

INTENTIONAL PLANNING IN THE READ ALOUD: A CASE FOR QUESTIONING

By

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Dedication

To my children, Anabelle, Killian, Daphne and Yvette, and all my kids in my classes throughout the years, may you always find the courage to not let others define what is to be expected of you, but rather to decide what you expect of yourself. Be kind, be courageous, and be relentless in the pursuit of knowledge. There is nothing you cannot accomplish if you are willing to work hard enough for it.

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Abstract

Reading aloud is an important instructional activity for helping young children learn early literacy skills and develop content knowledge. When teachers ask questions during a read aloud, they can help students notice and think more deeply about information in the book. Despite the benefits of read alouds, some teachers do not engage students in ways that support learning. The purpose of the study was to explore how two kindergarten teachers, each identified as a “model teacher” by their principal, based on a given criterion, prepare for read alouds and engage students in questioning during read alouds. Data collected included a survey about teachers’ read aloud beliefs and practices, video recordings of four read alouds (i.e., two readings of a teacher chosen book, two readings of a researcher chosen book) and semi-structured interviews after the second read aloud. Results indicated that teachers plan differently for read alouds, and teachers’ beliefs about read alouds and the role of questioning may have influenced the kinds and number of questions they asked.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The power of a read aloud seems to be undervalued in today's school systems, although years of research have emphasized that reading aloud to children is an important part of early literacy development (Lane & Wright, 2007). As Williams (2001) and others (Chomsky, 1972, Wells, 1986) have said, we should read aloud to children every day to help them develop their language and literacy skills. While having conversations with children are important, when they hear stories read aloud, they are learning about the language of written narratives such as sentence structure and vocabulary, as well as how books work (Purcell-Gates, 1989).

However, read alouds do much more than just develop language and literacy skills, and content knowledge in young children. They help them develop a love for literacy as well. This is particularly true when teachers engage children in socially and emotionally rewarding interactions around books, which in turn help children develop a more positive attitude toward reading, and motivates them to engage in other literacy activities (Lane & Wright, 2007). Further, as Fox (2013) states "listening to beloved stories again and again is a step on the road to literacy that cannot be ignored, no matter how gifted a child might be, or how disadvantaged; no matter what grade that child is in, or how young or old; no matter which language he or she speaks; no matter when he or she starts school; no matter which country he or she lives in" (p. 4).

Reading aloud to children is a common tool that teachers use for literacy instruction. Research shows that reading aloud supports development of skills such as listening comprehension (Morrow & Gambrell, 2002), oral language skills (Gerde & Powell, 2009; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000), vocabulary and concept knowledge (Neuman & Dwyer, 2011; Neuman, Newman, & Dwyer, 2011), awareness of story schema (Van Den Broek, 2001), print

awareness (Pullen & Justice, 2003), word recognition skills (Stahl, 2003), and comprehension monitoring (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001). However, the benefits of reading aloud can vary due to teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their purpose for reading a text aloud, as well as their skill at enacting the complex task of reading texts aloud to children. This has led to research exploring ways teachers can engage in high-quality read alouds (e.g., Swanson, Vaughn, Wanzek, Petscher, Heckert, Cavanaugh, Kraft & Tackett, 2011) to support learning. For the present study, I focus on interactive read alouds and how they are used to support early literacy development in kindergarten classrooms.

Kindergarten teachers have many responsibilities because kindergarten is an important foundational year for children. Kindergarten teachers teach children about school rules and routines, procedures and expectations, and they manage young children's behaviors, which can seem somewhat magical in the eyes of untrained observers. Kindergarten teachers are in the unique position of introducing children to academic learning and meeting the needs of a diverse group of learners. However, kindergarten teachers' beliefs and expectations influence their pedagogical decisions (Fang, 1996) and this sets the stage for what happens in their classroom and how children's attitude toward learning develops. In short, kindergarten is an important year for young learners and reading books aloud is an important instructional activity that supports students' language, literacy, and content learning, and their appreciation of literacy.

As with most terms of education, definitions can vary depending on the source. For my study, an *interactive read aloud*, sometimes known as an *interactive shared reading*, is when an adult reads a book aloud and engages children in interactions with the text (Trivette & Durst, 2007). These interactions can be used to emphasize specific literacy skills such as phonological awareness, which is the understanding of sound units in spoken words, vocabulary and/or

comprehension. However, the central idea is that the teacher facilitates conversations about the text to help children learn.

There are many well-known and effective strategies for supporting literacy (National Reading Panel, 2000) and most teachers employ these strategies. However, they sometimes do so without thinking deeply about what they are doing (Parker & Hurry, 2007). When teachers understand and carefully choose strategies, they are better able to differentiate lessons and scaffold learning based on students' instructional levels and learning styles. Further, by modeling and explicitly teaching strategies, students are better able to learn the tools they need to become skilled readers. For example, skilled readers use self-regulated strategies, such as generating their own questions about the text (Parker & Hurry, 2007). Also, when skilled readers use strategies such as making inferences and predictions, or rethinking events in a story in relation to past events, they are more likely to comprehend texts.

Modeling and explicitly teaching strategies to students are important instructional practices because they help students learn how to make meaning when listening to or reading texts. They also align with Rosenblatt's (1978) Transaction Theory, which discusses how a reader negotiates meaning in the text. However, as Hoffman (2011) notes, "not all readers naturally interact with the text to make meaning, especially less experienced readers; however, readers can be apprenticed into interpretive approaches to text, which can better prepare them for higher level literacy demands" (p. 185). While teachers typically ask questions, a powerful tool for supporting comprehension, they are often closed-ended questions (e.g., yes/no response), which limits students' opportunities to engage in or take control of talk and ask questions themselves. Ideally, teachers would model to students how effective readers interact with texts, such as asking open-ended questions, and provide them with opportunities to practice those

strategies (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

Teachers may not think deeply about the strategies they are using when reading aloud, such as questioning. This could be due to the fact teachers are focused on teaching content knowledge rather than teaching strategies that empower students to gain ownership of their learning and comprehension (Parker & Hurry, 2007). Less experienced teachers may also have limited pedagogical knowledge and/or be more focused on other important aspects of curriculum such as diagnosing students' learning needs, adapting instruction for specific needs, managing a classroom, and engaging in long-term planning. As teachers gain pedagogical knowledge and teaching experience, they may be more likely to use multiple strategies during a read aloud. But do experienced educators use their knowledge and experience to engage in intentional planning for a read aloud, and if so, do they consider the use of specific strategies? What strategies do experienced educators use during a read aloud? Specifically, what do they know about and how do they use questioning to further students' literacy and learning?

Statement of the Problem

Planning is important for ensuring that instruction is effective and meaningful, including planning for a read aloud. Questioning is a powerful strategy for supporting learning in a whole class read aloud and during a small group read aloud to differentiate instruction. However, for questioning to be effective, teachers should plan their questions in advance in order to teach literacy skills including analytical and critical thinking. If teachers do not understand the importance of reading aloud to students or engaging in planning before reading a text aloud, they may miss opportunities to teach students important literacy skills and strategies. Further, if teachers are not modeling strategies and if they are not allowing students opportunities to practice strategies when listening to texts, then students may not learn how to make purposeful

connections with texts that support comprehension. Practicing strategies can also help students learn early literacy skills such as print concepts and phonological awareness and increase vocabulary knowledge.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to understand how experienced kindergarten teachers plan for read alouds and view the role of questioning during read alouds, and to determine the types of questions they ask when reading a book aloud to students. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do kindergarten teachers prepare for the read aloud?
2. How do kindergarten teachers view the role of questioning during the read aloud?
3. What types of questions do kindergarten teachers ask during a read aloud event?

Significance of the Study

Research suggests that teacher effectiveness accounts for about 15 to 20 percent of the variance of student performance (Haertel, 2013). Planning is part of teacher effectiveness, yet there limited research on how teachers plan for read alouds, including the use of strategies such as questioning to support learning. If teachers, both novice and experienced, understand the importance of planning and reading aloud, the value of modeling and teaching strategies to students, and provide them with opportunities to use those strategies, then students are more likely to learn and internalize those strategies. For example, students' ability to answer questions and engage in self-questioning can affect their learning and reading comprehension. The present study is significant because it explores how experienced kindergarten teachers, identified as effective literacy instructors by their principal, engage in planning for and use questioning during read alouds. Understanding how experienced teachers plan and make instructional decisions to

support their students may help administrators and teacher-educators provide better support to in-service and pre-service teachers.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are central to understanding the current study.

Model teacher. The term “model teacher” is used to describe the participants in my selective sample of teachers. These individuals are referred to as models because their principal identified them as being a role model for other teachers, demonstrating leadership qualities, having a deep understanding of the teaching and learning processes, especially with respect to literacy, and engaging in reflective practice based on student results (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2001).

Interactive read aloud. As the vehicle for this inquiry it is important to understand what is meant by read aloud. Morison and Wlodarczyk (2009) describe a “read-aloud as an instructional practice where teachers, parents, and caregivers read texts aloud to children. The reader incorporates variations in pitch, tone, pace, volume, pauses, eye contact, questions, and comments to produce a fluent and enjoyable delivery” (p.111). As an instructional practice, a teacher can use read alouds to teach students vocabulary, print concepts, phonological awareness, and to support analytical and metacognitive thinking.

Print Concepts. Print concepts are defined as a student’s awareness of the parts of a book (e.g. title, cover, spine, what an author and illustrator do) and how print works, such as directionality of print, bolded print, italicized, speech bubbles, punctuation, and spaces between words. Print concepts provide a foundation for learning more complex literacy concepts such as the alphabetic principle, text structure and genre, and can create a desire to learn more about

books (Roskos, Christie, & Richgels, 2003).

Phonological Awareness. Mihai, Friesen, Butera, Horn, Lieber, and Palmer (2015) state that “phonological awareness is a child’s ability to recognize and identify sounds in their environment including spoken words” (p. 4). Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes the awareness of spoken word, rhymes, syllables, onset-rime, and phonemes.

Phonemic Awareness. Phonemic awareness refers to a student’s ability to isolate and manipulate the individual sounds of phonemes in a spoken word.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary refers to the words and word meanings that are taught within the read aloud. Vocabulary instruction focuses on the comprehension and retention of words in a text that may be unknown, have multiple definitions, or need explicit explanation.

Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised. Wilson (2017) states that the Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised “deal[s] with the varied aspects of human learning and is arranged hierarchically, proceeding from the simplest functions to those that are more complex” (para 2). Teachers can use this hierarchy to ask questions that engage students in low level cognitive skills (i.e., knowledge and comprehension) and high level or critical thinking (i.e., applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating). For the current study, I use Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised to identify the types of questions teachers are asking during each read aloud.

Summary of Chapter 1 and Orientation to Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter, I introduced the problem and provided the rationale for my dissertation study. I presented my research questions and explained the significance of the study. Finally, I defined key terms related to the study, and identified limitations. In Chapter 2, I review the literature related to this study. Specifically, I discuss intentional planning, questioning, and Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised. I also present my theoretical framework. In Chapter 3, I describe

the design and methods of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the major findings and outlines recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

Controversy regarding the role of read alouds in the curriculum is at an all-time high. This might be because some teachers use read alouds as part of their literacy instructions, while other teachers look at it as simply a break from teaching. So why do some teachers use read alouds as an instructional tool and others do not? Do teachers' beliefs contribute to their understanding of reading aloud as a valuable instructional tool? Do the decisions they make, such as choosing what book to read aloud or the kind of questions they ask students, influence their thinking? Regardless, research shows that read alouds are important to literacy learning (e.g., Beck, & McKeown, 2007; Gerde & Powell, 2009; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000; Silverman, 2007; Smolkin, & Donovan, 2001; Stahl, 2003) and planning is necessary for engaging students in meaningful read alouds.

When teachers and students interact with each other during read aloud, teachers have opportunities to discuss story structures, print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and vocabulary. In addition to teaching these components of literacy, when teachers interact with students during a read aloud, they can also teach students comprehension skills such as predicting what might happen in the story or how to engage in self-talk that helps them understand the texts (Fox, 2013). However, for this to occur, teachers should intentionally choose texts and then purposefully plan how to read the texts aloud to ensure that teacher-student interactions provide meaningful learning experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory is used to frame the present study because it underscores the importance of teacher-student interactions during a read aloud. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that through social interactions, an adult can structure activities so that a child's role is within his or her zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is "the difference between a child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Teachers should consider their students' knowledge and previous experiences in order to plan questions that are within students' ZPD and that guide students' learning until they are capable of more independent actions. As Vygotsky (1978) warns, "asking questions that are so far beyond the reach of a child's intellectual skills is to eliminate the influence of previous experience and knowledge" (p. 30). Vygotsky's emphasis on the social nature of cognition rather than its individual nature, in addition to his belief that social experiences influenced how learning was constructed, related to the important role interactive teacher read alouds might play in a classroom. When a teacher reads a book aloud to the students, the act of reading becomes a social event, especially when the teacher encourages student talk. This student talk may be between student and teacher, student and student, or both. Vygotsky's work suggests that the adult participant in a read-aloud is significant because it is his or her social patterns and scaffolding that shape the read-aloud event. Reese, Cox, Harte, and McAnally (2003) stated that, "Perhaps the most important sociocultural tool that a child can have in Western society is literacy, a skill that can only be learned through social interaction" (p. 37). This social interaction, as identified by Vygotsky (1978) and as seen in the interactive classroom read-aloud, is facilitated by the adult reader.

