student engagement.

One of the instructional frameworks designed to support this kind of motivated reading is Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). This construct utilizes five major components to support reading achievement for students. The first component to CORI is the use of content goals for reading instruction. CORI also emphasizes the importance of student choice for both reading texts and responses. When using CORI, an instructor will plan hands-on activities and ensure access to a wide variety of text genres to interest students. Lastly, CORI encourages the integration of social collaboration into reading response activities. These strategies support students' development of social skills and self-efficacy for reading comprehension (Guthrie, et al., 2004).

This study is established within the context of Engagement Theory since it takes the perspective that engagement is essential to the development of higher-level comprehension skills, and that there are strategies that can be employed to increase reading engagement.

Engagement should be considered an essential component to a well-balanced literacy program. According to the Engagement Theory and the CORI framework, students will be more engaged if they are offered a choice of interesting texts and have opportunities to socially interact with others about what they are reading (Guthrie, et al., 2004). As a result, this research took place within a summer literacy program for underachieving first through fifth-grade elementary students in a Title I school where the 45-minute literacy block of the summer program was a time where students could choose their own texts and related extension activities. This instructional design was socially collaborative, enabling me to see how students chose texts,

how engaged they were in the process of reading, and how they interacted with their peers about what they were reading.

Research Question

This study sought to answer the following research question: *What happens when elementary students are offered choice with interesting and relevant text at their independent reading level within a socially interactive environment?* Sub-questions include: a) *What levels/genres of text do children choose to read?* and b) *How does this experience impact students' self-reported confidence in their abilities as a reader?*

I believe we are doing commendable work in our district in the areas of literacy instruction as it relates to the skill of reading during the 90-minute reading block, but sometimes I wonder if it is enough. I pursued this research because I wanted to know what students would do when they were offered a choice of what to read and an opportunity to share their work with their peers. I wanted to know if giving students more autonomy in reading would make a difference in the quality of literacy experience they had and the level of confidence they had in themselves as readers.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this study and are important to identify and define in order to have a complete understanding of this research.

Autonomy: The ability to self-initiate and self-regulate, one's own actions (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan 1991).

Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI): An instructional framework based in Engagement Theory that supports cognitive, motivational, and social processes within the classroom by using

content goals during reading, offering choice to students, providing hands-on activities for students to participate in, using interesting text for students to read, and supporting a collaborative learning environment (Guthrie, et al., 2004).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS): A set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills (dibels.uoregon.edu).

Engaged Reading: The joint function of motivation, strategy use and conceptual knowledge during reading (Guthrie, et al., 1998).

Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System: A system of assessment in which the benchmark standard is set by the books a student reads aloud and talks about during the assessment. These books are placed on a text level gradient of reading difficulty. Each point on the gradient from the easiest at level A to the most difficult at level Z represent a small increase over the previous level. Assessment results yield optimal information to determine independent or instructional reading for each student (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

Frustration reading level: When a student reads a book at a low level of accuracy (below 90%) or with a higher level of accuracy but a limited understanding of the text, this book is too difficult and will be frustrating for the student to read (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

Instructional reading level: When a student reads a book with above 90% accuracy and a solid comprehension score, or above 95% accuracy with a limited comprehension score, this book can be read with support from a teacher (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

Independent reading level: When a student reads a book with above 95% accuracy and a solid comprehension score, this book can be read independently by the student (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

Self-Perception: A person's belief about his/her own ability (Bembenuddy, 2012).

Social Collaboration: The ability to participate and be accountable to peers in a socially collaborative working environment (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

Trade books: Interesting books that are composed by an author and attractive to read. These books afford an opportunity for extended pursuit of knowledge defined by students' goals and questions (Guthrie, et al., 2004).

Summary

Current literacy practices place emphasis on the foundational skills of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, accuracy and comprehension, often with an omission of engagement as an important piece of the system. I believe an effective literacy program should consider engagement in reading as an essential component of the process. This study examined the use of student choice of leveled, high-interest, and relevant text in a collaborative learning environment and examined the impact these things had on engagement in reading and students' perceptions of their self-confidence as readers. In the following chapter, I outline the literature pertinent to this study, which include student autonomy as it relates to engagement, social collaboration as it relates to engagement, and the relationship between engagement and students' self-perceptions as a reader.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

As it pertains to reading, Engagement Theory defines engagement as both a motivational process and the ability to successfully use cognitive strategies to improve reading comprehension (Guthrie & Cox, 2001). Engaged readers are students who are intrinsically motivated to read for the knowledge and enjoyment it provides, but engaged readers are also strategic. They self-monitor as they read and make inferences to understand text (Guthrie & Cox, 2001). There is a positive correlation between high levels of intrinsic motivation and reading comprehension achievement. This is because reading motivation has been found statistically correlated with reported reading activity positively impacting levels of comprehension (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Schaffner, Schiefele, & Ulferts, 2013). Literacy engagement is crucial to reading achievement because students are more likely to develop strong reading comprehension skills when they have abundant access to engaging texts and interact actively with them in social ways (Cummins, 2011). In a study that analyzed grade four students using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to compare engaged reading with comprehension achievement, researchers found the amount of engaged reading students participated in significantly predicted achievement (Guthrie, Schafer, & Huang, 2001). For these reasons motivation to read should be considered an integral component to an effective literacy program and will be examined closely in this review of the literature.

To describe engagement is to describe the quality of a student's involvement with school, but there are multiple distinguishable features of this involvement. According to Skinner & Pitzer (2012) features of engagement can be described as behavioral, emotional, or cognitive.

Behavioral engagement describes student participation and has indicators such as positive conduct, effort, or persistence. Emotional engagement describes a student's affective reaction to the classroom and may be manifest as interest, boredom, or anxiety. Finally, cognitive engagement describes a student's willingness to exert effort for the purpose of comprehending complex text or mastering a difficult skill (Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko, & Feldman-Farb, 2012). Another researcher describes a variety of indicators for student engagement such as participation, value of learning (goal setting), time on task, and self-regulation (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Engagement can ultimately be described as the outward manifestation of motivation (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Engagement is how cognitions, behaviors, and affects are energized, directed and sustained during learning and other academic activities (Schunk & Mullen, 2012).

The theories of motivation describe psychological processes that underlie *energy*, *purpose*, and *durability* of the human action (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). In other words, motivation is the force that directs and gives purpose to behavior (Reeve, 2012). This motivation relates to engagement because the effort, enthusiasm and intensity displayed by a student illustrate the *energy* of their motivation. Additionally the interest, focus, and concentration of a student illuminate the *purpose* of their work. Finally the determination and persistence of a student reveals the *durability* of their commitment (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

Reading motivation denotes the enduring readiness of a person to initiate and sustain reading activities and involves several dimensions (Schaffner, et al., 2013). One of the dimensions of engagement is *Object-Oriented Reading Motivation*, because a student might be motivated to read in order to learn more about an object of interest. Another component of

engagement is *Experience-Oriented Reading Motivation*, which occurs when a reader wants to “get lost” in the experience of a story or identifies with the main character of a story.

Competence-Oriented Reading Motivation is motivation to read in order to better understand texts. *Competition-Oriented Reading Motivation* is directed by the reader’s desire to perform or receive recognition for their abilities. Finally, *Social-Oriented Reading Motivation* could be described as reading to connect with peers or to gain recognition from others (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Schaffner, et al., 2013). As researchers consider these dimensions of reading engagement, it becomes important to identify classroom strategies that can pique and sustain reading motivation.

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) is an instructional framework that is based in the Engagement Perspective, and is a way to describe the development of reading comprehension. This perspective makes several claims, the first of which is that engagement in reading refers to interaction with text that is simultaneously motivated and strategic. This perspective also claims that engaged reading correlates with achievement in reading comprehension. Thirdly, Engagement Perspective says that motivation and cognitive strategies can be increased by instructional practices. Finally Engagement Perspective states that an instructional strategy that merges motivational and cognitive strategy support in reading will increase engagement in reading and therefore, reading comprehension (Guthrie, et al., 2004).

CORI supports cognitive, motivational, and social processes within the classroom by using content goals during reading, offering choice to students, providing hands-on activities for students to participate in, using interesting text for students to read, and supporting a collaborative learning environment (Guthrie, et al., 2004). These practices are further supported

by researchers who suggest that educators provide academic tasks that are authentic, challenging, relevant to students' experiences and concerns, hands-on, project-based, integrated across subject areas, and allow students some freedom to choose their own direction and to work closely in cooperative groups over long periods of time (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

In a study of the CORI strategies, researchers found the substantial majority of students who participated in the study increased in motivation and amount of reading, indicating an increase in reading engagement (Guthrie & Lutz, 2014). Researchers used the *Motivation for Reading Information Books in School (MRIB-S)* assessment with a four-point Likert scale to measure motivational constructs before and after the intervention. Intrinsic motivation was defined as enjoyment of reading, value of reading was defined as students' belief that reading was important, and self-efficacy was defined as students' confidence in their own ability to accomplish an academic task. This assessment was all self-reported information (Guthrie, Lutz & Ho, 2013). Additionally, students who experienced an increase in reading engagement also increased in successful use of comprehension strategies (Guthrie & Cox, 2001). This illustrates that CORI strategies for instruction have potential to impact reading engagement and subsequently comprehension achievement.

The purpose of this literature review is to explore three of the integral instructional strategies defined in CORI that are designed to increase engagement in reading. Autonomy support, collaboration support, and access to interesting text at independent reading level have been identified as facilitating conditions for motivation and engagement in the reading classroom (Guthrie & Cox, 2001). To further understand these practices, this literature review will explore

autonomy as it relates to engagement, social collaboration as it relates to engagement, and the relationship between engagement and student self-perception as a reader.

Choice and Engagement

Self-determination Theory denotes that all people possess inherent growth tendencies (Reeve, 2012) and are curious creatures that have a natural love for learning (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). This theory is unique because it emphasizes the task of vitalizing the existing desire to learn in every student (Reeve, 2012). Self-determination asserts people have three basic human needs. The first of these needs is the need to feel competent. This involves the desire to attain various outcomes and to have the ability to perform certain tasks necessary to achieve desired outcomes. Another necessity described in this theory is the need for relatedness or meaningful connections with peers. Finally this theory states that humans have the desire for autonomy or self-determination, which is the ability to self-initiate and self-regulate, one's own actions (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan 1991). A central theme in this theory is the idea that social contexts that support competence, relatedness, and self-determination will promote motivation (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Offering student choice and supporting autonomy is one way to impact cognitive and affective engagement because it increases intrinsic motivation. Autonomy will lead to motivated actions that are self-determined, rather than controlled (Deci, et al., 1991).

The need for autonomy is conceptualized as having two major components. The first component that defines autonomy is striving to avoid coercion and have optimal choice. When people feel like they are pressured into behaving a certain way, they experience frustration, which can undermine engagement. Secondly, autonomy is described as the ability to form and

realize authentic, direction giving values, goals and interests. This is important because it provides inner criteria for making important decisions (Assor, 2012).

One study illustrated that when students are offered unrestricted choice, they experience heightened favorable perceptions of the reading experience, greater perceived autonomy, and ultimately higher levels of intrinsic motivation and enjoyment (Schraw, Flowerday, & Reisetter, 1998). In another study, researchers asked fourth-grade students about their preference in reading in order to give them a voice in their own learning. When asked to rank reading activities by importance, 86% of these students stated that “having a lot of books in the class library was very important and they appreciated being able to choose their own books (Pachtman, & Wilson, 2006) further supporting how crucial choice can potentially be to a positive learning environment.

Furthermore, when the goal of reading is to create skilled, passionate, habitual, and critical readers, book choice is essential because students who choose books are more likely to grow up to become adults who read books (Atwell, 2007) Motivation, performance and development are maximized when students are offered the opportunity to satisfy their need for competence, relatedness and autonomy because their actions will be intrinsically motivated and fully self-determined (Deci, et al., 1991).

Locus of control relates to perception of choice. Locus of control is a set of beliefs a person has about their own agency. *Internal locus of control* is the belief that a person has control over choices involving future outcomes. *External locus of control* is the expectation that control is outside of oneself, either in the hands of powerful other people or due to fate/chance. Children who develop and maintain an internal locus of control have confidence in their abilities

to facilitate certain outcomes (Vieira, & Grantham, 2011). Studies have found significant positive associations between attitudes toward a task, task involvement, and perceptions of choice (Schraw et al., 1998). In other words, when students have a sense of control over their learning they enjoy tasks more and are more engaged.

In a study regarding locus of control and elementary students, researchers discovered that readers who perceived limited control over circumstances related to reading tended to go through the mechanics of reading and did not become emotionally involved in the story (Vieira & Grantham, 2011). This research indicates that offering choice of books and literacy activities to help students feel more empowered can increase their engagement in reading. Choice can influence interest in other areas as well. For example, allowing students to choose a character or an important topic in which to specialize is choice to enhance engagement (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Children often have difficulty choosing books that are interesting and at the appropriate reading level. Teachers can help support this choice by offering what is called *bounded choice* (Gambrell, 2011). This is done by offering several choices to students of books that are at independent reading level to ensure students can successfully access and understand text.

The CORI framework emphasizes providing choice as a motivational support system that allows students to develop self-direction in literacy. In a study about the impact of CORI instruction on student achievement, researchers found students were more motivated in reading and had an increase in their self-efficacy (Guthrie, Lutz & Ho, 2013). In a study about fostering reading motivation in elementary classrooms, Gambrell (1996) asked elementary students what their teachers should do to increase their interest in reading. The students said, “teachers should let us read our own books and tell others about them.” In another comment students said,

“teachers should have lots of different books in the classroom.” When children who participated in this study talked about the books they had most enjoyed, more than 80% of them mentioned the book was self-selected from the classroom library (Gambrell, 1996). These studies illustrate how choice promotes motivation to read and self-determination in learning.

