

Students' and Teachers'  
Perceptions of a  
Basal Reading Program

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to Thesis

Each classroom is filled with students who are all at different reading levels and abilities. In my long-term first grade classroom, I saw students at all different reading levels. The basal program that was being used, at the time, was the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. Basal readers are:

A series of books designed to teach children to read. Usually a part of a long-term instructional program, basal (or basic) reading programs include a series of readers, workbooks, activity sheets and a teacher's manual, with lessons planned according to grade level, from first to sixth grades. (Unger, 1996, p.126)

The basal readers are used by all students in the class, no matter their reading levels. As a teacher, I feel the basal program possesses both positive and negative qualities. According to Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas (1993), teachers need to use the program to reach the students' needs and interests, which will then spark interest in the reading process. The way in which reading instruction is presented to students is important. The steps in which the teacher delivers the lesson, sets the foundation that will help students learn the key skills that are connected to reading. This process also may be the decision maker for students, regarding whether they enjoy the reading process. As a teacher, no matter which reading program is being used, the lessons have to be designed to allow the students to develop key reading skills, along with having the motivation to read inside and outside the classroom. This study will consider perceptions of the teachers and students, who use the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. In order to understand how these perceptions are created, it is important to understand how the program is used.

**Problem Statement**

The problem this study addresses is schools are relying on basal reading programs to be the basis for their reading instruction, without knowing the perceptions the teachers and students have towards the basal reading program. In my long-term first grade placement, I heard a variety of comments from the students pertaining to the basal reading program. The comments would range from the students loving the stories, to the stories being too easy, and the most frustrating for a teacher to hear, “I hate reading. Everything is too hard for me to read.” Teachers have shared mixed views with the program. Some enjoy using the program because it focuses on specific skills, while incorporating other supplementary materials into the lesson. Other teachers do not seem to enjoy using the program because the stories do not meet the needs of all the students in the class, since students are at all different readings levels and have different needs.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research study is to discover teachers' and students' perceptions of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, on a variety of levels. The study will focus on perceptions regarding essential skills (comprehension, prediction, context clues) that are needed for critical thinking. The study will also focus on whether the program is motivating students to become excited with the reading process, beyond the basal readers. It is important to discover whether or not the basal stories are “turning students off” to the reading process, by the readings being too difficult, or the students are not finding the basal stories interesting. Questions regarding perceptions will also be focusing on whether to use the teacher’s manual as a script or a guide. The following research questions will be addressed: What are teachers’ perceptions towards the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program? What are students’ perceptions towards the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program? How do the teachers’ and students’ perceptions

compare? The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the perceptions that teachers and students have toward the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The data collection process will be completed through teacher/student surveys, teacher interviews, and observations of the program, being used during reading instruction. The participants will be two third- grade teachers and approximately 40 students and two fourth-grade teachers and approximately 40 students. The study will reach across a six week period.

### **Significance of the Problem**

Reading instruction is one of the most important aspects in a child's education. In order to provide students with proper reading education, schools have to choose a program for their teachers to follow. A program that some schools may choose is a basal reading program. In this study, I will collect and analyze data regarding the perceptions of teachers and students using the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. This type of research is important because by having an understanding of the teachers' and students' perceptions of the program, schools can use the information to modify or choose a program that will reach the needs of the teachers and students. It is important to discover how to spark students' interests to help them become motivated with the reading process. By having an understanding of the teachers' and students' perceptions, the program can be changed, if needed, so it becomes an interesting, interactive, motivational learning experience, for all parties involved. According to Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas (1993), providing students with options and breaking routine can reach students' needs and interests, which will in turn make the students more involved in the learning process. If students are bored with the routine of the program, it will not spark their interest to learn, which will hinder their motivation for reading both inside and outside the classroom.

Research portrays both supporting and non-supporting views of basal reading programs. According to Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas (1993), the basal reading program takes away from the teacher, student, and text interaction by “directing teachers’ decisions and student activities” (p. 50). This non-supporting view suggests that the program is “scripting” the instruction process. In this view, the basal program is not allowing for modifications that will enhance the students’ education. On the other hand, according to Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, if the teacher motivates the students by providing them with a story choice from the basal readers, along with setting aside one day a week for non-basal instruction, motivation for reading instruction can improve greatly; students enjoy choice. The researcher noted that students enjoy having options. Karniol (2009) conducted a study regarding whether the stories were more focused on the male or female gender. This was linked to motivation with students and the basal reading program. According to Karniol, an increase in male characters in basal readers and other literature can help motivate boys into finding the story interesting enough to read. Students’ interests, instructional process, and motivation are all key issues that help determine students’ and teachers’ perceptions of a basal program.