Read Alouds in Early Childhood Classrooms

Kindergarten is an important year for students as they begin their academic learning (Lee & Biermen, 2015), because it lays a strong foundation for learning how to read, especially for young students who have not had any prior preschool experience. Although teachers can teach literacy throughout the day, read alouds provide multiple and unique opportunities to support early literacy development. First, a read aloud offers a context in which a class can come together as a community to discuss a common topic in text and allow students of diverse backgrounds to participate in a meaningful conversation. Second, a read aloud provides teachers with opportunities to focus on different literacy concepts, depending on their purpose, for the read aloud. However, unlike small group instruction in a guided reading or other group settings that allow teachers to address the needs of a few students, a read aloud requires a teacher to consider the needs of all students to keep them engaged. Consequently, teachers need to be intentional when reading aloud to students. Furthermore, how a teacher views the read aloud and its importance to instruction will inherently affect how they plan for it as well as its overall purpose and intentionality in the classroom.

Teacher Intentionality

Intentionality refers to the choices teachers make, and it can either support or hinder students' learning. Intentionality occurs when planning a read aloud, and might include, for example, considering what content to teach, what standard(s) to address, and how to differentiate instruction. Highly effective teachers make it look easy, but, as Kindle (2009) states, "The effortless manner in which skilled teachers conduct read alouds masks the complexity of the pedagogical decisions that occur" (p. 202). One complexity that teachers address is that directed and designed interactions between a teacher and students should be purposefully aligned with the

requirements of the curriculum, the standards, and the needs of students. To be intentional in their instruction, teachers also should “challenge, scaffold and extend the children’s skills” (Mihai et al., 2015, p. 6).

Teachers’ beliefs regarding the read aloud will influence their behaviors and intentional decision within the read aloud. In the context of teaching, beliefs may lead educators to emphasize or leave out aspects of curriculum (Fives & Buehl, 2008). The objectives and choices that teachers make are important to the planning process. When teachers scaffold learning and clearly identify targeted objectives, the planning becomes more explicit. Lack of intentionality in planning objectives may influence the kind of questions and clearly defined learning goals in the read aloud. Deford (1985) drew attention to this as it relates to early reading when his research found a strong correlation between educators’ responses on a belief profile and his observations of their instruction.

Another issue that teachers should intentionally consider is how much time to spend on instructional objectives and to what extent cover the material. Considering breadth versus depth can be challenging for even the most experienced teachers. Breadth can involve cross-curricular planning to teach multiple objectives at a time, but it typically does not give students the time or opportunities in-depth or for hands-on experience they need to fully acquire new information. While depth affords students the ability dive deeper into content and to apply skills learned in lessons to authentic learning experiences, teachers need time to engage in detailed planning to effectively implement in-depth teaching. Often, due to time constraints, teachers must make difficult decisions about breadth versus depth, and which skills and strategies to teach and which are omitted.

Teachers should be intentional when they are selecting text to read aloud. Teachers need to consider the topic they are teaching, students' interest in and background knowledge about the topic, and how they might use the text to teach specific information. Teachers should also reflect on the length and complexity of a text. Text complexity is defined by the features that are within the text that might affect students' ability to comprehend its meaning at a deeper level. This includes, but is not limited to, sentence structures, vocabulary, storyline, point of view, and knowledge demands (Witte, 2016). If a text is too complex, students' attention and learning will decrease. Therefore, teachers should be intentional when choosing a text to read aloud to ensure that the text's content is interesting, and complexity is manageable so that students are able to learn from the read aloud.

Another component of intentionality is planning for repeated readings of a text. Repeated readings provide opportunities for teachers to engage students in conversations leading to high level thinking. They also allow teachers to model different strategies and create opportunities for students to practice using those strategies so that they can begin learning and internalizing those strategies. Finally, repeated teachings allow teachers to reiterate important content in different ways so that students are more likely to learn the information.

Teachers should be intentional when choosing instructional strategies to use when reading aloud. Intentionality is needed because implementing strategies without proper planning can lead to confusion, which decreases learning. With a variety of instructional strategies to choose from, teachers should reflect on the objectives they want their students to learn and choose strategies that will help students achieve those objectives. As McGee and Schickedanz (2007) state, "effective interactive read alouds include a systematic approach that incorporates teachers' modeling of higher-level thinking, asking thoughtful questions calling for analytic talk,

prompting children to recall a story in some way within a reasonable time frame, reading a single book repeatedly, and reading books related by topic” (p. 743).

Intentional planning is also necessary to determine what instructional steps are needed to help students learn new skills. As Mihai, et al. (2015) explain,

If the skill is *consistently demonstrated*, teachers may decide to focus on more complex skills. If the skill is *emerging*, teachers can continue to provide opportunities to practice, and if the skill is *not yet demonstrated*, teachers may plan more scaffolding of instruction or differentiating or individualizing instruction at the child’s level (p. 12).

In short, intentionality refers to the choices teachers makes when planning instruction and because “read alouds are instructional events [they] require the same advanced planning as any other lesson” (Kindle, 2009, p. 209). Teachers’ beliefs will affect the intentionality of the read aloud and thus their behaviors towards their instruction. Intentionality when planning read alouds means that teachers might makes choices about (a) what learning objectives to teach and to what extent they are covered, (b) what texts to use to teach objectives and how much time is spent to teach content, (c) what skills and strategies to teach, (d) what instructional steps to take to teach new skills and strategies, and (e) how to engage students in repeated read alouds to reinforce learning. While finding time to plan can be challenging for teachers given their responsibilities and busy schedules, it is important for ensuring that a read aloud is both meaningful and enriching for students (Mihai et. al, 2015). Without time to plan effectively, read alouds can do much more than hinder one's instruction, it can hinder a student's love for literacy. Therefore, understanding how effective teachers plan and make instructional decisions is important because district personnel and teacher educators can use this information to better support in-service and

pre-service teachers as they plan and make decisions related to read aloud.

Questioning

Effective teachers know that it is important to engage students in conversations that support learning. Conversations should be interactive and meaningful for students because when they are too teacher directed, they might lead to a “predetermined destination” (Myhill, 2006, p. 39). However, engaging students in interactive whole class and small group conversations can be challenging (Fordham, 2006). Further, while conversations may not always clarify students’ misunderstandings or misinterpretations, they are critical aspects of read alouds and help students to learn how to build connections with the text, which is important for becoming a proficient reader. In short, questioning is an important strategy that teachers can use during a read aloud, and planning questions supports comprehension and analytical thinking (National Reading Panel, 2000).

To engage students in meaningful conversations about texts, McGee and Schickedanz (2007) state that teachers should learn how to effectively craft questions and respond to students’ comments and questions. To do so, teachers can engage in questioning by (a) modeling a question and then engaging in a think aloud to demonstrate how to answer that question, (b) asking students low- and high-level questions to scaffold learning, and (c) encouraging students to ask questions during a read aloud to engage more fully with the text. Teachers can also model how to ask a variety of questions because, as Litwiller Lloyd (2004) states

good readers do much more than take in the literal - they analyze meaning to identify and pull out important pieces of information, synthesize that meaning with their own background knowledge and experience, and interpret meaning from their unique perspectives. Utilizing multiple questioning strategies that reach differentiated levels is

crucial for comprehension and skills for a competent reader. To focus exclusively on one strategy undermines the integration of methods, which is the natural process as a reader makes sense of a text. (p. 123)

Basically, teachers should ask a variety of questions that scaffold students' learning and they should model their own meaning-making processes (Fordham, 2006). Teachers can also explicitly teach students to how to engage in self-questioning (Parker & Hurry, 2007) so that they learn to how to ask questions strategically (Fordham, 2006).

To engage in effective questioning, teachers should be aware that questions fall into two main categories: convergent and divergent. Convergent questions typically involve simple recall of one correct answer, and guide student observation and understanding of basic information in the text. On the other hand, divergent questions, also called open-ended questions, have many potential answers and therefore, generate greater student participation, encourage inferencing, stimulate creative or critical thinking, and encourage students to be better observers. While both kinds of questions are needed, divergent questions may be more critical to the learning process because they expect more than just recalling information; they require analyzing, synthesizing and forming opinions. Planning convergent questions can help students learn basic facts and information and planning divergent questions can help students engage in conversations that help to uncover new information and explore issues in more depth (Tofade, Elsner, & Haines, 2013).

In addition to planning convergent and divergent questions, teachers should also consider sequence and balance. Tofade, Elsner, and Haines (2013) indicate that "sequencing is asking questions in a patterned order with the purpose to elicit meaningful responses from students [and] balance is asking both convergent and divergent questions from multiple knowledge domains and at varying cognitive levels" (p. 3). For sequence and balance to be accomplished,

teachers should engage in intentional planning. Without some planning, it may be more challenging to scaffold learning and engage students in complex thinking.

Tofade, Elsner, and Haines (2013) also present three categories of questioning: exploratory, spontaneous, and focused, and each serves a unique and individual purpose to help drive students' attention and retention of the topic at hand. It is important to note that these categories of questioning are strategies of *when* or *how* a teacher might ask questions to their students. All three categories of questions may be used with both convergent and divergent questions and, depending on the intentionality of the teacher, can utilize Bloom's Taxonomy Revised to facilitate lower and higher-level cognitive thinking skills.

By asking exploratory questions, teachers can determine how much information students know about a topic. For example, a teacher might ask questions to determine students' awareness of print concepts, their prior knowledge about a topic, their understanding of main ideas or the theme of the story. "To ensure that the conversation is guided in an intellectual manner, it is best to plan exploratory questions and topics in advance" (Tofade, Elsner, & Haines, 2013, p. 4).

In addition to planned exploratory questions, teachers should also ask questions spontaneously. Teachers ask spontaneous questions when they notice that students are naturally interested in a topic or encourage students to become more engaged in a discussion (Tofade, Elsner, & Haines, 2013). For example, a teacher might notice students are not invested in the characters and ask spontaneous questions and use think alouds to pique students' interest. When students are invested in the characters and plots, they will more likely be active listeners and participate in discussions. In addition, spontaneous questions tend to be divergent questions and allow for multiple answers or points of view.

Finally, focused questions help students to consider more specific issues or reflect on

certain ideas (Tofade et al., 2013). Teachers tend to ask focused questions at the beginning or end of a lesson to bring closure to the read aloud or activity. Focused questions can be used to evaluate students understanding of a text or topic, and they can be more personalized questions. While focused questioning can be both convergent or divergent, these questions are generally more effective, much like exploratory, if prior thought has pinpointed the intention of what is being focused on.

As Tofade, Elsner and Haines (2013) state, “Questions are among the most powerful teaching tools and adopting best practices can significantly enhance the quality of instruction” (p. 9). Although researchers and teacher educators generally agree that teachers should use high-level questions to emphasize critical thinking rather than lower-level that emphasize facts (Gail, 1970), most research shows that the majority of question teachers ask tend to be low-level questions (Ramsey & Gabbard, 1990). So how can teachers be supported so that they engage in more effective questioning? Does knowledge about the value of questioning and/or the types of questions one might ask students support teachers? Or, does planning and practice help teachers to engage in more effective questioning?

Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised

When planning objectives and engaging in questioning, teachers are often asked to consider Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) in order to ask low- and high-level questions that support cognitive development and to assess student learning. They are often asked to do so because “understanding the taxonomy of questions and best practice strategies may help educators formulate a wider range of questions that not only stimulate the recall of important factual, conceptual, and procedural knowledge but also requires learners to analyze, evaluate, and create” (Tofade, Elsner, & Haines, 2013, p. 1). Furthermore, while there

are different types of classification systems that use cognitive processing to help organize questions, Gall (1970) states that “Bloom's Taxonomy best represents the commonalities that exist among the question-classification systems” (p. 708).

There are six levels in Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised, levels are divided into two categories as a gradient related to low-level and high-level cognitive abilities. Two types of questions that require low-level cognitive abilities are labeled as knowledge and comprehension. Knowledge questions relate to information the student has just learned and/or is related to prior knowledge and easily retrieved. Comprehension questions require an understanding of a concept, main idea, character, problem/solution or other information from the content that has just been given to students. A key difference between knowledge and comprehension is when a student is identifying information, versus summarizing information. For example, if a teacher was reading aloud a common story such as, *The Three Little Pigs*, a knowledge question might be, “Who are the characters?” An example of comprehension question would be “What happened to the first two little pigs’ houses?” Both questions require students to interact with, but not go beyond information provided in the text, and their responses show if they learned and remembered basic information from the text.