Social Interaction and Engagement

Vygotsky’s Theory of Social Development is one of the foundations of the constructivist view of learning. Social Constructivism states that social interaction precedes development as an integral aspect to learning and children learn as a result of their social interactions with others (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Social interactions include collaborative practices in a community and the social goals of helping other students cooperate with a teacher. These in turn influence students’ reading achievement, knowledge gained from reading, and the kinds of practices in which they engage (Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012). The theory of Social Development asserts three major themes. The first of these themes is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development. Another assertion of this theory is that a “more knowledgeable other” (MKO) is a person who has a better understanding or higher ability than the learner. The MKO can guide or support learning for a student by modeling learning. Lastly, the Theory of Social Development describes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as the distance between a student’s ability to perform a task under guidance and his ability to solve the problem independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky would say that learning happens within this zone.

In 2010 Ogle & Correa-Kovtum conducted research in which they provided a socially interactive learning environment to determine the most effective way to support English Language Learners in reading (Ogle & Correa-Kovtum, 2010). They began by establishing

research-based priorities as a premise for this work. The first priority identified was the need for students to read every day at their independent or instructional level in order to improve as readers. With this in mind, classrooms should be amply supplied with materials in a range of reading levels. In addition to daily practice, providing students regular opportunities to converse with others about their reading while using academic language was identified as a priority to help students internalize concepts and express ideas. Thirdly, this research asserted that students' learning is enhanced when they ask and answer their own questions with an inquiry-based learning environment (Ogle & Correa-Kovtum, 2010). They implemented the *Partner Reading and Content, Too (PRC2)* routine with English Language Learners to offer this type of social support in reading.

The key to this process was that students were given enough time to read and reread the texts carefully and to talk about the ideas in a safe environment with their partner. The basic PRC2 routine consists of partners previewing a book. For each two-page spread, both partners first read the pages silently and reread their page to prepare for their performance read. Students also select a question to ask their partner. Each student then reads a page orally and asks a question of their partner and they talk about the text. Students switch roles between reader and listener throughout this process and both students add new academic vocabulary to a notebook at the end of the session (Ogle & Correa-Kovtum, 2010). This work gave students opportunity to support each other's learning and provided a scaffold for developing skill in reading and learning. The researchers found PRC2 created more competent and confident learners and readers in the classroom. This example supports the Theory of Social Development as it relates to reading engagement.

In another study that focused on English Learners and reading motivation, the social aspect of reading was strongly correlated with motivation to read. In one example, a participant stated enthusiastically that he and his friends were more motivated to read because of the discussions they had about the books they were reading. Not only did the social interaction provide more interest in reading, it helped deepen student understanding of text (Protacio, 2012).

To examine an aspect of social collaboration in the elementary classroom, Drabble (2011) incorporated strategies that enabled students to view themselves as resources of information rather than passive participants in the classroom. She did this by facilitating social collaboration in the classroom as a means of helping students engage in purposeful and meaningful conversations to increase learning experiences. In her research, she observed that offering students a social context in which to learn facilitated confidence with speaking and sharing of personal knowledge. This social interaction can help develop conversational skills and discussion strategies that add to the learning experience for students.

At the elementary level, social relationships are paramount for students' development as readers and learners. With these social relationships in mind, the CORI framework provides partner reading, team summarizing, group work, and peer conferencing to ensure full participation and accountability in a socially collaborative environment (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). In a study to compare this framework with traditional instruction, researchers found that when students were offered a collaborative working environment within the CORI structure, they scored higher in measures of reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading strategies (Guthrie et al., 2004).

In another CORI research project, teachers initiated partners or small groups exchanging ideas based on reading, student-led discussion groups, peer conferencing, and group projects to foster collaboration in the classroom. Participants had an increase both in reading motivation and development of pro-social reading goals as a by-product of this collaborative learning environment (Guthrie, Lutz & Ho, 2013)

Social interaction supports motivation to read by increasing interest and offering supportive opportunity for increased comprehension after sharing with a friend, and is therefore an important component for engagement in reading (Gambrell, 2011). A student who is engaged in reading is motivated, knowledgeable, strategic and socially interactive (Gambrell, 1996).

Self-Perception and Engagement

Expectancy-Value Theory addresses motivational influences on individual's performance with different achievement activities. According to this theory, a person's belief about his/her own ability has the most direct influence on performance (Bembenutty, 2012). The Expectancy-Value Theory asserts that motivation is determined by an individual's perception that they will be successful with a task (expectancy) and they perceive value in completing the task (value) (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Academic self-efficacy, or the perceived confidence in one's ability to execute actions for attaining academic goals, plays a crucial role in motivation and learning (Schunk & Mullen, 2012). The level of self-efficacy a student brings to a reading task affects how much they understand the text, and how well they can communicate their learning about the text. Students who feel efficacious about learning tend to be competent and engaged, and they are more likely to set learning goals and implement strategies for learning (Shunk & Mullen, 2012). A student with a healthy self-concept about their reading ability is more likely to

approach reading with enthusiasm, engage in strategic reading practices, and be willing to share their learning with others (Malloy et al., 2013).

Belief in one's self is more closely related to achievement than any other motivation, because confidence is linked to success. If a student reads a page of text fluently and is able to understand what s/he read, that student is more likely to read the next page; which builds reading proficiency (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). When participants have lower levels of perceived competence, they are not as motivated to read as their peers with higher self-confidence (Protacio, 2012). Continued low levels of self-perceived competence can undermine confidence to the point of participation in a cycle of frustration and failure. Students who are consistently low-performers believe that it is futile for them to think they will be able to read like their classmates (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

Confidence can be strengthened when teachers create a safe and open classroom environment where all students are respected, valued, supported and heard. This happens best in the context of understanding relationships. Supportive interactions with teachers and peers contribute to positive self-perception for students (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Teachers can also support confidence in their students with the materials they provide for them. When students can read books aloud with 90% accuracy and easily understand the contents they will feel instructionally supported and will increase in confidence (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

Students' confidence or self-efficacy is increased by their experiences of success in reading. When teachers locate texts at students' levels, and enable students to realize that they are reading them fluently with understanding, students gain confidence. Although it

may sound Utopian, success is the royal road to confidence. There is no alternative.

(Cambria & Guthrie, 2010, pp. 22)

This quote illustrates how vital it is for educators to offer opportunities to build self-efficacy in their students by providing books at an accessible reading level.

Conclusion

After a careful examination of the literature, it is evident that motivation is an important aspect to the acquisition of literacy skills. Motivation can be described as the force that gives purpose and direction for engagement. Engagement in reading is the outward evidence of the underlying motivation to participate in reading and can be seen behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively in students. In order to increase student engagement both motivational and cognitive strategies can be implemented. The CORI framework for reading instruction offers several strategies to impact motivation, which include offering choice, creating a socially collaborative learning environment, and increasing student efficacy.

There is evidence in the literature to illustrate that when a student is offered choice in a collaborative learning environment with opportunities for increased confidence, there will be a positive impact on their motivation to read. Perceived choice in learning gives opportunity to increase interest and confidence by enhancing student agency. Socially collaborative learning gives students an opportunity to share learning and offers a supportive climate for engagement. Finally, self-efficacy can be increased when students are offered opportunities to build learning on successful experience.

With the evidence from the literature in mind, the following chapter delineates the way in which student engagement in reading will be explored in this study, specifically the way it relates to student choice, social learning and self-perception as a reader.

CHAPTER 3

Method

In this study, I examined the nature of reading engagement for struggling elementary readers who were offered choice and engaging literacy activities in a summer school literacy program. I planned this study to investigate the relationships between students' access to interesting text and their ability to choose their own books to see how these practices might contribute to reading engagement. As the literacy specialist who worked with these students daily, my perspective was influenced by the stories of these struggling readers, and I was motivated to support their engagement in literacy. I did this research to consciously reflect on my students' experiences, to challenge my assumptions and the assumptions of the other adults who work with them, and to create possibilities for necessary change.

I explored students' reading interests by offering choice in text and engagement activities to potentially increase their interest in reading. I did this in a collaborative learning environment as an additional strategy to increase motivation in reading. This study also investigated student-perceived confidence as readers by offering access to books at students' independent reading levels and assessing self-reported confidence as it related to choice and social interaction. This provided opportunity to ascertain how student ability to choose texts in which they were interested and experience success affected their perceptions of themselves as readers. This study endeavored to answer the following research question: *What happens when elementary students are offered choice with interesting and relevant text at their independent reading level within a socially interactive environment?* Sub-questions include: a) *What*

levels/genres of text do children choose to read? and b) How does this experience impact students' self-reported confidence in their abilities as a reader?

Setting/Participants

This literacy camp in which this study took place was held at a Title I elementary school where I was the literacy specialist. The school is situated in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon and had a total of 586 students. Within this community, 26% of the students were English Language Learners and 51% were economically disadvantaged. The numbers of students who are economically disadvantaged qualified this school as a Title I school which means supplemental funding to bridge the gap between low-income, at-risk students and other students. Title I specifies allocations of additional federal dollars that allow the school to support any student, but at my school, this money was primarily used to support students who were struggling with reading, writing, and/or math. The students who were invited to the literacy camp under study for this research were specifically students who struggled with reading.

First through fifth-grade students were invited to join this program based on DIBELS scores that placed them in the lowest twentieth percentile of their grade level in the areas of fluency and accuracy. Additional qualifications for attendance involved students' integration into a reading intervention during the 2014-15 school year. There were 20 first grade students, 14 second grade students, 18 third grade students, 19 fourth grade, and 8 fifth grade students who are participating in this program, for a total of 79 students.

The program was run in a camp-like setting on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in July and August of 2015. There were a total of 15 instructional days in this literacy camp during which students traveled between several stations for a daily three hours of instruction. Students

experienced 45-minutes each of direct instruction reading intervention, writer's workshop, P.E., and a literacy enrichment opportunity, the last of which was the focus of this study. Participants were separated into groups of 15-20 students traveled through the four sections of this camp so that with each rotation, teachers were working with small groups of students. It was during the literacy enrichment station that I collected data from the participants in the program.

Before the first day of summer camp, the students in this study were assessed using the *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011) to determine their independent reading level. I did this so that during the literacy enrichment portion of summer camp students were offered book choices relative to their reading level and the literacy extension activities. Students were explicitly taught their individual reading level range and given strategies to help them choose books that were appropriate for them. This was done to help students choose books they could read fluently and accurately and discern how this might impact their confidence.

One of the characteristics of this research was to observe the level of confidence these struggling students had as readers. This was done using a pre/post measurement of the DART (Appendix A) and the Choice Data Sheet (Appendix B) which are both student self-report data pieces that will be described in detail later in this chapter. These data were correlated and compared to my field notes that described students' observed actions and conversations relating to confidence. A confident student is willing to tackle new challenges and invest time and energy to learning tasks because he expects to succeed (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Confidence is therefore an important aspect to reading engagement that was explored in this study. Teachers can support confidence by offering students texts they can read with accuracy and understanding.

When a student knows s/he is reading with fluency and understanding s/he gains confidence, which is an important component to increased motivation (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). It is for this reason that I tested to find students' levels and ensure that they were offered choice among interesting books at their reading levels.

The literacy enrichment time started with a 10 or 15-minute mini-lesson (see Table 1) that was used to set expectations for independent reading and offer models of literacy extension choices. Expectations for each choice were explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced before students were asked to work independently with them. There were two certified teachers who were team-teaching literacy mini-lessons (Table 1) and one instructional assistant who was supporting this work with students. In this way, there were several adults in the room at all times to monitor and support students during the collaborative and independent work times. Although participants were able to choose what to read and how they responded to that reading, there was the expectation that everyone was reading and participating in literacy activities during this time.

Providing choice as a motivational support is one way that educators can improve student interest in reading (Guthrie, Lutz & Ho, 2013). Students are more likely to read when they have opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks (Gambrell, 2011). For this reason, choice was added as a strategy in order to enhance and explore student engagement. Each day, began the 45-minute literacy enrichment session with a mini-lesson (Table 1), after which students were offered a selection of interesting books at their reading level and a menu of literacy extension activities to be completed after they read their selection. Students spent some time choosing what they wanted to read followed by

15-20 minutes of engaged independent or partner reading. When students finished a book, they used a menu of literacy extension choices to help them decide how to extend their learning.

These strategies were modeled after the CORI framework, which encouraged the integration of social collaboration into reading response activities because it supported students' development of self-efficacy (Guthrie, et al., 2004). This is why the extension options included socially collaborative choices such as an oral retell with a partner or an interview with a classmate about the book they read, providing students with multiple opportunities to interact with peers about their reading and learning. Other extension choices were available as well. These options included written retells and a sketch of the student's favorite part of the story with labels and words to describe their perception of the story.

This portion of the summer school day contrasted with the reading intervention segment because student choice and social collaboration were a key focus. In contrast, the reading intervention was delivered as small group reading instruction in which all students were reading the same book together with guided and direct instruction from the teacher. During the direct instruction reading intervention, students were not offered choice of books or extension activities, and were not working at a varied pace because they were working together with direction from the teacher. This instructional style was similar to the way instruction was delivered to these students during the school year. I purposefully made the decision to create a very different style of instruction in order to investigate how choice in a collaborative learning environment might impact student engagement in reading.

Literacy extension choices and expectations were introduced gradually with guidance and modeling. After each choice was modeled and practiced with all the students, it was added to a

menu of extension choices. Introduction and modeled practice of each choice was done purposefully during the 15 days of instruction.

On the first and last days of this enrichment time, the students were given an assessment that illustrated their self-reported perception of reading abilities that I called *Draw a Reader Test* (DART) (see Appendix A). This tool will be described in more detail in the data collection section of this chapter and was used initially as baseline data on student confidence. This assessment was given again at the end of this study to determine if there were subtle changes in the students' description of how they perceived themselves as readers. In subsequent days participants were systematically exposed to the tools they used to record their reading, along with the expectations for each day. At the beginning of summer camp students reviewed the difference between fiction and nonfiction titles and learned how to distinguish between these titles in the leveled library from which they chose their books. Fiction books were designated with green stickers and nonfiction books were identified with red stickers so students could easily discern the difference. Students were informed of their reading level range and learned how they could make the best choice for successful reading. Students were also introduced to the Reading Choice Data Sheet (see Appendix B) that they filled out when they chose a new book. The teacher modeled and practiced this with the students in a whole group setting before they were expected to complete it independently. One strategy was introduced, modeled and practiced each day with the whole group, until each strategy was added to a menu of choices. These strategies included: partner reading, independent reading, giving an oral retell (with sentence frames to support learning), writing a summary of the book, interviewing a friend about what they read and recording their answers. After all the activities had been introduced and

practiced students were able to work with more freedom to choose books and activities. The following table describes in more detail what students were doing every day in the literacy enrichment portion of this literacy camp.

