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A Practical Guide for Reading Motivation in the Elementary Grades

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Longstanding research has identified the role of motivation in literacy development and its strong relationship to academic success (Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2006; Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997; Marinak, 2013). In an educational climate of high-stakes tests and teach-to-the-test mentalities, maybe it is time we choose a more appropriate mantra and one that supports students towards independent learning—the ultimate goal of literacy instruction. The positionality of “teach with the learner” seems more appropriate and positions students to contribute to their own learning, passing the metaphorical torch to the student through carefully crafted instruction with an emphasis on motivation.

After all, it is with motivation that independent learning endeavors are most rewarding and most likely to be repeated as evidenced by experts across disciplines and domains (e.g., voracious readers; skilled hobbyists; prolific writers; innovative computer programmers; master surgeons; and creative teachers). Despite the inherent relationship of motivation to literacy learning, “motivation has never been a hot topic within the twenty-year history of the *What's Hot* survey” (Cassidy, Ortlieb, & Grote-Garcia, 2016). The plethora of strategies and classroom practices in the extant literature are noteworthy but are dependent upon intangibles like one's ability to motivate and maintain motivation through diverse units of study and disciplines (Applegate & Applegate, 2010). These moving targets change alongside students' interests. Thus, consideration to students' motivation should always remain a staple in curricular planning and instruction. Gambrell (1996) furthers that “teachers have long recognized that motivation is at the heart of many of the pervasive problems we face educating children” (p. 17).

We think the attention to reading motivation in the elementary grades is long overdue so students can thrive as literacy learners (Ortlieb & Marinak, 2013). In this article, we explore the way that engagement, excitement, interaction, and efficiency can foster students' motivation to read. First, we review relevant literature around reading motivation in today's diverse elementary classrooms.

Definitions and Demands

Although motivation in literacy education has been studied over the past few decades, there are differing notions of what constitutes reading motivation and what practices are best-suited for diverse learners (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), reading motivation can be defined as the individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes,

and outcomes of reading. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are two aspects that differentiate a person's goal for reading. When students are intrinsically motivated to read, they are characterized as engaging in a reading act for its enjoyment or to gain knowledge about a topic of interest. On the contrary, extrinsic motivation is the desire to read to receive external recognition, such as rewards or incentives (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Intrinsically and extrinsically motivated children approach tasks for diverse reasons. Despite the nature of the student's motivation, both aspects have been studied to increase student engagement and the sustainment of motivation throughout literacy activities. Moreover, teachers must be cognizant of their key role in this process.

So with the bevy of assessment and instruction demands in place, are students actually getting enough time to actually read in the classroom? Hiebert (2009) found that students' reading motivation, or lack thereof, can be directly linked to the time spent reading in class. The International Literacy Association's position statement (2014) further suggests the need for policymakers to provide ample opportunities for leisure reading in classrooms. However, research indicates that only one third of youth (ages 6–17) indicate their class has a designated time for reading a book of choice independently, and only 17% do this every or almost every day at school (Scholastic, 2015). Moreover, research suggests that students desire more opportunities to engage in independent reading (Sibbersson & Szymusiak, 2016).

Teaching Takeaways

Guthrie and Humenick (2004)'s meta-analysis of motivational studies revealed several practices that widely support students' intrinsic motivation: engagement, excitement, interaction, and efficiency. These practices can be fostered by choice of books or tasks, student collaboration in literacy activities, provision of interesting texts for instructional activities, and providing hands-on activities to make connections specific to book-reading activities. Open-ended tasks that give students choice, challenge, control, collaboration, construction of meaning, and consequences will be influential factors on students' engagement (Turner & Paris, 1995). *It seems obvious but it must be re-iterated that providing opportunities to engage is required for students to actually engage in the classroom;* their engagement is dependent upon instructional design. When teachers do not provide consistent opportunities for their students to engage in literacy, it becomes increasingly difficult to foster genuine reading motivation. The following sections describe a practical framework for creating and sustaining the motivation to read centered on the constructs of engagement, excitement, interaction, and efficiency.

Engagement

“My favorite time of the day is independent reading. It is fun to pick my own book out to read and just read for fun.”

Alexander – age 7

It is imperative for teachers to designate specialized times for students to engage in leisure or independent reading. Many schools have attempted to implement allotted leisure and/or independent reading time, but it is often the first component cut due to instructional time demands of current curricula (Miller & Moss, 2013). Fifty-two percent of children report that in-school reading opportunities are their favorite parts of the day or wish it would happen more often (Scholastic, 2015). Previous classroom practices have been referred to as *D.E.A.R.* (Drop Everything and Read) or *SSR* (Sustained Silent Reading) but were often unsuccessful since students were not always held accountable for their reading during that time (Duke, 2016).

How can a practice with such good intentions fail? One answer is the lack of teacher guidance. Too often students choose books without teacher monitoring; thus students may self-select books that do not extend their literacy development (too difficult or too easy), or they might not have a purpose or genuine interest in their selection. Using an instructional framework supports this practice whereby teachers can support this practice by modeling the behavioral model the behaviors of appropriate book selection along with demonstrating the process of how to make meaning from the text (Miller & Moss, 2013). In addition, for independent reading (IR) time to be successful, teachers must design opportunities for students to actively read and respond to print and/or digital literature. Candid discussions and iterative teacher feedback are essential components for the students to continually develop as independent readers. Teachers who take the time to explicitly teach IR practices will create a classroom filled with productive IR experiences (Miller & Moss).

To make IR effective, teachers can:

- Include a designated time for sustained, independent reading every day (the word *silent* has purposely been omitted). Finding time can be one of the biggest challenges to independent reading, but it is necessary to incorporate reading time (throughout the disciplines) to grow independent readers. Although there is no definitive answer in regard to the amount of time, most teachers will allocate about 20 minutes. Time spent on task might vary according to students' needs (struggling vs. proficient readers) and grade level, so teachers need to set time to confer and assess throughout the year. While it is common practice to save IR for the end of the day, that might not be the most beneficial time. IR can and *should* be infused anywhere into the class schedule.
- Be a role model for the students. Teachers demonstrate the value of reading by engaging in the task themselves and can foster student motivation when they are viewed as avid readers (Marinak & Gambrell, 2016). One simple yet effective way for teachers to publicize their reading habits and generate interest is to create a *Be a Role Model* poster (Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013). The poster should be hung in a highly visible area of the classroom (or on door) and include the following: "Mr./Ms. (name) is reading...", book title, picture, author, and followed with "Ask me about it!"

and “What are you reading?” Teachers can use the IR time to read a section of their book which can serve as a catalyst for classroom discussions and dialogic conversations by sharing something about their book. For example, Ms. Baker shared:

When I was reading *Girl on a Train*, I explained to my students how the author wrote the book using various characters’ perspectives, which gave me a deeper understanding of both the characters and how the events unfolded. John, my fifth-grade reluctant reader, was able to relate my story to his current book, *The Lemonade War*, also told from the two main characters’ point of view. This ignited a classroom discussion about characters that ultimately led to a unanimous vote to read the next book in the series! I always wonder if I would have generated such genuine interest in the series had I not been reading and discussing my book.