### **Rationale**

This research study is based on my long-term and day-to-day substitute teaching jobs. Students are exposed to teacher-based reading instruction using basal readers. The perceptions of the basal reading program were mixed for my first graders. The stories that the students had to read each week were for each student in the classroom, no matter his or her reading level or areas of interest. As a teacher, I feel the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program is educational, when modified to reach the needs of the students. One method of modifying for students’ varying needs, or differentiation, includes utilizing leveled readers that are connected with the

story of the week. This method of differentiation provides struggling students with the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge that they have developed through instruction, with the opportunity to apply it to a story at his or her reading level.

Students rarely show interest in the stories and seem bored with the routines that the program possesses. If students had the opportunity to choose between two stories at their reading levels, they might develop a stronger interest in the reading program. Also, research has provided me with views supporting and not supporting the basal reading programs. It has been suggested that the program can be altered to further meet students' needs. Duffy, Roehler, & Putman (1987) report that the researchers had the teachers use the program as a guide, instead of a script. As a result, students' performance improved. The "experimental teachers group received training on how to use the basal instructional program; as a result, the students were significantly better in both awareness of strategy usage and achievement" (Duffy, et al., p. 361). If the program is altered to meet their interests, I believe students' perceptions could lead them to become more motivated to engage in the reading process.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Basal reading programs (Basal Readers):** "Basal readers/basal reading series are highly organized reading textbooks used to teach reading and associated skills to schoolchildren. Stories are chosen to illustrate and develop specific reading skills, which are taught in a strict pre-determined sequence. Basal readers contain stories in which limited vocabulary is introduced in a controlled fashion from certain word lists which gradually escalate in difficulty (Think *Dick and Jane*)" (The Pennsylvania State University [PSU], 2013).

**Critical Thinking:** "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information

gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action” (Foundation for Critical Thinking [FCT], 2011).

**Level Readers (books):** Leveled books (or little books as they are sometimes called) are used with beginning readers in guided reading; children are matched with books (“Guided Reading,” 2007).

**Reading Skills:** “An automatic process of reading comprehension and fluency. Along with concentrating attention, sequence of ideas, associating meaning with symbols, using past experience to understand new ideas, word meaning in context, organizing, evaluating, and retaining meanings of reading materials” (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008, p. 367).

### **Summary**

The success of students with the reading process greatly depends on the teacher’s ability to use materials in a way that will allow students to learn, at his or her own speed. The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program is what this research project will be focusing on. The way in which teachers use and deliver the information from the program can greatly influence students’ views of the reading process. The materials need to be presented to each student, at his or her ability level, in a way that will spark their interest, so they are motivated to learn. Through this study, teachers and students will be sharing their views of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The study will focus on specific reading skills for critical thinking (comprehension, prediction, and context clues), gender representations in basal readers, impact on reading motivation, structure of the basal reading program, delivery of instruction, and appropriateness of reading levels in the texts. I have observed a variety of mixed perceptions that correspond to the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, along with other basal reading programs, through

research. The study will be focusing on teachers' and students' perceptions, along with how the teachers' and students' perceptions compare.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This literature review has been designed to discuss important issues pertaining to basal reading programs in general. The literature review focuses on the history of the basal programs, perceptions of teachers and students regarding basal programs, supporting and non-supporting views of basal programs, impact of basal programs on development of reading skills, and the relationship of basal programs to the development of motivation to read. The history, perceptions, impact, and relationships are important to know and understand because they provide the framework of the program. Solid understandings of the history, as well as teachers' and students' perceptions regarding basal programs, along with supporting and non-supporting views of basal programs, are also essential.

#### History of Basal Reading Programs

The idea behind the "basal" program can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century and McGuffey's (1866) readers (Hoffman, Sailors, & Patterson, 2002). According to Hoffman et al., the "basal" was not intended to describe an "approach," rather the term was deemed to describe a commercial program. Many of these early series:

used the term "progressive" in their titles, not to imply a "new approach" to teaching reading, but as a description of the leveled nature of the books in the program. It was the growing consensus surrounding the "look-say" method, popularized in basals in the mid-1950s that led to the association of basals with a particular approach or philosophy.