Table 1
Scope and Sequence for Literacy Extension

Day	Mini-Lesson (10-15 min)	Independent (30 min)
1	DART, intro of student folder & Data Record Sheet	DART, Explore book choices (no extension activity)
2	Fiction (green sticker)/Nonfiction (red sticker), What's my level? Why did I choose this book?	Fill out Choice Data Sheet, read book
3	What does partner reading look like?	Fill out Choice Data Sheet, assigned partner reading
4	Fiction Oral Retell (sequence events) guided and modeled with sentence frames. This book was about.., One thing that happened was.., My favorite part was..	Fill out Choice Data Sheet (fiction), independent or partner read, partner oral retell
5	Nonfiction Oral Retell (main idea/details) guided and modeled with sentence frames. This book was about.., Three things I learned about __ are..	Fill out Choice Data Sheet (Nonfiction), independent or partner read, partner oral retell
6	Review fiction/nonfiction, partner expectations, oral retell, guided and modeled with sentence frames	Fill out Choice Data Sheet, independent or partner read, partner oral retell
7	Written retell with sentence starters (partner or individual). This activity can use the same sentence starters that are used for the oral retell.	Fill out Choice Data Sheet, independent or partner read, written retell
8	Sketch/Draw favorite part of story with	Fill out Choice Data Sheet,

	labels an descriptions (partner or individual). This is my favorite part of this book because.., When I read this book I learned..,	independent or partner read, extension choice
9	Interview a friend about their book (modeled with sample questions). What book did you read today? What was your favorite part of this book? What new things did you learn from this book? Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why/why not?	Fill out Choice Data Sheet, independent or partner read, extension choice
10-15	Review tasks/expectations as needed final DART on last day	Fill out Choice Data Sheet, independent or partner read, extension choice

Research Design

Phenomenological study describes the common meaning of lived experiences for several individuals. When doing this type of research, a researcher focuses on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. The purpose of this type of study was to reduce myriad of experiences to a universal essence. This essence or description includes what the participant experiences and how they experience it (Creswell, 2013). This study was phenomenological because it described the shared experiences of readers who struggle in first through fifth grade.

This qualitative case study examined what students did when they were offered choice of interesting texts at their reading level in a socially interactive environment. Qualitative research looks for happenings rather than causes and seeks to understand the complex interrelationships among those happenings (Stake, 1995). I observed what students did and said as they were given choice of interesting books and opportunity to work with peers in order to seek out connections

between these phenomena for students. Phenomenological studies such as this tend to look at data thematically to extract essence and meaning from the events that are observed by the researcher (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). With these ideas in mind, I strove to objectively observe participants and organize my observations into themes that best described the essential meaning of what I observed. The aim of this process was to understand the experience of choice and exposure to interesting books for these students as it impacted their engagement with reading.

In order to see these events genuinely, this type of study is best conducted in a natural setting or site where participants experience the issue under investigation (Creswell, 2013). This is why the summer literacy camp was an appropriate place to examine the experience of readers who struggle and are typically unengaged. This kind of research emphasizes placing the researcher in the natural setting of the investigation to objectively record what is happening and simultaneously examine the meaning of what is happening. The function of the researcher during data gathering is to maintain vigorous interpretation in order to thoroughly understand (Stake, 1995). Qualitative researchers are noninterventionists; they try to see what would have happened had they not been there. During fieldwork they try not to draw attention to themselves or their work (Stake, 1995). For this reason I was not teaching the mini-lessons or directing this portion of the reading camp. There were two certified teachers teaching with an instructional assistant present to support the students when needed. I was sitting close to the students with my field notebook objectively observing and taking notes. I was the main instrument of data collection and analysis in this study (Miles, et al., 2014).

This phenomenological case study essentially sought to understand shared experience from perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2013). I chose to conduct this research alongside the elementary students who struggled with reading and subsequently participated in reading interventions. I wanted to investigate the experiences of these students by looking at their reading activities through the lens of reading engagement. Well-collected qualitative data focus on ordinarily occurring events in natural settings in order to paint a picture of real life (Miles, et al., 1994). By observing these students while they participated in a reading camp at the school they attended, I was hopeful to obtain a realistic view of students' experience.

Qualitative research involves multiple methods of collecting data, so I used a variety of strategies to gather information (Creswell, 2013). I observed students' actions and conversations with friends to infer meaning to the essence of students' experience. I also used student self-reported data of their reading choices and descriptions of why they made those choices to help me better understand their interest, confidence and ultimately engagement in reading and follow-up activities. An additional method I used to collect data was to have students draw themselves reading and answer follow-up questions about their reading experience. I examined the DART (Appendix A) results to give me insight into students' confidence in their abilities with reading. This assessment was given as a pre and post assessments in order to examine any changes in students' self-perception in reading from the beginning to the end of the reading program. Using multiple methods to gather data enabled me to more holistically understand the issue of reading engagement as it related to interest, confidence, and social interaction (Stake, 1995). The intent of this phenomenological case study was to describe what struggling readers in elementary school have in common as they experienced choice of leveled text and to describe and interpret

the meaning of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). As a result, this was a within site case study focusing on the group of elementary students who participated in the Title I summer reading program.

Data Collection

The following table offers an overview of the methods of data collection that were used in this study and how each data set was connected to the particular goal of that measurement. For example, I observed self-perception using DART, my Field Note Journal, and the Reading Choice Data Sheet. I observed choice with my Field Note Journal and the Reading Choice Data Sheet. Finally, social collaboration was observed with the Field Note Journal and the Reading Choice Data Sheet.

Table 2

Methods of data collection

DART	Field Note Journal	Reading Choice Data Sheet
Self-Perception	Self-Perception	Self-Perception
	Choice	Choice
	Social Collaboration	Social Collaboration

Prior to the summer reading program I assessed every student who is participating in the research using *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011). I did this to determine students' independent reading levels so that I had the best chance of putting

them with high-interest texts at their level. Existing DIBELS accuracy and fluency progress monitoring data was recorded for each student who participated in this program. In addition to these two assessments, students were given a pre/post *Draw a Reader Test* (DART) (Appendix A) with an opportunity to describe the drawing. Lastly I kept extensive field notes as I observed participants in their natural learning environment.

The *Draw a Reader Test* (DART) (Appendix A) was used as an interview tool to gather information about students' perceptions of a good reader and their confidence about their own skills as readers. They were asked to draw a picture of themselves reading and were given an opportunity to describe how they felt about their reading skills. There were a couple of follow-up questions after students finish the drawing. These questions included: What is happening in the picture? What does the picture tell me about how you are feeling when you read? I came upon a version of this assessment in the book *Living the Questions* (Shagoury & Power, 2012). It was originally used in a summer science program with elementary children. The facilitators asked students to take the Draw a Scientist Test (DAST) and used this information to understand students' perceptions of scientists before and after the program. I adapted this assessment because of the open-ended nature of the questions and I liked the idea of students drawing a picture of their perceptions because they are often able to express more this way. The students took this test on the first and last days of the program. I used the assessment as an entry to a personal interview with each participant to probe with deeper questions about their confidence as a reader. This interview was recorded on my computer as I was taking brief notes about our conversations. I created an audio recording of these interviews because I was able to go back and listen to individual students and clarify the accuracy of my notes. By giving this assessment

at the beginning and at the end of the summer school program I was able to make observations about any changes students are able to articulate about their self-perception about reading.

Every time students picked a new book to read they filled out a self-report form with information that described what book they were choosing to read (including the level of book), the genre of the book (fiction or nonfiction), why they chose the book, and what literacy activity they chose after reading. This tool was called the Reading Choice Data Sheet (see Appendix B). This self-reporting tool gave me knowledge about what kind of choices students were making with their reading, and provided insight into how those choices might have impacted engagement in reading. For example, I expected to note students' preference of interactive or independent work along with what genres of books students preferred to read. Another pattern that I looked for with this tool was how often students were choosing to read books that were either below or above their reading level. This information helped me triangulate data in terms of choice and how it enhanced interest in reading and confidence as it related to engagement in reading.

I took extensive field notes about what students were doing and saying during the socially collaborative environment in the literacy enrichment portion of this reading camp. As I took notes, I divided my journal into observations and interpretations. I chose to structure my notes this way because by making observations of these behaviors I was guided to find connections between student reading choice, social interactive situations and reading engagement. The interpretation section in my journal ensured there was room for summaries, reflective passages, codes, and memos so that I could add my personal reflections as I collected data.

After I was done collecting data each day I "cooked" my notes (Shagoury & Power, 2012) by making interpretations about student behavior and code it "on-task" or "off-task" in the

section for my interpretations. Some examples of on-task behavior were: reading alone or with a friend, talking about what is being or was read, writing about what was read, and asking questions about what others are reading. Some examples of off-task behavior might be: talking off topic, playing or distracting other students, or other work-avoidant behavior. Categorizing these behaviors helped me explain student engagement with reading. I used further categorization in the journal such as “off-task/on-task, social” “off-task/on-task choice” and “off-task/on-task confidence” to put actions and conversations into sections that related to choice, social interaction, and confidence.

Miles (2014) describes the process of *jotting* as an analytic sticky note. Jotting was an opportunity for me to record my fleeting or emergent reflections as I collected data. Some examples of items that needed to be jotted were: my personal reactions to participants’ remarks or actions, mental notes about ideas to pursue further, elaboration or clarification of events or incidents, doubts about the quality of some of the data, or cross reference to material in another part of the data set. In order to keep these analytical sticky notes while I was collecting data, I had a ring of index cards with me at all times during my data collection. I used these cards to consistently reflect on my interpretation of the data.

I collected a variety of data to obtain rich and thorough descriptions of students’ experiences. In order to be sure that I was generating a comprehensive and accurate description of students’ experiences, I needed to ensure that my data collection was triangulated and was aligned with the main themes of my literature review. In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources of information to make sure they are getting the story right and collecting corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective

(Creswell, 2013). This process helped validate and increase confidence in my interpretation of the data (Stake, 1995). To triangulate my data, I first used the students' self-reported data sheet to measure choice as it relates to student engagement (see Appendix B). I cross-referenced the students' data sheets with my field notes to make observations about how engaged students were on a given day. This tool also shed light on student self-perception and how it related to engagement. I utilized the DART test (Appendix A) to illustrate student self-perception. Finally, my field note journal and audio-recorded DART interviews were tools to examine social collaboration and how it related to engagement in reading.

Data Analysis

The *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011) and the DIBELS data was used as baseline information only. This data informed what level of book students were choosing and enjoying, and it enabled me to compare students' reading choices with their independent reading levels. This baseline information was compiled into a grid called the Data Record Sheet (see Appendix C). This record sheet contained student fluency rate, accuracy level, and Benchmark independent reading levels for each student. I used this table as a reference point for how students with similar or diverse skillsets demonstrated engagement during this research. In addition to being able to make comparisons between students I used this baseline data to make observations about students who consistently chose to read books that were either above or below their independent reading level and study how that informed their self-perception as it related to reading engagement.

Student choice was measured on the Reading Choice Data Sheet (see Appendix B). These data helped me track what genre, level, and title of book students chose to read, along with

a student-generated explanation of why they made that choice. I wanted to analyze three pieces of data from this tool. The first data point was level of book choice. I counted the frequency of times students chose books that were above or below independent reading level to note consistent patterns or similarities in these data. Secondly, I am interested in the explanation students gave for their choices. To analyze this data set, I began with provisional coding, or “start list” of codes based on what I predicted may have been reasons for choice (Miles, et al., 2014). The category codes in this “start list” of reasons were: social, personal interest, and reading level. These codes were revised, modified, or expanded to include new codes as the data set expanded and informed my analysis efforts. After I assigned codes to student choice, I used pattern codes to help me identify emergent themes for student choice. I was looking for threads of similarity that tied these data together and further helped me define student choice as it impacted engagement (Miles, et al., 2014). The third data piece that was captured with this tool was frequency of time students chose to work independently vs. interactively. The chosen strategies were coded as interactive or independent. I counted frequency of times students chose activities that were socially interactive to note consistent patterns or similarities in this data and infer meaning of this choice as it related to engagement.

The *Draw a Reader Test* (DART) (Appendix A) was used as an interview tool to gather information about students’ perception of good reading and confidence about their own skills as a reader both at the beginning and the end of the study. Students were asked to draw a picture of themselves reading. There were two follow-up questions: Tell me about what is happening in the picture? What does the picture tell me about how you are feeling about your reading? The students took this test on the first and last days of summer camp and I used the assessment as an

entry to a personal interview with participants to clarify their response and probe with deeper questions about their confidence as a reader. Follow-up interviews were done with students when more information was needed to understand their answer. These interviews were recorded and referred to or listened to in order to guarantee a deep interpretation of student answers.

Data condensation is the process of selecting, simplifying and abstracting the data to make it more understandable and meaningful (Miles, et al., 2014). This was my first step to analyzing the data from the DART (Appendix A) interviews. I converted my interview notes into an expanded write up that was a clear and concise summary of the data. This made it easier for me to start the coding process. I used In Vivo coding by turning words or short phrases from the participants' own language in the data record into meaningful codes in the data. I then grouped the pattern of codes into a smaller number of categories by clustering similarities together (Miles et al., 2014). I examined the clusters or patterns of data that emerged from this interview to seek out essential themes that described the participants' experience to investigate ways that student self-perception interacted with engagement (Creswell, 2013).