Students need literacy role models in their lives, and teachers are ideal candidates for this distinction.

- Promote collaboration. Similar to the foundation of adult book clubs, social interaction motivates independent reading (Gambrell, 2011). Teachers can encourage pairs of students to read the same book during independent reading, thus fostering an organic discussion of the story following IR time. Whether it is teacher-centered or student-centered, students who partake in these interactive discussions become accountable for their learning (Miller & Moss, 2013) as they share their reflections with peers and gain diverse perspectives and communicative proficiencies in the process.
- Students should be held responsible for their independent reading. While reading stamina is a goal, print or digital reading logs can be utilized to extend beyond the quantity of pages or time spent reading and give students opportunities to react or reflect. In the beginning of the year, teachers can prepare a list of sentence starters for students to use when constructing a reader response. Sample starters might include: *I wonder why...?; Why did...?; I was reminded...; I noticed...; I was surprised...; I don’t understand...; I liked that...* In addition, reading logs can help students establish realistic reading goals, gain insight into their reading behaviors (i.e., a student might notice a trend of reading one particular genre over another or even notice a pattern with their attention span), and give students a sense of purpose for their reading.

Excitement

“I love it when my teacher reads aloud because she brings excitement to the words and I picture myself in the story.”

Olivia – first grade student

Trelease (1989) stated that reading aloud can be an effective advertisement for the pleasures of reading. While it is commonplace for teachers to encourage parents to read aloud with their children, we find that we, as teachers, often need reminders ourselves of the effectiveness of allocating instructional time to reading aloud with our students. While it is a common practice in primary and elementary classrooms, its prevalence may dissipate as the grades progress. Teachers of all grade levels need to be aware that this research-based practice also enhances achievement for all students irrespective of ability (McQuillan, 2009). As teachers read aloud, they model appropriate fluency, teach new vocabulary, syntax, and expose students to texts or genres that they might not ever have opportunity to engage. Reutzel (2008) indicated that reading aloud emphasizes the importance of reading and can ignite students' desire to learn to read.

Teachers who incorporate read-alouds in their routines can:

- Read a variety of genres and text structures to their students and read often (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006): fiction, non-fiction, magazines, newspapers, poetry, biographies, graphic novels, realistic fiction, informational texts, and online texts. Exposure to multiple genres allows students to learn about different text structures. As students become more acquainted with these structures, they will have less difficulty navigating similar texts they encounter across the disciplines.
- Choose challenging texts slightly above grade level. A student's listening comprehension ability is oftentimes higher than reading comprehension (especially in the elementary grade levels); therefore, reading material above the students' level is an ideal approach to immerse them in literature beyond their independent capabilities. Teachers can capitalize on this opportunity to whet their students' appetite and promote the value of reading which in turn can be the stimulus for future independent reading (Rasinski & Young, 2017).
- Introduce discipline specific text sets that include online articles, pop culture, and sports news (e.g., using SportsVu technology to analyze player movement, tendencies, and statistical proficiency vs. traditional basketball game planning; the story of Alexander Hamilton told through Lin-Manuel Miranda's perspective compared to the story found in history books). Diversity of perspectives within disciplinary learning promotes critical thinking and compels learners to understand that there are differing viewpoints on issues, despite not always agreeing with all of them (Damico, Baidon, Exter, & Guo, 2009/2010).

Interaction

Providing social opportunities for collaboration and engagement in literacy instruction contributes to reading motivation. At the very nature of what it means to be human, we are social beings; we want our ideas to be heard; we want our work to have merit; and we want to learn through doing. Students' intrinsic motivation to

read is connected to feeling socially supported in the classroom (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). This support extends beyond the teacher's role and into student interactions in small and large groups. Peer ideas and discussion spark curiosity and interest in what other students have to say as well as contribute to building confidence when approaching new tasks (Ortlieb, 2010; Turner & Paris, 1995). When children model reading behaviors and strategies for one another, classrooms become safe havens, also known as low-risk environments. Low-risk environments can be especially beneficial for introverts or those who experience difficulties in reading. Thus, collaboration can encourage students to put forth more effort and increase their academic stamina.

Teachers can promote these high growth environments through the following:

- **Socratic Seminars:** These student-led discussions align with Socrates' view of the power of questioning and acknowledge the social nature of learning (Israel, 2002). Beginning with an authentic text (preferably one that lends itself for students to make real-world connections), the leader begins the group discussion with open-ended questions to foster critical thinking, active listening, and thoughtful responses. The focus of the Socratic seminar is on the student-centered inquiry and exploration that leads to insightful and thought-provoking discussions (Frey, Fisher, & Hattie, 2017). *Note: For this method to be effective, the teacher plays a pivotal role in planning and establishing the classroom community early in the school year.
- **Digital storytelling:** Storytelling has been a powerful tool used to transfer knowledge, information, and values for centuries. While this is not a new pedagogical approach in the classroom, with technology being more easily accessible in the classroom, teachers can take advantage of digital storytelling as a tool to enhance the learning experience (e.g., Slidestory, WeVideo, Adobe Slate, Toontastic). Through digital storytelling, students use their own voice, graphics, animation, and music to tell stories. This process promotes autonomy since students are engaged in activities that require strategic thinking and ongoing self-monitoring. Thus, digital storytelling can be an ideal activity to give students ownership of their learning (Chapman & Ortlieb, 2015).
- **Double questions:** Questioning has long been known to be an effective strategy for reading comprehension. Double questions put the students in the role of teacher as one student asks another student a question that builds from the initial teacher question. Students demonstrate knowledge of story elements or informational knowledge through inquiring about that which they read (Doveston & Lodge, 2017).
- **Buddy Reading:** Remember that this is not exclusive to the literacy block but can extend to all the disciplines. The structure of informational text is often more complex than narratives and can be intimidating for our struggling readers. Pairing students of mixed-abilities offers opportunities to engage in texts that he or she might not have had exposure prior to this partnership (McRae & Guthrie, 2009).