(Hoffman et al., p. 2)

The skill instruction in the early basal programs was focused on decodability and vocabulary control, but with lack of attention towards phonics instruction. According to Hoffman et al., the basals of the 1970's and 1980's did not provide enough focus on explicit skill instruction, but relied heavily on sight words. Hoffman et al. felt that the basals of the mid 1990's were not supplying effective focus on students who were seen as "high-risk" and or the needs of minority children who "struggled with the challenge level of the materials" (p. 3). To counter these accusations, the basal publishers responded, and as a result there was an influx in the "little books" to focus on the skills that high-risk and minority students were lacking (Hoffman et al.). According to Hoffman, Roser, Salas, Patterson, & Pennington:

the supplementary or alternative texts called "little books," these 8-, 12-, or 16-page paperbound texts were designed to provide for practice by combining control (of vocabulary or spelling patterns) with predictable language patterns--the latter an attempt to ensure interest and to include literary traits. (p.2)

As research and expectations for reading instruction evolved, so did the expectations of basal reading programs. Basal reading programs have changed greatly over time, to meet the new requirements and research of how reading education is supposed to look in America's classrooms.

### **Perceptions: Teachers and Students**

Perceptions of the teachers and students are an extremely important viewpoint for master developers to consider. Master developers are the test makers, curriculum developers, and district administrators (Duffy et al., 1987). Most of the changes to the basal reading programs are due to criticism from other programs and research, but the teachers and students using the program and learning from it should have an equal voice in the matter (Durkin, 1987). These

viewpoints are extremely difficult to find. Duffy et al. revealed a teacher's perception of the program; the teacher stated, "You just read the manual, coax the kids to the book's suggested responses, and they are supposed to learn. It's a magic formula" (p. 358). This quote shows that the teacher does not take the setup or skills instruction of the program seriously. The quote is also stating that the teachers are supposed to use the program as a script. The idea is if followed word by word all students will learn at the same pace. Using the program as a script is difficult to do when students do not all learn in the same manner. The program that the teacher in the above study used is now outdated. A more recent study reported by Baumann and Heubach discussed teachers' perceptions towards the basal program. The teacher responses in the article were focused towards the question, "Do you believe you are deskilled by using basal reading materials?" (Baumann & Heubach, 1996, p. 521) A teacher stated "It is a resource and a guide. I would expect an experienced teacher to use what works with her/his students and omit what does not" (Baumann & Heubach, p. 521). This teacher is suggesting that when the basal program is used as a guide, the teacher then can select materials from the program that will reach the needs of the students. Each group of students requires the materials to be presented in a certain manner. Another teacher from the Baumann & Heubach study stated "The basal is a tool-a good tool with many functions. Skillful teachers can use the basal and integrate lessons with core literature and whole language techniques" (p. 521). This teacher also believes that the basal program is a good tool. Pieces of it can be chosen and put with other literary teaching methods and techniques, to reach the needs of the students. Other teachers in the Baumann & Heubach study did not feel that the basal program was a good tool and resource to have.

According to another teaching professional:

Yes, I believe that I was “deskilled” by my use of a basal. The basal program was seen as being responsible for teaching my children-if I took each child through the pages and skill of the basal, they would learn to read-if they didn’t, then there was something “wrong” with the child, not with my teaching or the materials (Baumann & Heubach, p.521).

This teacher felt that the basal program deskilled his or her teaching ability. The district that the teacher taught for felt that the basal program should be used as a script. If the teacher read every scripted line, did every activity, and used the provided materials, the students would learn. If the student did not learn from the program, then there must be something wrong with the student, not the program itself. Another teacher stated, “It is possible for the teacher to use the basal as a “crutch” for too long a period and not to pursue professional growth in a variety of approaches to teaching reading effectively” (Baumann & Heubach, p.521). This teacher portrays that as a teacher one may fall into a routine of using and relying on the basal program for teaching reading. If this does happen, the teacher may not seek other professional development opportunities to strengthen and build his or her teaching techniques and strategies for reading instruction. Another teacher suggested that the program is effective for teachers who do not have experience teaching reading, “the basal program can be good for the teacher that lacks experience teaching reading because the teacher’s guide will get them through” (Baumann & Heubach, p. 521). This teacher is implying that without the proper experience, the basal program will provide the framework needed to help an inexperienced teacher teach reading. A student teacher had this to say about the basal program, “It really takes time and work to turn these lessons into something worth doing. No wonder so many teachers just use them as they are”

