



Effects of Daily Read-Alouds on Students' Sustained Silent Reading

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This action research project investigated the effects of daily teacher read-alouds on first graders' ability to sustain silent reading for an extended length of time. Students' enjoyment of silent reading was also investigated. The data on ability to sustain silent reading was collected from timed silent reading experiences, and a pre and post survey completed by students on their enjoyment and performance during silent reading time. The findings of the study suggest an increase in the length of time students silently read to themselves as a result of daily teacher read-alouds. Additionally, survey comments suggested an increase in enjoyment of silent reading as a result of the daily read-alouds.

Keywords: read-aloud, sustained silent reading, action research

Currently, read-alouds are utilized sporadically as a fun, relaxing and educational part of the classroom (Laminack, 2009). However, having a very busy academic schedule, it can be difficult to find as much time as one would prefer to read aloud to students for enjoyment. It can also be a challenge to assure that students are sustaining silent reading with proper behavior such as continuously being engaged in a book, and quietly reading the entire time, as long as they should without receiving proper modeling daily.

This action research project investigated the effects of daily teacher read-alouds on first graders' ability to sustain silent reading for an extended length of time, and their enjoyment of silent reading time.

The timed silent reading experiences were evaluated for an increase in time during and after the implementation of the daily read-alouds. Students also completed a pre and post survey that measured their level of

enjoyment of silent reading. The survey results were analyzed to evaluate if there was an increase in student enjoyment after the implementation of daily read-alouds. The timed silent reading experience data was analyzed to see what impact the daily read-alouds had on the amount of time students were able to sustain silent reading, and for a change in on and off task behavior during that time.

Review of the Literature

Many teachers schedule time for their students to engage in reading books they choose for an extended period of time to enhance literacy skills in their classroom. Such programs as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), or Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), or Daily Uninterrupted Reading Time (DIRT), have been shown to increase students' tendency to enjoy reading and the frequency of which they engage in reading for pleasure (Chua, 2008). Siah and Kwok (2010) found a positive correlation between the amount of time students spend reading for leisure and

students' values and attitudes towards reading. This suggests that providing students with the opportunity to listen and leisurely enjoy books their teacher reads aloud may impact students' attitudes towards silent reading.

According to Harvey and Goudvis (2007) an interactive read-aloud is a teacher lead activity that allows students to listen, talk and think about the story being read. In addition to providing time for students to reflect on a text, read-alouds are often students' favorite and most memorable part of the school day (Allen, 2000). Whether the text read aloud is chosen by the students, or the teacher, the act of listening to someone read a text has been shown to have many effects on the listener. According to Allen (2000) increased word knowledge, motivation to read, syntax knowledge and genre knowledge are some of the many effects listening to a read-aloud can have on students.

Most often, teachers choose books for read-alouds that are above their students' average independent reading level, providing students with exposure to content and texts they might otherwise never experience (Allen, 2010; Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004). When a teacher reads aloud, students are free to listen and enjoy the story without worrying about constructing meaning from a text that may be beyond their independent reading level. Even if a book is chosen for a read-aloud to expose students to a new genre or series of books, the experience has the ability to open new doors for readers of all ages by providing a dedicated time to sit, listen, and enjoy a story (Boyd & Devennie, 2009). Through a read-aloud, children are able to experience books that they may never have picked up on their own. These experiences may hold the power to engage students in a new love for reading (Fisher et al., 2004). Read-alouds are an important tool used not only to enhance skills, but create enjoyment within students' learning experiences (Braun, 2010).

Read-alouds have also been shown to increase students' motivation in content area studies and reading in general (Allen, 2000; Braun, 2010; Santoro, Chard, Howard & Baker, 2008). Braun (2010) stated that when teachers read, students listen, and when students can see their teacher responding passionately, they too will share those feelings. Providing students with the opportunity to see someone excited and engaged in reading is important to ensure that they too will find joy in reading. Allen (2000) discusses how a proper read-aloud model can hold the power to motivate students of all ages to pick up a new book and read it for entertainment, and enjoyment leading to numerous new learning opportunities.

In addition to exposure to a variety of texts, and increasing student motivation for reading, read-alouds have also been shown to have numerous other academic benefits. Barclay (2009) discussed the effects that read-alouds have on students' fluency, vocabulary, and phonological and phonemic awareness. These skills are necessary for students in order to develop proper oral reading styles and strategies. Read-aloud activities such as questioning, and

using comprehension strategies to incorporate engaging discussions into reading can also positively impact students' background knowledge, listening, and comprehension skills (Beck & McKewon, 2001; Santoro et al., 2008). In a study conducted by Braun (2010) read-alouds were used to introduce vocabulary, hook the students on a topic, and portray the notion that science was an important and exciting subject to learn about. Braun (2010) discovered that read-alouds were an effective method to get students' focus and attention, build motivation for the subject, and help them relate concepts to real life. Read-alouds provide students with a model of fluent oral reading and the opportunity to gain exposure to new vocabulary and knowledge.