Efficiency

The efficient teacher not only designates time in the day to read, but supplies a variety of texts and genres to support the students' reading habits. Just as relevancy of a task is highly associated with reading motivation, choice is also a powerful motivating factor. The importance of choice is found in every avenue of life from choosing a career to what to have for lunch—we have come to expect options and reading is no different. “When students choose texts they are interested in, they expend more effort learning and understanding the material” (Turner & Paris, 1995, p. 664). Teachers can nurture motivation, promote independence, and lead students towards academic achievement through supporting their self-selection of texts. By investing time in the beginning of the school year and learning students' interests (that change over time), teachers can customize and re-shuffle their libraries to entice students.

While a print rich classroom will support students reading, some students need much more to peek their interest. Ortlieb (2015) explains that we must expand beyond traditional notions of literacy and optimize reading experiences that have wide appeal (e.g., pop culture, cultural relevancy, and cross-disciplinary topics). The efficient teacher equips the classroom with various mediums to support literacy development and motivation.

Efficient teachers can:

- Administer reading attitude surveys or reading motivation questionnaires. These valuable tools provide insight into students' reading habits, values, and interests (Guthrie, 2013). Similar to how we plan instruction to meet their academic needs, this information is helpful for teachers so instruction will also meet their students' affective needs. Two measures used to assess student motivation are:
 - The Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-Revised; Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013) measures existing reading motivation for students in grades two through six (can and has been used with adolescents and high school students).
 - The Me and My Reading Profile (MMRP; Marinak, Malloy, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2015) assesses motivation levels of students in kindergarten through grade two.

Students' attitudes and interests change as the school year progresses, so administering these questionnaires multiple times during the year will help teachers compare the shifts or fluctuations in student motivation. Teachers can use this information, in combination with their observations, to plan for relevant instruction that will foster student reading motivation (Marinak et al., 2015).

- Provide multi-sensory opportunities to read through listening centers, computer stations, interactive Smart Board activities, and apps on I pads or tablets.

- Research and prepare a list of websites to support topical reading as well as websites with options for students' responses.

Conclusion

It is every teacher's wish to create classrooms that foster the love of literacy. "Motivated readers who see literacy as a desirable activity will initiate and sustain their engagement in reading and thus become better readers" (Gambrell, 2011, p. 177), and reading proficiency can result in higher academic achievement. With every call heard for increasing student achievement, we must echo the need for elevating student motivation to read. Each student brings a unique literacy background to the classroom; some being immersed in rich literacy experiences from birth, and others whose bookshelves are barren. Yet, those previous experiences do not ensure or predict positive reading growth in the future; it is incumbent upon all teachers to consider engagement, excitement, interaction, and efficiency towards promoting students' reading motivation. Being a listener is key to effective communication; and being receptive to students' voices and interests towards literacy development is no different. We can make an indelible impact on our students' reading motivation by efficient planning, providing opportunities for engagement, and leading children to get excited about reading through interactivity.

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Vocabulary Instruction and English Language Learners: Does Culturally Relevant Teaching Increase Retention?

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Vocabulary plays a central role in not only the acquisition of early literacy skills, but ultimately, the overall academic success of English Language Learners in the classroom and beyond. Students who speak English as a second language and who do not receive sufficient or culturally relevant vocabulary instruction are unable to comprehend most, if not all, forms of grade level reading (Beck 2002). According to Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant teaching possesses three major components: “(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p.160). Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992) also claims that Culturally Relevant Teaching or CRT is a “term used to describe the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students’ culture but also to use the students’ culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge.”

The goal of culturally relevant teaching is to bridge the gap between what students experience at home and what students experience at school in order to create instruction that is meaningful for the student. If culturally relevant teaching does not take place in the classroom, English Language Learners’ struggle with vocabulary can snowball, transcending into all content areas and become a discouraging, frustrating, and demotivating issue. For young English Language Learners, Tier 2 vocabulary words can present an exceptional challenge, as these are high frequency words that occur across content and are essential for comprehension. According to Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002), Tier Two words can be identified by three main characteristics: “importance and utility, instructional potential, and conceptual knowledge” (p.19). English Language Learners must be properly supported by educators in order to polish their foundational language skills that they will build upon.

The purpose of my research was to answer the following question: What happens to a kindergarten English Language Learner’s vocabulary retention when she is presented vocabulary in a culturally relevant form versus a non-culturally relevant form? As sole researcher, I conducted a qualitative comparative case study on these two different vocabulary instructional styles to help to determine if

culturally relevant teaching could aid an English Language Learner within a kindergarten classroom in developing the Tier 2 vocabulary words she needs in order to learn to read, comprehend texts, and succeed academically.

Methodology

I conducted an action research study during my fourteen-week student teaching internship which took place within the 2016-2017 academic year. I was simultaneously instructing my students (to help them succeed academically) while also collecting data for my research. This meant that I served as both a researcher and participant in the classroom.

Participants

This research study was a case study of a student t in a kindergarten classroom. This student will be referred to as Mia (pseudonym) for the purpose of this study. Mia is a five-year-old female. She speaks Spanish at home, but her family is also proficient in English. Mia is currently on grade level for all subjects and is reading at a level A according to Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, or PALS, testing. PALS is a researched-based assessment tool for early literacy skills. Because she is proficient in English, she was not being tested to determine her WIDA level. Although Mia will not be tested for WIDA, she exhibited codeswitching when speaking to her teacher and peers.

Setting

I conducted my research at a fully accredited Title I elementary school located in Central Virginia where all students are eligible for free and reduced breakfast and lunch. According to the Virginia Department of Education (2015), this school had a population of 870 students during the previous academic year. The school demographics indicate a diverse population where approximately 35 percent of students identify as black, 33 percent of students identify as white, 21 percent of students identify as Hispanic, 6 percent of students identify as Asian, 3 percent of students identify as two or more races, and less than 1 percent of students identify as American-Indian. More specifically, I conducted this research in a kindergarten inclusion classroom.

Data Collection

This action research project took place during the spring semester of the 2016-2017 academic year over the course of six weeks. For this case study, I collected data in the form of observations, pre-tests and post-tests, and a formal summative assessment. All pre-tests, post-tests, and the formal summative assessment were performed verbally while the researcher wrote down the responses of the participant. Prior to beginning my research study, I received written consent from the student's parents or guardians.

During this time, I helped to improve the vocabulary of an English Language Learner in a kindergarten classroom through one-on-one instruction where the student learned three new words each week through books that I read to her. I instructed the student using non-culturally relevant teaching for one week and culturally relevant teaching for the next week. The instruction was implemented in an alternating fashion so the data to be properly compared, an AB, AB, pattern. Weeks of non-culturally relevant instruction featured learning words through books that were required reading that the entire grade level worked with, as recommended by the language arts and reading specialist. The vocabulary words that I taught Mia were selected according to the school-wide teacher's manual for language arts, titled *ThinkCentral* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007). These books did not relate to Mia's life, experiences, or interests.