(Durkin, p. 340). An article by Gewertz (2012) focuses on a group of teachers and reading specialists that want to rework questions in a variety of basal programs to better reach state standards. In the meeting a New York City teacher “criticized the basal program for paying too much attention to low-level vocabulary and suggesting questions that students could answer without reading the text passage and too often the basals concentrate on simpler words” (Gewertz, p. 2). For example, Reading Street stresses the definition of *kind*, neglecting such words as *judgment* and *vision* (Gewertz, p. 3). Instead of the basal programs suggesting questions that focus on text-to-self, the teachers and literary specialists, in the article, want the basal programs to focus more on text-dependent questions forcing students to read and understand the story. This will compel the students to read the stories and develop an understanding of what the story is about, instead of focusing on how the students feel about the events in the story. Also, focusing on more complex words will broaden vocabulary and in turn make them strong readers.

I was unable to find research regarding student perceptions of the program, even though I searched JSTOR, ERIC (EBSCO), Academic OneFile, Academic Search Complete, and Info Trac. When searching these databases, I used the terms students’ perceptions of basal reading programs, students’ opinions of basal reading programs, and students’ views of basal reading programs. To be sure I was not overlooking any articles that focused on students’ perceptions; I contacted a Resource Sharing Librarian from Drake Memorial Library at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. The librarian did help me find more articles that discussed teachers’ perceptions of the basal reading program, but was unable to uncover articles discussing students’ perceptions. The students’ viewpoints are extremely important, since the

program is being written for them, but researchers have not reported how the students feel about it.

### **Supporting Views of Basal Reading Programs**

Research suggests basal reading programs offer important frameworks (Baumann & Heubach, 1996; Maslin, 2007; Tyner, 2009), a wide variety of materials (McCollum, McNeese, Styron, & Lee, 2007), and a solid educational basis for students' reading education (Schreiner, 2010).

The basal reading programs that schools are using are research based. This means: the instructional techniques used in Basal readers were based on the results of educational research. These techniques have been proven effective numerous times and are not merely an experimental attempt at educating students. By using research-based approaches with proven effectiveness, students can be taught more quickly because less time is expended trying out new techniques and determining their effectiveness through the process of trial and error. (Schreiner, p.1)

One form of support for the basal reading program was the program provides step-by-step framework for the teachers to use in their teaching. Shanahan (2006) states "basal readers (now core programs) were okay-as long as you didn't follow them "too closely" (p. 14). Since the program is setup in this way, the teacher can use the teacher's basal manual as a guide, instead of a script. By using the teacher's manual as a guide, the teacher may use the book in the manner that will provide information, instructions, or advice on how to deliver the lesson to help reach students' needs. It is important for teachers to utilize the tools that the program is providing correctly. If teachers are not implementing the lessons as designed, then the students will not be

receiving the reading instruction the basal program is offering. For example, according to Shanahan a study done by Dolores Durkin noted that:

Teachers routinely failed to incorporate children's experiences in prereading discussions, despite explicit guidance in the teacher's guides. That is, commercial programs were showing teachers how to personalize instruction in ways that improve reading comprehension (p.14).

Even when using a basal program as a guide, it is important to utilize the skills and teaching techniques and strategies that will enhance students' understanding.

When using the program as a script, the teacher would be reading the manual word for word, not making adjustments to meet the needs of the students. Tyner (2009) suggests "basal readers are most effective when they are used flexibly and as part of a comprehensive, balanced program of instruction" (p. 2). According to Baumann & Heubach (1996), teachers who used the basal reading program by choice selected activities from the program, adopted other activities outside the program, and ignored certain aspects that would not benefit that group of students. The basal reading programs reportedly did work for the classrooms in Baumann and Heubach's study. Baumann & Heubach point out that researchers and teachers have to remember that the basal materials do not do the teaching; they provide a framework for the teachers to use in their teaching processes; the basal is viewed as a helpful guide and tool when developing plans to meet students' needs. By using the basal program as a guide, the teacher can create modifications, so the program is targeted toward individuals. According to Maslin (2007), basal programs are designed for students to move up a continuum; as the students become stronger readers, the levels become more difficult and new skills are introduced. The basal program

provided new challenges for the students as they moved up the stages in the continuum, and provided them with the opportunity to increase their vocabulary range at the same time (Maslin).

