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Teaching Children to Enjoy Reading: Building A Strong Foundation in Children to Develop Lifelong
Readers

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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that the amount of time spent reading, particularly in younger generations has diminished significantly in recent years. In order to understand how educators can work to address this issue, I interviewed 6 students between the ages of 5 and 13, working to further understand what motivates students to read and what hinders their motivation. Through this study, I found that read-aloud, time to read independently for pleasure, and developing literary self-confidence in students are essential components to developing lifelong readers that have a positive relationship with literature. While much research and change needs to occur to decrease the shifting societal attitudes towards reading, these findings may help educators further understand how they can help build a strong reading foundation within young students.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, the National Endowment for the Arts released a rather defeatist but candid report that synthesized research on the latest trends on reading amongst adults in the United States. This report, entitled *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (2004), comprised of mostly data and statistics, divulged concerning information that leads reading experts to have a great deal of apprehension about the future of literary reading in America, which can be defined by reading texts such as novels, poems, and essays. In the introduction of this report, Dana Gioia stated “The report can be summarized in a single sentence: literary reading in America is not only declining among all groups, but the rate of decline has accelerated, especially among the young” (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004). According to this report, with research conducted by the Census Bureau, less than 50% of the American adult population reads literature, and this decrease in literary reading is declining amongst all genders, all ages, and all racial demographics. The rate of this decline is only accelerating with each passing year, raising concerns for younger generations (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004).

While the NEA’s report focused on adult literary reading habits, there is research to support that children and adolescents, as a whole, are reading less than previous years. In a survey conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 9-year old and 13-year-old students were interviewed on their reading habits. Only about 42% of 9-year-old students in 2020 stated that they read for enjoyment on a daily basis, which is a 11% decrease from the data from 1984. 16% of these students said they never or rarely read for fun, compared to 9% of students who rarely or never read for fun in 1984 (Schaeffer, 2021). When the 13-year old students were asked the same questions, only 17% said they read for enjoyment almost daily, and about 29% of students said they rarely or never read for enjoyment. In 1984, these numbers were 35% and 8%, respectively (Schaeffer2021).

When the statistics on this issue are examined, it becomes quickly apparent that, with each passing generation, school-aged students appear to be reading for enjoyment less and less, and these numbers are only continuing to drop. As we examine the data, the question arises: How do we help children enjoy reading and make them lifelong readers? As we look to find a solution to this mounting issue, it is important to look towards our education system and what teachers can implement—as well as not implement—to help develop a strong foundation in their students that fosters a positive relationship with reading. Through doing so, this foundation will hopefully span beyond the schooling years and into adulthood, helping those statistics discovered by the NEA to improve, rather than continually deteriorate with each passing generation of readers.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Motivating students to read has been a highly analyzed and researched concept in the education community, especially as the amount of time children appear to read on their own has steeply declined in recent decades. Educators and researchers alike have worked to better understand both the causes of why students seem to be reading less for enjoyment and the factors that educators can capitalize on in order to combat this issue.

Encouraging Students to Read in a Digital World

In an article written by Alyson Klein, an educational writer for Education Week, Klein cites the exponential increase of technology use as an explicit factor in why students are less likely to pick up a book. Between the years 2019-2021, the amount of time tweens (ages 8-12) and teens (ages 13-18) spend on technology has risen by 17% in both age groups. For children ages 8-12, that means they are spending an average of 5.5 hours on a screen each day. For teenagers between 13-18, they are spending over 8 hours a day on technology (Klein, 2022). In contrast, when surveying these same students, only about 1 in 3 tweens and 1 in 5 teens report taking time out of their day to read on their own for enjoyment (Klein 2022). With the increase in use of doing things such as watching videos and going on social media platforms, the amount of times students opt to pick up a book has gone down.

In response to the ever growing use of technology both inside and outside the classroom, Sarah D. Sparks shares her thoughts as a data journalist for Education Week. Sparks acknowledges that the new digital age we are living in has created issues with reading habits, stating that in both the United States and worldwide, around half of students report that they only read “when they have to” (Sparks, 2022). Sparks also acknowledges that reading in a digital context– such as on a tablet or a computer– impacts a student's ability to focus, as they are more likely to be distracted. However, Sparks recognizes that we are

living in a society where technology will only become more prevalent, and that, as educators, we can combat this technological issue through multiple tactics. For example, Sparks recommends that educators implement streamlining, which makes it more difficult for students to open other tabs or applications on their devices. Another course of action is adopting and enabling high-quality online tools that enhance reading, such as annotation and collaboration tools (Sparks, 2022). Sparks notes that an essential aspect of encouraging students to read is to get them in the *habit* of reading, stating “Developing the habit of long-form and pleasure reading is associated with significantly better academic achievement across subjects” (Sparks, 2022). If educators can work to eliminate distractions and build student reading stamina on technological devices, we can work to implement a habit in students that will make them more likely to read consistently, even if it is on a screen.