Weeks of culturally relevant instruction featured learning the words through books that were chosen by the researcher and were selected because they were culturally relevant to the specific student. They included families from similar cultural backgrounds, bilingual characters, codeswitching, and focused on her likes, interests, and personal experiences. The words taught utilizing culturally relevant instruction were chosen according to Isabell Beck's text *Bringing Words to Life* (2002) and were classified as Tier 2 words. Tier 2 words are high frequency words that that are used by mature language users across content areas. These words may have multiple meanings and can therefore be difficult, but essential for English Language Learners. Examples of Tier 2 words include: patience, avoid, and inspect. In addition, these words were selected in correspondence with the current units and lessons that all students in the classroom were learning. This was to ensure that the vocabulary words utilized were taught in context and were not taught in isolation without relationship to the student's academics.

During week one of my research project, a week of non-culturally relevant teaching, Mia and I read the book *Home for a Tiger, Home for a Bear* by Brenda Williams and Rosamund Fowler (2007). The vocabulary words that we worked with were: burrow, lodge, and patient. I first began with a pretest. In this pretest, I dictated one word to the student and asked the student if she knew what that word meant. If the student responded with a no, I inferred that this was an appropriate word to teach the student. If the student did not know the word, I asked the student if she had ever seen or heard the word before. If the student responded with a yes, I then asked the student to define the word. If the student's definition was incorrect, I knew that this was an appropriate word to teach the student. If the student responded that she knew the word, but gave the incorrect definition, I asked the student if she knew something about the word or if she could relate it to something else. If the student's definition was correct, there was no purpose in teaching the student this word, and a new word was selected. This process continued for all three words at the beginning of each week.

After the pretest was administered and all three vocabulary words were chosen, I presented the student with the three vocabulary words in a non-culturally relevant form, meaning the texts used were not relevant or meaningful to the student's life. Prior to reading, I dictated each word to the student. I then provided the student with the definition of the word and discussed the word with the student. As we read the book together, I paused when the vocabulary word appeared in the text. I discussed with the student how the vocabulary word functions in the text.

At the end of each week, I administered a post-test, similar to the pretest the student completed at the start of the week. For this posttest, I dictated each of the three words that the student has learned that week one at a time. After I dictated the word to the student, I asked the student to define the word. Once the student defined the word, I asked the student to provide an example of the word. I also asked the student what helped her to learn or remember the word.

In week two of my research project, a week of culturally relevant teaching, I repeated the pre-test procedures and then taught the student three new vocabulary words. These three new words were presented to the student in a culturally relevant form, meaning the texts used were relevant or meaningful in the student's life, interests, and experiences. At conclusion of the week, I repeated the post-test procedures. These first two weeks served as session one of the vocabulary instruction and allowed me to compare the student's retention of the vocabulary through my observations and the pre-tests and post-tests. I compared the data from week one and week two—as I had collected the student's response to vocabulary presented in a non-culturally relevant form, versus the student's response to vocabulary presented in a culturally relevant form. The vocabulary words that the student was able to remember and recall better aided me in discovering the effects that culturally relevant teaching may have on vocabulary retention. At the conclusion of session one, I reviewed the data that I collected. I compared week one of non-culturally relevant teaching to week two of culturally relevant teaching to determine what words the student retained and if that retention may have any correlation to the instructional method that was utilized.

During week 3 of the study, the student and I read the book *Turtle Splash* by Cathryn Falwell (2008). The words we studied were: timid, lounging, and idle. During week 5 of the study, the student and I read the book *How Many Stars in the Sky?* by James E. Ransome (1991). The words we studied were distance, dazzling, and gazing. All books used for non-culturally relevant vocabulary instruction were selected according to the school's current pacing guide and books that all other students we will be reading according to the curriculum. All vocabulary words used for non-culturally relevant vocabulary instruction were selected according to the school-wide teacher's manual, titled ThinkCentral. This manual outlines the Tier 2 words found in each of the books.

During week 2 of the study, the student and I read the book *I Love Saturdays and domingos* by Alma Flor Ada (1999). The words we studied were: nibbling,

difficult, and pier. During 4 of the study, the student and I read the book *Abuela* by Arthur Dorros. The words we will studied were: flock, harbor, and glide. During week 6 of the study, the student and I read the book *Chato's Kitchen* by Gary Soto and Susan Guevara (1995). The words we studied were reassure, dismayed, and vibrated. Books from each of the three sessions possessed common themes. For example, session one books included a theme of home, session two books include a theme of family, and session three books include a theme of animals. For culturally relevant texts, all Tier 2 words were selected according to the books corresponding manual, which indicates Tier 2 words.

At the conclusion of my action research project, the student studied eighteen different vocabulary words. These eighteen vocabulary words were then tested a final time using a formal summative assessment. For this formal assessment, I dictated each word to the student in the order that they were learned. After I dictated the word, I asked the student to provide a definition. This final and formal assessment allowed me to determine what the student has retained over the course of the entire research study. From the student's responses of this formal assessment, I was able to speculate if the vocabulary instructional styles played a role in how the student retained the information.

Results

During my action research study, my goal was to answer the question: What happened to a kindergarten English Language Learner's vocabulary retention when she was presented vocabulary in a culturally relevant form versus a non-culturally relevant form? In order to answer this question, I collected four types of data during my study: informal observations, pre-tests, post-tests, and a final summative assessment.

Out of all eighteen words, Mia was able to recall and define all of them correctly, except one—the word timid. The word timid was learned during week three, a week of non-culturally relevant instruction.

Discussion

According to the results of my study, specifically the summative assessment which evaluated the student's ability to retain the vocabulary, the answer to this question is: Presenting vocabulary in a culturally relevant form did not affect retention of vocabulary for my kindergarten student—at least directly. I suspect this is primarily due to the way in which I instructed the student utilizing the context/key word method. This method requires students to infer the meaning of a word based on the situation in which it is used and the words that surround it. It also requires students to find the meaning of a word based on words that are related to it. The student only gained vocabulary knowledge by constructing the meaning through utilizing the words around it and through words that she already knew for both culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts. Perle et al.

(2006) propose that the context/keyword method is proven to produce better learning and retention outcomes because it aids in transferring short-term memory to long-term memory. The results of this study are supported by Perle's findings. According to the student's summative assessment this method of vocabulary instruction proved to be quite effective, another finding of this study.

Another discovery involves the examples that the student provided when prompted during the post-tests. At the end of each week, the student was administered a post-test that involved three tasks: define the word, provide an example of the word, and state what helped you to remember the word. While defining the word indicated the student's vocabulary acquisition and stating what helped her to remember the word informed me of her retention—having the student provide an example added a layer to the study I did not expect. For vocabulary words that were presented in a non-culturally relevant form, the student was only able to provide examples that took place directly in the text. For vocabulary words that were presented in a culturally relevant form, the student first provided an example directly from the text, and then added an example not from the text, but from her daily life. For example:

Ms. DiGiacomo: Flock. Define the word.

