

Peer Book Discussion to Motivate Readers

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Abstract

An essential component of reading instruction is motivation. This study explored the impact of peer book discussion on motivation in reading in a fourth grade classroom in a rural community. Participants were engaged in three different types of peer book discussion within their classroom. These three book discussions were, reading buddies, booktalk posters, and informal book chats. Findings indicated that participants' desire to read and share what they have read with others increased.

Reading is undoubtedly a skill needed to be successful; however, reading isn't something all students enjoy and it can often be difficult for some students to obtain success. As a fourth grade teacher, I have found that students have various reading abilities. It is also very apparent that students have different levels of motivation. I've found that some students need help to find the motivation to read, where other students love to sit and read a book whenever they have free time. Unfortunately, in my experience I've noticed that there are some students who simply hate reading. I sometimes struggle to get them to read during class, and it often seems nearly impossible to get them to read outside of school. I am a teacher who holds high expectations for all of my students and wants all of my students to be successful; therefore, I am a teacher who needs to motivate my students to read and enjoy reading. In the past I have used reading buddies as a strategy to motivate my students to read. I found that my students really enjoyed talking, reading, and working with another student who was not in their class. While thinking of possible ways to encourage motivation, I questioned other ways that I could get my students to read and talk about books that would give them the same enjoyment as reading buddies. The purpose of this action research study is to understand the impact book discussion can have on my students' reading motivation.

The question of how to motivate students has been widely researched and discussed in many reading journals. In the literature review I will discuss the importance of motivation, the impact of using peer book discussion as a strategy to increase student reading motivation, and strategies that teachers can use in their classrooms to encourage peer book discussion.

Review of the Literature

Motivation to Read

Some students struggle to find the motivation to read. They would prefer to do other things they may enjoy more. If a person is motivated to do something, he or she is more willing to put the time and effort into it. Reading research has demonstrated that motivation leads to reading time, and the more a child reads the greater the opportunity to improve their reading proficiency (Jang, Conradi, Mckenna, & Jones, 2015). The amount of time students spend reading has also been linked to higher scores on reading assessments (Knoester, 2010). Since administrators, teachers, and parents want children to be successful readers it is important that students are motivated and encouraged to read. Many factors play a role in a child's motivation to read. These factors can be categorized as school influences or home influences. While in school, children's attitudes, teacher-student relationships, reading materials, and peer influences affect a student's reading motivation (Wigfield & Asher, 2002).

Students' attitudes towards reading will influence their motivation to want to read. If students have struggled and feel as though they are performing poorly academically, they will typically express a poor attitude towards that subject (Hutchinson, 1972). When children enjoy or like a subject, they typically have a positive attitude about practicing that subject. As with anything, the more opportunities a student has to practice, the better she or he will be able to perform. Having a positive attitude is important for all students because a student's attitude affects his or her literacy development (McKenna, 1990).

A student's attitude can often be affected by the teacher-student relationship. Teachers need to always encourage positive attitudes towards reading and encourage students to be interested in reading (Gambrell, 2011). Teachers should want all of their students to love reading

and help their students find a passion for reading. A teacher can show their passion by always encouraging their students to be interested and curious in books, and reading and showing students the relevancy of reading in their lives (Gambrell, 2011). Teachers must also be sure to give their students feedback. Feedback should be supportive and constructive in order to motivate students to learn. Recognizing students and praising them can also increase motivation. Teacher praise is a very effective motivator for students as long as the student feels the praise is deserved (Gambrell, 2011).

The availability of reading materials also influences reading motivation of students at school. Students are more motivated to read when they are able to choose what to read. They enjoy the being in control and picking out what they would like to read because they can then pick the topics they want to read about. Allowing students to self-select books and giving students easy access to reading materials will increase their motivation to read (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). If students have a wide variety of materials available to them they may feel they are able to find something they will enjoy reading. Teachers should have different genres and text types available to their students to encourage reading motivation (Gambrell, 2011). Teachers also convey the importance of reading by providing their students with various reading materials (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

The final school influence on student motivation is the influence of peers. Peer influences play a very important role when it comes to reading motivation. Students often choose books based on their friends. Student peers can have an impact on their friends' reading motivation by recommending a book, by showing their peers what they are reading, or by properly participating in sustained silent reading (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). Teachers should encourage peer motivation in their classroom and take advantage of this opportunity. It is beneficial for teachers

to allow their students to share and talk about books with their peers (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

Book Discussion and Motivation

Engaging students in book discussion can improve reading motivation (Williams, Scott, & Simone, 2015). Teachers can implement peer book discussion within the classroom to increase a student's motivation to read. Book discussion can increase motivation because students improve their comprehension, are held accountable for reading, and because they enjoy the socialization book discussion includes. (Williams, Scott, & Simone, 2015)

Students can improve their comprehension abilities by participating in book discussions because they are invited to talk about a book they are reading. Discussing the events of the book will improve their understanding of the text. Students are able to interact, question, disagree, and build on their peers' ideas while participating in book discussions (Moses, Ogden, & Kelly, 2015). Discussions encourage students to think critically about the text and share that with a peer (Williams, Scott, & Simone, 2015).

During a book discussion students are required to discuss a book they are reading. This prompts students to be prepared to share something. Students feel as though they are responsible for their part of the discussion and this encourages them to read (Williams, Scott, & Simone, 2015). Students also feel as though they have a voice and are listened to (Moses, Ogden, & Kelly, 2015). This encourages them to read because they enjoy sharing and know that someone will listen to their thoughts and feelings about the book. Students also want to show their peers their abilities. This encourages reading because students want to impress their peers with their book and/or their knowledge of the book they are reading (Williams, Scott, & Simone, 2015).