McGee and Schickedanz (2007) studied the effects of repeated read-alouds in primary classrooms. They stated that simply reading aloud to students is not enough to increase vocabulary and comprehension skills and suggest having a systematic approach such as a repeated interactive read-aloud technique, as the best way to strengthen student's skills.

There is not sufficient research on read-alouds and their direct impact on students' ability to enjoy and participate in SSR time. With the current research supporting classroom read-alouds and SSR time for a variety of academic and motivational purposes, there will confidently be a connection between daily read-alouds and students' ability to participate in and enjoy SSR time.

Research Questions

This action research project addressed two questions. The first one being, how will daily teacher read-alouds impact the length of time and frequency of on and off task behaviors of students during silent reading? The second question that was investigated was how daily teacher read-alouds will impact students' enjoyment for silent reading time.

Methods

Participants

This action research project took place at an elementary school in a first grade classroom. The school is part of a public school district located in a mid-size, suburban town. The majority of students come from middle class households. There were a total of 21 participants; 11 female, and 10 male. Four of the students received daily English Language Acquisition (ELA) support.

Procedure

Every day over a two week period students experienced an additional teacher read-aloud averaging 18 minutes per day. The style of read-aloud that was implemented for this study was a teacher chosen interactive read-aloud for the purpose of enjoyment. Students asked questions during the reading, and discussed their thoughts on the text afterwards.

The silent reading procedures from the Daily Five (2006) reading program were utilized in this study. According to Boushey and Moser (2006) the entire class

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participates in silent reading by following a set of instructions including, reading the whole time, not moving from one spot, not using the restroom or getting a drink, and no talking to others.

Prior to the study beginning, data on the length of time students sustained silent reading, and their behaviors during that time were collected. Recordings of the time the class as whole spent silently reading and anecdotal teacher notes indicating observed on and off-task behaviors during the time were collected. During the two week period in which the daily read-alouds were implemented, the class participated in five extended silent reading experiences. Resembling the baseline collection data on time spent reading and notes on observed student behavior were collected during each experience. The data on time spent reading and behavior while reading was evaluated for an improvement in duration, and on task behavior during the implementation of the daily read-alouds.

In addition to baseline data on silent reading time and behavior, a short teacher-created survey was completed pre and post study by the students. Students were asked to rate the level of enjoyment they had for silent reading time, and how long they believe they read. There was also an open-ended opportunity for students to explain their answers at the bottom of the survey to provide students the opportunity to share how they truly feel (see Figure 1).

The silent reading timed data, and the survey data collected was analyzed to discover the impacts the daily read-alouds had on the duration the class was able to sustain silent reading, and their behavior during that time. In

addition the survey results were used to evaluate an impact on student enjoyment.

Limitations

In this study time was a significant limitation. The daily read-alouds were implemented for a two week period of time. During the two weeks in which the study took place, the class had five extended periods for silent reading data to be collected. The daily read-alouds would have optimally been implemented for at least a four to six week period for the students to become accustomed to the routine. In addition to the limited length of time of the study, the class the study was conducted in does not represent a random sample of students in the school district. Because of this, it is difficult to say whether or not individual background knowledge, socioeconomic status, or reading level had an effect on the results.

The ability of a first grader to complete a survey with accurate meaning may have also been a limitation to this study. It is difficult to control and assess whether or not the young participants fully understood how to properly portray their feelings thorough a survey. This could have altered the findings of the study.

Data Analysis and Results

As depicted in Table 1, the length of time students sustained silent reading increased. Specifically, the amount of time that the class as a whole sustained silent reading increased by nine minutes during the time in which they experienced the daily teacher read-alouds. In this study, this represents a significant increase for the two week period.