My extensive field notes were used to gather information about what students were doing and saying throughout this socially interactive literacy enrichment. The journal had a section for my observations and for my interpretation of those behaviors. Part of my interpretation was to note if the behavior I observed is on-task or off-task. I counted the frequency of time students were engaged in on-task reading behavior. This initial piece of data helped me search for threads of related information that tied data together. Analysis of field notes and related student conversations started with narrative data condensation. I selected pertinent notes from my journal to simplify and abstract by writing a narrative summary of the data to make it more

understandable and meaningful (Miles, et al., 2014). This made it easier for me to start the coding process. As in my prior data set, I used In Vivo coding by looking for themes in student language to identify meaningful emerging patterns in the data. I then grouped these topics into small categories by clustering related themes together (Miles et al., 2014). I examined the themes that emerged from my field notes and transcriptions of student conversations to seek out essential patterns that described the experience of the participants. In this way I was able to examine ways that students' self-perception, social interaction, and choice interacted with reading engagement (Creswell, 2013).

After reading through my data in its entirety multiple times and coding my several data pieces with themes that described, classified and interpreted my data, I took a step back from my data and wrote a narrative description of my observations that captured the big ideas and trends I saw in my data. This helped me to determine categories or themes I could group information into. The categories I started with were: high confidence/low confidence actions, social interactions helpful/distracting, determination, and engagement or excitement to read. After creating these categories for my data I went back to the In Vivo coding I had done earlier and connected each word or phrase to a category that I thought it best represented. To further triangulate my data I correlated each code to behavior that I had designated on-task or off-task in order to realize relationships between engagement and choice, social interaction or self-perception. After analyzing my data in this way, I started to make assertions or things I knew *for sure* by observing trends and themes in my data.

Role of the Researcher

As the literacy specialist, I had multiple roles in this research. I was actively participating and leading this literacy camp every day. I knew these students personally and was touched by their personal struggles with reading on a daily basis. It should be noted that as I interpreted and analyzed data I pulled from a bank of knowledge of these students that helped me share their story. In many cases, the stories I was telling worked as comparisons between student behavior I had observed during the school year, and actions students were taking at our summer reading camp. According to Cameron (2012), the *whisper* of education is the courageous and persistent voice of the educator who attempts to engage in meaningful relationships with students in order to know them and affirm their value and purpose. I am the researcher who lived with that whisper. It is the reason I have chosen this research and it is the reason my perspective will be a part of the story. This is how I was able to expand the stories for some of these students beyond the data by including what I knew about them prior to this research. As I interacted with students, listened to their conversations, and observed them working, I am confident that my thoughts, intentions and hopes for their success influenced this research. I was not able to emotionally separate myself from the connection I already had with these students, nor would I desire to. It was because of my affection for them and my desire for their success that I was drawn to this research. It was my aspiration for the stories that come out of this research to be from the perspective of the students, clouded as little as possible by my own thoughts and biases. For this reason, I strove to maintain triangulation of data that painted a thorough and complete picture of students' reading engagement and experience. Miles (2014) states that the danger of patterning in data analysis is getting locked too quickly into naming a pattern. I believe this is

especially true if the pattern being named easily aligns with researcher bias. For these reasons I worked with loosely held chunks of meaning as I analyzed data and approached it with an open mind, consistently seeking multiple perspectives and use triangulation to raise potentially conflicting points of view on the data. I resolved these conflicts through careful analysis and explanation of the data.

Limitations

In this study I was aiming to observe how choice, social collaboration and access to literature at students' reading level related to student engagement in reading. One of the limitations of this study was that engagement is difficult to quantify. It could only be quantified by my personal interpretation of what I saw students doing and heard them saying to each other during this study. I was observing engagement by noting student on-task and off-task behavior as it related to their engagement in reading. For example, if students were engaged in close reading of a book, or talking about what they were reading with a friend, or writing about a book, I named that behavior on-task and determined that it demonstrated engagement. If however, students were not reading or were playing rather than working together on literacy projects, I determined that to be off-task behavior that indicated a lack of engagement. Additionally, the enthusiasm level and focus of conversations with other students shed light on their level of engagement. In addition to having difficulty quantifying engagement, I personally knew and worked with the students who were participating in this study, so I had some predetermined bias about their reactions to this environment. To address these limitations I had audit checks from the chair of this study and other adults who were involved in the summer program regularly in order to check my perspectives.

Another limitation to this study was the short time I had with students to collect data. It was not possible to have adequate pre/post data that demonstrated a real change in engagement from the beginning to the end of the program.

In addition to the short time for collecting data, I was seeking to tell the story of my students in their own words, but the participants in this study are young and lacked the ability to express introspective self-perception of themselves as readers. To address these limitations I used multiple tools to collect data and triangulated and crosschecked these data with each other. For example, students self-reported their self-perceptions as readers on the DART, I crosschecked these data with student recorded behavior in my field note journal. Another way I triangulated data was to compare the Reading Choice Data Sheet filled out by students with their observed behavior as recorded on my field note journal.

Research Ethics

The first responsible step I took as an ethical researcher was to gain permission from my school district to conduct this research on site (see Appendix D). This permission came with full disclosure of actions, intent and contents of the research I was conducting. In addition to permission from the district, I needed to gain informed consent from the families of the participants (see Appendix E). Because the students in this study are elementary-aged students, this involved informing their parents of the project so they fully understood what it meant to allow their children to participate in this study (see Appendix F). I submitted an IRB form to the Human Subjects Research Committee at George Fox University to obtain permission to conduct this research. In addition to full disclosure and obtaining permission, I maintained complete confidentiality for all the students who were included in this project through use of pseudonyms

and protecting the data. It is my ethical responsibility as a researcher to describe the experience of my students from their own perspective as honestly as possible, while protecting their identity.

Potential Contributions to the Field

Locally, this research could impact program design in the school and district in which I was employed and where this research took place. This district has a strong philosophy of teaching reading using direct instruction with skills-based curriculum. This is especially true when teaching reading intervention to struggling readers. I believe struggling readers need skills-based instruction to address deficits in reading achievement, but by not addressing engagement, I believe we could be missing an important aspect to literacy development. This research could impact next steps for focus in program design, curriculum choices and professional development in this district.

In a more global sense, the findings of this study can add to the body of research that indicate that students' interest in reading and confidence in oneself as a reader impact their dedication to reading and engagement and ultimately contribute to improved comprehension. It is important for educators to know how the experience of choice and reading at an independent level impact students' experience with engagement and confidence. By confirming whether or not engagement should be considered an important aspect of reading instruction, this research can potentially impact curriculum choice, professional development and instructional choices that teachers make in their reading classrooms. The findings from this study may also further support the idea from Engagement Theory that engaged reading refers to interaction with text that is simultaneously motivating and strategic and correlates with achievement in reading

comprehension. It may also support the idea that engagement should be considered as an essential component to an effective reading program.

Timeline for research

The following table lays out my timeline for this research from proposal defense to defense of my completed dissertation.

Table 3

Timeline for Proposal, Data Collection and Data Analysis

Dates	Actions
June 29-July 2, 2015	Meet with committee to obtain approval on proposal.
July 14, 2015	Send informational letter to superintendent of Tigard-Tualatin School District to gain approval to conduct research (see Appendix D).
July 14, 2015	Send Parent Information Letter (see Appendix E) to all families who are participating in the study.
July 21, 2015	Obtain permission slips from all participants.
July 21-August 20, 2015	Collect data during summer school.
September/October, 2015	Data Analysis
October 11-17, 2015	Submit data analysis chapter for revision.
November 1-7, 2015	Submit discussion chapter for revision.
November 20, 2015	Submit dissertation to committee.
December 1-5, 2015	Final defense of dissertation.

December 6-12, 2015

Revisions after defense meeting.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This qualitative research examined the nature of reading engagement for struggling elementary readers who participated in a summer school literacy program. While partaking of the activities in this literacy program, students had an opportunity to choose reading materials from an assortment of literature at their reading level. They were also allowed and encouraged to interact socially with their peers during literacy extension activities. Providing choice and social interaction was a different means of literacy instruction than these students had previously experienced; I wanted to see how this would impact their motivation and engagement in reading as well as their self-perception as readers. The goal of this phenomenological study was to explore the experience of these students in their own words and from their perspectives. By creating a less restrictive environment for reading and talking about reading, I was able to observe more authentic interactions between students and communicate with them about their experiences and perceptions.

A Typical Literacy Enrichment Day

As I walked into the room where the literacy events took place each day, I saw one of the teachers off to the side of the room sitting next to a student who was reading aloud, while the other teacher was standing near the book tubs discussing reading selections with another student. Normally these teachers would be standing in the front of the room or sitting around a table with students delivering direct instruction. But in this space, they were guides to the reading work students were choosing to do all around the room.

As I scanned the room I saw students clustered on the floor, in desks or around tubs of books. They were reading or chatting excitedly about what they wanted to read. Some of the participants on this day chose to read alone, others were reading in pairs. I heard partners chorally reading books aloud and an occasional giggle. Students were writing, drawing, or talking about what they were reading in every corner of the room. I did not see rows of desks and chairs facing the front of the room and quiet students looking in one direction waiting for instructions from the teacher. Rather, I saw a free-flowing dialogue of friends and colleagues connecting with literature and with each other in a natural and refreshing way. I observed the more confident students helping their friends sound out words and I heard conversations erupting from the pure enjoyment of a good book.

When students came into this classroom they quickly met as a group to talk about a literacy strategy focus for the day. These strategies included partner reading, individual reading, partner oral retells, interview with a partner, written retell, and draw a picture. Following a short meeting with the teacher, students would set about picking a book to read. After reading, students would choose an extension strategy from the prior listed strategies and share their book either in a written or oral format. While these interactions were happening, I did my best to observe and record what I saw and heard.

I specifically designed this literacy enrichment time this way because I wanted to know what students would choose to read and how they would go about making those reading choices. I was also curious about the level of engagement in reading that would be evident when allowing students to choose their own books. During this literacy program, students made multiple decisions: one key decision included whether they wanted to read alone or with a peer. I planned

the program this way because I wanted to know whether social interaction might impact interest in reading or task engagement. I also wanted to observe, interpret, and explain the experience of these students as it related to their self-perception as readers. The most powerful way I found to observe self-perception was by recording student language while reading or talking about reading. For example, at times I heard students make comments like, “I can’t read so I just pretend to read.” At other moments students would exclaim with pride, “I read the whole thing by myself!” I recorded these kinds of comments and interpreted their language as an expression of how students felt about their own reading ability. I wondered how choice and social interaction during reading time might be related to student confidence as well as to their engagement in reading. Specifically, this research enabled me to observe student autonomy as it related to engagement, to ascertain social collaboration as it related to engagement, and to study the relationships between engagement and students’ self-perception as readers.

This study sought to answer the following research question: *What happens when elementary students are offered choice with interesting and relevant text at their independent reading level within a socially interactive environment?* Sub-questions include: a) *What levels/genres of text do children choose to read?* and b) *How does this experience impact students’ self-reported confidence in their abilities as a reader?*

In short, the answers to my major question was that students obviously enjoyed having choice in their reading, were highly socially interactive in their reading, and had varying levels of self-perception as evident in what they did and said. In the following sections, I unpack the ways I conceptualized choice, social collaboration, and students’ self-perception in my analytic work.

Choice

When students made a book choice, they filled out the Reading Choice Data Sheet (Appendix B), which was a place for them to record their reading preferences. This tool allowed me to observe students' choice of fiction or non-fiction books and the level of book they were opting to read. The first data analysis step I took in the area of choice was to count the frequency of times students in each grade selected fiction vs. non-fiction text, and to ascertain whether the book was at, above, or below their independent reading level. As I was analyzing these data, I further delineated students' choices by grade level so I was able to compare how students at different levels made book choices. In addition to the Reading Choice Data Sheet, the observations I recorded in my Field Note Journal supported my understanding of students' choices.

I used my Field Note Journal to record observations about students' engagement level while reading and interacting with peers. Initially, I interpreted all of the observed actions as either "on-task" or "off-task" because as a teacher, reading specialist, and researcher, I value students' on-task behavior with reading and I was interested in observable actions that could be interpreted as potential engagement in reading. This enabled me to connect behavior with other signals of engagement that related to high interest in the text, such as students' obvious and intentional focus on a book, spontaneous book talk, reading aloud, choosing a new book, telling a partner about a book, helping a partner read, reading with another student, or asking a teacher for assistance. I used my field notes in this way because I hoped to ascertain whether higher levels of engagement in reading were connected to students' opportunity to choose their own

books. Additionally, the information that I gathered from the Draw a Reader Test (DART) (Appendix A) gave me insight into how student choice impacted engagement in reading.

The (DART) was another self-reporting tool that was administered as a pre and post assessment during this research. It provided an opportunity for students to express their experiences with reading. Students were instructed to draw a picture of themselves reading, and then describe the picture and explain the way it illustrated how they were feeling about reading. This assessment was initially meant to help me describe students' self-perception as readers. However, during the post assessment, the follow-up questions led to a more in-depth interview with many of the students. During this interview, I asked additional questions about how the students felt about having a choice of any book they wanted, or to describe how they went about choosing the books they ultimately decided to read. This concluding interview gave me additional insight about how choice was potentially connected to engagement in reading. The statements students made in this concluding interview clearly connected the constructs of choice and engagement; for example, students expressed appreciation about being "allowed" to read any book that looked interesting to them. These were also the books in which they were the most absorbed, as I explain further on in the chapter. Specifically students described their interest in animals or science and talked about enjoying access to books that were on a topic they wanted to know more about.

Social collaboration

Most of the data I collected in the area of social collaboration was in my Field Note Journal. When I observed student behavior, I noted whether students were working alone or with another person. I added detailed behavioral actions to my notes and as previously

mentioned, I labeled behavior as either on-task or off-task. After collecting these data, I returned to my field notes and coded my notes with several categories, which added another layer of depth to the on-task and off-task behavior I previously noted. I coded my notes across several categories, a process which I explain further on in this chapter. These categories were high/low confidence, social interactions, interest-based choices, determination, and engagement/excitement to read. I further coded all peer interactions as either “social interaction helpful” or “social interaction distracting” with the hope of making connections between high engagement in reading and helpful social interactions. I did this by connecting socially interactive behavior to either on-task or off-task behavior to assign meaning. Social interactions that led to on-task behaviors were coded as helpful and social interactions that distracted students and led to off-task behaviors were coded distracting social interactions. In addition to my field notes, I utilized the DART to shed further light on how social collaboration might be related to engagement in reading by looking closely at how students described their feelings about reading with others and asking probing questions about this factor in the personal interview.