Lastly, book discussion is enjoyable for participating students. The simple act of working with peers can encourage student interest and engagement (Gambrell, 2011). When listening to a peer share about what they have learned from a book students can learn from watching their peer be successful. Students are able to see their peer's successes and be encouraged to have that same success (Gambrell, 2011). Teachers want their students to be excited about learning. Working with others to learn something new creates excitement in the classroom (Moses, Ogden, & Kelly, 2015). Working with others also gives students an audience to encourage their thinking and reading skills (Williams, Scott, & Simone, 2015).

Instructional Strategies for Book Discussion

Book clubs are an interactive tool used in classrooms to encourage the discussion of texts between students. Book clubs are unique in the sense that students often select the book they want to read from a group of choices. After students have started reading the book, they come together and discuss the text they have all read as frequently as they desire. Students' conversations could be about their favorite characters, connections to their life or other books or movies, and why they do or do not like the book (Lapp & Fisher, 2009). Teachers may lead book clubs by having the students write in journals and discuss in partners and as a whole group; however, a student moderator could be assigned in each club instead of a teacher. This leadership role would be to ensure that all group members were following the book club guidelines of being prepared, being courteous and sensitive to others comments and contributions, being respectful to other group members, questioning other group members, and assuming responsibility for the group (Lapp & Fisher, 2009).

Students are often more motivated to learn when they have a voice in what they are learning. Running a book club in a classroom will encourage and motivate readers because they

are in charge of the discussion. According to Lapp and Fisher (2009), students are “intrinsically motivated to read and participate in these readings and subsequent discussions because their voices and interests were driving the text selections and conversations.(557)” Students are able to feel successful when able to have a discussion without the lead from the teacher (Donoahue, 1998). The feelings of encouragement and success will continuously motivate students to read and enjoy reading.

Another research-based instructional strategy to improve student motivation is using literature circles. Literature circles are very similar to the previously discussed book clubs. In a literature circle students are placed into small groups based on interest or book choice and have discussions about the common text they are reading. Literature circles often provide students roles which they are to focus on while independently reading. These roles require students to bring something back to the group to use for the group discussion. Literature circles are frequently used in the upper elementary and middle school grades. To maximize student involvement, students are often grouped into a literature circle based on their interest which leads to increased student participation. Literature circles allow students to explore common interests and share opinions and understanding (Knoester, 2010).

Using blogging to promote student discussion is a more current strategy being used in classrooms. A blog is a social networking website that can be used as a discussion board for students to talk about the books they are reading. It has the unique power to make in and out of school literacy connections (Albaugh, 2013). A blog is a unique tool because students can use it whenever and wherever they have access to the internet. It is a discussion tool that is not restricted to school and allows for enriching discussions outside of the classroom. All discussions are on the computer so teachers are able to review and read all of the students’ discussions as

they are occurring or when the teacher has the free time. Blogging is very easy to access and is enjoyable for the participants (Albaugh 2013).

For most youth today, the affinity for technology is very visible, and in most cases, adding technology to the classroom increases student engagement. The use of blogs, a technology based discussion technique, strongly affects a student's ability to discuss books. Students enjoy using the technology, so they are motivated to blog and share their ideas. Using technology also allows students who otherwise would have been more reserved and shy, to share their thoughts and feelings about a book openly and honestly. A student's confidence and personality come out through the use of blogging (Albaugh, 2013). Blogging is also very accessible to students because they can blog anywhere that has internet. This can increase student discussion due to the simple fact of it being more accessible than having to meet and discuss face to face. Albaugh (2013) describes using blogging as, "a supplement to language arts literacy instruction that allows students to interact with a medium that is accessible and enjoyable" (6).

Interactive book journals are another tool used to increase the amount a student talks about books. When using an Interactive book journals, a student writes about a book and another student or teacher will write back. The dialogue can continue throughout the entire text as new topics come up. This could be used very similarly to blogging, except the journal is hand written instead of typed on the computer. Students will show their understanding of the text through the dialogue and their questions (Knoester, 2010).

Another activity used to encourage book discussion is reading buddies. Students of different ages and reading abilities, come together over an extended time period (Knoester, 2010). Reading buddies provides two students an opportunity to sit down with each other and take turns reading and listening. Frequently in schools classrooms are paired together and read

with the same buddies on a scheduled basis. Sometimes schools have a reading buddy time for the entire school and students may be paired up with a different buddy each time. Buddy reading provides many opportunities for book discussions (Ziolkowski, 1999).

When students participate in reading buddies, they are not just reading. They are also forming a relationship with another student. Over the course of the school year buddies become excited to meet with their buddy. The majority of the time is spent reading or listening to their buddy read, but they also spend a small amount of time talking and catching up with each other. This relationship grows and makes reading buddies an enjoyable time for all students. Most reading buddy situations form a friendship, and as Ziolkowski (1999) states, “Friendships between our buddies provided the positive motivation all students needed to focus on literacy skills.(5)” A positive buddy reading experience will add enjoyment to reading and encourage students to continue reading.