In order for students to be successful with the basal reading program, the program needs to have tools that will enhance the learning process (McCollum et al., 2007). As the basal programs grow and change, new materials are introduced to enhance students' education. The basal program provides a wide variety of materials for students and teachers to use. The materials include:

comprehensive teacher guides, practice workbooks, testing materials, and instructional aids such as charts, word cards, “Big Books”, game boxes, supplementary paperback library books, dictionaries, and reproducible masters for classroom handouts. (McCollum et al., p.2)

Schreiner (2010) points out that the program provides teachers with ready-to-use materials, such as workbooks and reproducible worksheets; this allows the teacher to cut down on planning time. By cutting down on planning time, teachers are able to focus on students' concerns and needs in a one-on-one setting (Schreiner). According to Ryder & Graves (1994), teachers can divide reading lessons in the basal program in a way that focuses on both definitional and contextual information. The program has the teacher explain the word, definition, and then use it in a sentence to depict proper use of the new vocabulary word. It focuses on vocabulary terms that the students are not aware of, which will allow them to develop a stronger understanding of the story's content. Due to the basal reading program being used as a guide and implementing new materials, recent studies suggest that the basal reading programs can promote reading proficiency in students (McCollum et al.).

McKeown, Beck, & Blake (2009) found students instructed through the basal approach outperformed students who were exposed to a strategy approach to reading education.

According to McKeown et al., strategy instruction is defined as a mental process that increases the use of approaches for students, during the reading process. The reading discussions that take place during basal reading instruction provide students with a stronger understanding of the story, than the strategy approach because the basal program has a strong focus on comprehension (McKeown et al.). When students use a basal reading program for their reading instruction they are being exposed to a phonetic study. According to Schreiner (2010):

the Basal approach uses a phonetic system of reading instruction. In this system, students are taught to sound out words using knowledge of common letter sounds. Studies, including a National Research Panel examination of the topic, have indicated that phonetic instruction is effective because it equips early language learners with the tools they need to continue to develop their vocabulary independently by sounding out words and deducing meaning. (p. 1)

Basal reading programs have been around for many decades. As the times change, research is done to support the techniques and materials that are provided to the teacher, to help guide students' reading education. Research (Baumann & Heuback, 1996; Maslin, 2007; McCollum et al., 2007; Schreiner, Tyner, 2009) provided a wide variety of support towards basal reading programs and how the program helps children learn how to read.

### **Non-Supporting Views of Basal Reading Programs**

On the other hand, research suggests that the uses of the basal reading programs are influenced by political agendas (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 1993; Duffy et al., 1987). Due to these political influences, the ways teachers utilize the program and use teaching skills are

affected (Durkin, 1987; Baumann & Heubach 1996). The materials that correspond with the program do not always fully reach the students' needs either (Tyner, 2009).

Many negative connotations are connected to basal reading programs, which have been used in schools for the past century. According to Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas (1993) "teachers' reliance on basal reading programs are the result of societal issues involving political, economic, and social conditions. Reform of the politics of public schools are necessary in order for reading instruction to change" (p. 50). The root of the problem with the basal reading programs comes from a political issue, which is connected to the "master developers" (Duffy et al.). The master developers of the basal reading programs are the test makers, curriculum developers, and district administrators (Duffy et al.). Duffy et al. broke down the roles of the master developers in the following ways: The test maker makes the key decisions on the materials that will be covered in reading class, along with the materials that teachers will use. The role of the second master developer, which is the curriculum developer, is the basal text author. The curriculum developer decides on the curriculum content and the techniques that the teachers will use to deliver the lessons. The master developers decide how the students are going to be taught, without having a solid understanding of the way in which the materials need to be presented and what is meaningful to the students. The role of the third master developer, the district administrator, is to "establish procedures designed to guarantee compliance with the program" (Duffy et al., p. 358). Since the administrator of the school promises the master developers of the program that it will be followed as they designed it, this limits the teachers' ability to critique the program as needed (Duffy et al.). Each of these powerful people is connected to the reading development of America's children.