Providing Motivation for All Students

Rather than examining the factors that are correlated with students reading less, many researchers have worked to understand motivation factors to encourage students to read more. Two educational researchers, Jenna Cambria and John T. Guthrie, have dedicated their research to student motivation, particularly to how we can provide students with motivation to read. As stated by Cambria and Guthrie, successful readers need two things: reading skills (such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension) and the “will to read” (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Through their research, Cambria and Guthrie have determined that motivation stems largely from a student’s confidence. The two researchers point out that a student's perception of themselves as a reader is more closely linked to their success and achievement more than any other motivating factor. As humans, we innately enjoy continuing to do things we perceive ourselves to be good at. Therefore, students who believe they are strong readers are more likely to do it more often. However, in contrast to that, students who do not perceive themselves as proficient readers, will often stop trying completely. These students also perceive their abilities as worse

than they actually are, which provides them with a further lack of motivation (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

Cambria and Guthrie also point out the role of the teacher in a student's confidence, indicating that fostering strong relationships and rapport with students can be a large factor in a student's self-confidence (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

Another factor Cambria and Guthrie believe is heavily linked to motivation is interest. When Cambria and Guthrie talk about interest, they refer to the concept of "intrinsic motivation," meaning that students want to read for the sake of personal enjoyment or success, not for the sake of some sort of external reward, such as money or a grade (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Cambria and Guthrie also state that interest should be enduring rather than situational. Situational interest is described as interest in something "in the here and now," meaning the interest does not persist longer than a moment (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Enduring interest, however, is when students take interest in an aspect of reading, such as a genre, that encourages them to read for pleasure for a persistent period of time (Cambria & Guthrie).

Robin H. Boltz works to understand reading habits from the lens of different genders, striving to understand how gender influences motivation. Boltz noticed that across the United States, female students tend to score higher in reading performance than male students of the same age (Boltz, 2007). Determined to figure out what factors motivate students and influence this discrepancy in scores, Boltz interviewed 25 boys and 34 girls ages 10-13 about their reading habits and interests. Boltz found that both genders perceived reading as a whole as valuable and important. After her research, Boltz concluded the following statement: "Books are important to boys and girls, but for different reasons. Boys want action and adventure, even in their nonfiction selections. Girls prefer story and narrative if they are reading books" (Boltz, 2007). Boltz also observed that, in many classrooms, the reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment often is geared more towards the girls' interests, with fewer books and passages that are related to non-fiction and adventure. Similarly to Cambria and Guthrie, Boltz determined that, in order to motivate all students across all ages and genders, it is essential to have a reading curriculum that caters to

all student interests by either providing a variety of different genres or topics or giving students autonomy and freedom when it comes to choosing their reading material (Boltz, 2007).

Teacher, author, and literary consultant Debbie Miller has spent a large part of her career working to understand literacy and reading in the classroom. In her book, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2002), Miller discusses motivation, sharing her opinions and observations on how educators can motivate students to read. From Miller's perspective, she expressed an emphasis in providing students with choice and autonomy. In order for students to enjoy reading, it is important for them to be allowed to decide what they read, where they read it, and whom (if anyone) they read it with. Forcing students to read a certain book in a certain way limits both their interest in reading and their reading achievement (Miller, 2002). In the words of Miller, "When children understand that they share in the responsibility for their learning, when they have a say in the books they read, and when what they are asked to do has meaning, they are able to read for long stretches of time" (Miller, 2002). It is also important to make sure children have access to a wide range of books that are interesting and engaging both in the classroom and at home when possible. Children should have access to books that not only explore different topics and genres, but that are also a variety of levels. Students need books that are easier for them to read for the sake of enjoyment, but they also need to be challenged with books that are just within their reading level ability to provide them with a challenge (Miller, 2002). In addition, Miller believes that a key way to motivate students and to guide them to enjoy reading is to model these behaviors as educators. When we do things such as reading aloud to our students, modeling enthusiasm and positive attitudes towards reading is a key motivator to helping motivate students to read. When we do this, Miller states "My message is clear: I love reading. I know you will too" (Miller, 2002).