A very informal way to get students to talk about books is simply to pair or group them and ask them to discuss the books they are reading. Students could be paired strategically or randomly. Students could be paired based on interest to spark common interests in the books being chosen to read. They could also be picked at random so students will have an opportunity to learn about a variety of books. Students can be at any point in the book and do not need to be reading the same book. Students can be prompted to summarize their book, share connections, share predictions, and share their feelings of interest or disinterest toward the book. Peers would also be given the opportunity to ask questions about the book to strike up further conversations about the text. These discussions allow students to play a role in their classroom. Students enjoy being a part of the social interaction of the classroom, which in turn gets them excited about reading. Their peers are also excited about sharing their books, which will motivate others to also

want to pick up that book and read it (Jang, Conradi, Mckenna, Jones, 2015). Getting students to discuss their book selections can have major impacts on motivating their peers to also get excited about the book they are reading or excited to pick up their peer's book when they are finished reading. A middle school teacher from the Knoester article experienced events where students would get excited about a book from their classmates' excitement. She also found that when kids talk about a book it motivates other students to want to also read it (Knoester, 2010).

Booktalks is the final way presented in this study as an approach to get students talking about books. Booktalks can be comprised of three different parts, booktalks, booktalkers, and booktalking. Booktalks are written presentations of a book; booktalking is a verbal presentation of a book; and booktalkers is when someone presents a booktalk prepared by someone else. All three of these are like a brief advertisements or commercials which give just enough information about the book to get students interested in reading it. It is similar to a commercial or movie preview and allows for the students to get a brief introduction to the book and to decide if they would find the book interesting or not. Many students judge a book by the front cover, but a Booktalk will get the readers inside enough to get the gist of what they book is going to be about. Booktalks can be teacher or student led in the classroom, but can be especially successful when students are the talkers (Littlejohn, 1999). In many cases, when students encourage their peers to read a book, their peers are more eager to pick up the book. If they know their peer or friend really enjoyed the book, they are more willing to try and read the book because they think they too will like the book. An important motivation piece to Booktalks is that students are ultimately given the choice as to what they want to read. A Booktalk may encourage a student one way or another, but students have the choice in the end (Littlejohn, 1999).

In summary, student motivation plays a significant role in student success as a reader. Book discussion is one way to improve students' motivation to read. There are many ways teachers can get students to talk about books. In this study, I implemented some of these techniques and strategies within my classroom in order to investigate how book discussions impact the motivation of my students to read.

Methodology

Description of School and Classroom

This study occurred in an elementary school in a small rural city that serves 205 students ranging from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. The school's general student population is 95% Caucasian and has very small percentages of students who are Hispanic, African American, Native American and Asian. 70% of the students attending the elementary school receive free or reduced lunch.

There are sixteen fourth grade students in my classroom. Our general schedule for the day is: an hour and 15 minutes for math, one hour for writing, fifteen minutes for Words Their Way, a common core aligned developmental spelling program (Bear, Invernizzi, Johnston, & Templeton, 2008), an hour for guided reading, 45 minutes for whole group reading, and a half an hour for both science and social studies.

Participants

The participants in this study were 16 fourth-grade students: six boys and ten girls. Based on the results of the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment given at the beginning of the year (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008), five of these readers were reading below grade level, seven were reading at grade level, and four were reading above grade level. All of the 16 students were Caucasian and nine come from economically disadvantaged families.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data for eight weeks during the first quarter of the school year from several different sources: an attitude survey, reading logs, observations of on-task behaviors, and observational notes. In order to collect baseline data, I administered a self-created reading attitude survey (Appendix A) to all of my students during the second week of school. In order to analyze this data I created a reading attitude percentage of the pre- and post- survey. To find the reading attitude percentage, I assigned each survey question point score 3, 2, 1, or 0. A three indicated the best reading attitude response for the question, and a 0 indicated the worst. To then find the students' overall reading attitude percentage, I tabulated their total score and divided that by the maximum score of 12. This was a measure of student reading attitude over time. I also created two charts to compile data of how many minutes students read outside of school and how often students were on task during book discussions. The charts would measure whether students had increased their reading minutes per week, if my students would read the class goal of 100 minutes a week, and a possible correlation between student reading minutes and student off-task time during book discussions. I recorded the number of minutes read by each student on a weekly basis for eight weeks when students returned their reading logs. Additionally, I observed and recorded whether each student was on task. I recorded observational notes of our book chats, book talks, and other related comments made by students in a journal when they said something related to a book discussion. At the end of the study, students were given the reading attitude survey a second time to assess change in reading attitudes and feelings about book discussions. After the final survey was completed, I examined students' pre- and post- survey results and analyzed them to view the differences in student attitude toward reading.

Lastly, I compared the students' attitudes with the number of minutes they read in a week and their on-task behaviors during book chats by creating a chart. The chart documented four answers from the reading attitude survey. The chart also included the number of minutes read each week and the average number of minutes the students read. Lastly, it included the students' on task percentage, which I found by documenting in a chart whether the student was on task or not during each book chat.

Procedures

My desired outcome from this project was to increase student motivation to read. I planned to use reading buddies, booktalk posters, and book chats to engage students in peer discussion. Based on my literature review, I predicted that peer discussion would result in motivation which would lead to more reading enjoyment for my students.