The other four levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating, require higher levels of cognitive ability. Buchanan Hill (2016) state that “Higher order questions include inference questions in the area of reading and language arts that require that the student state a relationship between elements of the passage that may be implied but not explicitly stated” (p 663). An apply question asks students to use information learned in a new situation. When reading *The Three Little Pigs*, a teacher might ask students to apply what they have learned from the book by asking, “Could this have happened in real life?” An analyzing

question requires students to draw connections among ideas, so a teacher might say, “Explain what happened when the wolf came down the chimney”. For this question, students have to examine the story and make inferences (e.g., looking at the illustrations and deducing that a fire has been made and is hot, which would burn the wolf), and be able to explain their thinking. An evaluation question requires students to justify a position or decision. For *The Little Pigs*, a teacher might ask students that put themselves in the place of the character for example, “How would you feel if you were the third little pig?” This brings us to the final and highest cognitive ability categorized by Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised, create. To ask a create question you are also generally requiring students to extend beyond the text to produce new or original work. Typically, a create question will be asked at the end of a story, such as “Can you write a new ending to *The Three Little Pigs*?” High-level questions are built upon students’ ability to understand low-level questions, and to be able to apply, analyze, evaluate and create, students must be able to understand and remember basic elements of a story. Finally, as Buchanan (2016) states, “theorists may differ in the definitions they posit about higher order thinking, but they agree that it means the capacity to go beyond the information given, adopt a critical stance, evaluate, and have metacognitive awareness and problem-solving capacities” (p. 663).

Summary

To engage in effective read alouds, early childhood teachers should be intentional in their planning. For example, they should identify learning objectives, choose texts carefully, think about skills and strategies and how they will teach them, and engage students in repeated read alouds to reinforce learning. Also, to engage students in effective read alouds, teachers should engage students in interactive and meaningful conversations. To do this, teachers should plan to ask both convergent and divergent questions. Although some questions will be spontaneous

because they are based on the students' comments and questions, others should be exploratory and focused. Finally, to support comprehension, teachers should use Bloom's Taxonomy Revised to ask low-level questions that help students identify and learn basic information about a text, as well high-level questions that help students to think critically.

Literacy Concepts in Read Alouds

There are many benefits to reading aloud to students. For example, read alouds help students to develop listening comprehension (Morrow & Gambrell, 2002), print awareness (Pullen & Justice, 2003), word recognition skills (Stahl, 2003), vocabulary and concept knowledge (Neuman & Dwyer, 2011; Neuman, Newman, & Dwyer, 2011), and awareness of text structures such as story schema (Van Den Broek, 2001). In this section, I discuss how questioning during a read aloud supports print concepts, phonological awareness and vocabulary.

Print Concepts

Young children begin learning about print concepts during literacy-based interactions such as read alouds, with the adults in their lives (Pullen & Justice, 2003). Print concepts consist of, but are not limited to, letter and word recognition, directionality of print, and punctuation. For example, students need to understand that words are made up of letters and that there are spaces between words (identifying a break and start of a new word). Students also need to understand that print has directionality and movement (left to right, top to bottom), as well as completion represented by punctuation marks. Print concepts are considered to be "constrained skills" (Snow & Matthews, 2016, p. 59) or "are directly teachable because the domain is finite" (p. 58) and mastery of these skills is foundational for learning how to read. To teach print concepts during a read aloud, teachers should be aware of their student understanding of print concept and then intentional teacher skills that have yet to be mastered. Further, students need to "move beyond

the understanding of print forms to a more comprehensive view of ‘book knowledge’” (Pullen & Justice, 2003, p. 89).

Young students need to understand that words and environmental print around them (e.g., signs, labels, posters, books) convey meaning from the outside world to them. Thus, environmental print is important for helping students understand that print carries meaning and for building print concepts; however, “children must move beyond that understanding to an understanding of the alphabetic principle” (Pullen & Justice, 2003, p. 89).

Students need frequent and varied experiences with environmental print and texts in order to understand what reading is (Rosemary & Abouzeid, 2002). This is perhaps one of the most important aspects of helping students learn about literacy. Students’ understanding of reading and their thirst for knowledge starts first and foremost with their introduction to and engagement with texts. Thus, understanding print concepts is foundational to literacy learning, and the conversations, or lack thereof, in which teachers engage students will affect their understanding of the purpose for reading.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness refers to “children’s ability to recognize and identify sounds in their environment including spoken words” (Mihai et al., 2015, p. 4). It is an umbrella term for a complex continuum that includes the awareness of environmental sound, as well as the awareness of words in sentences, syllables, onset-rimes, and phonemes or individuals sounds. Phonological awareness is essential to literacy instruction and for learning how to read and spell. Phonological awareness can also be taught during read alouds.

First, phonological awareness begins with environmental sound awareness, which is a child’s ability to understand sounds in an environment. An example of this is when a child can

identify that a word corresponds with something in their environment, such as that “mooo” is a sound that a cow makes.

The second skill on the continuum is word awareness, which is when students are able to understand and identify when individual words are spoken. Teachers can help students learn word awareness by clapping or counting each word in a spoken sentence. Word awareness is about the whole word, syllables are how that a word is broken into parts. Syllable awareness, the third skill on the continuum, is the understanding that spoken words can be broken into sound segments. According to Mihai et al. (2015) when a student is able to discriminate between syllables, they are demonstrating signs that they are ready for smaller units of speech. Word awareness and syllables are two skills that can easily be tied together in any interactive read aloud. However, Mihai et al. (2015) warn that combining too many phonological skills can overwhelm students and that it is important to be intentional in planning when embedding phonological skills.

Although most of the phonological continuum is rather straightforward, many educators have difficulty in discriminating between rhyme and onset-rime awareness. Rhyme awareness is when students can hear and isolate the same ending sounds (e.g. In order to determine that /pig/ and /big/ rhyme, the child must isolate the rime from the initial sound(s) or onset in these words). Onset-rime awareness is the ability to produce a new rhyme by isolating and substituting the onset or initial phoneme and identifying and maintaining the ending rime pattern. For example, if a student heard the word “sail”, he or she would recognize that ending sound or rime is /ail/ and then, to generate a new word, would isolate the /s/, replace with a /t/ to produce the word “tail”.

Finally, phonological awareness includes phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, isolate and manipulate phonemes or individual sounds in a spoken word. The

ability to segment and blend sounds is an essential foundational skill that supports reading and spelling.

While instruction should not include teaching all skills at once, intentional instruction allows teachers to focus on one skill (e.g. rhyming) at a time. However, Mihai et al. (2015) state that “children do not need to master one phonological awareness skill over another and that skills can be obtained simultaneously” (p. 4). When students have mastered phonemic awareness, they are more likely to become independent readers as instruction shifts to teaching students how to read or decode written language using different strategies. In short, a solid foundation in phonological and phonemic awareness is crucial for reading success.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is important for reading comprehension. To support word learning, vocabulary instruction should focus on students’ understanding and retention of words that may be unknown and/or that have multiple definitions. Reading aloud is an ideal instructional tool for teaching vocabulary. Texts are multifaceted, and they contain both common and sophisticated words and descriptive language, which provide teachers countless opportunities for choosing and teaching words and phrases (Kindle, 2009). However, as Beck and McKeown (2007) state, “although read alouds are a fertile source for vocabulary, studies have revealed that the relation between reading aloud and learning vocabulary contained in the books is less straightforward than expected” (p. 3). Teaching vocabulary via read alouds can be complicated, and instruction can vary based on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, knowledge and skills, as well as the focus of the lesson.

When discussing vocabulary instruction, it is important to consider both receptive and expressive language. Receptive language is the ability to understand the language that is received

or heard, while expressive language is the ability to use language to communicate. Children will generally have a much higher receptive vocabulary than an expressive vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Until a child can bridge his/her receptive language to his/her expressive language and use that language in context, then the child may not have complete grasp of the word. As Coyne and his colleague argue, “How well, or deeply, a word is known determines whether or not it can be discriminated from other words and understood in novel contexts or in different morphosyntactic forms” (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli Jr., & Kapps, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, a goal of read alouds is to give children opportunities to increase both their receptive and expressive language by explicitly teaching vocabulary and encouraging them to use those words in conversations.

It is also important to consider the types of words that might be taught. Since some vocabulary words might be considered simple or basic, and other words might be considered more complex or sophisticated, words have been classified in Tiers (Kindle, 2009). Tier 1 words are those words you would hear in everyday language such as *cup* and *dog*, and generally do not need explicit instruction. Tier 2 words are those that will be most common in the read aloud and considered “high frequency of mature language” (Kindle, 2009, p 202). Tier 2 words are also more common in the written language and can affect story comprehension and thus make them ideal for instruction. The final group is Tier 3 vocabulary words and they tend to be specific to academic content and should be explicitly taught within the content area. Examples are scientific, math, and literary terms such as *atmosphere*, *rotation*, *addend*, *quotient*, *abbreviate*, and *articulate*, that students need to understand to move ahead with a lesson.

Once words are identified, teachers should consider three levels of vocabulary instruction: incidental, embedded, and focused. Incidental exposure is when an unfamiliar word

is used in context to help a student understand its meaning through discourse before, during, and after reading (Kindle, 2015). Embedded instruction is when brief word associations or synonyms are used to help teach or clarify the meaning of an unknown word during instruction, although the explanations are minimal to avoid disruption. Focused instruction usually warrants additional time and attention, as targeted words are either essential to comprehension, or miscommunication or misunderstandings about word meanings arise (Kindle, 2015).

Even though literacy programs make reference to vocabulary instruction, few words are actually identified for instruction and “far fewer than would be needed to significantly impact vocabulary development” (Biemiller & Boote, 2006, p. 45). Therefore, it is up to teachers to provide vocabulary instruction, which can feel complicated and overwhelming; and, likewise, choosing the right words to teach can feel like the most complex decision of all. While there is little research about how teachers choose vocabulary words they teach, there are suggestions or guidelines about how to choose vocabulary words, particularly Tier 2 words. As previously discussed, Tier 2 words are words that are used by mature language users, are often found in text, including storybooks, and many times have multiple meanings. Nevertheless, deciding if a word is Tier 2 can be largely subjective, often due to the teacher’s experience and method of choosing words, and the students’ language abilities.

Planning, trial and error, and commitment are needed when incorporating vocabulary instruction into read alouds. “These instructional decisions affect the balance of direct and incidental instruction, between planning in advance and seizing the teachable moment, the quantity and quality of vocabulary instruction within the read alouds and ultimate student learning” (Kindle, 2009, p. 210). Through these methods discussed, the read aloud can be the perfect vehicle to weave the necessity of vocabulary instruction into the curriculum.

Comprehension

Teachers use many strategies to help students to comprehend a text during a read aloud, such as understanding the meaning of a word, building on prior knowledge, key ideas/details from the story and/or inferring the thoughts and motives of a character. As teachers ask questions, think aloud, and actively engage their students in discussions, they are doing so with the end goal of helping students understand and make connection to texts and achieve learning objectives.

Strategies are necessary for comprehension, and as Litwiller (2004) stated, “The thoughtful, reflective reader will be able to question, infer, analyze and interpret text and successfully negotiate meaning” (p. 116). To become a thoughtful reader, students need opportunities to learn and practice different comprehension strategies during read alouds. However, teachers need to be aware of differences between asking questions that assess students’ knowledge (e.g., What does “enormous” mean?) versus questions that help students think strategically (e.g., Why do you think the author used “enormous” rather than “big”?) (Fordham, 2006). Further, teachers need to be aware of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, the importance of asking low-level questions to ensure students understand the basic information, and the importance of high-level questions that engage students in analyzing, evaluating, and creating, as well as help student extend beyond the text

To engage students in meaningful discussions, a teacher should carefully analyze a text, determine what content he/she wants students to learn, and ask students purposeful and guiding questions to help them comprehend the text. “There is a body of evidence in the literature that demonstrates that appropriate questions, when properly asked, contribute to significant improvement in student learning and the development of critical thinking skills” (Buchanan Hill,

2016, p 662). Questioning allows students to comprehend the content of the read aloud by, for example, making connections (e.g., text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world), drawing inferences, and evaluating and explaining their thinking.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

A read aloud is an important instructional practice that supports students' literacy and content learning, so kindergarten teachers should plan carefully for read alouds. Planning helps teachers teach students a variety of skills and abilities related to early literacy (Lane & Wright, 2007). Planning questions helps teachers engage students with the text, focus on key concepts, and supports students' conceptual development. Further, by engaging in effective planning, as well as reflective teaching, teachers will help students engage with texts and develop emergent literacy skills in early elementary grades, which predicts later academic success (Lee & Bierman, 2015).