In many districts, teachers must follow these programs closely, like a script. The master developers tell teachers that they must follow the reading program in this fashion. This does not provide teachers with the opportunity to create modifications for his or her students. By not being able to create modifications, the reading lessons are unable to meet the individual needs of each student. Duffy et al. states that the master developers wanted the teachers to use the basal reading program as a script, in order to help raise test scores. Using test scores as a reason to use the program as a script is a political influence with the basal reading program. Duffy et al. discovered that “programs of recent years have resulted in improved achievement test scores; some educators believe that they are beneficial and the proceduralizing instruction is acceptable” (p. 358). As a result of the findings, teachers have noted that even though their students’ scores have increased they are still “poor readers” (Duffy et al.). By having the increased test scores, teachers will not be able to make the key modifications to the basal reading program that will help students learn the reading process better and at their own pace (Duffy et al.). The key modifications will not be able to be made because according to the test scores the students are developing reading skills that make them strong independent readers. The scripts that teachers need to follow for the basal reading programs are long and difficult to use (Duffy et al.). According to Durkin (1987), the basal readers are time consuming and difficult to integrate with other materials, in order to make the lesson effective. The program provides a good foundation, but the teachers have a difficult time following through effectively with materials that are supposed to be covered (Durkin). In some views, scripting of the lessons is not only hurting the students, but the teachers as well by “deskilling” them (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 1993). The deskilling of teachers is taking place because the instructor is not using his or her skills to design lessons to meet their students’ needs. Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas say, “the power vested in

basals as analogous to the technicalization of the factory workplace in which machines, like packaged, efficient basals, 'deskill' the worker" (p. 50). The teachers Baumann & Heubach (1996) suggest are being deskilled because they no longer have control over their teaching, but are becoming overly reliant on the basals because the teachers are lacking in confidence to create meaningful lessons to reach students' needs. Teachers "relinquish control of or responsibility for their teaching. The technical control of the reading program deskills teachers by supplying the goals, means, and evaluation of their reading instruction" (Baumann & Heubach, p. 512). By these processes being done for them, the teachers do not have to use their teaching skills to make modifications for their students.

When a basal reading program is used as the sole part of the reading program, students' reading education starts to suffer. According to Tyner (2009), one of the most overlooked aspects of the basal reading program is the lack of leveled books. Even though the program does supply leveled readers, the levels are not broken down enough to reach a variety of reading levels (Tyner). The basal program provides books below, at, and above grade level, not supplying enough books to reach the needs of all the students (Tyner). Students who struggle the most with this program are struggling students; high achievers and average students are able to read the story well enough to get by (Tyner). When students are struggling with their reading program, this "begins the downward spiral; motivation is lost and the gap between readers and nonreaders widens" (Tyner, p.3). The program setup, supplies, and materials available to the students can greatly affect the students' literary education.

A variety of factors influence the use of basal reading programs throughout America's classrooms. According to the research the influential factors of basal reading programs are societal issues (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 1993), political motivations (Duffy et al., 1987), the

basal programs are complex and time-consuming (Durkin, 1987), use of program results in the deskilling of teachers (Baumann & Heubach, 1996) and lack of materials result in teachers being unable to reach all reading levels of the students (Tyner, 2009). These factors portray the variety of issues that affect the effectiveness of reading education within the classroom.

### **Skills**

Controversy exists over whether basal reading programs provide students with adequate experience with the different types of reading skills such as comprehension, prediction, and context clues that are needed for critical thinking. The supporting side feels basal reading programs have a strong focus on the different types of reading skills such as inference, comprehension, predication, and use of context clues. These reading skills allow students to become well-rounded readers (Afflerbach et. al., 2008). During their study, Duffy et al. (1987) stated that teachers had to teach students to know when to use specific skills and how to utilize them with the reading process. Teachers also need to develop lessons on how to utilize certain skills (predication, inference) and strategies in the reading process, instead of using and teaching them in isolation, so students see them used in a variety of settings (Duffy et al.). When the skills were integrated with the reading process, instead of in isolation, the study found that students were “significantly better in both awareness of strategy usage and achievement” (Duffy, et al., p. 361). A study done by Maslin (2007) focused on readability, word counts, sequence of phonics instruction, and words in text taxonomy; the result for all of these skills being put together is readability. In all areas that were analyzed for this study, the skills taught within the basal reading program showed improvement from the past.