As mentioned previously, The DART turned into an extended interview opportunity with students. We talked about more than just the pictures as we conversed about how students felt about themselves as readers. These pictures also indicated social aspects of reading. For example, students often described reading with a sibling or another family member, or they drew pictures of themselves reading with another person. When I asked students how they felt about reading, they often made comments about feeling better when reading with someone they knew. These kinds of comments indicated the importance of social interaction in reading and helped me ascertain the nature of students’ reading experiences. In the post DART assessment and

interview, I asked many students if they preferred reading alone or with someone else. As I read this information and collated my data, I looked for common threads and gleaned information about how social collaboration might be connected to engagement in reading.

Self-perception

Part of this research was designed to describe how this summer literacy experience might have impacted students' self-reported confidence in their abilities as readers. This particular aspect of the study was the most difficult to observe, interpret and describe, but I had measurements in place that were meant to help me recognize trends in student confidence. The first tool I anticipated would give me insight into self-perception was the DART because it required students to draw a picture of themselves reading and use words to describe what was happening in the picture and how they felt about reading. This assessment by itself was difficult to analyze because students usually made limited comments such as, "I feel good." I attempted to ask follow-up questions that would encourage students to use more words to describe their emotional response to reading. What students often provided was an extended description of their reading events, such as the book, location, events of story, etc. Although students provided some information about their self-perception in the DART, my field notes offered me additional insight into how students were feeling about their reading. This was because as I was observing student behaviors, I made notes of not only the actions that students took during our literacy program, but also the words they spoke. When I was recording language, I did my best to record it in students' exact words to ensure that I was sharing this experience from their perspectives. I heard students saying things like, "I can't read," or "I am a good reader!" I also saw students exhibiting behavior like helping peers with reading or avoiding reading. These kinds of

observations indicated students' confidence or lack of confidence related to reading activities. After I recorded these data, I coded them with "high confidence" and "low confidence" in order to make connections between students' reading behaviors or language and their self-perception.

Coding and correlation of data

In this section I describe the steps I took to code my notes and connect evident trends in order to analyze and make meaning of my data. This process began with "cooking my notes" (Shagoury & Power, 2012) frequently during my research. I did this by returning to my journal each day to making interpretations and code student behaviors and language as either on-task or off-task. I counted both on-task and off-task behaviors in order to make connections between reading behavior and levels of engagement in reading. I then determined what percentage of behaviors I witnessed in each grade level that I interpreted to be aligned with engagement in reading. When I say behavior that was aligned with engagement in reading, I mean behavior that was defined as on-task because I assumed that students who were on-task were more engaged in reading. My next step of analysis was in the area of choice.

To look deeper at student choice, I analyzed the Reading Choice Data Sheet. I counted the frequency of times students in every grade level chose to read fiction or non-fiction books. I also explored what level of books students chose to read. I knew the independent reading level for each student based on the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment and I decided that if a student was choosing books within two levels of their independent reading level, they were choosing a book at their "just right" level. This means they could read the book they chose with a high level of accuracy and understanding. If students chose to read a book that was two or more levels above/below their reading level, I recorded that as choosing above/below level. I

categorized book choice by either above reading level or at/below reading level. I determined what percentage of time students chose to read books above their reading level in each grade. I did this to see if there was a connection between wise book choices and an indicated positive self-perception. I wondered whether students who exhibited high confidence actions in other areas of my data might also challenge themselves with book choices that were above their reading level. After counting student choice, I coded the notes in my Field Note Journal.

To analyze my field notes, I read through my notes multiple times and wrote several narrative memos along the way to synthesize my grasp on the entirety of my data. From those memos, I looked for trends and common themes to emerge in my data. I assigned statements that I thought were *big idea* summaries of what I saw and created categories for my data. I determined there were five big categories evident across my data. Those categories were, (a) high confidence/low confidence (hc/lc), (b) social interaction helpful/social interaction distracting (sih, sid), (c) interest based choices (ibc), (d) determination (d), and (e) engagement/excitement to read (eer). Once I identified these major categories, I went back through my data again, this time using in vivo coding, using words or phrases spoken by the students and partial sentences that described student actions that were indicative of the categories. After this second round of coding, I wanted to connect student behavior and language in the data with engagement in reading so I started working on making connections with these codes and my on-task and off-task behavior.

I then crosschecked every piece of data with all others in order to see the relationships between them and make interpretations within the patterns I saw in the research. For example, I looked for confirmation that interest-based choice might connect with engagement and

excitement to read or that on-task behavior and determination might be connected with high confidence actions. This was the analytical process I took in order to find connections between information in my data to answer my research questions and describe the experience of my participants.

After crosschecking each segment of my data to make connections between reading behaviors, I again wrote narrative memos to summarize and interpret each theme. I also created tables to present data best explained visually. After reading my memos several times and closely analyzing my tables, I looked for the emergence of themes or statements that I *knew for sure* by reading through my data again. I then wrote several assertions that could be supported with the entirety of my observations. I composed vignettes as another analytic step, which were representative narratives of the assertions. I chose vignettes to tell these stories because they capture significant moments (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) and were the best way to explain students' experiences from their own perspectives. After each vignette, I used tables to explain data when a visual representation was most appropriate and poetic display when tables did not work as well. When using poetic display, I arranged carefully-selected portions of qualitative data into poetic structures (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) in a way that could represent and evoke human experiences by extracting significant and meaningful in vivo words and phrases from the text. I finished each assertion with narrative descriptions to explain the data in support of its related assertion.

The major findings of this research include four assertions that describe the students experience in this summer literacy camp. They are (a) Offering choice to students in a socially interactive environment contributed to a high quantity and quality of student on-task reading

behaviors. (b) Students who exhibited “low confidence” behaviors also had more off-task incidents. (c) First and second-grade students made substantially more choices at or above their reading levels than students in third through fifth grades did. (d) In an environment where students could choose books based on their interests, students indicated determined reading behavior, even when they chose books above their reading levels.

Findings

Assertion 1: Offering choice to students in a socially interactive environment contributed to a high quantity and quality of student on-task reading behaviors.

Ronan and Max are both entering second grade and have been participating in the Title I reading program for two years, indicating high reading needs for both boys. Max reads about 24 words per minute on average with 92% accuracy and is a level E (first grade) in the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. Ronan reads approximately 20 words per minute with an average of 74% accuracy and scored as a level D (beginning of first grade) in the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. Although their skills are similar, Max is a little stronger as a reader and has more confidence than Ronan. Together they decided to read a book about dinosaurs, which was a level G (end of first grade). Max started reading until he came to the word “mammoth.”

“What is a mammoth?” asked Max.

Ronan took a minute to look at the picture closely and replied, “mammoths are animals that lived a long time ago.” The discourse continued as these boys struggled through sounding out words. Their persistence and conversation indicated they were completely engaged in looking at pictures and reading together.

“Wait! Go back! I think I know what that animal is,” Ronan declared as Max continued to read the book. “That is a saber-tooth tiger, I have seen one before.” Ronan continued to try to read the words until he encountered the words saber-tooth cat, which he slowly read and repeated a couple of times before he was sure that he read it correctly.

Max exclaimed, “you were right, it is a saber-tooth!”

This vignette is just one of many examples of engaged reading behaviors and positive social interactions I observed during this study. It is significant that these interactions took place in an environment in which students were offered choice of reading material and the opportunity to share their experiences with other students in the room. Prior to this research, many of these students had not been exposed to an opportunity to choose their own book and share it freely with a friend.

For example, on one day I observed two students who had been described by several teachers on different occasions as “unmotivated” or “distracted” reading a book together. Both of these second grade boys were English language learners (ELLs) who were reading at least one year below grade level according to their fluency and accuracy scores as measured by DIBELS. Because of their language difficulties and possible lack of confidence in their reading abilities, these boys often did not fully participate during typical reading instruction. In fact, they were both experts at avoiding the challenge of reading. On the day I observed this partnership, I saw something very different from the typical descriptors for these two. They were sitting next to each other with a book open between them, chorally reading and taking time to stop and giggle together when the story was funny. When they came to a word that was difficult for them to read, they collaboratively worked to figure it out. I heard one of the boys say to his friend, “let’s read

this page together.” They chorally read the remainder of the page together until they got to the words *fat cat*. They glanced at each other and burst into laughter at this portion of the story. I wondered if the freedom for these boys to read a book at their own pace, without the stress of trying to keep up with the rest of the class in a book that was too difficult for them allowed them an opportunity to have success on this day. Perhaps knowing that they did not have to do it alone, but rather could share the task of reading with another student who could help when it got difficult gave them the confidence to take a risk and read this book. Whatever the reason, it was evident that on this day, these “distractible” students were both extremely engaged during reading.

As I observed students reading and working with others in literacy extension activities, I began my analysis by assigning categories to their behavior. I defined all student behavior and language as either on-task or off-task and made interpretations about what was impacting their behavior. In counting reading interactions this way, I observed 102 behaviors that I categorized as on-task and only 23 examples of behaviors that I called off-task. Some examples of behaviors that I considered on-task were focusing on a book, reading aloud, helping a partner read, or talking about a book. Conversely, I considered that students talking about something other than a book, playing, or avoiding reading as off-task behavior. After counting these kinds of behaviors, I noted that this equated to 82% on-task behavior and 18% off-task behavior. An important indicator in this research was to observe what happened for students when they were offered unrestricted choice of reading material and a collaborative environment for reading. The percentage of student engagement I saw during reading time indicated to me that these factors had a positive influence on student engagement.

In addition to assigning student language and behavior to categories of on-task or off-task categories, I hypothesized what aspect of my research question might be having the greatest impact on observed levels of student engagement. For example, if I determined two students who were helping each other read were exhibiting on-task behavior, I would also code that behavior as “social interaction helpful,” thus determining social collaboration was a contributing factor to the behavior. In another example, if I observed a student who was deeply engaged in reading a book who spontaneously declared, “Look at that!” was exhibiting on-task behavior; I would also determine that choice was a contributing factor to that behavior. As I observed engaged reading, I assigned a possible meaning to those behaviors. Based on what I perceived in my research, I wondered whether it was choice, social interaction, or self-perception that played a role in keeping students engaged. It is important to note that assigning a motivation or meaning to engaged reading behavior was a significant interpretive move and I knew I was taking some risk to do this. But I felt it was important to the synthesis of my data to ascertain the meaning of the actions I was observing from my students. For example, on one day I encountered a student who was reading a book that was several levels below his reading level. I asked him if he was going to record the book as one of his choices and he replied, “No, I was only reading this for fun, I don’t want it on my choice sheet because it is too easy.” He made another book choice at his reading level and recorded it on his sheet. I felt certain that in this instance, self-perception was impacting this student’s reading behavior because he was embarrassed to have me see a book that he considered too easy listed on his choice sheet. This is just one story, but it illustrates the way I searched for trends across the entirety of my data and

assigned meaning to smaller pieces of information in order to categorize and look for connections between behaviors and reading engagement.

The following tables summarize the on-task and off-task behaviors I observed during this research. It is important to note that the majority of observations I made were of students who were engaged in reading (82%), but I further broke down those observations by describing the specific behavior I saw taking place.

Table 4

Summary of on-task Behavior

<u>On-task behavior</u>	<u>Frequency of Action</u>
Intentional focus on book	24 (23.5% of on-task)
Spontaneous book talk	7 (6.8% of on-task)
Read aloud/sound out words	15 (14.7% of on-task)
Choosing a new book	4 (3.9% of on-task)
Tell a partner about book	18 (17.6% of on-task)
Help partner with reading	5 (4.9% of on-task)
Partner reading together	17 (16.6% of on-task)
Teacher assistance	7 (6.8% of on-task)

Table 5

Summary of off-task Behavior

<u>Off-task behavior</u>	<u>Frequency of Action</u>
Saying "I/we can't"	2 (8.7% of off-task)
Playing/other conversations	4 (17.3% of off-task)

Delay reading by staring or wandering	8 (34.7% of off-task)
Explaining/excusing reading choice	3 (13% of off-task)
Flipping/counting pages in book	4 (17.3% of off-task)
Needing teacher prompt	1 (4.3% of off-task)
Switching books quickly	1 (4.3% of off-task)

The most frequent on-task action I observed was students who were intentionally focused on the book they were reading. This was evidenced in behavior such as students having their finger under the words and their eyes on the page. As I made these observations, I assigned a hypothetical reason for engagement. With intentional focus on the book students were reading I thought maybe they were focused because they were interested in the topic they chose to read, so I coded that example of engaged reading as resulting from their ability to choose their book. In the event that a student was talking to a partner about a book or helping a partner with reading, I assumed that the socially interactive environment was increasing engagement for those students, so I ascribed “social collaboration” to that student behavior.

I differentiated spontaneous book talk from telling a partner about book because of the context of each. In the case of spontaneous book talk, a student would obviously be very engaged in the topic of the book they were reading and might exclaim at times to no one in particular, “Look at this! Wow, this is a cool book!” I coded this activity as “choice” because I interpreted it as excitement about the content of the book they had chosen. But telling a partner about a book was more of a socially collaborative literacy activity. After reading a book a student could find a partner to retell the story to or interview about their book. Because this was

an activity that required deliberate seeking out of another person to interact with, I coded this behavior as “socially interactive helpful.”

With off-task behavior, I noticed some student conversations that were not about the reading. I initially coded these conversations as social interactions distracting (sid) so I predicted that some social interactions may increase off-task behavior and were therefore coded as a possible motivation for being off-task. Self-perception was something that I coded in connection to off-task behavior because when I heard students saying, “I can’t read” or I saw them creating delays to avoid reading; I connected that to a lack of confidence in reading ability. I therefore coded these kinds of activities as a lack of self-perception as a possible reason for students to exhibit un-engaged behavior. It is important again to note that the portion of my data that was coded as a possible motivation for the behavior is my best interpretation of student actions.