Questioning is an important strategy that teachers can use to engage students in conversations that support early literacy and higher-level thinking. Approximately one-third of early childhood teachers' utterances consist of questions (Massey et al., 2008; Rivera, Girolametto, Greenberg, & Weitzman, 2005; Zucker, Justice, Piasta & Kaderavek, 2010) and the type or level (e.g., low versus high) of questions teachers ask is significantly related to students' learning (Zucker et al., 2010). If kindergarten teachers ask questions that are primarily literal or low-level, students will not have the opportunity to engage in higher-level thinking. Similarly, if they ask questions that are primarily inferential or high-level then they may be beyond students' zone of proximal development and hinder learning. "A particular technique recommended for students who need practice in thinking their way through a reading task is for the teacher to embed questions or scaffold questions; this enables those students to think about how to structure and organize their thoughts during reading" (Buchanan, 2016, p 663). So, how do kindergarten

teachers plan questions to ask during a whole class read aloud and what types of questions do they actually ask students as they read a text aloud? To that end, my research questions are as follows:

1. How do kindergarten teachers prepare for the read aloud?
2. How do kindergarten teachers view the role of questioning during the read aloud?
3. What types of questions do kindergarten teachers ask during a read aloud event?

Research Design and Methods

Methodology

Qualitative case study methodology was used to collect and analyze data. Merriam and Tisdale (2016) state that, “A case study is an in-depth and descriptive analysis of a bounded system” (p. 37). While a case study can include qualitative and quantitative research, I collected qualitative data. The “what” of a case study is the thing that is bounded, in this case, the “what” is the read aloud and questioning. Finally the a case study is characterized by its unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation (the teacher) (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

School District

Kindergarten teachers from a suburban school district in the Midwest portion of the United States were recruited to participate in the present study. The Montgomery School District (pseudonym) serves approximately 12,000 students from preschool through twelfth grade. The student population consists of 67.97% White, 9.33% Hispanic, 6.46% African American, and 16.24% other; 35.82% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged (State Report Card, 2016-2017). With respect to English language arts (ELA) standardized testing of 3rd grade students, in 2017, 23.82% were classified as Level I (i.e., limited ability to understand and use

the ELA skills and knowledge needed for college and career readiness), 26.71% as Level II (a basic ability to understand and use ELA skills and knowledge needed for college and career readiness), 29.24% as Level III (effective ability to understand and use the ELA skills and knowledge needed for college and career readiness), and 20.21% as Level IV (excellent ability to understand and use the ELA skills and knowledge needed for college and career readiness) (Kansas Report Card, 2016-2017).

Participants

Through selective sampling, I recruited two kindergarten teachers to be participants in the study. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through the University of Kansas and approval by the school district, I asked 11 principals to nominate kindergarten teachers who they believed were highly efficient in classroom management, leadership qualities and responsibility beyond their classroom (i.e. mentor among their peers in curriculum), as well as implemented effective literacy instruction. Of the 11 principals, five responded with recommendations of two or three teachers. Of the 12 teachers nominated, two teachers agreed to participate in the study: Mrs. Carol and Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Carol worked in a Title I funded school with 75% of the students coming from low-income families who received free or reduced lunch. The school served 212 students; 64% are classified as White, 14% two or more races, 8% Native American, 7% Hispanic, 6% Black and 1% Pacific Islander. Mrs. Carol's class consisted of 11 male and seven female students, and three students were identified as having special needs and needed accommodations.

Mrs. Smith's classroom was also in a Title I funded school with 65% of students coming from low-income families and who received free or reduced lunch. Her school served 439

students; 65% are classified as White, 13% two or more races, 12% Hispanic and 10% Black.

Mrs. Smith’s class consisted of eight male and 12 female students, and four students were identified as having special needs and needed accommodations. Further, based on Title I funding, Mrs. Smith had a full-time aid in her class to assist students with high needs.

Procedures

After teachers agreed to participate in the present study, I met with each teacher to discuss the purpose of the study and describe what they were expected to do before I asked them to sign the consent form. Afterwards, I set up dates and times to observe and video-record four read aloud events (See Table 1 for the timeline).

Table 1: *Timeline of Study*

Activity	Dates
Approval from Committee; Approval from HSCL	End of January 2018
Email participation request; Send and receive consent forms; Email instruments	End of January 2018
Survey - Data collection	Before Spring Break - March 23, 2018
Observation 1 & 2 - Teacher Choice of book	Week of April 2nd, 2018
Interview of observation 1 & 2	Week of April 16th, 2018
Observation 3 & 4 - Researcher Choice of book	Week of May 1st, 2018
Interview of observation 3 & 4	Finalized week of May 16th, 2018

Next, I administered a questionnaire to collect demographic information about the participants, to understand their confidence with aspects of the Common Core State Standards

(CCSS) and to learn about their beliefs around read alouds, how they plan for them, and their thoughts about questioning. I observed and video recorded teachers as they read two different books aloud twice to their students in a whole class setting. During the first observation, teachers read a narrative fiction book of their choice; and on the next day, I observed teachers engage in a repeated reading of the book. During the second set of observations, the teachers engaged in repeated reading of a researcher-selected narrative fiction on consecutive days. After the second reading of each book, teachers were presented with selected video clips from their read aloud and asked to comment on their thought processes. Teachers were asked to compare and contrast the first observation from the second, as well as identify purpose, questions and thinking behind each lesson.

Criterion of narrative fiction. Teachers were given the following criterion for selecting fiction narratives suggested by McGee and Schickedanz (2007); stories that (a) allow readers to infer character motivations and thoughts and connect them to actions, and (b) have a rich repertoire of vocabulary. Further, the fictional narratives should not be predictable picture books that use repeated words and actions (e.g. *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Eric Carle) and the selected text must be published within the last ten years.

The researcher-chosen narrative fiction book, *Peanut Butter and Cupcake* (Border, 2014), is about finding friendship and connecting children to the emotions of asking to play with others. This story was chosen for multiple reasons; the complexity of its text, ability to cover many features, allowing teachers a variety of objectives to focus on, complex pictures, play on words and smaller print size. The illustrations in *Peanut Butter and Cupcake* are in themselves a conversational objective for teachers. Terry Border uses real food that the average American child eats to recreate his stories. In the story, these common food items take on human qualities

and show how they can become friends despite differences. “The hero is a peanut butter—lathered piece of white bread with bent paper clips for arms and legs. Bored with playing solo soccer, Peanut Butter wanders his new neighborhood, requesting companionship in a repeated rhyme with an ending that alters to accommodate each neighbor: “we’ll go together like Peanut Butter and...Hamburger” (Border, 2014, p. 7) (who happens to be walking two hot dogs). Suspense builds as readers realize how things should come together. In the end, Peanut Butter and Jelly bring the entire food team together to play (Van Vleck, 2014). This narrative fiction book has a Lexile level of 680, a typical age range read aloud for a fourth-grade student. Also, because it was published in 2014, it was less likely that teachers would be familiar with this story.

While teachers read a variety of books to their students, creating a criterion for the choice of read aloud helped me understand how teachers plan for and ask questions during a read aloud of a rich or sophisticated narrative fiction. Second, teachers were asked to read a researcher-chosen book to understand how they plan when reading an unfamiliar text and determine the questions they might ask during the read aloud. Further, because I asked teachers to view clips of their video-recorded read aloud, it gave me a better understanding of their thought processes and how they reflect on, and might possibly revise, their read alouds.

Data Collection

Questionnaire. Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire to learn about (a) courses they had taken, and professional development related to literacy, (b) their experience with and knowledge about their district-provided curriculum (Reading Street), (c) their confidence implementing certain aspects of the CCSS, and (d) their beliefs and attitudes toward read alouds. Demographic information related to the teachers (e.g., level of education, years

teaching) and their students (e.g., number of students, gender, English language learners' status, special needs status) were also part of the questionnaire. See Appendix A for the questionnaire.

Interviews. Following the observation of the second read aloud I conducted a semi-structured interview (See Appendix B) that addressed teachers' planning, their beliefs about the read aloud, and their use of questioning. Teachers were asked to compare and contrast short video clips from their first and second read aloud of each book. I asked teachers to view these video clips to better understand their thought processes, identify the purpose behind their lesson, and gather strategic information of getting to resulted outcomes particularly in relation to questioning. Finally, the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Observation of read aloud. Each teacher read-aloud was video-recorded and I transcribed the recordings verbatim. The video camera (Go-Pro) was focused on the teacher to capture what she was doing and saying before, during, and after the read aloud event.

Lesson plans. Lesson plans, in multiple formats, were gathered. Teachers used different techniques in planning, such as the use of sticky notes to remind a teacher where to stop in a book to ask a question or make a comment. The lesson plans were searched for themes in planning, including ways teachers planned for questioning.

Data Analysis Framework

Qualitative data gathered (e.g., interviews, open-ended questions on the questionnaire, lesson plans) were analyzed using inductive reasoning. I read and re-read transcripts and documents, and then assigned a code, which was most often a word or short phrase that captured the salient attributes of the data (Saldaña, 2009). Since coding is cyclical in nature, I went through multiple stages of coding before creating my final codebook and assigning codes. Once all data were coded, I identified themes through pattern coding (Miles & Haberman, 1994) and

then made generalizations regarding how teachers planned for a read aloud and viewed the role of questioning during a read aloud.

Questionnaire and interviews. Initial and pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were used to identify themes regarding how teachers planned for read alouds, which addressed Research Question 1: How do kindergarten teachers prepare for the read aloud? and Research Question 2: How do kindergarten teachers view the role of questioning during the read aloud?

Transcripts of video-recorded read aloud events. This data was used to answer Research Question 3: What types of questions do teachers ask during a read aloud event? First, I read transcripts to identify the questions teachers asked and then I applied Bloom's Taxonomy Revised (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to label each question. Some questions required students to use lower-order thinking skills (remembering, understanding) and some questions required students to use higher-level thinking skills (applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating). Further, questions were coded to determine their content with respect to literacy skills (e.g., concepts of print, phonological awareness, vocabulary, comprehension). Finally, all transcripts were coded by researcher and two colleagues to ensure reliability of coding. When disagreements were found in coding, discussions regarding the transcript and Bloom's taxonomy Revised allowed for a mutual agreement to be reached.

Table 2. *Examples of Coding from Mrs. Carol's Observations*

Lower Level Questions		Higher Level Questions			
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
What is?	C: Who do you think Max is?	C: How else can you tell?	C: Does that mean grandpa went woop and vanished?	C: Can a moon hug you?	
V: So embracing means to hug?	C: Who do you think Max is?	C: How else can you tell?	V: What do you think that means disappeared?	C: What do you think?	
C: It's a night because the moon was in it?	V: What does Tag Along mean?		C: Who do you think is driving the car?	C: What do you think that is?	
C: Who remembers this book?	C: So the Tag Along moon means what's going to happen?		C: Did they show us in the book?	C: Why do you think it's night time?	
C: Who remembers what it's about?	C: The moon is going to follow it?		C: Don't you think grandma probably lives with grandpa?	C: How did you know that by looking at this picture?	
What is it?	C: What do you think that means?		V: They said the mouth of the tunnel. Do tunnels have mouths?	C: Moons play games?	
C: What happened in this book?	C: What do you think that means?		V: Do you think mouths go in or out?	C: Why do you think that's the same one?	
CAP: Who's this man on the back with him?	C: Is grandpa still there though?		C: What happened to the moon?	PA: Why do you think it was going to say Jelly?	
Code	V: Vocabulary	PA: Phonological Awareness	CAP: Concepts of Print	C: Comprehension	

Table 3. Example of Coding from Mrs. Smith's Observations

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
<u>CAP</u> - What part of the book is this called everybody?	Who do you think is saying that?	<u>CAP</u> - Do you guys know what the narrator is?	What do you think dreary means?	Does that remind you of anything?	
<u>CAP</u> - What does the illustrator do?	<u>CAP</u> -Do you think that's the narrator?	<u>V</u> - Do you know what a vegan is?	<u>V</u> -What kind of a village is a dreary village?	Would you go to a restaurant that serves only beans?	
<u>CAP</u> - Raise your hand if you can tell me what the illustrator does?	<u>C</u> -He's not liking the way this narrator is telling the story is he?	<u>V</u> - Where have you bean... isn't that a silly play on words?	<u>C</u> - Why didn't he want the egg to laugh anymore?	Do you like beans?	
<u>CAP</u> - Draws the pictures and then the person who writes the words is called the what everybody?	<u>C</u> - He's kind of naughty that Jack isn't he?	Raise your other hand if you like playing with a ball with your friend?	<u>PA</u> - But what did the words finally make?	Do you like black beans? Do you like Lima Beans? Baked Beans?	
<u>CAP</u> - What's his job title?	Does that look like quite a party?	I was wondering, in our class do we have someone who was new to our school?	<u>PA</u> - What do those words do?	Did you like Jack and the beanstalk better, or not quite Narwall better?	
<u>CAP</u> -Who writes the words?	<u>C</u> - Is it now finally the end of the story?	Do you have a question about the story?	<u>PA</u> - What did it finally make with the words.	<u>C</u> - Do you think he was worried he might knock over his sprinkle castle?	
<u>CAP</u> - And it's Illustrated by He does what?	Is that silly?	<u>C</u> -He goes with ketchup?	<u>PA</u> - A match how?	<u>C</u> - How do you think Peanut Butter's feeling?	
Code	<u>V</u> - Vocabulary	<u>PA</u> - Phonological Awareness	<u>C</u> -Comprehension	<u>CAP</u> Concepts of Print	

Credibility

Establishing credibility is an important consideration when doing qualitative research and Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed various techniques such as triangulation that help to establish credibility. Triangulation was accomplished by comparing and contrasting multiple data sources; specifically, the questionnaire, transcripts of interviews, and transcripts of videotapes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also state that member checking is important for establishing credibility. To conduct member checks, I summarized the findings to share with teacher participants and asked them to read and make comments on those findings.