The way in which the skills are presented in the basal reading program is not always viewed in a positive manner. In a study by Barr & Sadow (1989), the conclusion was made that

teachers tend to omit background and pre-reading questions that would allow students to use these key reading skills to develop a stronger understanding of the upcoming reading materials. By these questions being omitted, students are not being forced to think critically about different parts of the story. In turn, students are not effectively utilizing reading skills (prediction, comprehension, inference) for the reading to become more meaningful. Effective teaching of reading skills may be difficult with the materials that the basal program provides for reading instruction, but teachers need to utilize all aspects of the basal program. Effective teaching of reading skills (comprehension, inference, decoding) is important, so students can become well-rounded readers (Durkin).

### **Motivation**

It is important to keep students interested in reading instruction and wanting to be avid readers, inside and outside the classroom. According to Gambrell (2011):

engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read for a variety of personal goals, strategic in their reading behaviors, knowledgeable in their construction of new understandings from text, and socially interactive about the reading of text. Therefore, promoting intrinsic motivation to read should be given a high priority in the reading curriculum (p.172).

Motivation is important when trying to get students interested in the subject that is being taught (Gambrell). With reading it is important to get students motivated, but also excited to read other books (genres) inside and outside the classroom (Gambrell). Choice also needs to be present within reading instruction; this will help spark students interest and motivation (Gambrell). According to Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas (1993), teachers reported that providing the students with the option of choosing any story out of the basal to read resulted in positive results.

Students like choice (Gambrell). Teachers hold the power to create a learning atmosphere that will empower students to learn (Williams, Hedrick, & Tuschinski, 2008). This can be done with a basal program (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas). Teachers need to use the program to reach the students' needs and interest to spark enthusiasm in learning to read.

With boys it is sometimes more difficult to spark their interest and motivation with the reading process (Farris, Werderich, Nelson, & Fuhler, 2009). According to a study done by Karnoil (2009), it was found that boys usually only read materials that have a "masculine" tone to them. As a result of this, the increase in male characters in basal readers and other literature can help motivate boys into finding the story interesting enough to read; boys were reluctant to read a story with a female lead and were criticized amongst their peers. A study that was done by college students, focused on fifth grade boys' reading preference. The study noted that boys look for biographies and nonfictional books (informational texts) with "real stuff in them such as spiders and sharks" (Farris et al., p.180). The article by Farris et al. also discussed how boys chose books based on the cover, along with the margin and print size; these two components matter most to struggling readers. With the female population it did not matter the role of the characters, whether it is a female/male lead (Karnoil). Their interest and motivation did not falter. Additional motivation can be implemented into the program with supplementary materials (McCollum et al. 2007). McCollum et al. noted that motivation for both boys and girls can be done with supplementary materials. This sparks the students' interest, along with focusing on a variety of different learning types (McCollum et al). It is important to have a variety of books within the classroom for everyone to enjoy; this will in turn motivate all readers, no matter reading level or skills, to enjoy the reading process.

**Summary**

Basal reading programs have been around for decades. Over time the programs have changed to meet the needs of the new reading requirements. Throughout the years, there have been a wide variety of perceptions of whether or not basal reading programs are a good source for the students' core reading instruction. The histories of basal reading programs show that the programs have changed to correspond with new research to support the materials and procedures that are being used. Both supporting and non-supporting views of the basal reading program have been backed up by numerous studies, along with the skills and motivational techniques that can enhance the students' reading education. It is important to know and understand how students and teachers perceive the program. The way the program is being used can greatly influence students' perceptions of not only reading instruction, but reading as a concept in general.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

#### **Introduction**

This study was designed to explore the perceptions of a basal reading program from both teachers' and students' viewpoints. I will discuss specific perceptions such as development of specific reading skills for critical thinking (comprehension, prediction, and context clues), gender representations in basal readers, impact on reading motivation, and structure of the basal reading program.

#### **Research Questions**

- 1) What are teachers' perceptions towards the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program?
- 2) What are students' perceptions towards the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program?
- 3) How do the perceptions of the students and teachers compare?