After an analysis of student behavior that illustrated engagement in reading, I noted evidence that this environment of offering book choice in a socially collaborative classroom generally contributed to a positive experience for these students. This is evidenced, first of all, in the 82% of on-task behavior that was observed. Additionally the vignette and subsequent stories of student reading engagement offered multiple examples of students whose experiences were enhanced by this environment. This was not true for all students, however; in the following assertion and vignette, I explain the relationship between students’ lack of confidence and their reading behaviors.

Assertion 2: Students who exhibited “low confidence” behaviors also had more off-task incidents.

Lori was a first-grade student who is one of the higher-level readers in her group. After administering the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment with her, I determined she was at a reading level C, which was beginning of first grade. Although her skill was right at her grade level, her confidence did not match her abilities, as indicated by an exchange I witnessed several days into summer school.

Lori and Steve were working together to pick a book for their partner reading time. After they chose a book, they moved about the classroom several times before they found the place they were comfortable sitting.

“I really don’t know how to read,” exclaimed Lori, “so I am just going to look at the pictures.” She quickly flipped through the pages while Steve watched. At one point he tried to look more closely at the book, but Lori would not let him, she wanted to be done quickly.

When she found the last page, she threw the book down and said, “Done!” She was off to choose another book, distracting a few other students with conversation on the way.

On another day I observed Lori sitting with a book that was near her reading level. She was trying to read it aloud. She struggled with a couple of words and gave up quickly to choose another book.

Lori looked at her new book for several seconds and then decided to choose another. When she started to trade for a third book, I intervened and asked her if she was ready to read.

“No, it is too hard for me!”

“Can we read it together?” I asked her.

“Nope! It is too hard!”

I offered to help her read it, “We can read it together, and I will even read it to you.” I suggested.

Lori refused one more time and chose another book. This time she sat down and tried again to read it aloud. After a couple of attempts, she threw her head back and exclaimed, “Aaah! I cannot read this!”

I observed Lori on several other occasions displaying off-task behavior similar to that described in the vignette. During one observation, I witnessed her wandering around the room for a prolonged period of time with a book in her hand. On another day, she was going to draw a picture from her story; she sat down to start and quickly put her head on the table and sighed, “Oh man, I can’t draw this!” She then erased what she had started. On many occasions, she was unable to persevere in reading when it became even a little bit difficult.

Lori’s DART and follow-up interview further shed light on what I interpreted to be a lack of confidence in her reading experiences. When I asked her to describe the picture she drew of herself reading she said she was reading at the park. After further probing, I learned that Lori was not describing a real memory of reading, but had rather imagined reading at the park. I asked her if she read at home and she replied, “I don’t do it, I don’t read too much at home.” This conversation was in contrast to many other students who were able to describe real events in which they were enjoying a book at home. This interaction with Lori left me wondering about her lack of successful and enjoyable experiences with reading and subsequent self-perception of herself as a reader.

If I told Lori’s story with just one example, it would be a stretch for me to assign a code of “low-confidence” to her actions. This is because there could be many other explanations for

her behavior. For example, she could be showing off for attention, distracted by other things in her life, tired, or just having an off day. But as I observed her over time in the context of an environment in which many other students with lesser reading abilities were engaged and excited about reading and were determined to challenge themselves, I began to wonder about her self-perception. Lori was one of several students who indicated off-task behaviors consistently throughout the summer school program, which I interpreted as demonstrating low confidence in herself as a reader.

On another day, Billy was perusing an interesting book. He took some time to look at the pictures and flipped to the end of the book to count how many pages he was going to have to read. He expressed frustration about how difficult it would be to read this book. Rather than attempting to read he returned the book to the tub with disappointment. I wondered what inhibited his ability to give a book that he was interested in a try. When I asked him why he chose this book, he admitted he knew it was going to be good because someone had read it to him before and he had seen the movie. But he decided it was too difficult for him to read.

Instead, he chose a book at his reading level. I asked him how he felt when he was reading a book at his level, he declared, "Horrible, because I am a level G and I want to read higher levels." Billy did not have an opportunity to read that day because he spent his time counting pages in a book that he thought was going to be difficult and perusing the book tubs for a book he might be able to read. I considered his behavior off-task because although he was not bothering anyone else, he was not engaged in reading. In addition, I coded this interaction as "low confidence" because in Billy's own words he said he felt "horrible" about his reading level.

There were other students who exhibited off-task behavior that may have been an indicator of low confidence.

This assertion refers to students who exhibited off-task behavior that might be related to low confidence. Hannah was a fourth grade student who was reading at level N (beginning of third grade) according to the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment and has participated in a Title I reading intervention for several years. At first I did not equate Hannah's behavior as off-task because she was reading every day, but after talking to her more about reading I perceived a connection between her reading choices and confidence. As I observed Hannah's book and literacy extension choices, I noticed that she consistently chose books that were several levels below her independent reading level. Although this may not have been considered an off-task action, it was behavior that I noted might be connected to low confidence. This was especially significant because Hannah's independent reading level was a full year behind her current grade and she was choosing books even lower than her level. She seemed to prefer books that were approximately middle of second grade. Hannah also preferred to read with a partner whenever possible. These two indicators by themselves may not lead a person to say Hannah struggled with her self-perception as a reader because there may be a variety of reasons for Hannah to make these choices. However, on several occasions I had the opportunity to talk to Hannah about her reading, the conversations we had shed further light on her reading experiences.

One day I sat next to Hannah and asked her to tell me about her DART. She started to describe the picture she drew of herself reading. She said she was reading her favorite series, *Dear Dumb Diary* in a chair in her room. She chose this series because she saw the movie first

so it was easier for her to make sense of the book. From this story Hannah began to describe her difficulty with reading and some of the strategies she had tried to employ in order to gain ground in her abilities. She mentioned that she asked her mom what she did when she was reading to help her understand the book. Her mom shared with Hannah that she would imagine herself as the main character of the book and it would help her understand what was happening in the story. Hannah confessed that she had tried this strategy and it was helping her with reading. I began to ask deeper questions about the DART to help me ascertain how she felt about herself as a reader. These questions led her to another personal story.

She recounted a time when she was reading with another teacher with whom she confessed that reading to her dad made her very nervous because she felt he rushed her when she was reading. This teacher told Hannah she could read to her cat because her cat could not talk so she could not rush her. Hannah also liked this idea. I asked her to tell me more about feeling nervous when she was reading. She responded with, "I am doing my best to read to my dad and he tells me to be more fluent. I feel rushed, when I get stuck on a word and try to sound it out I will say half of the word and then he finishes it for me. I want to figure it out myself." I asked Hannah to describe the feeling of being rushed when she was reading. She said, "It feels like my head is getting really tight and I want to say the words in my head, but I can't and I don't want to hurt my dad's feelings."

To contrast this experience of feeling nervous, rushed, and inadequate when she was reading, I asked Hannah to describe a time to me when she did not feel her head tighten up with anxiety when reading. She mentioned that she has some easy books to read at home that she likes to practice with. She described that when a book is really easy she can take her time and

read it correctly. I asked her how she felt when she was reading the easy books and she described feeling more fluent. Hannah said, “I feel happy for myself when I can read a book that is easy for me because I can read more fluently.”

It should be noted that the curriculum, assessments, and interventions in the program that Hannah has been participating in are driven by DIBELS; which is an assessment that focuses on fluency and accuracy and offers grade level benchmarks for expectations. Another crucial observation is that Hannah reads well below the benchmark for her grade level but is still offered the same grade level text as her peers in the core reading program. While she is experiencing frustration in reading because it is difficult for her, the message she hears repeatedly is “read more fluently.” Hannah is a hard-working student who has been behind for some time and she has expressed in her own words that her struggle causes her anxiety. There is ample evidence in Hannah’s story that her experience with reading has influenced her self-confidence and therefore her subsequent reading behavior. Although I do not blame her for the choice, in my perspective, consistently choosing books below her reading level is connected to off-task behavior for Hannah because it inhibits her from being able to take the necessary risk to attack a new book and challenge her skills in reading.

These stories offer evidence that low self-perception as a reader might contribute to lack of engagement and determination in reading. In the previous paragraphs I shared in detail the stories of several students who displayed off-task behavior that I perceived to be connected to low self-perception. I could have labeled these students as low-confidence participants, but I did not do that because I observed some of them on other days displaying dedication and engagement in reading. I was however, analyzing data to observe the emergence of trends and

themes that could explain the experience of the students in this study. When I observed off-task behavior it was often connected to low confidence during the reading time. In order to best share the stories of the students who displayed that behavior, I have chosen portions of the data to share in a variant structure of poetry that describes what I heard and saw. I chose to do this in order to illuminate the perspective of the participants in their own words. The following poetic display illustrates the trends that emerged in the data in terms of off-task behaviors and words, phrases or statements made by students that I perceived to highlight how self-perception could relate to off-task behavior and potentially cloud engagement in reading.

Time to read, off-task and low confidence

“Time to read,” the teacher says.

Can I put this off? Hey, do you want to play?

“Time to read.”

I forgot my glasses. I need to go to the bathroom.

“Time to read.”

How many pages is this book? I’ll just pretend.

“Time to read.”

Maybe a partner could help me? I’ll choose another book.

“Time to read.”

This is frustrating. My head is tight. I don’t like reading. Head down.

“Time to read.”

“I can’t”

This poem is composed with the words and actions of the students who participated in this summer literacy camp. I interpreted these language and behaviors as both low confidence and off-task because it inhibited students' engagement in reading.

During the post DART assessment, I was able to use the extension questions to talk to many students about the choices they were offered during our literacy extension portion of the summer camp. In many of the follow-up interviews I asked participants how they felt about the choice of reading materials that had been offered to them. I also asked them to describe how they made reading choices. Many students described their book choice as a level choice. They expressed that they always started with the tub that had their reading level in it and went down one or two levels from there. In fact, most of the students who described choice in terms of level confessed that they would not choose any book that was higher than their level because it would be too difficult for them to read.

After these conversations I wondered if students were limiting their book choices to reading level on some occasions because of low confidence. I considered other possibilities as well. It is possible that the students felt they needed to make choices this way because their teachers placed an emphasis on the importance of choosing to read a book at the appropriate reading level. The culture of the learning environment at this summer literacy camp reinforced this belief so students may have responded accordingly. This assertion however is more about connecting student off-task behavior with low confidence behavior.

There was evidence expressed in the stories of Lori and Billy who manifested consistent behavior that was both off-task and "low confidence" that there could be a connection between student low self-perception and off-task behavior. Hannah's story was different because at first I

did not equate her behavior to off-task, but after further investigation I perceived that her experience had impacted her confidence. Additionally, Hannah's consistent choice of books below her reading level could be called off-task because she was not presenting as a reader who was challenging herself with books at her reading level. All of these students were limited in their ability to enjoy reading time, receive help, participate in a literacy experience, or see themselves as fluent readers because of their low confidence.

Assertion 3: First and second grade students made substantially more reading choices at or above their independent reading levels than students in third through fifth grades did.

Brady was a second-grade student who chose to read a book that was a level P from the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment (beginning of grade four) even though his reading level was G (end of grade one). This drew my attention because he chose to read a book that was several levels above his independent reading level.

He was working independently with his eyes fixed on the book and his fingers under the words. I could see his lips moving and heard small sounds coming from his mouth as he worked to read this book.

After I observed him for a couple of minutes, I asked him why he chose this book, which was about extinct animals. He confessed that he was very interested in learning about these animals that were no longer on the earth. He was able to tell me several of the main ideas in the book he had read thus far indicating that although this book was difficult for him, he was able to read for some meaning.

He was so interested that when he ran out of time at the end of the session he asked for a sticky note to save his spot in the book.

He said to me, "Tomorrow I will learn more about animals that lived a long time ago."

Brady chose this book based on his interest level rather than the difficulty of the text. His interest was high enough to drive him to take the risk to try reading the book.

One of the sub-questions to this research was, *what levels/genres of text do children choose to read?* In order to address this question, I analyzed the Reading Choice Data Sheet and tallied fiction or non-fiction choices, along with students' level choices. I determined that students were reading at their independent reading level if they were choosing books that were within two levels (above or below) their Fountas & Pinnell reading level. The following table explains the difference between grade level choices in reading.

Table 6

Summary of students' reading choices

Grade level	Fiction	Non-fiction	On/below level	Above level
First grade	55%	45%	35%	65%
Second grade	56%	44%	44%	55%
Third grade	53%	47%	86%	14%
Fourth/Fifth grade	48%	52%	95%	5%

As I observed the data on this table, I noticed that there was not a great variance across the grade levels in student choice when it came to fiction or non-fiction text. It seemed that at every grade level students were choosing both almost equally. Fiction was chosen slightly more often than non-fiction in first, second and third grades. Fourth and fifth-grade students preferred non-fiction books, but only by a small percentage. The greatest variance in grade level data appeared when I examined book choices as they related to reading level.

These data indicate that first and second-grade students in this research seemed to make their reading choices more by interest than reading level. My follow-up interviews with the DART further confirmed this idea. When I asked these first and second-grade students how they chose books to read, they more frequently stated that they looked for what interested them and chose to read it. I asked if they thought knowing their reading level was helpful to them for making a book choice, most of them said, “No, I choose what I like.” One student said, “If it is too hard for me, I just try to read it anyway.” Several of my second-grade students expressed a desire to choose books that were higher than their reading level so they could challenge themselves to become better readers. In contrast, when I looked at the third, fourth and fifth grade choice data I saw a drastically different trend.