Mia: A big group of birds.

Ms. DiGiacomo: Good! Provide an example of the word.

Mia: Like our class—it's a flock. It's a big group of kids.

Here, the student references the book, *Abuela*, where the granddaughter and her abuela go to the park in New York City and watch someone feed a flock of pigeons. Next, she adds that her class is also a big group, so it is like a flock. Below is another example:

Ms. DiGiacomo: Great! What about difficult? Define the word.

Mia: Well, it means that something is really hard.

Ms. DiGiacomo: Provide an example of the word.

Mia: To drive to Florida, when we visit Nana, we like to fly there—not drive. Or like tying your shoe.

Here, the student refers to the drive the main character must make in order to see her family. Then she connects the vocabulary knowledge to another event she deems as difficult that is relevant to her life—tying her shoes. These patterns continued through the entirety of the study. Below is a comparison from a non-culturally relevant week:

Ms. DiGiacomo: Burrow. Define this word.

Mia: It means an underground hole.

Ms. DiGiacomo: Provide an example of the word.

Mia: Bunnies live in burrows.

Ms. DiGiacomo: What helped you to remember the word?

Mia: The book.

Here, the student demonstrates retention of the word, however, the example she provides stem directly from the text, and she does not elaborate further than that event, as she did during weeks when vocabulary was presented in a culturally relevant form.

This finding shows that when the kindergarten student was presented vocabulary in a culturally relevant form, she was better able to connect the vocabulary knowledge to her own life. This finding directly relates to research from Islam & Park (2015), who write, “Obstacles to comprehension for ELLs are decreased when teachers use purposeful tasks that use language productively and meaningfully and identify cultural links to texts” (p.1). The way in which the student was able to better explain her knowledge beyond just events that occurred in the text demonstrated increased comprehension or understanding of the word. This is because the student was given a more purposeful task in order to learn the word—by reading a story that was directly related to her life and her culture.

While retention of vocabulary is of immense importance for ELL students, rote memorization does not give a student a true grasp on the words’ meaning, which may translate into the student memorizing a word’s definition, but not being able to utilize the word effectively because they are not understanding the words meaning. In my study, vocabulary words that were presented in a culturally relevant form could be used effectively in conversation because the student understood the meaning of the word outside of the context of the book.

Conclusion

In my future classroom, I will continue to instruct vocabulary using the context/keyword method because of its effectiveness. I will also continue to teach vocabulary through the context of stories that prove meaningful to the student and connect directly to their daily lives. I would like to further this research by investigating what vocabulary words the student was able to retain over a longer period of time. At the end of the six weeks, the student was able to retain the vocabulary, at least on the surface. I would be interested to see if the student was able to still recall the words that were presented in a non-culturally relevant form over a longer period of time. In time, Mia is likely to forget the texts we read together. I predict that when she does, Mia will also forget the meaning of the words instructed in a non-culturally relevant form, for her, knowledge of these words lives

only within the fictional, disconnected stories on page, and not within her own life.

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“Cinderella with a Twist”: Building Academic Literacy and Social Consciousness

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Celeste, “I never thought I would like Cinderella. I did not like Cinderella before. But now I like the story very much. It is my favorite story now.” These are the words of an English learner (EL) who loves reading but prefers to read young adult novels about adventure and dystopia in Spanish. Fairy tales, creation tales and myths are a component of the program of study in Virginia’s secondary English curriculum, but the literature in these genres are generally unknown to most ELs. As Celeste, and her EL classmates, progress to academic English course work and graduation they will need to become familiar with, and think critically about, such literature. It was with this progression in mind that the “Cinderella with a Twist” project was planned and implemented.

Many ELs that arrive in the U.S. struggle to meet proficiency in English. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the 2014-2015 school year approximately 24.6% of ELs met proficiency in English assessments (EDFacts, 2017). English learners possess varied skills in literacy in their first language and in English, but are expected to demonstrate the same mastery of English as their monolingual English peers. The stakes are high, and the challenges are many. Teachers of ELs must help them find entry points into academic content that are personalized and accessible. Krashen (1983) describes comprehensible input and affective filter as critical variables in the language acquisition of ELs.

Researchers exploring best practices for supporting ELs have described a variety of strategies to accomplish this outcome. Many have proposed using poetry and multimodal instructional strategies with positive results. This research provided direction for the “Cinderella with a Twist” project.

Literature Review

Vogel and Tilley (1994) described a layered approach to literacy skill development through poetry instruction. The strategies included reading a variety of forms of poetry and making connections to music and TV characters known to the students. The students’ teacher added depth through sharing her own writing, then students were asked to do the same. The next layers were built through communal

storytelling, discussion and sustained sharing of student work to establish a constructive environment for writing to support reading comprehension. Rubenstein-Avila (2004) described work with a young adolescent male who struggled with acquiring literacy skills. As in Vogel and Tilley (1994), it was found that writing and sharing work with others helped the student learn new vocabulary and develop greater comprehension of what he read.

Myers (1997) promoted the perspective that in order to make learning relevant to adolescents, teachers should connect content to poetry. Myers posited that students should participate fully in reading, writing, listening, and speaking poetry, with extensions to music and art, to help them develop important academic literacy skills. Myers reiterated the need to teach poetic literary terms and their application in different forms of poetry as a part of this instruction.

Pellegrino, Zenkov, and Calamito (2013) examined the use of multimodal texts and media to enable adolescent students to understand and critically analyze the abstract concept of citizenship. Students expressed their understanding through illustrated “slam” poetry. The researchers posited that students achieve more in-depth understanding of content when multimodal and image-based materials are used for instruction. Johnson and Kendrick (2016) also explored the impact of the use of multimodal modes of communication to help ELs engage in academic activities. They acknowledged that because so many ELs have experienced interrupted education in their first language they have underdeveloped literacy skills, which makes it difficult to help them build literacy skills in English. They demonstrated that the use of visual material and music enabled the students to share their perspectives and experiences.

Wissman (2007) and Wiseman (2011), explored the importance of encouraging critical thinking and analysis of social issues through literature. Wissman (2007) engaged a group of 14-16 year old young women in constructing and sharing poetry that reflected their experiences and thoughts about social justice and self-definition. She noted that it is critical that teachers acknowledge the thinking capacities of young women and provide opportunities for them to express themselves through writing and the arts. Similarly, Wiseman (2011) described how teaching students to write poetry could support their development of critical social thought as well as reading and writing skills. Poetry provided efficient opportunities to engage with literature so that students could use a minimal number of words to express big ideas. Wiseman (2011) described how poetry helped students make connections between academic content and their personal experiences and creative expressions.