Before beginning to implement the strategies in my classroom I wanted to make sure students were aware of the expectations. The first book discussion strategy I used was reading buddies. My fourth grade class paired up with a kindergarten class and we scheduled reading buddies for 20 minutes every Friday afternoon. Each fourth grade student was paired with a kindergarten student who would be their buddy for the remainder of the school year. The fourth grade class was larger, so four of the fourth grade students shared a kindergarten buddy. Before our first reading buddy experience, I led a discussion of expectations during reading buddy time. Students were reminded that they were a role model for the younger students and they were going to help them with their reading. They were told to sit next to their buddy and share the book between them so both students could see the book. I modeled to my students what a conversation might sound like between a fourth grade student and a kindergarten student. I also encouraged my students to talk and have a discussion about the books they were reading.

The next strategy shared with the fourth grade students was peer book discussions. I chose this strategy as a combination of many strategies I learned about during my literature review. I wanted to give my students opportunities to talk about the books they had read or were currently reading. To set this up in my classroom I explained to my students the expectations of book chat time. Students should take turns talking about their book. They should share details about the book such as what is currently happening in the book, what parts of the book do they like or not like, what has surprised them about the book, would they recommend this book to a friend, what the story elements of the book are, or anything else they would like to share about the book. The other partner was also provided expectations to listen and ask questions about their partner's book. Students were instructed to sit next to or face to face with their partner and to not be moving around during this time. We discussed good listening skills such as looking at the person talking, commenting, and asking questions about their conversation. Before our first book chat I modeled this for my students with another student in my classroom. I made mistakes as an example of what students shouldn't do and we discussed them afterwards. Following this, I had my students practice a book chat with a partner. I walked around while they practiced and encouraged students to have deep and thoughtful conversations. To conclude the lesson on book chats, I led a final class discussion on expectations during book chats.

The final strategy I used with my fourth-grade students was creating and presenting a booktalk poster to the class. As previously stated, a booktalk poster is like an advertisement for a book encouraging others to read it. After reading aloud from our first class book, *Tales of the Fourth Grade Nothing* (Blume, 1972), I created a booktalk poster to share with my students. I modeled the presentation that goes along with the poster and gave my students the assignment. Students were encouraged to pick any book they had recently read to create the booktalk poster

and share it with the class. We shared the book talk posters in class and each student was allowed to answer two questions from their classmates following their presentation.

Findings

Survey

I administered a survey to my students in the second week of school prior to beginning the book discussion strategies. I gave them the same survey with four short answer questions added at the end of the study in November. The survey included 12 items; I chose to analyze four items that I felt correlated the best with book discussion and motivation. The four questions I chose to analyze were: “Reading a book is something I like to do,” “I tell my friends about the good books I read,” “I think reading is _____,” and “Talking about the books I read is _____.”

Question 1: Reading a book is something I like to do. When asking my students the survey question “Reading a book is something I like to do,” they were given the option to answer “never, not very often, sometimes, or often.” According to the pre-survey two students answered “never,” one student answered “not very often,” six students answered “sometimes” and seven students answered “often” (Figure 1). The post-survey showed a change. Zero students responded with “never,” two students answered with “not very often,” five students answered with “sometimes,” and nine students answered with “often” (Figure 2). Responses to this survey item showed that over the course of my eight weeks of strategy implementation more of my students said they often like reading a book. My pre-survey had two students who gave the response that they “never” liked reading a book, and in my post-survey I had zero students with “never” as their answer.

Pre Survey

Reading a book is something I like to do.

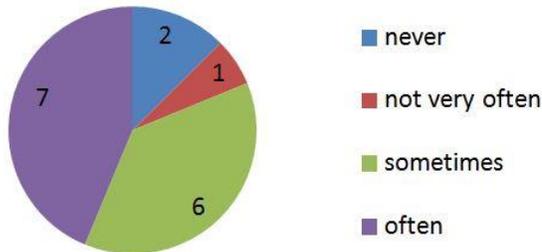


Figure 1: Pre-survey. Reading is something I like to do.

Post Survey

Reading a book is something I like to do.

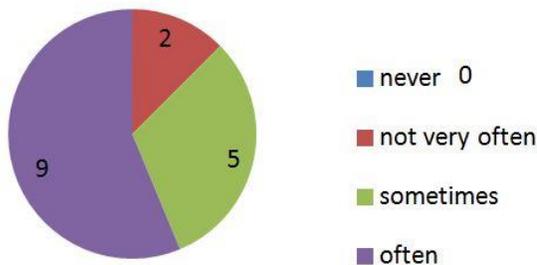


Figure 2: Post-survey. Reading a book is something I like to do

Question 2: I tell my friends about the good books I read. When asking my students the survey question “I tell my friends about the good books I read,” they were given the option to answer: I never do this, I almost never do this, I do this sometimes, or I do this a lot.” The pre-survey showed that seven students “never do this,” four students “almost never do this,” two students “do sometimes do this,” and three students said “I do this a lot” (Figure 3). According to the post-survey, zero students answered, “never do this,” three students answered, “I almost never do this,” eight students answered, “I sometimes do this, and five students answered “I do

this a lot” (Figure 4). This survey question shows that more students in my classroom were sharing with their friends about the good books they read. In the beginning of my research seven students were not sharing with their peers and four students were rarely sharing with their peers. At the end of my study all my students were sharing, and only three students said they rarely shared.

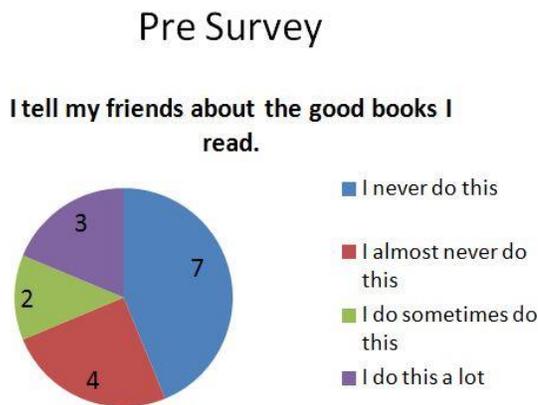


Figure 3: Pre-survey. I tell my friends about the good books I read.