For students in third grade and above, the majority of them would not choose to read a book that was above their reading level. In fact, after talking to them in more depth and observing their behavior, I found that the older students did not even look into tubs with books above their level to see if there was something that interested them. Instead, they would start at their reading level tub and go down levels to find books to read. This was not universally true for all third through fifth-grade students. I observed some encouraging evidence of a few students who had previously been very difficult to motivate who chose to read books above their reading level and showed determination based on interest. But as an overall trend, the participants in third, fourth and fifth grades seemed more limited by the knowledge of their reading level than their younger peers. When I asked these students how they made book choices, they frequently mentioned starting at their book level tub. Several students stated, “I do not choose a book from a higher level because I think it will be too hard for me.”

As I contemplated why these students might be making their literacy choices by reading levels, I thought of a couple of possibilities. First of all, this was the first time in most students' schooling experiences that they had been informed of their reading levels and offered choice of books at those levels. Since choice was a new idea for these students, choosing by reading level was perhaps the only strategy they knew to employ that would ensure reading success and enjoyment.

Another possible reason was the length of time these students had been encountering school as struggling readers. Many of the third through fifth grade students have been behind their peers in reading for several years and have experienced reading frustration. With a longer history of reading disappointment than their first and second-grade counterparts, these students might be more likely to avoid repeating failure. In this scenario, there is evidence that students' self-perception may have been impacted by these experiences. A history of low levels of success may have potentially driven students away from taking risks and challenging themselves with new reading experiences. These students expressed this to me in their own language when they said things like, "I will not choose a book higher than my level, because it will be too hard."

Additionally, these students were being exposed to more and more academic text during the core-reading program. Their behavior in choosing books indicated that they might have appreciated the opportunity to spend some time in the picture books they enjoyed as younger readers. Possibly they considered it a nice break to be engaged in a book that they did not have to work too hard to read. In this way, their experience was potentially enriched by pure enjoyment of a good book rather than the "work" of reading.

As I mentioned earlier, these students have had very little exposure to being offered choice in reading and therefore may have lacked additional strategies to choose a good book beyond using their reading level. Only one student in this study described a strategy she used to choose a book. She indicated that if she chose a book, she would read the first page and if she made more than five mistakes she determined that book would be too difficult for her so she would put it back and choose another book. I wonder if students were using reading level as an exclusive strategy to make a good book choice because it was the only strategy they knew could help them to read a book that was enjoyable rather than too difficult. With coaching, and a bank of solid book choice strategies, these students could be taught to become more independent with their reading choices.

Assertion 4: In an environment where students could choose books based on their interests, students indicated determined reading behavior, even when they chose books above their reading levels.

David is a second grade student who reads at level G (end of first grade) according to the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. He chose to read a nonfiction book at level O (end of third grade) about ticks, bedbugs and other insects. He was reading independently, and his enthusiasm for this book was so contagious I could not help but be drawn into his literacy experience.

“You must look at this, you must see this!” he excitedly reported

As I joined him he struggled to read to me that ticks think human blood tastes good, “I did not know that!” he declared.

David continued to plod through this book with great interest, enthusiasm, and dedication. I know this because his eyes were glued to the page, his finger followed the text closely as he read, and his mouth was moving carefully to sound out each word.

As he finished the last page, he looked at me and said, "These are dangerous to you!"

I have worked closely with this student for two years, he is a demonstrative little boy, but I had not seen this level of excitement and engagement from him in reading. In fact, I had heard teachers frequently complain that he was distractible and off-task. As an intervention team, we were concerned about his progress in reading. Because of this concern, we implemented additional tight interventions for him with hopes of catching him up with his grade-level peers. We believed multiple readings of a familiar text would help David catch up, so he did this several times a day. Unfortunately, we did not consider offering book choice to David as a possible motivation to help him engage in reading.

In this interaction, David's behavior indicated that when he was able to choose a book he was interested in, he demonstrated high levels of determination to read, even when the book was above his independent reading level. When given the opportunity to choose a book based on his interest, David was able to manifest the persistence in reading we had been hoping to see.

Molly was another student who exhibited new tenacity to read during this summer literacy camp. Molly was a third-grade student who read level H (end of first grade) according to the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, but on the day I observed her, she chose to read a book about dolphins, that was a level K (middle of second grade), because she thought it "looked cool."

As I sat down next to her I saw her intently focused on her book and I could hear her slowly reading aloud. She continued to labor through this book, occasionally asking me to help her with difficult words, until our reading time ended.

When it was time to clean up, she showed me that she was a level H and she was reading a level K book. I asked her how she felt about her reading today and she exclaimed, “good!” She asked for a sticky note so she could return to her book the next day.

When teachers described their concern for Molly, I most commonly heard that she was not motivated, she did not work hard, and she did not try. Although attempts were made to offer Molly opportunities to practice reading, we had little success closing the achievement gap between her and her grade-level peers. During the school year, she attended two interventions each day in which she was pre-taught and re-taught the stories she would read with other students in the core-reading program. Although we increased Molly’s exposure to grade level text, we did not see improvement in her motivation to read or engaged reading behavior. But in summer school, when provided with the opportunity to choose her own book, Molly displayed a new perseverance in reading. Molly and David’s reading behaviors are two examples of how students comported themselves, generally.

For example, Thomas opted for a nonfiction book called *From the Earth*. He told me he chose it because he saw they were using wood to build things and he wanted to learn to build a house someday. He was a first-grade student who read independently at level C (beginning of first grade) and this book was a level J (middle of second grade). He was very focused on this book and read it from cover to cover. This was another example of a student persistently accomplishing reading, even when it was difficult because of interest in the text.

One day I sidled up next to Andrea and asked her questions about her experience as a reader. Her first statement was that she did not like reading because her grandmother made her read books that she did not like. She further explained, “When I get to choose, I don’t feel as mad about reading, but my grandma always chooses for me. I want to read something that I CAN read. She chooses books that I can only read one or two words on a page. I would pick Elephant and Piggy because they are funny.” Andrea was expressing her frustration about not being able to choose the books she wanted to read. In her frustration, she even stated that she did not like reading. This conversation illustrates from a student’s perspective how important it is to allow students opportunities to choose their own reading material.

As I recorded examples of students who chose books above their reading level and displayed determination in my field notes, I noticed that determined behavior showed up in the same stories that also illuminated high confidence and engagement/excitement to read. Because there was overlap between these three categories, it was important for me to further define each one as I assigned codes to each behavior. I coded actions that illustrated perseverance as “determination.” This code specifically came up when I noted students were doing or saying something that helped them to overcome difficulty with reading. When I coded behaviors “engagement/excitement to read” I noted behavior that depicted students engulfed in their reading. Some examples of this might be following the words on a page with their finger, reading aloud, or laughing when the book got funny. It was easy to see that there could be some behaviors that were in this category that could also be called “determination.” I differentiated between the two by determining that “engagement/enjoyment to read” could be about enjoying a good book more than it was about the *hard work* of reading. For example, a student could

exhibit engagement in reading with a book that was easy for them to read and it might not take too much determination for them to get through it. The third code I used to describe this on-task reading behavior was “confidence.” In this category, students were mostly using their own language to describe how they felt about their abilities as readers. These codes could have very well been both “engagement/excitement to read” and “determination,” but when students declared they were good readers, I labeled that language as high confidence.

In order to best share the stories of the students who displayed the behaviors of determination, engagement/excitement to read, and high confidence I have chosen portions of the data to share in another variant structure of poetry that describes what I heard and saw. I opted to display data in this way because the perspective of the students is best described in their own words.

Time to read, determination, engagement/excitement to read, and high confidence

“Time to read,” the teacher says.

I use picture clues. I sound out words.

“Time to read.”

I wonder? I keep trying.

“Time to read.”

Lips moving. My fingers run under the words.

“Time to read.”

I take my reading seriously. I like to challenge myself.

“Time to read.”

I escape into another world. I laugh. I read with emphasis.

“Time to read.”

I read by myself. I can do this. I feel smart. I help others read.

“Time to read.”

“I am a good reader.”

These data further explain the engaged reading behavior that was evident in this summer literacy program, in the words and actions of the students who were participating. As I described earlier, this Title I program contained many students who had struggled for years and might have been described by adults in the building as difficult to motivate. However, when given the opportunity to choose their own reading material, many of these students manifested more motivation to read than they had in the past. This evidence further supports the idea that there may be a connection between reading choice and determined, engaged reading behavior.

Conclusion

I conducted this research in a natural school setting where these students had a history of being instructed and supported in very directed ways as readers. I observed student behaviors and language in a different setting as they participated in a summer literacy camp. I wanted to examine authentic social interactions and interesting literacy experiences for students who were participating in the program. Overall, I noticed that having choice of reading material and an opportunity to interact with others about literacy set a positive tone for the students who were sharing this experience.

Not only did I observe a high percentage of on-task behavior during this time, but the quality of interactions and the levels of engagement I witnessed were significant. This was important because for many of the students in this program, engaged behavior and positive

experiences with reading had not been easily achieved in the past. The themes that emerged in my data indicated that offering choice within a socially collaborative environment did enhance reading engagement.

Very few behaviors that were recorded in my Field Note Journal were determined to be off-task actions, because most of the students had behavior that indicated they were highly engaged in the process of reading and sharing literacy with others. However, there were a few students who consistently exhibited off-task or distracting behavior. As I looked deeper at patterns and emerging themes in my data I observed that when students had higher incidents of off-task behavior, they also tended to exhibit low-confidence behavior. These data indicated that there could be a relationship between self-perception and engaged reading behaviors.

As I analyzed book choice within the context of this research I observed that the younger students chose to read books that were at or above their reading level significantly more often than the older students in this research. Initially, I wondered if older students were making choices by level because they had longer histories of struggling and were therefore allowing their fear of repeating failure inhibit their reading choices. But as I closely examined these data, I could not determine that to be the only reason for students' choice of books by level. Choice of reading material was consistently described by the students in this literacy camp as a positive addition to the environment, and therefore these data indicated that there could be a relationship between being offered book choice and engaged reading behaviors.

There was evidence that even when students were reading books above their reading level, they were exhibiting "determined" reading behaviors when they were able to choose to read something they were interested in. This evidence was especially compelling because some

of the students I observed are ones that have consistently struggled to persevere in reading and stay engaged. This assertion further illustrated the fact that there could be a relationship between being offered book choice and engaged reading behaviors.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusions

The lived experiences and reading behaviors of struggling elementary readers are complex and important to understand. This is especially true for educators who strive to increase students' reading engagement and motivation, to foster increased reading achievement. For this reason, this phenomenological study explored the experiences of students who participated in a summer school literacy camp. I sought to use students' own words and perspectives to understand students' reading choices, social collaboration, and self-perception as readers. I did this by collecting students' self-reported reading choices and providing opportunities for students to draw themselves reading and explain their feelings about reading. Additionally, this study relied on detailed observation notes about students' reading behaviors and subsequent interpretations of those behaviors. After an in-depth analysis of the data collected, I answered these research questions:

What happens when elementary students are offered choice with interesting and relevant text at their independent reading level within a socially interactive environment?

What levels/genres of text do children choose to read?

How does this experience impact students' self-reported confidence in their abilities as a reader?

Initially, the data revealed that offering book and literacy extension choices to students in this environment provided a positive and enjoyable atmosphere, evidenced by high levels of on-task student behavior. Additionally, providing opportunities for students to socially collaborate with peers created a cooperative and supportive climate for them to experience literacy, which

was illustrated through vignettes and other narrative examples of high quality student interactions. Students' responses to the environmental changes that were implemented in this research contributed to a phenomenological description of students' experiences that in many ways supported the existing discussion from the literature. For example, the literature described behavioral engagement in reading as an action that demonstrated persistence and effort (Skinner, & Pitzer, 2012). As I was gathering data, I perceived reading engagement to be manifested by indicators such as participation, and time on-task (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). These on-task indicators were some of the elements I used to tell the stories of particular students who participated in a summer literacy program.

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) is an instructional framework that has a foundation in Engagement Perspective (Guthrie, et al., 2004) with extensive representation in the literature. I sought to offer reading choice to students and support a collaborative learning environment as recommended by this framework to ascertain if students would have an increased level of reading engagement. In general, the trends that appeared in my data lend further support to the Engagement Perspective by providing evidence that choice and social collaboration enhanced the learning environment, contributing to student engagement in reading.

Several themes emerged from the data that further described the experiences of the participants in this study. First of all, just by observing the quantity and quality of student on-task behavior, it was clear that choice and social collaboration provided a positive environment for student learning. Secondly, although the majority of behaviors that I observed, interpreted, and described in this research were on-task, there were some examples of off-task behavior manifested by students who also had a tendency to exhibit low confidence in reading. Another

theme I observed was that younger students in this study tended to make more reading choices that were above their independent reading level than the older students in this study. Finally, I observed several examples of students who were highly engaged in reading and exhibited great determination to read. This was true even when students were reading books that were above their independent reading level. I observed many nuances in these emerging themes that influenced my personal observations as I derived conclusions from the data.

Motivated by Choice

In her book *The Reading Zone* Nancie Atwell (2007) states that having the opportunity to choose books should be a right for every student beginning in kindergarten and moving clear through high school. Book choice makes reading more attractive and can potentially ensure that students will read more books and therefore grow in their abilities as readers.

I described in chapter one that as the literacy specialist in this Title I school, I experienced frustration with the limited instructional techniques we were implementing to support young readers who were struggling with reading. Although we offered many interventions that focused on the skills of reading, I felt we were falling short when it came to supporting students' will to read (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). By this, I am referring to students' motivation to read and subsequent behavior that would represent engaged reading. With this in mind, I designed this research to offer reading choice as a support to these students because I felt we needed to do more to increase students' motivation to read. For some of these students, we had been unable to successfully support them in a way that led to an increase in observed reading engagement. I hoped that book choice would support student autonomy and lead to reading behaviors that illustrated engagement (Deci, et al., 1991). As I completed and analyzed my data

I became aware of some trends that offered evidence to support the idea that providing book choice to students increased both their motivation to read and their on-task reading behavior.

For example, when I examined the stories of Molly and David, I was inspired by the obvious ways in which choice appeared to increase their engagement in reading. These students had both been struggling for some time and had been added to additional reading interventions in which we increased their exposure to grade-level texts and practice for the necessary skills to support their reading. Although we led them through extended lessons to teach reading skills, we had not addressed their apparent lack of engagement in reading. However, when offered a choice of book, both Molly and David exhibited high levels of engagement and determination to read.