Name _____		
1) During read-to-self do you:		
Read the whole time	Read most of the time	Read a little bit of the time
2) Do you:		
Love read-to-self ☺	Like read-to-self ☺	Not like read-to-self ☹
Why _____		

Figure 1. Pre and Post Survey

Table 1

Pre and Post Intervention Reading Times (in minutes/seconds) for the Total Subject Group

	Mean	SD	SEM	N
Pre Intervention	15.06	1.0	0.21	21
Post Intervention	24.30**	0.0	0.00	21

**p < .01

Table 2

Pre and Post Survey Responses for the Total Subject Group

	Pre Intervention		Post Intervention	
	N	%	N	%
Q1: During read-to-self do you:				
Read the whole time	18	.85	17	.81
Read most of the time	2	.10	3	.14
Read a little bit of the time	1	.05	1	.05
	N	%	N	%
Q2: Do you:				
Love read-to-self	14	.67	13	.62
Like read-to-self	7	.33	7	.33
Not like read-to-self	0	.00	1	.05

The total subject group increased the amount of time they stayed on task silently reading by approximately nine minutes over the course of the two week period. At the baseline collection the class was able to sustain silent reading for approximately 15 minutes. By the last data collection the class read for 24 and ½ minutes with an overall change of nine minutes. In addition to the increased time spent reading, there was also a significant decrease in observed off-task behaviors during silent reading time.

During the baseline silent reading data collection there were three students observed occasionally looking around the room during reading time. Not only were a few students occasionally looking away from their reading, there were also three students that had a restroom break during the baseline silent reading session. By the final silent reading session there was no one who attempted to use the restroom during the 24 minutes of silent reading. The number of students observed looking around and not reading, steadily decreased eventually ending at zero during

the last session.

Not only did the off-task behavior decrease the overall sense in the room during silent reading was much more intense and meaningful at the end of the study. It was clear that the entire class was deeply engaged in the literature they had in front of them and were enjoying the quiet time reading alone. This could suggest that the students developed a greater appreciation and enjoyment for reading due to the increased teacher read-alouds.

Table 2 indicates the students’ responses to the two survey items. As depicted in Table 2, only a slight difference, or approximately two students, indicated a change in their level of enjoyment they had for silent reading time, and how long they believe they read.

The open ended responses from the pre and post surveys were categorized into like groups and evaluated comparatively. Only one subject did not provide responses to the open ended response portion of the pre and post survey.

Table 3

Pre and Post Open Ended Survey Responses for the Total Subject Group

	Pre Intervention	
	N	%
Love Reading	4	.20
Like Reading	8	.40
Reading is Fun	8	.40
	Post Intervention	
	N	%
Cool Books	4	.20
Quiet Reading Time	4	.20
Learning from Reading	4	.20
Reading is Fun	8	.40

As Table 3 indicates, the responses on the pre-survey were rather generic in nature. The majority of the students simply stated they liked to read as their justification for their response.

The post-survey responses were of a more elaborate, and meaningful nature. On the post-survey students stated reasons such as enjoying the quiet time to read, learning from the books, and enjoying the fun books and pictures as some of the reasons why they enjoy silent reading. The nature of the comments on the post-survey clearly express a greater appreciation and level of enjoyment for silent reading compared to the pre-survey, suggesting an increase in enjoyment as a result of the daily read-alouds.

Discussion and Implications

Discussion

This study showed evidence of a change in students' ability to sustain silent reading time and their enjoyment of silent reading time based on the daily teacher read-alouds. Teacher observations and student comments, in addition to the increased time spent silently reading, suggests a significant impact of the daily read-alouds. It is the researcher's belief that after experiencing the increased daily teacher read-alouds, the students developed a greater enjoyment for books both read to them, and read on their own during silent reading time. After one week of reading aloud every day one student commented "Wow! You have a lot of good picture books!" In addition to spoken comments, the reasons students stated to justify their survey response on silent reading on the post-survey showed a greater appreciation for reading compared to the pre-survey. More responses were based on a nature of an enjoyment for

reading and how it is beneficial on the post-survey. It is the researcher's belief that increasing the amount of time spent listening to reading through a teacher read-aloud, increased students' enjoyment for reading on their own and therefore showed an increase in duration of silent reading time.

The researcher believes the comments, observations and increased silent reading time showed sufficient data to justify a replication of this study. The impact of the read-alouds was significant over a two week period of time, however in the follow-up study the duration of the intervention and data collection should be increased to more accurately assess the effects. In addition to increasing the duration of the study, the increased daily read-alouds should be implemented throughout various grade levels to investigate if age and developmental reading level played a part in the effectiveness of the current study.

Implications

This action research project found that implementing daily teacher read-alouds had an impact on the length of time that students sustain silent reading. In addition to lengthening the amount of time students read silently, comments and behavior about silent reading time also improved. With the shift towards standards based, content packed curriculum, teachers may need to realize it is acceptable and beneficial to slow down and read aloud to their students. Not getting caught up in the whirlwind that can be created by demanding curriculums and standards, but according to this study and the supporting literature, taking the time to enjoy books with students can have benefits as well. With the results of this study in mind, it is advised that teachers increase the frequency of which they read aloud to their students. Not only do children deserve

to be provided with time to listen to and enjoy quality literature, but the daily read-alouds implemented during this study showed additional benefits of reading aloud to students.

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