The Role of Read Aloud and Independent Reading

While Miller briefly touches on read-aloud time in school as a way to motivate students to read and show them how to see reading as pleasurable, other researchers take a deeper look at the influence of read-aloud and its impact on students. McCarthy et al. (2001) conducted an intervention and study across kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade classrooms in one urban and two suburban schools in Illinois to see the impacts implementing read-aloud programs have on students and reading. In this read-aloud intervention, McCarthy et al. worked to install reading corners to allow for a comfortable reading space for students, create “print-rich” classrooms with a variety of books for students to choose from, and allot time for teachers to read out loud to their students in the daily schedule (McCarthy et al., 2001). Students in the four different grade levels were surveyed before and after the program was implemented. At the end of the study, McCarthy et al. found that installing a read-aloud program significantly increased the amount of time students spent reading on their own across all grade levels, which, in turn, led to a decrease in the time most students spent watching television in all grade levels except for fifth grade, where the time spent watching TV stayed roughly the same (McCarthy et al., 2001). The article stated, “The researchers concluded from the results of the observation checklists that despite the short duration of the intervention, the number of students who chose reading as a free-time activity improved significantly” (McCarthy et al., 2001). Additional benefits to enriching the reading program and incorporating a designated time for read-aloud included allowing students to experience new genres and types of texts, improving student knowledge on reading elements such as story structure, vocabulary, and language structure, and helping students to view reading as an enjoyable activity, rather than an obligation (McCarthy et al., 2001).

Twenty years later after McCarthy et al.’s study, Rebecca Bellingham had similar thoughts and findings in her blog posting *Why Read-Loud Matters*, stating that, despite many teachers feeling like they do not have the time to read aloud to their students, “There is virtually nothing you could do that would

be more valuable and important than reading aloud every day, not just because kids love it and are able to experience the joy and delight books can provide but also because it fuels their ability and desire to read” (Bellingham, 2021). In particular, Bellingham pointed out the positive impact read-aloud can have on students who struggle with reading, as it gives all students access into the world of reading and its ability to introduce students to information and topics they may not otherwise be able to read for themselves yet. Additionally, Bellingham highlights how read-aloud allows for students to have more opportunity for higher-level discussion, allowing them to think more deeply about a wider range of content. Read-aloud is an effective time to introduce students to topics and issues that may not always be as prominent in the classroom, such as different cultures and social issues (Bellingham, 2021). In her article, Bellingham emphasizes that, despite what some educators and administrators believe to be true, read-aloud is a quintessential aspect of helping children to not only enjoy reading, but to broaden their critical thinking and literary skills. In the words of Bellingham, “Reading aloud to children every single day is one of the most important things any teacher can do to help children grow and become better readers, better thinkers, and, frankly, better human beings” (Bellingham, 2021).

Some research has worked to examine another common classroom reading practice: independent reading time. Independent reading time has taken on many names and forms over the years, including “Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)” or “Read-to-Self.” However, no matter what it is called, the purpose of independent reading is for students to have time during the school day to read on their own. In her article *Independent Reading: Perspectives and Practices of Highly Effective Teachers* (2012) Sherry Sanden observed 8 elementary school classrooms grades 1-5 in hopes of further learning about independent reading practices from teachers who were deemed effective and skilled by their communities and administration. In the early 2000s, many teachers were breaking away from incorporating independent reading time in their classroom by instead implementing more “scientifically-based” reading activities (Sanden, 2012). However, Sanden aims to highlight that independent reading time does have a place in the classroom, and that its impacts can be highly effective in not only encouraging students to enjoy

reading, but in elevating their reading performance. Sanden states that, while it is important for educators to still oversee a student's independent reading, providing students a choice in what they read and designated time to read that book of their choosing significantly motivates students to read on their own without being asked to do so (Sanden, 2012).