In the literature, autonomy is described as the ability to form authentic values, goals and interests (Assor, 2012). This study demonstrates how difficult it is to foster autonomy in students if they have not been offered the opportunity choose books that are interesting to them. My research shows that when students were presented with a chance to make reading choices, their perception of reading was more favorable and they experienced higher levels of enjoyment. This is also supported by research (Schraw, Flowerday, & Reisetter, 1998) affirming the power of autonomy and choice. The stories of David and Molly further confirmed that it is imperative to foster student autonomy as part of a comprehensive literacy program in order to help students enjoy participating in reading. In fact, interventions that directly address a student's lack of motivation should be among the strategies that teachers employ to increase student engagement in reading (Guthrie, Lutz & Ho, 2013). Along with instruction that supports the skill of reading,

this research demonstrates how potentially powerful it is to offer students a choice of books to read as an intervention to increase motivation.

Choice as a Strategy

Additionally, there were other ways that I saw choice impacting students behavior during our literacy activity. For instance, younger students consistently chose books that were beyond their reading level and in many examples persevered to read the books they chose because they were interested in them. But these reading behaviors were not evident in the choice habits of the older students. Although all students were informed of their reading level, this knowledge seemed to direct the older students' choices more than the first through third-grade students. Older students more frequently chose books by their reading level than the younger students did. I wondered if this happened because older students had a longer history of struggling with reading in a culture that did not offer choice of materials. If this were the case, these students may have had more difficulty making book choices when offered unrestricted access to books. As I analyzed these data more deeply, I realized there might be a variety of reasons for the variance of choice across the grade levels, which made it difficult to draw specific conclusions to the phenomenon.

As I pondered these data, however, I realized that choosing a book to read is a literacy skill that is not necessarily natural for all students. At one time during this research I asked a fourth-grade student how she went about choosing a book. She described her detailed process for choosing something she could read. She said that she would read the first page of a book and if she made more than five mistakes she thought it might be too difficult for her and she would choose another book to read. She had most likely internalized a skill that was taught her by a

teacher at one time. This interaction was the only one I had in this literacy camp in which a student described a strategy to choose a book.

With this in mind, it became clear to me that students might not have had existing strategies that helped them choose books. This is most likely because choosing a book that they were interested in reading was not considered an important aspect to daily literacy instruction in the existing curriculum for these students. With a lack of apparent book-choosing skills, these students chose by level. They were told to choose any book they would like to read, but I believe they decided that if they stayed close to their reading level, they would be guaranteed a more pleasant experience because the book would not be too difficult. The data trends I observed in the area of choice confirmed to me that it is imperative for educators to offer choice to students as part of a regular literacy program in order to increase motivation to read (Gambrell, 1996), but choice alone is not enough. Students should be explicitly taught the skill of wise book selection as part of their literacy instruction. According to Atwell (2007), this is done by helping students develop and refine their literary criteria and carve out their identity as readers, which she believes is through the art of realizing preference of reading choice. This realization seemed even more evident in this particular environment because these students did not have many options to choose their own books prior to this summer literacy camp.

Self-perception

As I observed students making book choices, I paid close attention to their actions with hopes of not only observing on-task and off-task behavior, but also of making interpretations about the behaviors I observed. As I explored the emerging themes in my data, I was interested in seeing trends that might shed light on how self-perception and reading engagement were

connected. According to the Expectancy-Value Theory self-perception has a direct influence on performance (Bembenutty, 2012). When a person experiences success with a task and perceives that success will be repeated, they will be potentially more motivated to attempt other related tasks (Eccles & Wigfield). When designing this research, I wondered if giving students opportunities to choose books at their level would provide the successful experiences necessary to build confidence.

Self-perception was the most difficult element of my research to observe and interpret because I believed it was best measured by students' personal reflection of their emotional reactions toward reading. Some of the participants in this study were young and had difficulty expressing their emotional reactions to books in a way that shed light on their self-perceptions. Even with the older students, it was unusual for me to talk to a student who was clear and articulate about their emotional reaction to reading. Because of this, I relied on my personal observations of student actions and my subsequent interpretation of those behaviors. I perceived that students who exhibited off-task behavior also had some tendency to use language that exhibited low confidence in their reading abilities. This may have been partially due to students' limited access to books at their reading level and opportunities to choose books they could read successfully. According to Cambria & Guthrie (2010), a reader is more confident with reading because of their past success with it. The data indicated that there were some students who needed more exposure to choosing books at their reading level and extended practice with these books in order to potentially boost their confidence in reading. Hannah's story in particular illuminated how limited success with reading and subsequent anxiety might inhibit a students' confidence.

When I reflected on the poetic display of the data in chapter four as it related to off-task behavior and low confidence actions, it dawned on me that although it was written from the words and actions of many students, it could represent the continuum of struggle for a particular student like Hannah. As I “unwrapped” my interview with this young girl I heard her frustration with ongoing failure to meet the grade level expectations for fluency. This was followed by her descriptions of ample attempts to “read more fluently” and her heartbreaking anxiety connected to her reading experiences. Her story is specifically troubling because it broadcasts the message and priorities that have been spoken to her by the education system and adults in her life. This message has potentially shaped her perception of reading and her own skill related to literacy. She has learned that reading well is reading fast, and she cannot read fast enough.

The core-reading program that Hannah and other students in this summer literacy camp participated in relies on the Big Five Areas of Reading: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency and Comprehension (<http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org>), with a particular focus on phonics in the primary grades and fluency in the secondary grades. In contrast, Taberski (2011) contends that accurate and fluent reading is just one component of literacy, next to other pillars of background knowledge, oral language and vocabulary, reading/writing connections, and repertoire of strategies. She further states that time to read, write, and talk support comprehension, which is the goal of literacy instruction. In my mind, Hannah’s story causes me to question a literacy program that focuses too heavily on one skill of reading (fluency) and on pushing students to the next grade-level benchmark. This is because it has the potential to foster anxiety, feelings of failure, and ultimately low confidence when students do not make expected growth toward that target.

In contrast, a literacy program should, “bring children one step closer to becoming motivated, confident, self-improving readers, who automatically call up appropriate strategies when they sense their connection to a book’s meaning is faltering” (Taberski, 2011, p. 6). This could be easier to do if the focus on literacy instruction shifted toward fostering motivation in students rather than simply building skills.

In a different picture of engagement the poetic display for students who had exhibited determination, engagement/excitement to read, and high confidence brought me to a completely disparate conclusion about self-perception. These students were experiencing success in reading, attempting to employ a variety of strategies, taking risks to challenge themselves, helping others, and exclaiming about their competence. These data drew a picture of a student that looked similar to what Atwell (2007) described as skilled and passionate readers. These are the readers that most teachers would agree they want to produce in literacy programs. I believe this happened for these students in this summer program because the pressure of reading fluently and accurately had been temporarily removed and students were allowed to choose their own books.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

When describing the important skills that need to be covered in a comprehensive literacy program, The National Reading Panel (2013) stated that the most effective reading instruction incorporates explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, methods to improve fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension. While it is true that these are all essential skills that can help build a bank of strategies for young readers, it should be noted that motivation to read and engagement or dedication to read are necessary components for students to have in order to become life-long readers. As stated by Cummins (2011), students are more

likely to develop strong reading skills when they have abundant access to engaging text and interact with them actively. This research points to the crucial need for access to books from which students can choose as a component of elementary literacy programs.

Yet it is not enough to offer book choice to students. Choice should be supported with explicit teaching of strategies for making wise book choices. By continuing to teach students that they have to ability and freedom to choose books that are interesting to them while at the same time filling their strategy bank with skills to help them make good choices, we will empower students to develop their own reading determination and hopefully increase their confidence. This shift to empower students can happen through curriculum design and teacher professional development. When literacy instruction includes a focus on motivation to read as well as other strategies for reading, our programs will produce more confident and determined readers. Strategies that include wise book choice, social interaction, and building successful reading experiences for students should be modeled, practiced, and reinforced for students.

In addition to incorporating book choice into literacy instruction, it is important to consider the interventions we offer to students who are struggling in a core-reading program. In this research, I described several students who exhibited determination in their reading in ways that had not been previously observed for those students. Some of these students had been offered additional supports in reading for multiple years. These interventions always incorporated multiple reading of the same text, or extra practice with phonics and sight words. Although many teachers were frustrated with students' lack of motivation to read, there were not interventions implemented that addressed motivation. This is something that needs to change.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

I mentioned several times throughout my research that gleaning definitive information about student self-perception was difficult to gather, interpret, and define, but it is worth further investigation. The DART (Appendix A) was meant to be a place for students to describe themselves as readers and how they felt about reading. I created this tool to allow students to share their thoughts in an open-ended format with hopes that it would give me insight to their thoughts and feelings about their experiences as readers. Because I think student self-perception is so important, I think it would be valuable to continue this line of observation. I am especially interested in how self-perception might change over time for struggling readers and how confidence might relate to student engagement. Additionally it is worthwhile to investigate how instructional choices can impact student self-perception. For example, further research about how book choice can enhance students' successful experiences with reading and therefore confidence.

It would be beneficial to observe a cohort of students who were offered choice of reading materials and literacy activities over a longer period of time and one cohort that were not. When observing these students it could be important to note emerging trends in their reading experiences, behaviors, and emotional affect related to reading.

To Improve this Study

As I reflect on the design of this research and the outcome, I think one major improvement to this study would be to have more time. Many of the nuances I observed in student behavior may have been easier to interpret if they had happened over a longer period of time because there would have been a larger bank of incidents from which to draw conclusions.

Additionally, I made predictions about how the constructs of a literacy program might impact self-perception and I was interested in collecting data that would give me insight into that phenomenon for these students. It would be valuable to examine more indicators of low confidence and perhaps have several ways to examine and interpret information in a way that shed light on self-perception.

Conclusion

Hannah perches in her bedroom with her silent stuffed animals lined up in front of her on the bed and a book in her hand. Beyond the bed and pile of creatures, her cat, Fluffy is relaxing in a chair gazing at Hannah while she carefully chooses a page to start with. Hannah has chosen a book she knows well. She believes this story will be easy enough for her to read aloud, that perhaps she will sound fluent to her audience. In the sanctuary of her bedroom with only the sound of her own voice, she begins to carefully read a story to her friends. She is apprehensive at first, all eyes are on her, and she is aware of her occasional mistakes. Her friends have heard her read many times, and there is no judgment in their eyes, in fact she thinks they might like it. As she moves through the story she forgets to be nervous. There is no interruption; the space in her head is easy and open as she continues to read. Hannah starts to believe maybe she can be a good reader. Fluffy already knows she is.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Draw a Reader Test

Draw a picture of you reading.

What is happening in this picture?

What does this picture tell me about how you are feeling?

Appendix D

Informational Letter to the Superintendent of the Tigard-Tualatin School District

June 14, 2015

Dear Ernie Brown,

I am currently completing a Doctorate in Educational Leadership with a Reading Specialist certification at George Fox University. Beginning on July 21, 2015 through August 20, 2015, I will be collecting data for completion of my dissertation in our summer school program at Templeton Elementary. I am interested in how offering choice of engaging books at students' reading level in a collaborative and socially interactive learning environment can impact student engagement in reading. I will be observing participants' choice of reading material and interactions with peers during a literacy enrichment portion of our summer school program.

The information gathered from this study will be used to inform my practice as a Reading Specialist and will only be shared with the chair of my research and my committee at George Fox University. Any data and information collected in regards to our students will be kept strictly confidential and names will not be used. Data will include observations in the form of field notes, personal interviews, student self-reported choice of materials and extension activities, and student self-reported perceptions of themselves as readers. Additionally, I will make audio recordings of student interview conversations between students and myself during literacy enrichment activities. Parents will be informed through an informational letter and will be given a permission slip for their child's participation.

I am honored to have the opportunity to improve my practice and the experience of my students by being a teacher researcher in our summer school program. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding my project. I appreciate your feedback and thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ferguson
Literacy Specialist/Title I Coordinator
Templeton Elementary School
Tigard-Tualatin School District

 Signature/Title of District Personnel Granting Permission

Date

 Signature of Building Principal

Date

Appendix E
Permission Slip

Please complete the permission slip below and bring it with you on the first day of summer school.

Child's Name:
<p>_____ I understand my child will be a participant in this research as a student in the Title I summer school program at Templeton Elementary.</p> <p><u>AND</u></p> <p>_____ I give permission for my child's conversations with peers in a learning environment to be audiotaped in this research.</p>
<p>_____ I do not give permission for my child to be audiotaped in this research as stated in the informational letter.</p>

Signature of Family Member: _____

Printed Name: _____

Appendix F

Parent Information Letter/Permission Slip

June 14, 2015

Dear Parents,

I am excited that your student will be joining us at Templeton's Summer Reading Camp! In addition to a fun literacy-filled summer camp, your student has the opportunity to help me continue my learning as a teacher. As I complete my Doctorate in Education at George Fox University I am researching how I can enhance your child's learning by offering them choice of interesting books at their reading level. I will be watching your child choose books to read and talk to friends about what they learn from the book. Your child's participation in this project will be very similar to the learning they do throughout the year and should not detract from their growth during this summer school program. The information gathered from this study will only be used to make me a better teacher and will only be shared with my professors at George Fox University. Any data and information collected in regards to your child will be kept strictly confidential and your students' name will not be used. I will be interviewing your child and taking notes while they interact with their friends about the books they are choosing to read. I will be asking them to tell me how they feel about themselves as readers. Additionally, I will make audio recordings of student conversations during literacy enrichment activities.

I am honored to have the opportunity to learn more about being a good reading teacher while working with your children. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding my project.

Please fill out the attached permission slip and have your student bring it with them on the first day of summer school; your child will not be able to participate in this study without it. I appreciate your feedback and thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ferguson
Literacy Specialist/Title I Coordinator
Templeton Elementary School
Tigard-Tualatin School District