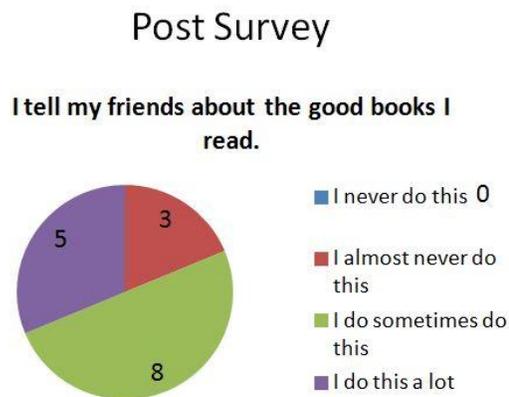


Figure 4: Post-survey. I tell my friends about the good books I read.

Question 3: I think reading is ____. When asking my students the survey question “I think reading is ____.”, they were given the option to answer “a boring way to spend time, an

OK way to spend time, an interesting way to spend time, or a great way to spend time.”

According to the pre-survey two of my students thought reading was, “a boring way to spend time,” two students thought reading was, “an OK way to spend time,” seven students thought reading was, “an interesting way to spend time,” and five thought reading was, “a great way to spend time” (Figure 5). The post-survey results show improvements with my students’ attitudes towards reading. One student thought reading was, “a boring way to spend time,” three students thought reading was, “an OK way to spend time,” four students thought reading was, “an interesting way to spend time,” and eight thought reading was, “a great way to spend time” (Figure 6). On this question the most significant change was the addition of more students who thought reading was a great way to spend time. There was not a large amount of change in the boring or OK category.

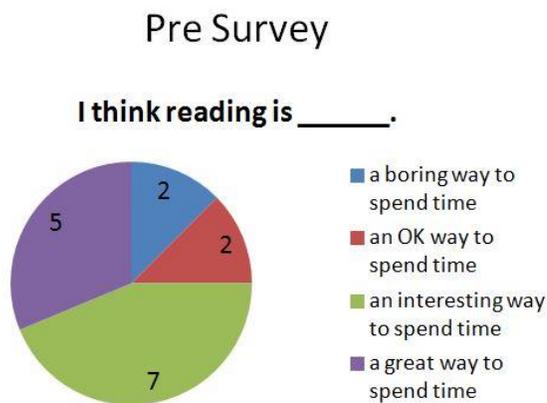


Figure 5: Pre-survey. I think reading is _____.

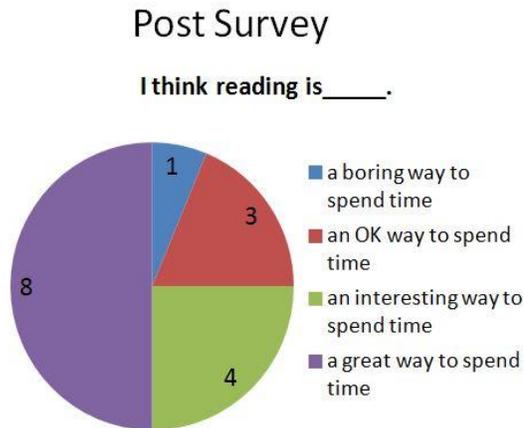


Figure 6: Post-survey. I think reading is _____.

Question 4: Talking about the books I read is _____. Lastly, when asking my students the survey question, “Talking about the books I read is _____.”, they were given the option to answer “boring, OK, enjoyable, or fun.” The pre-survey results show that one student answered “boring,” six students answered, “OK,” five students answered, “enjoyable,” and four students answered, “fun” (Figure 7). Improvements are visible on the post-survey because, zero students answered, “boring,” five students answered, “ok”, five students answered, “enjoyable,” and six students answered “fun” (Figure 8). More students answered that book discussion was fun after the strategies were implemented in the classroom. There was also a change that no students answered, “boring” on the post-survey. This is evidence that the overall attitudes of my students in regards to book discussion improved through the implementation of the strategies.

Pre Survey

Talking about the books I read is _____.

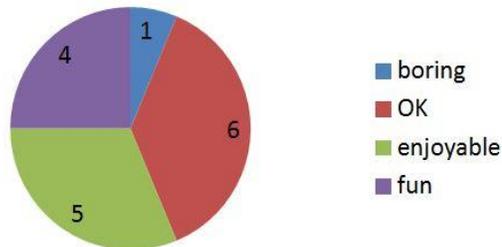


Figure 7: Pre-survey. Talking about the books I read is _____.

Post Survey

Talking about the books I read is _____.

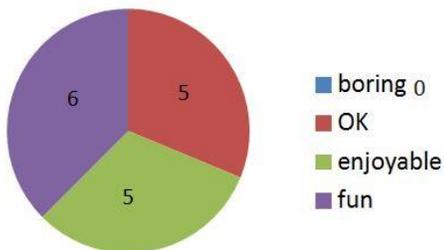


Figure 8: Post-survey. Talking about the books I read is _____.