Chapter 3

Data Methods

In order to determine how educators can help students foster a positive relationship with reading—both inside and outside the classroom—I interviewed six different students about their attitude and perception of reading. I decided to interview two different groups: students who were in lower elementary school (grades 1-2) and students who were in upper elementary or early middle school (grades 5-7). I chose students based on personal connections I had, many of whom were students I taught swim lessons to in the last few years. I tried to choose students that came from a variety of different types of schools and areas in order to try and get a fuller perspective and have a variety of different opinions and attitudes. The purpose of interviewing two different age groups was to determine if there was a difference in overall attitude towards reading between younger students—students who either had just started or were about to start to learn how to read—and older students—students who have been reading for multiple years now and have a more intensive reading education.

The interviews were divided into two different parts. During the first part, I provided participants a scale (Appendix A) that ranged from 1-5, each number having a corresponding emoticon that portrayed an emotion that correlated to that number. On this scale, one was the lowest score and five was the highest score. Participants were then asked to rate on the scale their feelings towards a variety of different activities related to reading. If a student strongly disliked an activity, they would point to the one on the scale. If they strongly liked an activity, they were to give it a five on the scale. If an activity did not apply to them, I wrote “n/a.” The goal of this activity was to get a general understanding on not only individual attitudes for different aspects of reading, but to also identify any overall trends between age groups.

Following this activity, I then interviewed each participant with more specific questions that were open-ended (Appendix B). These questions were designed to estimate the general frequency each participant read, what they enjoy and dislike about reading, and how reading could be improved for them in schools. At the end, participants were also asked questions designed to assess their confidence and self-

concept of themselves as a reader and their perception of reading's value. Following the interviewing process, the interview responses were assessed for common trends and key concepts. Through examining the data, four themes emerged that provided insight into how we, as educators, can work to instill a positive relationship between students and reading: enhancing self-concept, providing increased time for students to read independently the book of their choosing, encouraging students to see the value in reading, and incorporating designated "read-aloud" time regularly.

Chapter 4

Findings

Table 1: A Summary of Participants

Student	Grade Level	Summary
Lucy	Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was behind her grade level in reading • Confidence in reading increased her enjoyment • Reads at home daily • Enjoys read aloud, fiction, and silent reading time in school • Does not enjoy reading in front of her teacher or class
Charlie	Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends a Waldorf school where they do not have formal reading education until first grade • Wants to learn how to read • Doesn't read at home frequently • Enjoys read aloud and picture books • Has not yet experienced other types of reading instruction
Lily	Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is "on level" for her age • Read almost every day at home • Enjoys reading at home more than reading at school • Enjoys picture books, fiction books, and read aloud • Does not like reading tests or reading in front of the teacher
Emma	Grade 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is above her grade level in reading • Reads every day, multiple times a day • Enjoys silent reading time, historical fiction, and challenging herself in reading
Flynn	Grade 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above level in reading • Reads every day, multiple times a day • Likes silent reading time, fiction, and read aloud
Connor	Grade 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers other activities (sports, video games) over reading • Enjoys reading without assignments attached

The Value of Confidence and Self-Concept

For each of the participants I interviewed, I asked the question “Do you view yourself as a good reader?” The purpose of this question was to identify if there was a correlation between how much a student enjoys reading and their self-concept as a reader. The older students—Emma, Flynn, and Connor—all viewed themselves as strong readers. Emma and Flynn, who are twin siblings, are both multiple reading levels ahead of their grade level, reading at almost a high school level in fifth grade. Their enjoyment for reading was extremely evident, as they both explained in their interview that they read every single day, frequently picking up a book whenever they had a spare moment of time both at school and at home. Connor tends to read less than Emma and Flynn, telling me that he usually opts to do other activities—such as baseball, playing outside, and playing video games—over reading in his spare time. However, when asked if he saw himself as a good reader, he responded with “I think I’m pretty good at it most of the time.” While his self-concept of himself as a reader did not appear to be quite as strong as Emma and Flynn’s, it was still evident that he has confidence in himself when it comes to reading.