Summary

Planning for a read aloud and considering questions teachers might ask is important for implementing a read aloud that is engaging and meaningful for students. However, there is little information about how teachers go about this process. In the present study, qualitative data were collected and analyzed to understand how effective kindergarten teachers, as nominated by their principal, engage in the process. By understanding what teachers do, district personnel and teacher educators might be able to provide better support to novice teachers or teachers who struggle to implement effective read aloud instruction. In the following chapter, I report the results.

Chapter Four

Findings

This chapter presents the findings that address the research questions (1) How do kindergarten teachers prepare for the read aloud? (2) How do kindergarten teachers view the role of questioning during the read aloud? and (3) What types of questions do kindergarten teachers ask during a read aloud event? It is divided into sections describing each teacher's reading practices during the teacher and researcher chosen read alouds. Each teacher or case subsection presents information regarding how teachers engaged in planning, their beliefs about the role of questioning, and the types of questions they asked, as well as the content of the questions (e.g., concept of print, vocabulary, comprehension of the story). A table with examples of direct quotes from the read aloud events is presented to illustrate the types of questioning teachers asked students. Interesting observations are noted and discussed.

Procedure

To recruit participants, an email was sent to 10 principals in the district to recommend high quality kindergarten teachers and in total they recommended 25 teachers. Once recommendations were given, I emailed those teachers to tell them about the study. Two teachers from the selective pool indicated that they were interested in the study. Once the study had been explained, teachers completed an online pre-observation questionnaire (Appendix A). Following the completion of the questionnaire, I contacted each teacher and began scheduling observations prior to their spring break. While the teachers were willing to assist and be a part of the study, scheduling was often challenging. Like me, the participants had busy schedules that often changed at the last minute and without notice, or had personal situations arise (e.g., illness). In addition, on one occasion a teacher read a book outside of the requested publication date for the study and the

observation needed to be rescheduled. Nonetheless, all data was collected between February 2018 and May 2018.

Upon entering each classroom, I would discreetly find a location out of the way of students to place my GoPro camera and laptop. I sat next to the GoPro so as to monitor the recording of the read aloud and to take notes on my laptop during the observation. My goal was to stay out of the students' line of vision during each read-aloud session so as not to distract them. It was my impression that the teachers discussed the purpose for my visit with students prior to my initial classroom observation. After the first observation, students appeared comfortable with my presence in the classroom and during the reading, it was as if I was not there. Most students did not look at me or watch to see what I was doing or how I was reacting to the story or their discussion. Of course, one would assume that some minor variations in the read-aloud event might take place with any outside observer, but it is my opinion that any variations were minimal.

Classroom Teachers

Participants in this case study were two kindergarten teachers from the Montgomery School District (pseudonym). Mrs. Carol (pseudonym) had 21 years of teaching experience and taught in a Title I funded school with 75% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. Her class consisted of 11 male and seven female students, and three students were identified as having special needs and needed accommodations. Mrs. Smith (pseudonym) had 15 years of teaching experience. Mrs. Smith's classroom was also in a Title I funded school with 65% of students coming from low-income families and who received free or reduced lunch. Her school served 439 students; 65% are classified as White, 13% two or more races, 12% Hispanic and 10% Black. Mrs. Smith's class consisted of eight male and 12 female students, and four students

were identified as having special needs and needed accommodations. Further, based on Title I funding, Mrs. Smith had a full-time aid in her class to assist students with high needs.

Overall, both teachers taught in general education classrooms and they were solely responsible for all core subject areas (e.g., math, literacy, science and social studies). Both teachers set up print-rich classroom environments that included a classroom library with books that students could access for personal reading, additional books placed in bins based on topics, and other books displayed on the teacher's easels. Both teachers read aloud regularly to their students, and they believed their reading style was effective and they regarded questioning as an effective strategy for the read aloud. For read aloud events, each teacher invited students to sit on the carpet in the same general area of the classroom during each observation as they sat in a chair in front of the student audience as they read aloud.

Mrs. Carol

Based on her questionnaire (February 13, 2018), Mrs. Carol reported reading aloud to her students at the beginning of the Language Block, but she also indicated that she read aloud to students at other times per day. On the questionnaire, Mrs. Carol stated that she believes the most important role of a teacher during a read-aloud event was to ask questions during the reading. She believes that questioning is inherent and something that good teachers just know how to do. Mrs. Carol did plan for her read alouds. For example, Mrs. Carol would read through a book before reading it to her students in order to find logical and meaningful stopping points in which to ask questions (Interview 1, March 28, 2018). Further, Mrs. Carol reported that it is important that she asks questions that encourage student engagement throughout the reading. Yet, based on the following comment, she also recognized that she could not plan all questions: "I would have

never come up with many of my questions just on my own, [questions are also] based on student response and I don't know how you plan for that kind of thing. It's innate. I think that's part of being a teacher, responding to students and making them think more" (Interview 1, March 28, 2018). With respect to the books she uses in read alouds, Mrs. Carol stated that she generally chose books based on a curricular theme or to address a skill the students were working on as per grade level standards or that students were missing. However, she stated (Interview 1, March 28, 2018) that at other times, "I choose books because I liked them and thought they were funny."

Planning. Before reading aloud to students, Mrs. Carol planned, as she stated on both the questionnaire and throughout the interviews, based on years of teaching experience. Before reading a new book aloud (such as the researcher choice) Mrs. Carol would read through the book and take mental notes on questions to ask students. She did not write or intentionally script her read alouds, but rather asked questions she thought about prior to the read aloud and used student responses during the read aloud to ask additional questions. Mrs. Carol indicated that her learning objectives would be based on the skills students were still acquiring during that part of the year (Interview 1, March 28, 2018). Specifically, some of Mrs. Carol's objectives that guided her questioning were: word puns, using context clues (in the illustrations) to identify information throughout the text and comprehension of characters' feelings and motives. In addition, she took into consideration her students' prior knowledge and how to guide her questioning during each read aloud and scaffold learning.

The Read Aloud and Questions Asked. All observed read-aloud events in Mrs. Carol's classroom began with her inviting the students to sit on the floor in the front of the classroom. Students sat quietly in assigned places, in an open area in front of the whiteboard, as Mrs. Carol introduced and read a book aloud. It should be noted that for management reasons, a few

students sat in the front to be near Mrs. Carol and were separated from other students. Overall, though, students seem to be familiar with the read-aloud routines and procedures.

Mrs. Carol used a variety of strategies during each read-aloud observation. For example, both the teacher choice and researcher choice texts offered dialogue and she dramatized her reading by altering the voices for each character. She also incorporated a variety of voice intonations including pausing, varying pitch and speed, and elongating of words and phrases. The act of elongating words and phrases was most common as she highlighted vocabulary presented in the familiar read aloud. As she read, Mrs. Carol incorporated gestures such as pointing to illustrations, gesturing as she dramatized the voices of the characters and using facial expression for each character. Student engagement during both the familiar and unfamiliar read alouds was similar. They listened quietly and responded to questions.

Researcher choice text. During the first interview Mrs. Carol clearly stated that she did not plan for her read alouds in what might be considered a conventional sense (March 28, 2018) That is, she did not write a lesson plan or write down essential questions on sticky notes and place in the book. Instead, Mrs. Carol planned by reading the book ahead of time and mentally mapping questions and comments based on the students in her classroom. She indicated that she was a reflective planner, using inner dialogue while reading to assess, reassess and formulate questions and comments during and after a read aloud. For the book I chose and asked her to read aloud, this is the method of planning that was used. Mrs. Carol read the book ahead of time and mentally identified unfamiliar words and phrases with double meanings that she believed her students would not understand, and she identified questions to help students comprehend the text.

During the first read aloud of *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, Mrs. Carol asked 28 questions (See Table 5). Nineteen questions were low-level based on Bloom's Taxonomy Revised; specifically, 11 questions were identified as knowledge questions and eight were comprehension questions. Mrs. Carol asked nine high level questions; two questions were identified as analytic and seven as evaluative. The content of Mrs. Carol's questions focused on print concepts, vocabulary and comprehending the story. One example of a low-level question related to print concept is "What does an illustrator do?" She also asked questions to help students use pictures to identify key ideas such as "How do you think Peanut Butter is feeling?" In addition to discussing what was happening in the pictures, she asked question such as "What was the mom doing? Does food usually play soccer? What is Peanut Butter looking for?" Thus, Mrs. Carol primarily asked question to check for understanding and build content knowledge. Since most questions were low-level, students were able to provide correct responses. Finally, it also seemed as if Mrs. Carol was asking questions to help students remain attentive during the read aloud.

For the second read aloud of *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, Mrs. Carol planned to identify phrases with puns, or a play on words (e.g., silly goose). During our interview after the second read aloud (Interview 1, March 28, 2018), Mrs. Carol indicated that she noticed after reading the first read aloud that students were making text-to-text connections, but they were not aware of the phrases with puns that were present throughout the story. So, before beginning the second read aloud, Mrs. Carol front loaded the reading with examples of words and phrase she already used in class such as, "Do I sometimes call you a 'silly goose'?" What does that mean, are you actually a goose?" She then discussed how many phrases in the stories have puns: a play on words with two meanings as a connection to figurative language throughout the read aloud, Mrs.

Carol specifically pointed out words and phrases and she asked the students questions to help them determine what the author meant.

Thus, during the second read aloud, Mrs. Carol specifically targeted words with puns to help students learn vocabulary and comprehend the story. For example, the word “Ketch-up” meant a bottle of ketch-up in a picture and to “catch up” to a friend. To help students notice this word, Mrs. Carol asked, “What do you think that means?” and “Does the picture give you clues?” By asking such questions, she helped students understand the pun in the story. To comprehend the story, Mrs. Carol asked questions about the characters’ feelings and she had students put themselves in the place of the characters. To do this, she asked high-level questions such as, “What do you think? Would this be something you would do to make a friend? Why? Asking them to analyze, evaluate, and compare the text to their own life situations helped student understand the story.

When I shared a video clip of *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, Mrs. Carol indicated that sometimes she asked questions to engage in high-level thinking such as analyzing the pictures (Where did he get the letters from?) and using clues from the text to draw conclusions. (Why do you think you wanted to say ‘jelly’?). She also indicated that she asked questions to help students arrive at answers with her support, rather than simply giving them the answers. Mrs. Carol pointed out that she was rephrasing and repeating her questions in different ways to support students’ ability to answer the questions. However, when students are unable to provide a logical answer, Mrs. Carol indicated that she would use lower level questions to scaffold their response.

Comparing read alouds. There were several differences between the first and second read aloud for the researcher-chosen book, *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*. In the first read aloud, Mrs. Carol asked low-level questions the help students understand the story grammar (e.g.,

character, setting, problem, events, solution). For example, Mrs. Carol asked questions to help students to understand the who the characters were (What is the mom doing?), what the story was about (Peanut Butter is looking for a friend and one of the friends is a cupcake? What other friends do you think he will come across?), the point of the story (Peanut Butter is not having much luck making friends is he?) and the story line and sequence of events (What happens after he meets Cupcake?). She also asked questions to help students notice details in the pictures and identify the meaning of vocabulary. In the second read aloud, Mrs. Carol helped students make text-to-text connection by discussing puns in the book with another text she had read aloud, and make text-to-life connections by encouraging students to use their prior knowledge as they listened to her re-read the book. In addition, the text-to-life connection consisted of high-level evaluating questions. For example, Mrs. Carol asked, “What did he do that was right when trying to make friends?” to help students understand how the characters’ behaviors were similar to how students behaved on the playground and in school. With respect to the numbers of questions that Mrs. Carol asked in the first and second read aloud, they were similar; 28 questions and 21 questions respectively. However, since Mrs. Carol had difference purposes for each read aloud, the content or focus of the questions were different.

Teacher choice text. Mrs. Carol’s teacher choice fictional text was called, *The Tag Along Moon* by Floyd Cooper, a book she received from the school book fair. This read aloud has a Lexile level of 550, which is an independent read aloud for a late second grade student. *Tag Along Moon* is about a little boy who is sad to leave his Grandpa’s house. To assure his young grandson, Max, that everything will be fine, Grandpa tells him that they both see the same moon no matter which house they are at. This sweet adventure follows Max, in his parents’ car, full of questions as he watches the moon follow him home.