Feedback on Book Discussion Strategies

In order to gain an understanding of how my students felt about the strategies implemented in the classroom, I added four short answer survey questions to the initial survey students took. I also collected anecdotal notes throughout the eight weeks to document feedback from my students.

Post-survey questions. In addition to administering the initial survey as a post-assessment, I added four questions to assess the attitudes about the strategies I used to increase

book discussions. The first question I asked students was, “Do you like Reading Buddies? Why or Why not?” The second was, “Do you like book chats? Why or why not?” The third short answer question students answered was, “Did you like creating, sharing, and listening to booktalk presentations? Why or why not?” The final question I asked was, “Did a book talk presentation or book chat encourage you to read a specific book? If yes, which book did you read?”

Reading buddies. All sixteen of my students expressed that they liked reading buddies. We scheduled reading buddies for every Friday afternoon. This year Halloween fell on a Friday, and because of other Halloween school wide activities we didn’t have reading buddies. Throughout the course of the day, four students expressed disappointment to me that we were not going to be participating in reading buddies. For example, Bob said, “Mrs. Steinmetz, why can’t we just have reading buddies in the morning?”

Along with sixteen students saying they liked reading buddies, my students were asked to explain why. Below are the reasons my students said they enjoyed reading buddies. The number behind the reason symbolizes how many students shared that same opinion.

- Like sharing books with them (4)
- Good way to help young kids read (3)
- My reading buddy really likes to read to me (2)
- Because both my buddy and I were learning
- Make new friends
- Like to motivate the younger kids to read
- I can read an easy book
- Like the little kids

- Like to learn what kinds of books others like
- I can read to someone

Throughout the course of this research project I kept a journal to document student conversations or actions that were related to book discussions. A few student comments are included in Table 1 (Reading Buddies Comments) below.

Table 1: Reading Buddies Comments

Date	Student Comment
9/18/15	"I love reading buddies so much!"
10/2/15	"My book buddy is so funny, we even played at recess today!"
11/2/15	"I saw my reading buddy in the hallway and she gave me a hug! She is so funny!"

My students' comments show that my students enjoy reading buddies and that reading buddies serves a purpose for both groups of students participating. Reading buddies is something my students look forward to and are unhappy when it is missed. This strategy made a positive impact on all my students by encouraging them to read and making them excited about reading. Reading buddies has a positive impact on student reading motivation.

Book chats. When my students were asked to express their attitude towards book chats on the survey, fourteen students said they liked book chats, one student said he didn't like book chats, and one student said she sometimes like book chats (Figure 9). Students were also asked to express their reasons for liking, disliking, or sometimes liking book chats. The student responses are below. Answers with a number following them represents the number of students who had the same or similar response.

- Yes
 - I learn what books my classmates are reading (4)
 - I get motivated to read other books (4)
 - It's fun (2)
 - I got into a new series
 - I can pick to share with my friends
 - We can share books
 - Can show classmates what you are reading
- No
 - My classmates don't enjoy reading as much as I do
- Sometimes
 - I only like it when the person has something I like to read

As previously stated, I kept a journal to document student conversations or actions that were related to book discussions. A few student comments are included in table 2 below.

Table 2: Student Book Chat Comments

Date	Student Comment
10/2/15	"Could we do a book chat because I want to tell her about my book?"
10/15/15	"I can't wait until she is done with that book so I can read it."
11/4/15	"When are we going to do another book chat, I want to share this new book I'm reading."

Most of my students found book chats to be enjoyable and they had a positive experience with them. As described in some typical student answers, they were excited to learn about what their friends were reading and this made them want to read what their peer was reading. As shown below in Figure 9, book chats made a positive impact on student motivation to read, read what their peers were reading, and to talk about what they read.

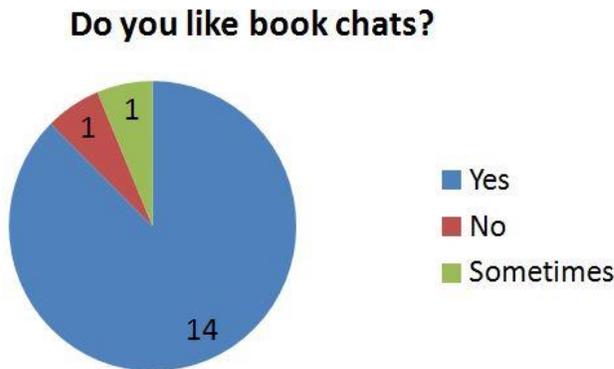


Figure 9: Do you like book chats?

Booktalks. When my students were prompted on the survey to express their attitude towards the booktalk process of creating, sharing, and listening to presentations, twelve students said they liked the booktalk process, one student said they didn't like the book talk process, and three students said they liked parts of the booktalk process (Figure 10). Students were asked their reasons for liking, disliking or liking parts of the booktalk process. The student responses are below. Answers with a number following them represent the number of students who had the same or similar response.

- Yes
 - Made me want to read some of the books (4)
 - Liked seeing what my friends read(3)
 - Liked drawing and making the poster (2)

- Liked hearing and learning about the book (2)
- Liked advertising my book to my friends
- Parts
 - Didn't like presenting in front of the class (3)
- No
 - Takes too long to create and share and it is hard to share without spoiling the book

On November 4th, I documented student conversations or actions related to book discussions. A few student comments are listed below.

Yumi said, "Where is that book because I want to read it?"

Olive said, "Is that on the white shelf (our recommendation shelf) because I want to read it."

Blade said, "Now I want to get that reindeer book that Brianna was talking about."