Confidence and self-concept seemed to have a greater importance and impact on the younger participants—Lucy, Charlie, and Lily. After interviewing Lucy, Lucy’s mother mentioned that Lucy has been behind in terms of her reading development and reading level. While other factors may have had a role, Lucy’s mother believed that Lucy struggled to develop phonemic awareness due to COVID-19. When teachers tried to teach phonics with masks, it made it more challenging for Lucy to grasp what sound each letter made because she could not see her teacher’s mouth form the sound. However, teachers did not seem to notice that Lucy had fallen behind, as Lucy had a strong ability to “guess” on reading exams. The summer after Lucy finished first grade, Lucy’s mother had Lucy working with a private reading specialist for about 1-1.5 hours a week, which drastically increased Lucy’s decoding and comprehension skills. When Lucy was interviewed, she had been working with a private reading specialist for about one month, and Lucy’s mother stated that she not only noticed a large difference in her ability to read, but also a shift in Lucy’s confidence as a reader. As a result of this increased ability

and confidence, Lucy has been asking her mother to read with her much more frequently and has been reading on her own far more often than she had prior to receiving additional support. While this may not be true for all children, in Lucy's case, an increased self-concept and sense of confidence also correlated with an increase in enjoyment of reading.

Charlie also demonstrated similar attitudes as Lucy. When Charlie was interviewed, he had no formal reading instruction despite going into first grade. Charlie attends a Waldorf school, which does not begin formal reading instruction until first grade. While other schools often begin to teach letters, phonic, and sight words in Kindergarten, Charlie had not yet been exposed to any of these concepts due to the curriculum and philosophy of his school. When I asked him "how could reading be more enjoyable for you in school?," Charlie responded with "If I could read better, I would like it more." Out of the three younger students who were interviewed, Charlie read the least amount, stating that he often did not read at home and that he did not always enjoy reading. He had the lowest confidence in himself as a reader, and his response reflected that his self-concept often contributes to less reading time. Like many people, humans are not inclined to participate in something they do not feel they are proficient in doing. Similarly, when young children do not view themselves as "good" readers, they are less inclined to do so.

"Reading Just to Read": Providing Students Choice and Independence

Throughout the interview, one of the main purposes was to determine what educators and schools could do to make reading more enjoyable for students. If students found more enjoyment in reading, it could potentially lead them to increase how often they seek out a book during their free time. Just like how it is often human nature to not want to participate in an activity we don't view ourselves as "good" at, it is also typically natural for people to seek out activities that bring them enjoyment and satisfaction. For the younger participants, their self-concept and ability as a reader seemed to correlate with how much time they spent reading. For the older participants, their motivation was correlated to another factor: being

able to read just for the sake of doing so and being able to choose their own reading material. In other words, the participants stated that they wanted to be able to read a book of their choice without any test, report, or other assignment attached.

In Emma's interview, her love for reading was immediately apparent, especially when it came to historical fiction and nonfiction books about dogs. She stated that she reads during a large portion of her free time when she is at home. However, she expressed disappointment in the amount of time she is allowed to read in school on her own, with the book of her choosing. She stated the only time she is allowed to read is if she finishes an assignment or test before the allotted time is up, but she said that makes her feel "pressure to finish early."

Emma's twin brother, Flynn, also had parallel feelings without even hearing his sister's similar response. Flynn also often chooses to read in his free time, particularly fantasy books (he expressed a particular interest in Rick Riordan) and World War II historical fiction. Throughout the entirety of the interview, Flynn reflected a positive attitude towards reading. When I asked him what his favorite reading activities were in school, he stated that he likes almost all of them. The only time Flynn's positive attitude towards an aspect of reading diminished is when he stated that he did not like when he had to "write about books." When I asked him how reading could be more enjoyable, Flynn expressed that he wanted more time to read on his own, or in his words, "I like reading just to read." Silent reading time is Flynn's favorite reading activity in school, but, like Emma, felt that there was not enough time to do so.

In his interview, Connor's feelings towards reading were different than Emma and Flynn's. During his free time, Connor prefers alternative activities to reading. He said he might read a few times a week when his parents ask him to, but there are other things he would rather do. However, despite having a different perspective on reading, when I asked him how reading could be more enjoyable, Connor's response was similar to the other two participants in the older age group. Connor stated that he felt his school did not allow for enough independent reading time where students could choose the book. He

expressed disdain for reading tasks that involve some sort of assessment or writing. Instead, he stated that he wanted an increased amount of “more reading for fun that’s not graded.” To follow up, Connor was asked if he thought he would read more often in his spare time if he were given more opportunities to read. He replied, “I think so because I would get into more books and want to finish them.”