During the first interview, which was conducted after the second read aloud of this book, Mrs. Carol said that she did not specifically choose the book for a curricular or targeted learning purpose. However, she did indicate that the class had discussed space and they would soon be working on a unit about space. In addition, it was a new book her students had not heard, she thought they would find it interesting, and it aligned with the criteria I gave her (i.e., ~ 32 pages, written in the last 10 years). That said, Mrs. Carol did mention that as the characters were African America, the story lent itself well to her demographics. She stated that she liked to choose books that were relevant to her students, ones they could see themselves in and relate to (Interview 2, April 24th, 2018). Since she chose the book out of convenience, Mrs. Carol indicated that she did not intentionally or formally plan for this read aloud, but rather read through it ahead of time to scaffold what objectives she wanted to cover (Interview 2, April 24th, 2018).

Using Bloom's Taxonomy Revised, I coded Mrs. Carol's questions using the following six categories: (1) knowledge and (2) understanding, which are low-level questions, and (3) apply, (4) analyze, (5) evaluation, and (6) creating which are high-level questions. During the initial read aloud of *The Tag Along Moon*, Mrs. Carol asked a total of 48 questions (see Table 1). Thirty-five questions were low-level based on Blooms Taxonomy Revised. Specifically, 15 questions were identified as knowledge questions and 20 were comprehension questions. Mrs. Smith asked 13 high level questions; two questions were identified as application, eight questions as analytic and three as evaluative. Mrs. Carol's lower-level questions focused on Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words in relation to the content of the story, such as *tag along*, *embraced*, *disappeared* and *orb*. While these words were important to the story, they were also words that were in reference to other content and of more specific scientific curriculum. For

example, she asked, “A moon is an orb, but what does the word orb mean?” Students were quick to volunteer answers. She also asked, “Can you give me an example of something that disappears?” Again, children were quick with relevant responses. However, she also asked high-level analyzing questions, as well as questions that went beyond the content in the text. For example, she asked, “Is the moon still there, even if it’s behind the clouds? If the moon is out where is the sun?” Overall, 73% of questions were low-level questions and 27% were high-level questions during the first read aloud. Further, 15% of the questions were related to vocabulary while the other 84% were focused on comprehending the story.

Table 4. *Level of Questioning: Mrs. Carol*

	Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised Categories	1 st Read Aloud Researcher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Researcher Choice	1 st Read Aloud Teacher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Teacher Choice
Low-Level	Knowledge	11	6	15	8
	Comprehension	8	5	20	8
High-Level	Application	0	0	2	0
	Analysis	2	4	8	10
	Evaluating	7	6	3	4
	Creating	0	0	0	0

	Total # of Questions	28	21	48	30
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For her second reading of *Tag Along Moon*, Mrs. Carol engaged in informal planning by reflectively evaluating her initial read aloud and making decisions about questions to ask and content to emphasize based on student responses during the first read aloud. Consequently, during this read aloud, Mrs. Carol's questions in relations to Bloom's Taxonomy Revised were different. She asked a total of 30 questions. Sixteen questions were low-level questions; specifically, eight questions were identified as knowledge questions and eight were comprehension questions. Mrs. Carol asked 14 high level questions; ten questions were identified as analytic and four as evaluative. Overall, Mrs. Carol asked more high-level questions (47%) during the second read aloud and the majority of those questions, 10 of the 14, were questions that analyze the author's or illustrator's purpose and how the illustrator connected meaning throughout the pictures in story. She also asked evaluating questions. For example, Mrs. Carol asked, "How did you know by looking at this picture?" requiring a student to understand the story, consider what might happen next, and then evaluate and explain based on data from the illustration. She asked about an illustration in which there was a reflection of the road and the moon in a car door mirror. First, Mrs. Carol asked students about the shape of the moon, because I assume it was related to math standards that kindergarten students are learning. Mrs. Carol then asked why they thought the illustrator would create a reflection and she encouraged students to empathize by asking questions about how the characters might be feeling. For example, she asked questions such as, "I wonder why he would draw it that way? How do you think he's feeling?" These first question encouraged students to analyze the picture and think about the

illustrator's purpose. However, the second question could be considered either evaluating or understanding. Depending on when the question is asked in the story, it can dictate whether the question is a low-level comprehension question, or a high-level question for evaluating of the character in relation to their own experiences. In this situation, the second question was a high-level evaluating question. Students needed to use the illustration, the message of the story and their own prior knowledge to discuss how they believed the character was feeling and why. Finally, Mrs. Carol asked students about their feelings toward the characters in the story, and how they felt while listening to the story as it was read.

Comparing read alouds. Mrs. Carol seemed to have different purposes for each read aloud of *Tag Along Moon*. First, Mrs. Carol did not set a purpose for listening to the story, but rather discussed the title and pointed to the picture of the moon before she began reading. As she read, she asked questions to help students comprehend basic information in the story. Of the 48 total questions she asked, 30 of those questions were low-level and 18 were high-level questions. The content of her questions was either related to vocabulary (8 questions) or comprehending the story (39 questions; see Table 4). With respect to comprehension, Mrs. Carol often asked question that helped students connect the story to their prior knowledge. In the second read aloud, Mrs. Carol asked a total of 30 questions, 14 were low-level questions and 16 were high-level questions. Read alouds were similar in that the low-level questions focused on vocabulary and basic content in the story and the high-level questions focused on the illustrations to extend students' thinking beyond the text.

Table 5. *Content of Mrs. Carol's Questions*

	1 st Read Aloud Researcher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Researcher Choice	1 st Read Aloud Teacher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Teacher Choice
Concept of Print	6	1	1	0
Phonological Awareness	1	4	0	0
Vocabulary	3	4	8	4
Comprehension	18	12	39	26
Total # of Questions	28	21	48	30

After the second read aloud, I shared a short video clip with Mrs. Carol. I chose a clip that contained a high-level question, based on Bloom's Taxonomy Revised, that she asked while reading aloud. Of the four high level questions (i.e., application, analyze, evaluation and create), Mrs. Carol's questions were generally analytical in nature. For example, understanding that the earth orbits around the sun and that sometimes the sun and moon are both visible in the sky, while at other times you can only see either the sun or the moon but not both, requires high-level thinking for kindergarten students. After viewing the clip, Mrs. Carol stated that she often takes things to levels that most people do not think kindergarten students are capable of understanding and that it is especially important to use read alouds to support more academically advanced students (Interview 2, April 24th, 2018). While most of the students may not know why or how

the earth orbits the sun or the moon orbits the earth, they might remember that it does, and this creates knowledge that supports learning in the upper grades.

Summary of Mrs. Carol. Read alouds in Mrs. Carol's class were interactive in nature, with questions posed throughout the first and second read aloud in both the teacher choice and research-chosen texts. In fact, Mrs. Carol posed questions more than 20 times during each read aloud observed. Questions did not appear to disrupt the flow of the read aloud and were conversational and reciprocal in nature. The purpose of her questions was to encourage students to use their prior knowledge to comprehend the stories. She also emphasized using the illustrations to help understand the story and facilitated this by holding the books to the side as she read so that students could see the illustrations. Mrs. Carol engaged students in discussions by asking questions and she facilitated student responses by rephrasing questions. Students responded to questions and often posed questions of their own, to which Mrs. Carol would respond through further discussion or reading. Finally, as observed and stated by Mrs. Carol, questioning during read alouds was important. She used questioning to elicit rote responses, to check for understanding, and to encourage sophisticated discussions that all of the students could actively participate in.

Mrs. Smith

Based on the first Interview, April 7, 2018, Mrs. Smith stated that she read aloud to her class at least once per day, sometimes twice daily, and she stated that she generally read books that were not prescribed by the curriculum but rather helped students relax or unwind at the end of the day. Also, although she did not read aloud books prescribed by the curriculum, Mrs. Smith generally chose books that aligned with topics or objectives that she was teaching in class.

She also stated that if extra time allowed, or if transition gave time for another read aloud, she attempted to find books that the students would genuinely enjoy, regardless of the subject matter. Mrs. Smith stated she believed that varying her voice when reading aloud, asking questions and using a variety of strategies to differentiate instruction were all important, and she noted that choosing books based on student interest was slightly more important than reading books that were prescribed by the curriculum.

Planning. Mrs. Smith indicated that she plans differently for each read aloud (Interview 1, April 7, 2018). On both the questionnaire and in the interviews, Mrs. Smith said that she would plan for read alouds by reading through them first and using sticky notes to highlight vocabulary words, to teach phonics skills such as rhyming, blending consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words found in text and specific comprehension strategies such as sequencing events or visualization. Mrs. Smith used her informal planning style and standards to work on content that the students needed to review or were pertinent to current learning. There were also times when she would just pick up a book and read it without planning in advance. However, by asking questions, making comments and reflecting on students' responses, Mrs. Smith believed that she was able to provide effective instruction to her students. This aligns with how she read the teacher choice book; that is, Mrs. Smith did not read the book ahead of time, but rather just read it aloud to her students. For the second read aloud, again Mrs. Smith did not plan ahead but she did ask a student to help read to the lines of a character. This helped the other students to understand the difference between the narrator and the character in the story. Although she did not plan her questions in advance, they were focused on word choices and what the narrator was doing. For the researcher-chosen book, Mrs. Smith read through the book in advance to determine what information was most important to students and then she used sticky notes to

plan questions. This aligned with her use of standards and objectives, Mrs. Smith purposefully asked questions like, “What word is spelled in the soup”, to look at many phonemic awareness skills and spelling patterns that were current with the objectives and standards for that time of the year in kindergarten. Some questions on the sticky notes focused on word choice, key details of the text, and inferencing, but most questions were focused on print concepts (e.g., title, author, front cover) and the sequencing of the story. Finally, with respect to planning, Mrs. Smith stated that, “No matter how many times you read [a book], it seems you can always find other parts of a read aloud to emphasize” (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

The Read Aloud and Questions Asked. All read-aloud events observed in Mrs. Smith's classroom began with her inviting the students to sit on the floor in the front of the classroom. The area was a relatively small space, so each child had his or her designated carpet square. After the students gathered around Mrs. Smith, they listened as she introduced the book and then offered comments and asked questions as she read. A read-aloud procedure appeared to be routine for the students.

Mrs. Smith was observed incorporating a variety of strategies during the read-aloud observations. Both texts offered dialogue for which she dramatized, altering the voices of each character as their dialogue appeared. As she read both texts, Mrs. Smith incorporated hand gestures and body language such as pointing to illustrations and gesturing as she dramatized the voices of the characters. She maintained eye contact with students throughout the reading of both books and used facial expression as she read, mimicking and dramatizing appropriate facial expression for each character.

During the teacher choice fiction read aloud, the students were thoroughly engaged, though in a much more subdued manner, listening intently to try to hear the characters and

following along, answering questions during the reading when prompted to do so. At no point did I question if the students were engaged during either of the fiction reading observations. Student engagement, though different, was obvious during both reading events. The teacher choice read aloud sessions ended with a class discussion, reviewing the story and connecting them to the classroom activities that prompted them. In contrast, the researcher choice fiction read aloud prompted student laughter at her voices, and she laughed with them. Student engagement varied for the fiction read alouds, in that all students were receptively, passively engaged during the read-aloud, while some students were engaged more actively and expressively during the reading of the researcher choice. Many students participated in commenting and spontaneous questioning throughout the story. It was obvious that the students were actively and physically involved in the story.

Researcher choice text. For the researcher chosen book, *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, Mrs. Smith indicated that she planned for the book in multiple ways (Interview 1, April 7, 2018). She read the book ahead of time and used sticky notes as markers throughout the book. Each sticky note had questions and talking points to help Mrs. Smith stay focused on what she wanted to emphasize during the read aloud.

During the first read aloud, Mrs. Smith asked a total of 25 questions. Fifteen questions were low-level based Bloom's Taxonomy Revised. Specifically, eight questions were identified as knowledge questions and seven were comprehension questions. Mrs. Smith asked ten high level questions; two questions were identified as application, five questions as analytic and three as evaluative. The content of Mrs. Smith's initial low-level knowledge questions related to print concepts and phonological awareness. Informal planning allowed Mrs. Smith to gauge questions that she asked on objectives that students needed, as well as rote questions that some teachers ask

before beginning a read aloud. For example, she asked questions such as: “What does the author do? What does the illustrator do?” and “What part of the book is this?” In relation to phonemic awareness she asked low-level questions such as, “What do you see in the soup? A word?” She then followed up with a question in relation to phonics and asked, “What does S-O-U-P spell?” then pointed out the word and letters in the illustrations. She also asked, “What do those words do?” which was in reference to hearing the rhyme in “belly” and “jelly”. Other low-level questions were related to vocabulary and helping students understand the story. With respect to vocabulary, Mrs. Smith typically asked a question to determine if students knew the meaning of a word; for example, “What does chuckle mean?” However, on one occasion a student, without prompting, noticed that “ketch-up” had two meanings. Mrs. Smith used the student’s comment as an opportunity to ask questions to help the class recognize both meanings (i.e. What is one thing we use ketch-up for? How do we catch-up?). To help students understand the story, Mrs. Smith asked high-level questions such as, “Why didn’t he want the egg to laugh anymore?” This question required students to use their prior knowledge, critical think, and analyze what happens to an egg when it cracks and then determine why the main character would not want this to happen.