The Project

The “Cinderella with a Twist” project reflects the research findings that poetry instruction using multimodal resources to encourage reading, writing and critical discussion is an effective strategy for engaging ELs in academic content and social

consciousness. The use of fairy tale literature, with simple but profound themes of kindness, justice, gender roles and hope that can be found in most cultures, provided an accessible point of entry for the ELs.

The student group included adolescent ELs from Central America, Brazil, Mexico, Iran, and Pakistan. All students had ACCESS scores (ACCESS for ELLS 2.0, 2017) of 1.5 to 2.0. Students were enrolled in English literacy class in a suburb of Northern Virginia. Students were surveyed to determine their familiarity with fairy tales. They had little to no knowledge of traditional fairy tales in general, and none of Cinderella, or other culturally based Cinderella tales from their home countries. This indicated a need as the cultures these students represented have rich folklore. Of the 23 students participating in the project, one admitted that she liked haiku poetry, although her understanding of it as a poetic form was only that it was short, and about nature. Three others had limited experience with Shel Silverstein's poetry from study in the previous year. All students involved in the project needed to develop their writing skills as documented by their ACCESS scores, and they all vocally expressed a dislike of writing because it was difficult for them. A blank sheet of paper was a daunting challenge to them. It was difficult for them to acknowledge that they had good ideas that could be reflected in writing.

Project Goals

There were several goals in the project. Each goal guided instruction to scaffold skill development in reading, writing, listening and speaking around academic skills and social consciousness. The opportunities to apply technology to their work extended their comprehension skills through multimodal avenues. The project took six weeks to complete, as the accomplishment of each skill and knowledge goal provided a base for the next.

Social Consciousness

The class had just completed study of Black History and Women's Rights Month. Students' social consciousness had been raised regarding equality, fairness, kindness and overcoming racial and gender barriers. For example, connections were made between the study of the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman's experience as a slave, conductor and fearless woman. Students also read about women other time periods who broke racial and gender barriers and contributed to the lives of people, in general. Important figures included Elizabeth Blackwell, Helen Keller, Marie Curie, Wilma Rudolph, and Mare (2012), a Mexican woman rapper and Queen Noor of Jordan (2011). These portraits of strong women provided a basis for the later work on the retelling of Cinderella with a "twist."

Student discussion about breaking barriers focused on what it means to be courageous in the face of external limitations, and the importance of equality in relationships. For example, student reaction to viewing Mare, as she rapped in Spanish about women's responsibility to themselves, was particularly impactful at

this point in the project. The Spanish-speaking students translated the rap for the non-Spanish speaking students in English. It was a clear demonstration of their understanding of the meaning of the words Mare (2012) rapped.

Analysis of Literature

Students enrolled in the literacy class are expected to read and analyze material they read. As emerging ELs, lengthy literary material is exhausting to read, comprehend and analyze. Even children's literature, such as short Cinderella stories, contains difficult vocabulary. However, the story line is not complex. It can give ELs a sense of confidence that they can read and understand literature written in English and a basis for discussion about kindness, justice, gender roles and hope. A second goal was to build student reading comprehension skills. Students participating in the project listened to a reading of the traditional version of *Cinderella* (Craft, 2000), using a document camera so they could see the words and the illustrations. Students explored the words used to create imagery in the story, and recorded these words (sadness, gray, brilliant) for future use. At this point, it was explained that students would be retelling the Cinderella story, but with a twist. It was explained that "The Twist" would change how the story ended. Students also learned, at this time, that the retelling would be shared with the Head Start children in the school. Not only would their words be read aloud, but there would be a ballet performance to accompany their writing. This intrigued the Els as it gave value and importance to their work.

Students were then introduced to the different versions of the Cinderella story from other cultures. Their options included *Yeh Shen* (Louie, 1982), *The Egyptian Cinderella* (Climo, 1989), *The Korean Cinderella* (Climo, 1993), *Cendrillon* (San Souci, 1998), *The Rough Faced Girl* (Martin, 1992), *Little Gold Star* (San Souci, 2000), and *Adelita* (dePaola, 2002). They rank ordered which version they wanted to read and students were then paired to carefully read their preferred story. They read the story and identified and defined words unknown to them, so their comprehension would be enhanced. They used a graphic organizer to note events in the beginning, the middle and the end of the story.

Poetry Terms

A third goal was to begin to prepare students for the poetry vocabulary they would need to know and use in future academic English classes. The participating students were introduced to important poetry terms, such as alliteration, rhyming, onomatopoeia, assonance, personification, imagery, metaphor and simile. A pretest indicated that these were terms with which the students were unfamiliar. As a class, they listened to poems by Robert Frost, Alfred Noyes, color poetry found in *Hailstones and Halibut Bones* (O'Neill, 1961), Shel Silverstein (1981), and the lyrics to the title song from the musical "Hair" (Cowsills, 1969). Students worked to analyze the poetry and lyrics using these poetry devices. Students were given a packet of templates of different forms of poetry to include "I AM," Bio, acrostic,

haiku, lantern and cinquain. They were asked to apply various poetic devices to write in these different forms of poetry. This application allowed students to experience writing poetry in different forms while using the poetic devices and learning the literary terms for these devices in English.

The writing of poetry in the poetry packets was a parallel activity to the retelling of the multicultural Cinderella in poetic form. Once they had completed the first type of poem, an acrostic poem, on a topic of their choice, the paired students began to write an acrostic poem retelling their multicultural Cinderella story, using key words from their graphic organizer and their imagery word lists to guide them.

Once students completed their multicultural Cinderella acrostic poems they illustrated the poem to further demonstrate their understanding of the story. The students' multicultural Cinderella acrostic poems were published in the 2nd Annual ELL Poetry Anthology. Students' were very excited to share their work with their peers. They also were excited to take home a copy of the Anthology to share with their families. The public recognition was an important boost to their self-confidence as writers of English. I share an excerpt in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Excerpt from: Cedrillon by Bryan and Katia

*Indescribably in the most beautiful green island,
Sanctuary of a wonderful young lady,
Largely covered by trees and rivers,
Automatically the flowers rise with the shiny sun,
Normally a lot of commotion at the fresh river,
Diversity of birds stop to sing with gorgeous Cedrillon.*

Multimodal Learning

The use of Green Screen technology was a means to further demonstrate comprehension of the Cinderella story in an authentic, multimodal way. Students worked with school librarians to learn how to create a WeVideo. This activity involved identifying and saving visuals that represented their particular Cinderella story version in a folder in the Cloud. They then were videotaped with their partner while reading their multicultural Cinderella acrostic poem, which also was then put into the Cloud so they could combine visuals, music (using Audacity) and their videotape to make their personal movie. This multimodal approach added another skill layer, connecting reading, speaking, listening, writing and technology skills

(Pellegrino, Zenkov & Calamito, 2013). Later, as a part of an “end of the year” reflection, students had the opportunity to view each group’s video.