When comparing the responses of the younger participants to the responses of the older participants, it seems that the time allotted for students to read independently in school diminishes as students get older, as expressed by the older participants’ desire to want to be provided more time to read a book of their choosing with no assessment or writing attached. In addition to having less time for silent reading as students get older, it also seems that students have less choice in what they read. As reading curriculums get more rigorous as students grow older, more time is dedicated to students reading the literature the school requires them to read over reading a book of their choosing. In my time working in a second-grade classroom, I have noticed that even lower-elementary classrooms are adapting more rigorous curriculums that leave little time for students to read a book of their choosing. While adhering to a reading curriculum is important, it is also important that students are provided opportunity and time to read a book of their choice in order to perpetuate a positive attitude towards reading in students.

Perception of Value in Reading

At the end of each interview, all participants were asked the following question: “Do you think reading is important?” While there were a variety of different responses to almost every other question that was asked, this question yielded the most consistent results: all participants felt that reading was important. Regardless of their age, their self-concept as a reader, or how much they enjoyed reading, all participants believed that reading had some sort of value. When asked why they felt reading was important, the responses varied.

For the younger participants in particular, they saw reading as important and valuable because reading is what educates people and students. Lila stated that reading is important because “it helps us learn new things,” and Lucy explained that “if you read non-fiction, you learn more real things that tell you information.” Charlie had a similar response as well, but he took it one step further by explaining that reading is important because, without reading, people would “know almost nothing and couldn’t write.” Even without formal reading and writing instruction, Charlie was able to identify the link between reading and writing and recognize the importance of reading in one’s writing development.

While the older participants also noted that reading plays an essential role in educating the human population, they were also able to recognize that reading has additional value that expands beyond educational purposes. While Connor did reply that reading is important because “you can learn about important things in the world,” he also continued his answer and stated that reading also holds value because it is “good for your brain.” He did not elaborate further on why reading was healthy for your brain, but this response indicated that he recognized reading has benefits aside from helping the reader learn new information. Emma also recognized the educational benefit of learning, but she also acknowledged the enjoyment of reading as well.

Read Aloud

Throughout the interview, I asked the participants about various aspects of reading activities that they may encounter throughout the school day. Students shared their experiences and feelings towards reading assignments (such as papers, worksheets, etc.), silent reading time, and reading exams, but I took a special interest in determining students’ feelings towards read-aloud time. I asked each participant “How do you feel about read-aloud time in school? Why do you feel this way?” All students have experienced read-aloud time in school, and each participants’ response either indicated positive feelings

towards read-aloud, or feelings of indifference. No negative feelings were indicated in any of the participants' responses.

For Lily, it was clear from her interview that her favorite aspect of reading is being read to by an adult. However, her positive feelings seemed to be directed more towards being read aloud to at home. At school, she explained that her classroom read-aloud was almost always done by a computer, rather than the teacher, which she explained she did not like as much. When she was home, she stated that she liked hearing the "silly voices" her dad often uses when reading aloud to Lily. Additionally, Lily also enjoys reading at home because her parents would often read books about her culture. Lily's family is from Brazil, and she always spoke very enthusiastically when talking about the books her father read to her that were written in Portuguese. When I asked her if she ever read books about her culture or in Portuguese in her classroom, she told me that they did not have any.

Based on Lily's response, it seems that her enjoyment for read-aloud stems from two aspects: 1) Getting to form a connection with an adult and hear a story "come to life" with the use of different voices, expressions, etc. and 2) It allows her to learn about her cultural background and even get to hear stories read in a completely different language. In her classroom, she was not receiving either of those aspects, which made it so that read-aloud was not as enjoyable for her at school as it was at home. As educators, read-aloud can be an opportunity to show students the enjoyment that can be derived through reading by choosing books that encapsulate student interest and adding life to a story through reading it aloud with enthusiasm and emotion. Additionally, it can be an effective way to bring in different cultural elements that relate to student identities within the classroom. For Lily, these elements of read aloud were evident at home, but were not nearly as present at school, which seemed to diminish her excitement towards school read-aloud.

Despite not having other aspects of reading education in his Waldorf education, Charlie did mention that his teacher would do a read-aloud time everyday called "story rest time." At his school, this time was designed to help students relax their body and unwind after a period of activity. However,

Charlie did mention that after Kindergarten, which was the grade he had just recently finished, this period of the day was taken away, stating that “first-graders don’t get to have story rest time anymore.” When I asked him how he felt about not having read-aloud time next year, he explained that it made him sad because “it helps me relax my body and hear a story.”

Chapter 5

Conclusion

How do we motivate children to enjoy reading and make them lifelong readers?