For the second read aloud of *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, Mrs. Smith did not formally plan ahead. Instead, she stated that she used the first read aloud to gage what the students needed for the second read aloud (Interview 1, April 4, 2018). She also used the story to help the students consider how a new student in their class might be feeling. She did this by first asking the students how they might feel if they were new to a school and then how the character in the book might be feeling.

Overall, Mrs. Smith asked a total of 38 questions (see Table 6). 23 questions were low-level based Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised; eight questions were identified as knowledge questions and 15 were comprehension questions. Mrs. Smith asked 15 high level questions; two questions were identified as application, five questions as analytic, one question as synthesis, and seven as evaluative. Mrs. Smith asked low-level questions to help students see how the story connected to some real-world such as, “Does he (referring to the French fries in the picture) go with ketchup?” She also asked, “Do you like playing with a ball all by yourself? Raise your hand if you like playing all by yourself.” These knowledge-based questions could be high level questions (i.e., analyzing and evaluating) if related to the character and his or her feelings, rather than the students’ own feelings. Since students were simply relaying their own feelings, rather than thinking from the characters’ perspective, it is connecting to prior knowledge, and not evaluating of the text.

Table 6: *Level of Questioning: Mrs. Smith*

	Bloom’s Taxonomy Revised Categories	1 st Read Aloud Researcher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Researcher Choice	1 st Read Aloud Teacher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Teacher Choice
Low-Level	Knowledge	8	8	7	1
	Comprehension	7	15	9	7
High-Level	Application	2	2	3	0
	Analysis	5	5	2	0

	Evaluation	3	8	4	1
	Create	0	0	0	0
	Total # of Questions	25	38	25	9

Mrs. Smith’s first and second read aloud were similar with respect to the types of questions she asked. In the first read aloud Mrs. Smith asked 25 questions, with 60% of the questions being lower level. In the second read aloud, Mrs. Smith asked 38 questions with 61% of the questions being low-level knowledge and comprehension (Table 6). The content of the questions was also similar and related to print concepts, vocabulary, and building comprehension (e.g., text-to-self connections). However, 52% of her questions were in the first read aloud focused on comprehending the story, while 95% of her questions focused on comprehension in the second reading (Table 7).

Table 7. *Content of Mrs. Smith’s Questions*

	1 st Read Aloud Researcher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Researcher Choice	1 st Read Aloud Teacher Choice	2 nd Read Aloud Teacher Choice
Concept of Print	0	0	7	1
Phonemic Awareness	8	1	0	0
Vocabulary	4	1	5	0
Comprehension	13	36	13	8

Total # of Questions	25	38	25	9
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After reading *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, I shared a video with Mrs. Smith in which she asked students multiple questions about a topic that they had difficulty answering. In one situation, Mrs. Smith asked a question relating to a rhyme (i.e., What do those words make?) Students were struggling to make the connection between why they wanted to use the word “jelly” instead of “cupcake” when the phrase was, “I’ll make you chuckle deep down in your belly and we’ll go together like Peanut Butter and Cupcake” (Border, 2014, p. 4). When students could not provide the correct response that they wanted to rhyme in “belly” and “jelly,” she moved on. However, a few pages later she came back to the question and asked it differently, “So what do those words do?” She then went back to the previous page and asked the question again, “So why did you want to say ‘jelly’ What do those words do?” This allowed students to understand the pattern of the book and also time to hear the missing rhyme. While the word missing was “cupcake,” Mrs. Smith was trying to help students understand why they wanted to say “jelly” because they wanted to complete the rhyme, as well the fact that “peanut butter and jelly” are a known pair among children. Rather than just provide the answer, Mrs. Smith’s questioning helped students explain their thinking. When I asked Mrs. Smith why she did not give students the answers, she stated that just like teaching students to read and write, we need to teach them to answer questions. Consequently, simply giving students an answer does not help them think for themselves (Interview 1, April 4, 2018).

Teacher choice text. For her choice reading, Mrs. Smith chose the book, *It’s not Jack and the Beanstalk* by Joshua Funk. This interactive read aloud has a 550 Lexile level, is 40 pages in length and is an independent reading level for a mid-year second grade student. It is a remake

of the age-old fairytale Jack and the Beanstalk. However, in this fractured fairytale a narrator is leading Jack through the tale and Jack is not pleased about what he's being told to do.

Throughout the book Jack argues with the narrator, makes new friends and rewrites the tale to his very own ending.

Mrs. Smith chose this book because her school was participating in the Book Madness: Tournament of Books. This activity is a spin-off of March Madness and students vote on different preselected books and winners continue through the brackets. Mrs. Smith was forthcoming about the fact that she did not plan for this read aloud because she had been feeling ill. Also, since reading this book aloud was required by the school and it aligned with the criteria I gave her, she stated in her interview that she read the book because it covered these two requirements. However, she also believed it was fun for her students (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

During the first read aloud Mrs. Smith asked a total of 25 questions. 16 questions were low-level based Bloom's Taxonomy Revised. Specifically, seven questions were identified as knowledge questions and nine were comprehension questions. Mrs. Smith asked nine high level questions; three questions were identified as application, two questions as analytic and four as evaluative. The focus of these questions was to primarily help students learn about print concepts, vocabulary and understand the book's text structure (Table 6). To learn about print concepts, she asked low-level questions such as "What is this part of the book called?" To help students learn vocabulary she asked low-level questions such as "What does chuckle mean?" Finally, since this story had a narrator who was interacting with the main character, Mrs. Smith asked questions to help students understand what a narrator is and how this book was written

differently compared with stories she had read aloud. To do this, she asked low-level understanding questions like: “What is a narrator?” and “Was that the narrator speaking?”

During the second read aloud of *It's not Jack and the Beanstalk*, Mrs. Smith again, as conveyed in an interview, did not plan for the read aloud (Interview 2, April 27, 2018). However, she asked a student who wanted to read to read the part of Jack. Mrs. Smith thought that including the student as the character would be an effective way for the students to understand the difference between the narrator telling the story and the character in the story. In addition, this gave the student the opportunity to read in front of the class.

Mrs. Smith asked fewer questions in the second read aloud; specifically, she asked nine questions in the second read aloud as compared to 25 questions in the first read aloud. Also, instead of asking the whole class questions, Mrs. Smith tended to ask questions to the student who was reading the part of Jack. Of the nine questions asked, eight were low-level with one question identified as knowledge and seven as comprehension (Table 6). Examples of comprehension questions include: “Are you feeling sad about losing your cow? Are you nervous? Do you not like my story?” Further, of the nine questions she asked, she asked the whole class only three questions about the story to make sure students were following along.

The first and second read aloud were different in several ways. In the first read aloud only Mrs. Smith read the text aloud, whereas in the second read aloud a student helped by reading a character’s part in the story. In addition, the number of questions and content of the questions were different. In the first read aloud, Mrs. Smith asked 25 questions; 16 questions were low-level and nine were high-level. Mrs. Smith focused on helping students understanding print concepts, vocabulary and the role of a narrator in a story. However, in the second read aloud, Mrs. Smith highlighted the new concept of a narrator interacting with a character in a

story by asking a student to help her read the text. However, much of the questioning and dialogic conversation occurred between the individual student reading the book and Mrs. Smith.

After observing Mrs. Smith, I showed her a video clip of her read alouds of *It's Not Jack and the Beanstalk*. During this interview, Mrs. Smith mentioned multiple times that if she reads this book again, she will do it completely different. For example, she stated that she would focus on comparing the fractured story to a traditional version of Jack and the Bean Stalk or she would simply talk about the sequencing the story (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Summary of Mrs. Smith. Based on the video of the read aloud, the researcher choice read aloud was considerably more interactive than the teacher choice. The difference between the teacher choice and researcher choice read aloud could have been due to the content of the books or Mrs. Smith's purpose and planning. While the teacher choice text supported the curriculum and was meant to highlight and extend it, Mrs. Smith primarily choose the book because it was part of the Book Madness month, otherwise she indicated that she would not have chosen the book to read aloud. Also, as she commented after the second read aloud of the teacher choice book, she had been sick for many days and did not plan for the read aloud. However, Mrs. Smith did plan for the researcher-chosen book and it was my impression that she read it for enrichment and enjoyment.

Nonetheless, the teacher choice read aloud included more spontaneous conversations during the first read aloud, while during the second reading, Mrs. Smith primarily interacted with the student who helped her read the text aloud. This limited both questioning and strategies used during the second reading of the teacher choice text. While the student audience readily responded when prompted by Mrs. Smith during both reading observations, she asked few questions to the whole class during the second reading.

Mrs. Smith stated that in the questionnaire and interviews that she believed that questioning was important during the read aloud, but not more so than other strategies. This was clear during my observations of her read alouds and discussions with students. Further, the questions she asked them were consistently low level. The line of questioning did vary between the two books. Questions during the teacher choice story focused on concepts of print and vocabulary, while the questions during the researcher choice story focused mostly on illustrations and making inferences to comprehend the story, as well as phonological awareness. Finally, for both narratives Mrs. Smith used her read aloud to emphasize in the joy of reading, which was apparent by her use of voices, and the animations and gestures she used during every read aloud.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings from two kindergarten teachers. It described each teacher's beliefs about the role of questioning during a read aloud and how they planned for a read aloud. It also presented information regarding the types of questions teachers asked based on Bloom's Taxonomy Revised and the content of those questions for a teacher choice and researcher choice read aloud. Teacher reading style of planning and reading varied between teachers. In the next chapter, I summarize and discuss the major findings, delineate the study's limitations, and outline implication and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five

Discussion

In this chapter, major findings of the study are summarized based on the research questions guiding the study. Those questions were:

1. How do kindergarten teachers prepare for the read aloud?
2. How do kindergarten teachers view the role of questioning during the read aloud?
3. What types of questions do kindergarten teachers ask during a read aloud event?

Study implications are discussed, and recommendations for future research are presented the chapter.

The purpose of this study was to understand how experienced kindergarten teachers plan for read alouds and view the role of questioning during read alouds, and to determine the types of questions they ask when they read a book aloud for the first time to students, as well as a second time.

Two kindergarten teachers were recruited to be participants. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through the University of Kansas and approval by the school district, I asked 11 principals to nominate kindergarten teachers who they believed were highly efficient in classroom management, leadership qualities and responsibility beyond their classroom (i.e. mentor among their peers in curriculum), as well as implemented effective literacy instruction. Of the 11 principals, five responded with recommendations of two or three teachers. Of the 12 teachers nominated, two teachers agreed to participate in the study: Mrs. Carol and Mrs. Smith. Both participants signed an informed consent. Data was triangulated by using responses from teacher questionnaires, face-to face interviews with teachers and videotaped and recorded observations and field notes.

Using a qualitative case study method allowed me to be an observer in a naturalistic setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), to "understand [a] complex social phenomena" (Stake, 2000, p. 438) and to collect qualitative data (Bogdan & Bilden, 1998). Specifically, I explored how two kindergarten classrooms planned for and used questioning strategies while reading aloud in early childhood classrooms.

Research Question 1: How do Kindergarten Teachers Prepare for a Read Aloud?

First, the teachers had different views about read alouds. Ms. Carol said that read alouds were a top priority in her classroom, as was the use of questioning, and that she was passionate about literacy (Interview 1, March 28th, 2018). On the other hand, Mrs. Smith stated that many times she used read alouds as a time filler, a reward or as a transitional activity, instead of incorporating it into daily lesson plans (Interview 2, April 27, 2018).

Data from the interviews and observations showed that both teachers planned for the researcher's choice read aloud. Although they read the book in advance, neither teacher wrote down objectives or strategies. One reason they may not have written objectives or strategies is because the book did not align with their current objective but rather related to prior objectives they had addressed. While both teachers read the researcher choice before reading it aloud to their students, only Mrs. Smith used post-it notes throughout the book to indicate stopping points to address students. While specific questions were not written on the post-it notes, Mrs. Carol's thoughts and ideas were about what discourse to have with the students.

Data from the interviews and observations showed that one teacher planned and the other did not for the teacher choice book. Mrs. Carol read through prior and informally scaffolded her learning objectives for the students. Mrs. Smith did not plan at all for the teacher choice narrative. She was sick during this observation and indicated that she chose the book because it

was one the students had not heard and allowed her to fulfill *two* requirements at the same time: one being my observation, another being the March Madness read aloud the school was doing. Consequently, it is unclear how she typically plans for books she chooses.