Pepper said, "Where could I find that book?"

Chelsea said, "I'm going to read that next!"

A reluctant reader, Peter, was very excited to share his book and smiled more than I have seen all year!

The findings show that most of my students enjoyed the full booktalk process. Some of my students didn't enjoy the sharing part of the booktalk process because they have a fear of talking in front their peers. Over half of my class enjoyed learning about what their peers were reading and some even said that they were encouraged to read one of the books. Booktalk posters made a positive impact on student motivation to read what their peers were reading, by listening to their peers talk, and share images about their book.

Encourage reading of specific book. The final short answer question my students answered was if a book chat or booktalk presentation encouraged them to read a specific book. As shown below in Figure 10, thirteen of my students said that they were encouraged to read a specific book and three students said that they were not encouraged to read a specific book. I found this data to be important because the majority of my students were encouraged by a peer to read a book and this shows that peers have an important role in student motivation to read.

Did a booktalk presentation or book chat encourage you to read a specific book?

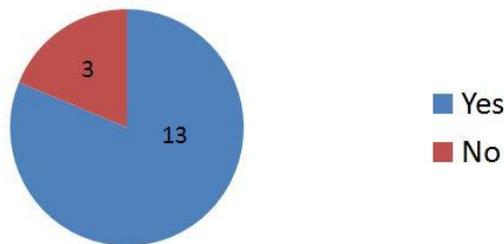


Figure 10: Did a booktalk presentation or book chat encourage you to read a specific book?

Reading Attitude and Time on Task

The final data collection and analysis I completed was comprised of three parts. Table 3 summarizes each student's overall reading attitude from the pre- and post- survey, their average number of minutes read in a week, and their on task percentage during book chats. The table shows that according to the survey responses, ten of my students showed improved reading attitude, five stayed the same, and one had a decrease in their positive attitude about reading.

The table also includes each student's reading minutes and an average of number of minutes read each week. When calculating and analyzing the average minutes read per week, fourteen of my students met the goal of reading 100 minutes per week; two did not. Lastly, the table includes the on-task percentage of each student during book chats. Five students were

always on-task, five were on task between 70-99% of the time, five were on-task 50-69% of the time, and one student was on-task less than 50% of the time. I found it interesting that the student who was generally off task during book chats was also the one student whose positive reading attitude decreased. Based on my other students and their improved attitudes, I question if this student’s reading attitude might also have improved if he would have been on-task more frequently or if he was off task because he has a poor attitude towards reading and/or book discussions.

Table 3:

Student Data on Attitude, Book Chat On-Task Percentage, and Reading Minutes.

Student Name	Pre-Survey Attitude Percent	Post-Survey Attitude Percent	On Task Percentage during Book Chats	Average Reading Minutes	Reading Minutes							
					Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Zoey	8.3 %	41.7%	75%	123.75	110	130	105	85	100	120	130	210
Fred	91.7%	100%	62.5%	196.25	190	90	200	65	130	280	280	335
Pepper	50%	75%	100%	139	107	145	155	110	130	155	165	145
Blade	83.3%	83.3%	71.4%	66.875	100	20	20	130	20	20	100	125
Bob	41.7%	50%	50%	187.125	165	110	100	95	80	155	372	420
Peter	83.3%	50%	28.6%	48.25	120	55	60	42	8	20	51	30
Zara	75%	75%	100%	237.5	200	200	310	220	150	275	300	245
Ginga	0%	33.3%	62.5%	155.125	114	102	124	124	143	153	235	246
Olive	33.3%	83.3%	75%	204.25	160	140	190	210	191	208	260	275
Itsy	66.7%	91.7%	62.5%	109.375	165	55	15	90	85	160	110	195
Brianna	75%	83.3%	75%	158.125	180	165	55	155	175	170	205	160
Yumi	100%	100%	85.7%	132.5	140	140	140	140	100	100	150	150
Josie	41.7%	75%	57.1%	112.5	100	100	60	140	100	100	150	150
Brooklyn	66.7%	91.7%	100%	306.25	190	270	60	350	460	400	300	420
Paul	66.7%	66.7%	100%	368.125	325	280	300	420	420	360	420	420
Chelsea	83.3%	83.3%	100%	103.375	100	120	115	102	120	130	170	105

Green = Increase in attitude

Yellow = No Change in attitude

Red = Decrease in attitude

Blue = Met reading minutes goal of 100 minutes per week

Pink = Didn't meet reading minutes goal of 100 minutes per week

Discussion

Summary of Results

In this action research study, I found that all of my students enjoyed reading buddies and book chats. Also, most of my students said they enjoyed booktalk posters, except for three students because they didn't enjoy having to present in front of the class. I feel confident saying that I could make a few changes, like using a binder or audio record the presentations instead of presenting in front of the class, and all students would enjoy booktalk posters also.

Along with positive feelings about the strategies implemented, student attitudes also improved. On the post-survey only one student's attitude decreased and the other fifteen students in my classroom stayed the same or increased. I found this to be extremely encouraging to see that book discussions affected the majority of my students' reading attitudes in a positive way.

After stepping back and looking at my research project as a whole, I feel very confident that book discussions have an impact on student motivation to read. The literature review shows, and my findings support, that there is a positive correlation between peer book discussion and motivation. I will be continuing this practice in my classroom and I recommend that other teachers implement some of these strategies into their regular instruction. This research study has also shown me that this instructional strategy may not work for all students. Motivational strategies should be differentiated to ensure all students' needs are being met. As I found in my literature review, students reading motivation at school can be broken down into four categories: children's attitudes, teacher-student relationships, reading materials, and peer influences. Knowing the importance of quality reading skills and students having motivation to read, teachers have many strategies to implement in their classroom to create motivated readers.

Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations with this project. The topic of motivation was difficult for me to assess. Creating and administering a survey, collecting observational and anecdotal notes, and charting weekly reading minutes and on-task percentage were the ways that I collected data. The validity of the survey data could have been affected by contextual issues such as a student was in a bad mood the day of the survey, not understanding the survey question correctly, or hurrying to finish so they just circled letters. I considered asking the questions verbally during a one-on-one conference, but worried that students wouldn't answer honestly.

Another limitation was the amount of time I had. I plan to continue data collection throughout the course of this school year. With more time I would expect a greater increase in positive student reading attitudes, which I would want to include here. I also could have included a mid-year assessment to see which students were struggling with reading motivation and address student concerns if for example, they didn't like part of a book discussion strategy. I could then change how students share their booktalks. I had three students say they didn't like having to present in front of the class. I could have asked them to share with just a partner or made a binder for students to look at when they were trying to find a book to read.

Another limitation I had, was working with only one group of sixteen students. My group of students this year seems to be more motivated to read than groups I've had in the past. I am not sure if this is because of the motivational techniques I've implemented into my classroom instruction or if it just the group of students I have this year. Working with more than sixteen students would give me more results to see the impact book discussion has on reading motivation. Continuing this study year after year would help me answer this question.

Next Steps

In the future, I would like to continue using peer book discussions in my classroom. The student data I collected and analyzed showed improvements in the overall students reading attitudes in my classroom. I will also plan to give the survey at least one more time throughout the year to see if their positive attitudes continue to increase.

There are some modifications I plan to put into place based on what I have learned from this project. For one, I will find other ways to pair partners. I currently let students pick their own partner occasionally, but more often I use my popsicle sticks with their names on them to pick their partner. Letting them pick may increase their excitement, keep them on-task more during book discussion, and allows them to choose students who have similar interests. I could also survey my students on their reading interests and try to pair students based on their interests. This may allow students to connect and related to what their peer is reading more frequently.

I plan to find new ways to share booktalk presentations. One solution to this problem would be to create a binder of booktalk presentations and keep it in our classroom library. When students were finished with a booktalk poster they could write a quick summary, basically what they would have said to the class, and put that in the binder with the book. This would then be available for students who are looking for a book to read. Another solution would be to have the students bring their booktalk to a book chat. They would then only be sharing their poster with one or two other people. This would help with the fear of sharing in front of the entire class, but it would still give them the opportunity to create, share, and encourage their peers to read the book. Another option would be to have students record their presentation on the ipad and upload it to our class web-page. Students could then use their Chrome book to access the booktalk presentations to help them choose a book. This option would also remove the fear of standing

and sharing in front of the entire class and would include technology, which is always a motivator for my students.

Finally, I would like to introduce my students to blogging. My fourth graders just started one-to-one technology this year by having a class set of Chrome books. I felt they would need to get used to their Chrome books before jumping in and using them to blog. I would like to use blogging as a discussion technique first with my guided reading groups to allow students to practice. Then I would introduce blogging as a way to share and encourage peers to read a book. I think my students will love this opportunity to share and read about other books that their peers have read and enjoyed.

My Learning Process

This process has been a tremendous learning experience for me, starting with what I learned from reading peer-reviewed articles, to finding appropriate strategies to use in my classroom, to lastly correctly gathering and analyzing student data. The most exciting part about all of this learning is that I have gained a technique to help improve student reading motivation. The literature research and my own classroom research analysis have shown that peer discussion has helped motivate my students to read. Peer book discussion has proven to be a way to motivate students to read and it has helped me because I now am able to use this technique in my classroom to encourage student reading motivation.

Appendix A: Motivation Survey

Name _____



Reading Rocks Survey



1. My friends think I am _____.
 - a. a very good reader
 - b. a good reader
 - c. an OK reader
 - d. a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
 - a. Never
 - b. Not very often
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Often

3. I read _____.
 - a. not as well as my friends
 - b. about the same as my friends
 - c. a little better than my friends
 - d. a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is _____.
 - a. really fun
 - b. fun
 - c. OK to do
 - d. no fun at all

5. I tell my friends about the good books I read.
 - a. I never do this.
 - b. I almost never do this.
 - c. I do this sometimes.
 - d. I do this a lot.

6. I am _____.
 - a. a poor reader
 - b. an OK reader
 - c. a good reader
 - d. a very good reader

7. Knowing how to read well is _____.
- not very important
 - sort of important
 - important
 - very important
8. I think reading is _____.
- a boring way to spend time
 - an OK way to spend time
 - an interesting way to spend time
 - a great way to spend time
9. Reading is _____.
- very easy for me
 - kind of easy for me
 - kinda of hard for me
 - very hard for me
10. When I grow up I will spend _____.
- none of my time reading
 - very little of my time reading
 - some of my time reading
 - a lot of my time reading
11. Talking about the books I read is _____.
- boring
 - OK
 - enjoyable
 - fun

12. Do you like Reading Buddies? Why or why not?

13. Do you like book chats? Why or why not?

14. Did you like creating, sharing, and listening to booktalk presentations? Why or why not?

15. Did a booktalk presentation or book chat encourage you to read a specific book? If yes, which book did you read?

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