When I began my research, my main goal was to answer the following question: How do we help children enjoy reading and make them lifelong readers? As I begin my student teaching career, which will quickly be followed by a professional education career, I wanted to learn more about how I could promote a positive relationship towards reading in all of my teaching endeavors, as well as motivate students to read for pleasure. Throughout my research, I have arrived at many conclusions as to how I can promote lifelong readers. First, as an educator, I want to help guide my students to not only see reading as valuable, but to also have confidence in themselves as a reader.

Additionally, I find read-aloud to be an essential component to developing positive relationships with reading, particularly in younger students. Read-aloud allows stories to come to life, and it allows for young students to hear stories they may not otherwise be yet able to read themselves. While read-aloud may be a concept that is being forced out of many school schedules, I believe there is always time for students to sit down and listen to a good story. Read-aloud allows for in-depth discussion, and it allows children to learn about topics they may not have otherwise chosen to learn about themselves.

During my interviewing process, I was surprised by how many students—particularly those in the upper grade levels—indicated that they wanted more time to read independently a book of their choosing. It seems that, often, school curriculums do not allow for a lot of time for students to participate in reading for pleasure, particularly as students get older. While teaching reading skills such as decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension are important, how are we supposed to develop lifelong readers who view reading as enjoyable if we never provide them time to practice choosing and reading their own literature?

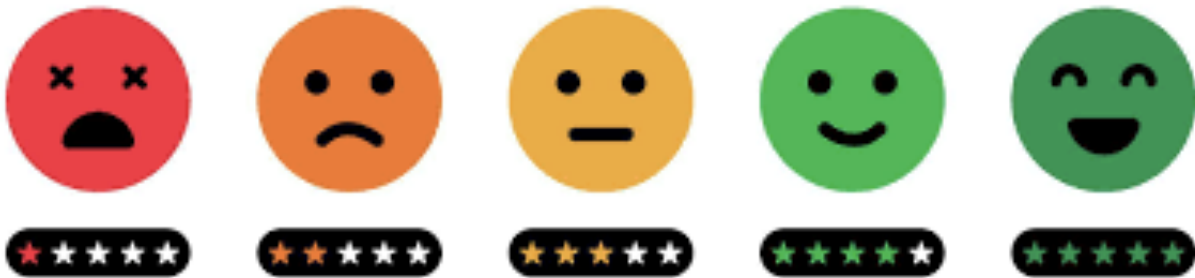
The power of choice in independence is an essential part of a student's reading journey and them finding enjoyment in reading. When I have a classroom of my own, I aim to have a print-rich classroom where students have access to books of a variety of genres and topics. I also want to allow them to explore the world of reading on their own terms, finding the pleasure in it independently.

Even living in an ever-growing digital age, it is my hope as a teacher to foster a positive relationship with reading for as many students as I can and motivate them to become lifelong readers. This research helped me to realize how such a goal can be accomplished, allowing me to better understand student perspectives on reading across multiple age groups. I believe that, no matter what field or profession one enters into, reading is an essential skill that one will use for their entire lives. It is my hope that I can develop students who not only view reading as a skill they need, but also as a means of enjoyment and pleasure. Rather than always viewing reading as an obligation, I want my students to see reading as an outlet of enjoyment that they can turn to throughout their time in school and well beyond.

Appendix A

Rating Reading Activities on a Scale of 1-5

Using the following scale, rate how you feel about each of the following activities:



- Reading at home with a parent
- Reading a book for school
- Reading for pleasure by yourself
- Reading with a friend
- Read aloud at school
- Silent reading time in school
- Taking a reading test
- Reading in front of a teacher
- Reading in front of your class
- Reading chapter books
- Reading picture books
- Reading non-fiction
- Reading fiction

Appendix B

Research Interview Questions

- Do you like to read for pleasure? Why or why not?
- How often do you read for pleasure?
 - Almost every day
 - A few times a week
 - A few times a month
 - A few times a year
 - I only read when I have to
- What kinds of things do you like to read for pleasure?
- What is your favorite reading activity to do in school?
- What kinds of reading assignments do you not like at school?
- How do you feel about read-aloud time in school? Why do you feel this way?
- How do you feel about reading tests in school? Why do you feel this way?
- How could reading in school be more enjoyable for you?
- Do you view yourself as a good reader?
- Do you think reading is important? Why do you think reading is important?

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