While their planning was not like the conventional method taught in teacher preparation programs (e.g., writing lesson plans), their informal planning style can still be considered planning. As Mrs. Carol stated, she did not leave the read aloud session to chance and she always read a book prior to reading it aloud to her students (Interview 1, March 28, 2018), which is a practice recommended to early childhood teachers (McGee, & Schickedanz, 2007). Nonetheless, their planning was rather informal, but the intentions behind each read aloud was not. Whether they planned by reading the book in advance or using post it notes, they were intentional about their questions and what parts of the story they wanted to clarify or emphasize to support comprehension.

For the researcher choice book, *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, vocabulary was important for understanding the story. So, during the observations of the initial read aloud of *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, both teachers asked similar vocabulary questions like, “What is a chuckle?” and “What do you think dreary means?” In addition, they both asked similar comprehension questions such as: “How do you think Peanut Butter feels when nobody wants to play with him?” Both teachers intentionally asked low-level questions to make sure students understood the vocabulary, the story and they connected it to their personal lives.

While their questions differed for the second read aloud of *Peanut Butter and Cupcake*, each teacher had clearly planned how they were going to engage the children in the read aloud. Mrs. Carol focused her objectives and questions on wordplay and puns that were used throughout the story. She asked high-level questions that related to how the students felt while

listening to the story and she asked them to explain their thinking multiple times. These more evaluative and analytical questions were possible because she had asked low-level comprehension questions during the read aloud and students understood the story. However, Mrs. Smith continued to ask more low-level questions but with the purpose of asking children to sequence the story.

For example, for the teacher choice read aloud, Mrs. Carol selected the book *Tag Along Moon* that she knew her students had not heard before and that tied well with their unit on space, specifically the Moon, Sun and Earth. She used the story to support students with higher abilities and to expand their knowledge beyond what they had learned during the unit (Interview 2, April 24, 2018). This was apparent in the high-level questions she asked. For example, Mrs. Carol asked, “Does the moon disappear just because you can’t see it?” After students responded, she related their response to the character in the story by asking, “Just because the boy could not see grandpa, does that mean he was not there?” Thus, students were expected to evaluate the information based on what they had learned from their unit on space, and from their own life experiences. This question, along with others, demonstrate that Mrs. Carol’s planning was intentional.

Time constraints, expectations and obligations can weigh heavily on teachers and at times they choose the path of least resistance. This was the case for Mrs. Smith’s teacher choice book. While she didn’t choose the teacher choice read aloud to help students learn a specific objective, it allowed her to fulfill a school expectation (i.e., Book Madness: Tournament of Books) and she believed students would enjoy the book. Another underlying factor for Mrs. Smith lack of planning was that she had been sick and was just returning to school. This is a reality of

teaching; sometimes school expectations and life situations limit a teacher's ability to explicitly plan for all activities.

Although one teacher did not plan for one book, it was clear from observations and interviews with both teachers that their style of planning worked for them.

Research Question 2: How do kindergarten teachers view the role of questioning during the read aloud?

Both teachers indicated that questioning was an important strategy that they use during read alouds and when teaching subjects (Interview 1, March 28th/April 7th 2018) and this was apparent through observations. In fact, Ms. Carol said that she was passionate about read alouds and the use of questioning, and they were top priorities in her classroom (Interview 1, April 7, 2018). While Mrs. Smith indicated that questioning was important, she was not as passionate about read alouds or questioning as Mrs. Carol. That said, Mrs. Carol and Mrs. Smith, both asked questions that required higher level thinking. They also scaffolded questions to help students to determine the correct answer because neither teacher wanted to simply give students the answer or simply let go of the question. However, while approximately 35% of the questions were high-level, Mrs. Carol, who was more passionate about questioning, asked 130 questions, while Mrs. Smith only asked 98 questions in total. As Vygotsky (1978) stated, teachers' beliefs, behaviors, and use of language influence children's behaviors in the classroom. Therefore, the teachers' differences in how they viewed questioning might explain some of the differences in their observed behavior and may have influenced children's behaviors, too.

Research Question 3: What types of questions do kindergarten teachers ask during a read aloud event?

Both teachers asked a variety of questions during the read alouds. However, the majority were low-level questions that supported student's understanding of literal aspects of the story. Research suggests that it is more common for teachers to ask low-level comprehension questions during an initial read aloud and focus on higher cognitive questions during a repeat read aloud of the same text (Wilensky, 1991). The content of Mrs. Carol's and Mrs. Smith's questions focused on helping students learn vocabulary and comprehend the story.

During her first read aloud, Mrs. Carol asked primarily low-level comprehension questions and then she asked high-level questions during the second read aloud. For the researcher choice book, she asked 30 low-level questions and 19 high level questions. In relation to the content of the questions, 30 were related to basic comprehension of the text, seven on vocabulary, and the other 12 questions related to print concepts and phonological awareness. For the teacher choice read aloud, she asked 51 were low-level questions and 27 were high-level questions. With respect to the content of the questions, 65 were related to basic comprehension of the text, 12 questions about vocabulary and one about print concept. In comparison, Mrs. Smith asked more low-level comprehension questions for both the first and second read aloud and focused primarily on sequencing the story and identifying vocabulary to support comprehension. During the researcher choice, Mrs. Smith asked 39 low-level questions and 24 high-level questions. For the teacher choice read aloud Mrs. Smith asked 24 low-level questions and 10 high level questions. 21 questions focused on basic comprehension of the texts, five on vocabulary, the other eight related to print concepts. Again, asking more low-level questions align with research "because a student needs to have a deep understanding of the topic in order to

answer high-level questions. Teachers do not use high-level-cognitive questions with the same amount of frequency as they do with low-level-cognitive questions” (Brauldi, 1998, p. 1).

Conclusion

Although the teachers’ views about reading aloud and questioning were slightly different, both teachers engaged in informal planning before reading aloud to their students and they both used questioning as a teaching strategy. In general, both teachers asked more low-level questions (65%) compared to high level questions (35%), which aligns with research (Wilens, 1991). However, Mrs. Carol was more passionate about reading aloud and questioning, which may explain why she asked questions at a greater volume, and per volume asked more high-level questions compared with Mrs. Smith.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the study consisted of two teachers who work in one school district. More teachers and more observations would have added to the richness of the findings.

Second, generalizability is limited, but I chose to do a case study because I wanted "to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). Two definitions are offered to define the term, generalizability: "A study that [sets] forth findings that are expected to be true in samples of persons and situations beyond those studied" (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 71) and a study that examines "whether the findings of a particular study hold up beyond the specific research subjects and the setting involved" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 32). The sample selection procedure limits the generalizability of the results to districts and teachers with similar characteristic.

Third, the study is descriptive and did not explore all the complexities of a read aloud, teacher effectiveness, and student outcome. If teachers were being effective, did their objectives influence what questions teachers asked and how this affected the complexities of the read aloud? In contrast, did the lack of planning or type of planning affect the questions asked and objectives addressed? These complexities were limited by the fact that it took place in only two kindergarten classroom and for a short two-month duration. An extended period of time for observation and data collection would have provided more information.

Fourth, participants in the study read two narrative fiction books (i.e., a familiar and unfamiliar book) to their students, so findings provide only a snapshot into their read aloud styles and teaching methods. Nonetheless, the present study does provide insight into how and what teachers are thinking and doing to support their students' literacy learning.

Fifth, one can speculate that the time of year would have produced different results. As this study was done during the second semester, students were accustomed to many of the print concept questions. Therefore, they may have received more questions in comprehension, vocabulary and phonemic awareness that would not have been seen if prior knowledge of skills had not yet been set with previous teaching.

Finally, the study observed, logged and categorized the types of questions asked, but did not explore how those questions related to future implications of learning. Were the teachers teaching to question and to teach, or were they just asking questions to manage behaviors, and move through the story?

However, despite these limitations the study does provide us insights into how teachers, who were identified as highly effective by their principals, plan to read high quality literature and the types of questions they ask during a read aloud.

Implications

Education often focuses on standardized tests, but read alouds continue to be an important instructional activity that promote students' learning and both students and teachers enjoy. However, findings from this present study showed that one teacher viewed read alouds as an instructional tool, while the other teacher viewed read alouds more as an enjoyable activity. Consequently, it is important that teachers continue to receive professional development about how read alouds can be used to support students' literacy and conceptual development.

The findings of the present study indicate that teachers view questioning as an important instructional strategy and, in most instances, the teachers were engaging their students in learning through questioning during classroom read alouds. Findings also identified similarities and slight differences between the types of questions teachers ask, and that a teacher's beliefs might influence the types of questions asked during a read aloud. Consequently, professional development might help teachers become more aware of their own beliefs toward questions, and promote consideration for the types of questions they ask. In fact, both teachers were somewhat surprised when observing the video clips of their read alouds because they had never reflected in such a manner. Professional development or instructional coaching might include teachers viewing video clips of their teaching to help them think more deeply about their instructional practice (Knight, Bradley, Hock, Skritic, Knight, Brasseur-Hock, Deshler, Ruggles, & Hatton, 2012).

Finally, the present study found that, in general, teachers planned informally for read alouds but in only one instance did a teacher write questions in advance. Therefore, it might be important for teachers to consider if such informal planning is beneficial for student learning, or

if it would be better to take a bit more time to write key questions in advance. By reflecting on their belief and actions, educators might be able to make changes to better support their students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several suggestions for future research studies emerge from this qualitative case study. First, with mandated curriculum and increased pressure on teachers' time, it is important to consider if and how teachers plan for instruction. If teachers are familiar with books or materials, do they continue to plan for them and do they engage in reflective practice? Is informally planning as effective a more formal planning (e.g., writing down questions)? Second, how do novice teachers' beliefs, planning and questioning change over time. That is, the experienced teachers in the present study engaged in informal planning and rarely wrote their questions in advance. It is unclear if this had always been their behaviors or if they changed over time. Third, a multisite, multi-classroom study comparing the practices of novice teachers (e.g., first- or second-year) and more experienced educators (e.g., 10 + years of experience) might help us to understanding how teachers develop their beliefs and practices. Fourth, research is needed to understand pre-service teachers' beliefs about read alouds and how they can be taught to engage in effective planning of and questioning during read alouds. Finally, with increased demands on teachers' time, teachers are increasingly using websites such as YouTube and Story Town online to replace teacher read alouds. Future research is needed to understand student outcomes with respect to listening to teachers read texts aloud versus listening to technology read e-books aloud. That is, is there a place for or what is the role of read alouds using technology? In conclusion, a read aloud is an important instructional tool in early childhood classrooms and there are always ways to read aloud more effectively to support student learning.

Appendix A

Teacher Questionnaire

1. Age _____
2. Degree/s _____
3. How many years have you been teaching: _____ (including this year)
4. What grades have you taught? _____
5. Please describe general demographic information of your students:
 - Number of males _____ Number of females _____
 - Number of English language learner _____
 - Number of students identified with special needs _____
 - General socio-economic status of students in your class _____
6. Please list, if any, coursework or professional development related to your prescribed curriculum, read alouds, or children's literature you have participated in.
7. Please list, if any, coursework or professional development related to questioning, Bloom's Taxonomy or rigor related to comprehension strategies. If you have not participated in any professional development related to these topics, would you be interested in attending one?

Please rank your answers to the following questions by:

1 = Not Confident; 3 = Moderately Confident; 5 = Confident

How confident are you in your understanding of

8. How the CCSS expect teachers to provide comprehension instruction in literacy.

1 2 3 4 5

9. How the CCSS defines student achievement in the area of literacy comprehension.

1 2 3 4 5

10. The term "levels of questioning instruction" or Bloom's Taxonomy of Questioning.

1 2 3 4 5

Read Aloud Practices

11. Does your prescribed curriculum influence your read aloud choices and planning? If so, how?
12. What is your primary purpose for reading aloud to students?

13. Do you try to engage your students in interactions during the read aloud? If so, how?
14. What do you think you do well during your read alouds?
15. What challenges, if any, do you have during your read alouds?

Appendix B
Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher Name/ _____

Grade Level _____

1. Tell me what you think are the benefits and drawbacks of a read aloud, in general?
2. How do you view read alouds in relation to the CCSS?
3. What is your perception of your literacy program?
4. What is your thought about read alouds in regard to expectations and delivery? Use of technology?
5. Tell me your specific purpose when reading the familiar/unfamiliar book aloud?
6. Tell me how you planned for this read aloud.
 - a. What strategies did you plan to use during this read aloud?
 - b. Familiar Book: What did you consider when choosing this book for the read aloud?
 - c. Researcher-Chosen Book: What do you about this book in relation to reading it aloud to your students?
7. With respect to this read aloud, what do you think went well?
8. What surprised you?
9. What might you do differently?
10. I noticed you were / weren't asking questions while reading aloud. Tell me more.
11. Are your read alouds based on my curriculum and book choose and/or your own beliefs/choices?
12. Do you think you ask the kind of questions that support your students? What might you do differently?
13. Now I'm going to show you X clips of you reading aloud. Please tell me what you were thinking. The teacher will watch 2-3 minutes of video clips of their read aloud. Questions will be specific and relevant to observation.

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