Another goal was to guide students in exploring how to re-envision traditional, dependent roles of women into roles of strength and independence. Once students’ individual movies were completed, they listened again to the traditional version of Cinderella. The students in the class reflected on how their multicultural version compared to the traditional version through class discussion. Next the class listened to a reading of the *Paper Bag Princess* (Munsch, 1980). The class discussion continued in order to make comparisons between the traditional Cinderella character and her dependence on the Prince, and the Paper Bag Princess and her independence from Ronald the Prince. For example, Prince Ronald did not want to associate with the Paper Bag Princess because she no longer “looked like a princess.”

As a whole group, the students began to write an acrostic poem about Cinderella with a Twist. Students were reminded that “The Twist” meant that the story would end somewhat differently for Cinderella. This part of the project involved revisiting information about the women that had been studied during Women’s History Month, and how they broke stereotypes and barriers. The story of Queen Noor (2011) and her role as Queen and humanitarian gave students a direct connection to the task of making Cinderella an independent working queen that helped her kingdom beside the Prince. This was an authentic example of “The Twist.”

The students followed the same process of outlining the events of the beginning and middle of the traditional story. Students referred to their poetic devices and imagery notes to make suggestions as they dictated the retelling on the Promethean Board. The students also had their multicultural Cinderella acrostic poems to refer to for ideas. Each class for three class periods, students drafted the retelling, and revised their work the next day. This collaborative writing encouraged students to brainstorm ideas and participate in discussions as to word choice and events that should be highlighted. Word choice, putting ideas into words, and descriptive and figurative language are examples of critical writing skills that can be very challenging for ELs; but in this case, students had the support of each other to share and discuss how these skills are applied. The “Cinderella with a Twist” poem from students in the ELL Literacy 2 is shared in Figure 2 below.

A Powerful Culmination

Students also created original drawings to accompany their class traditional “Cinderella with a Twist” acrostic poem. Students volunteered to illustrate different settings, artifacts or events in the story. Then, through a partnership with a program “The Adventures of a Rogue Swan” and media specialist/ballet dancer and director, Ms. Matina Banks, (2017) the students’ illustrations and poem were digitized. Students were then treated to a performance by Ms. Banks with their

illustrations and narrated poem with a twist presented on stage in the background. None of the students had ever seen ballet danced before, and the thrill of seeing their work presented as a performing art supported the multimodal connection to literature and social consciousness. After the performance, students were asked to reflect on the project. All the students were very proud. Their comments reflect the value of the project:

“This project helped me to be more creative, to open my brain.”

“I feel very proud of what I have done in school this year.”

“I love the rhythm of the poems. I feel happy and peaceful when I read the poems.”

“Spending time doing this project made us more of a unit as a group and friends. We have more trust between each other. It was good to let your weakness go and to trust yourself.”

“The woman dancing was beautiful. I like this dance.”

It was exciting to see the pride reflected in the students’ faces as they watch the performance and realized the value of what they had created. It was especially moving to see how the Head Start children responded to them as authors. It can only be hoped that this experience will remain as a positive memory and will encourage their continued confidence in their lives.

Figure 2

Excerpts from: *Cinderella with a Twist* by ELL Literacy 2 Class

Stopping to rest after her stepsisters sleep

Tears of deep sadness and loneliness

Everyday imagining changes in her life

Putting her mean and ugly stepsisters before herself

Sharing a small space with mice, spiders, the cat and cinders

Impossible to feel loved, be happy and free

Sometimes she dreams of gardens of violets, roses, sunflowers and tasting of honey

Trying to survive her harsh life

Everything is dirty, grey and dark

Reaching for her dreams

Someday she hopes to find her dreams.

Life of the kingdom depends on her

Energy and emotions are low without her

After the wedding, the prince promised to love her forever and give her freedom

Divergent ideas about leading the kingdom

Expressing dedication to her future

Respecting each other to live happily ever after.

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Yes, Virginia, Motivation Matters

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Motivation Matters

What motivates students to read is a complicated issue. Paul Tough, author of *How Students Succeed* (2012) suggests that “this is the problem with trying to motivate people: No one really knows how to do it well...what motivates us is often hard to explain and hard to measure” (pp. 66-67). Further, there is a difference between what motivates us in the near term and what we choose to do over the long haul. While the promise of a pizza party might motivate some students to achieve a goal of reading five books that week, it does not ensure that the child will want to pick up a book again after eating the pizza.

What we need to consider as educators is what we are after when it comes to our students and their reading. Do we want them to have read a particular number of books over a set period of time or do we want them to enjoy and learn from reading – to choose it as an activity even when no reward is offered? This is an important distinction, because our desires and expectations for students strongly influence the instructional choices we make, and thus, the motivational context of the classroom. Some choices are more likely to encourage a motivating classroom context for reading, whereas other practices we choose may work against us.

What the Research Tells Us

Many schools (perhaps yours) support reward-based reading programs - those where students or classrooms receive some prize or earn a fun event as a result of reading. Extrinsic rewards are common in our lives: we work to get a paycheck; we get points for staying at a particular hotel or drinking coffee at a particular shop. We like rewards! But if we didn't get a paycheck, would we still show up to work? Hmm.... So if we take away the prize for reading, will students still read? When

it comes to influencing lifelong practices, we might want to be more thoughtful about how and when we use extrinsic rewards.

If you take a look at the notable body of research on reading motivation that has accrued over the past three decades, there are several researchers who question the efficacy of using extrinsic rewards for reading with K-12 students. Some early studies indicated that rewards and incentives can actually undermine intrinsic motivation – that is, a student’s desire to read for their own reasons and their own enjoyment (Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The concern here is that students may be motivated by the reward itself, so the choice of reward is to be carefully considered. Marinak & Gambrell (2008) found, for example, that books and time to read are the most intrinsically motivating rewards you can offer if you want them to read. If we really want students to find reading to be both valuable and enjoyable *for their own reasons*, then we need to find the practices that we can implement in our classrooms that will guide students in discovering their own joy in reading.

Why Motivation Matters

In reviewing the research on reading motivation, Schiefele and colleagues (2012) found that “[a] multitude of studies have suggested that students’ motivation impacts their processes and products of learning above and beyond cognitive characteristics such as intelligence or prior knowledge” (p. 427). They follow that as academic learning is predominantly text based, reading competence plays a crucial role in learning. Reading motivation, then, is important to developing reading competence as it influences both the amount and breadth of student reading (Schiefele et al., 2012). There are a number of studies that support the idea that amount and breadth of reading is the single largest factor that influences reading achievement (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). In other words, the more they read, the better they become.

The Reading Habit

Schiefele and colleagues (2012) make another important observation about reading motivation; there is a distinction between *current* and *habitual* reading motivation. We are demonstrating a *current motivation to read* when we choose to read a specific text in a given situation. Reading a book for your book discussion group is a current reading event.

Habitual reading motivation, on the other hand, suggests a relatively stable willingness to *initiate* reading activities. This conceptualization might cause us to consider whether we have done enough to support our students in developing a habit of reading for learning and for pleasure. Have our practices supported them in finding the joy of reading for their own reasons and the security that they are competent to read the texts they enjoy?

ARCing Towards the Reading Habit

Students who develop a habit of reading are intrinsically motivated to read, regardless of whether there is an incentive or reward to do so. This should be our gold standard as educators – at least if we want our students to be readers for life. We already know a great deal from the literature regarding the types of instructional choices that promote the reading habit. Of these, **Access** to books, reading tasks that are **Relevant** and opportunities for student **Choice** have been linked to reading engagement and achievement (Anderman & Midgely, 1997; Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000). When these three elements are combined in reading activities – access, relevance, and choice – the overlapping benefits create a synergy that may support intrinsically engaged reading for current tasks that may develop into a habitual reading pattern.

Access

Studies document that classrooms rich in reading materials support higher levels of reading motivation than classrooms that have few materials (Guthrie & McCann, 1997; Neuman & Celano, 2001). Having a sufficient number and variety of books, magazines, graphic texts and other reading materials offers more choice to students who come to us with varying reading interests.

However, just having the books in the classroom is not sufficient to engage students- rather, how the teacher makes the materials available to the student is equally crucial. Students need to be aware of – or part of - how the materials are organized, how they are used, and how they are shared.

Book baskets. As adults, we often choose a book to read based on the recommendation of our friends or family members. In the classroom, a book recommendation from the teacher can be the spark that kindles students' interest in books that they might not have noticed. In the teacher's book basket are 10 – 15 books that the teacher presents in a 'book sell' that might hook students into giving it a try – just enough about the book to be interesting without giving it all away. Some (or all) of the books can be changed weekly.

Ideally, a variety of text types (narrative, informational, poetry, graphic) should be included, as should topics that would be interesting to the students in the classroom, not just the teacher's own favorites. For example, a teacher might be repelled by a book on dangerous spiders, but giving a book talk on how frightening the pictures appear will likely interest quite a few fans of the crawling arachnids (as well as fans of anything that repels the teacher!).

Bridging school to home. As the classroom library grows (and teachers do tend to hoard books over the years!) precious opportunities are created for sharing books with our students in a more permanent way. Books that have become a bit dated, perhaps more than five years old, can be marked with a piece of colored tape on the spine and set aside as a 'give away' book. This makes the books special

again, because these are books that students can take home to read over Thanksgiving or winter breaks to keep them reading, or as a gift from the teacher for birthdays, Valentine's Day or the last day of school.

Relevance

Reading activities that are interesting and relevant to students' lives are more likely to engage them – both affectively and cognitively (Brophy, 2008; Duke et al, 2006; Fulmer & Frijters, 2011; Purcell-Gates, 2002). If students see that the literacy activities you invite them to in the classroom are reflective of things they already do or will do in the future, they are more likely to engage meaningfully.

Reading to share. When adults finish reading a great book at night, they don't wake in the morning desperate to find a shoebox to make a diorama; rather, they tell a friend or a co-worker about the great book they read. Students can also be given the opportunity to share the books that they loved as well as those they disliked. Teachers can do this by providing time for students to do their own 'book sells' (à la Reading Rainbow, for those of you old enough to remember). Another way is to create a 'listography'; ask students to add books titles to lists on the classroom website, contributing titles to "Loved it!", "Loved the illustrations", "I learned a lot" or "Wish I hadn't read it". The teacher can create some categories to start and the students can add others as needed (and approved).

Reading for a purpose. Reading is an important way to know what we need to know. If, for example, students are concerned about extreme weather, teachers can both provide access and information regarding resources for understanding how extreme weather develops and how to stay safe when it strikes, but also the support required to understand these texts. In the content areas, demonstrate how reading is important to different professions; how to read like a historian or an environmental detective, for example.

Similarly, demonstrate how narratives are great resources for understanding the lives of people similar to - and different from - us through historical fiction, or learning about how people solve problems like bullying or being 'different'. Stories help us to understand what makes us human and can inspire us all to be better versions of ourselves.

Choice

There is an abundance of research suggesting that students are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to self-select materials for reading and to choose aspects of the tasks and activities in which they are involved (Cambourne, 1995; Guthrie et al., 1999; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). Reading something because the teacher requires it is a natural consequence of being in a K-12 classroom; there are many times that reading is prescribed and required so that students learn essential content and skills. However, completely removing the opportunity for students to choose what *they* want to read is dis-empowering;

students do not learn to browse and choose books and to find texts that will absorb them. This also makes it difficult for teachers to discover the types of reading materials their students prefer.

Time to read. Students need our support in selecting books to read that might interest them. In a classroom where there are teacher and student book recommendations (see *Access* and *Relevance* above), there is a better chance for students to discover something they can't wait to read. The only thing left is *time* for reading. Students will need enough time to become absorbed in what they are reading. Teachers have been successful in carving out a good 20 minutes or more in the morning as students are coming in, after lunch or recess when students are settling back into the classroom, or before dismissal when end-of day quiet reading time makes dismissal feel less hectic.

Bounded choices. While teachers, having curricular standards to address, may have particular texts in mind for certain activities, providing students a bounded choice can bridge the gap between *required* and *desired*. If teaching about the American Revolution, for example, the teacher might pull together a set of five or six biographies or historical fiction texts that present multiple perspectives and viewpoints – those who were Patriots, Loyalists, or points of view less mentioned, such as those of women or First Americans. Students can learn about the events and experiences of the war, but can choose their own path to this knowledge based on a point of view that might interest them.

Make Motivation Matter

While we agree with Paul Tough that motivation is complicated, we have enough research available to us to make reading a more engaging prospect for our students. Giving careful thought to how we are valuing and presenting reading activities and opportunities in our classrooms is an important first step to creating classroom climates that encourage and celebrate the habit of reading. Applying the evidence-based elements of *Access*, *Relevance*, and *Choice* in designing reading instruction in your classroom show promise in helping develop engaged readers who are passionate, persistent and proficient.

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