#### **Participants**

The student population for the school, according to CL Search, is approximately 80% white, 12% black, 8% Hispanic and 7% other ethnic groups. The socioeconomic background of the students ranges from high to lower income. The participants for this study included approximately forty students and four teachers from two third- and two fourth-grade classrooms, in a rural elementary school. The participants for this survey were a convenience sample, due to not having a classroom of my own. I chose this location because it is where I do my substitute teaching and the teachers know me from working in their classrooms.

**Positionality of the Researcher**

I am currently working on my master's degree at the College at Brockport, State University of New York. This is my final semester in the Childhood Literacy Master's Program. I hold New York State initial certifications in Early Childhood, Childhood, and Students with Disabilities. I have spent the past five years in this district and four of them using and implementing the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program in grades 1-5. As a substitute teacher, I am provided with the opportunity to see how teachers use the basal reading program, within their classrooms. My teaching experiences have provided me with the opportunity to witness many educational, effective and ineffective techniques and strategies that students have been taught, through the basal reading program. These experiences have led me to desire to research students' and teachers' perceptions, regarding the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program.

**Criteria for Trustworthiness**

My goal for this research project, based on the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, was to collect the data in a nonjudgmental way. The data collected through the surveys, interviews, and observations were the views of the participants, teachers and students, with no other parties, including myself, influencing their responses to the questions.

**Procedures of Study**

This study was designed to portray how teachers and students perceive the basal reading program. The concluding results show how the participants view the reading program. The study reached across a six-week period. Throughout the study my participants, both teachers and students, took part in a survey. Along with the survey, teachers were interviewed. I also observed how the program was used, noting student and teacher reactions to the basal materials.

It is important to have a well-rounded understanding of how the basal reading program was used throughout the week. In order to have an awareness of how teachers and students perceive certain aspects of the program. With the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, the setup of the reading lessons for the week usually looks about the same, throughout the school year. The program has the teachers teaching specific skills and passages on a specific day of the week. The following represents a typical week in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom. The following schedules of the third and fourth grade teachers were derived from the information inquired through the teacher interview sessions. Using the publisher's guidelines the teachers developed the following schedules.

Third Grade:

**Monday:** Introduce spelling words and discuss new skill. Emphasize spelling and the phonics skills that were being focused on and learned that week.

**Tuesday:** Introduce vocabulary by writing word on easel, overhead, or white board. Discuss possible meaning from vocabulary paragraph from basal reader. Review vocabulary by having students look it up in the glossary of the basal reader and identify whether the word is a noun, adjective, etc. Then preview the story by doing a picture walk and identify whether the story is fiction or nonfiction, along with specific genre.

**Wednesday:** Read story as a whole group using the CD that narrates the story. Students complete vocabulary sheet and workbook pages, which correspond with the story.

**Thursday:** Second reading of the story, now with a partner. After reading the story, students complete remaining workbook pages that corresponded with the basal, which focuses on the specific skill set of the week. Students with a lower reading level, read a leveled reader in a

small group lead by the teacher. Students discuss story and vocabulary words that correspond with the leveled reader.

**Friday:** Students complete selection test of story, which focuses on vocabulary words and the story as a whole. Students highlight vocabulary, important words, names, question words, and italicized words. Also find page where answer can be found in story, along with crossing off wrong answers.

The following is a typical week in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom.

**Monday:** The new vocabulary and spelling words are introduced. Students look up the meaning of the vocabulary words and discuss meaning as a whole group. Vocabulary words are used in a paragraph that corresponds with story of the week to help identify meaning, along with the use of context clues to further help identify meaning of the words.

**Tuesday:** Read story together as a whole group and go over comprehension questions, throughout the story. Complete workbook pages that correspond with story of the week. Workbook pages focus on a specific skill or vocabulary that corresponds with the story.

**Wednesday:** The students are broken up into groups for centers. The centers are leveled readers, grammar, phonics, oral fluency, and computer centers. The content of the reading centers focus on the review of old skills and further instruction of the new skill of the week.

**Thursday:** Students do a second reading of story individually or with a partner. When second reading of story is complete, comprehension questions are answered. Finish any workbook pages that correspond with the story and skill set of the week.

**Friday:** Review spelling words and story of the week. Students take spelling and selection test. Students look up answers in the story to practice referring back to passages to identify answers.

\*Third reading of the story maybe incorporated with some classrooms. The preceding schedule is a combination of the activities that the third and fourth grade teachers in the study used. The teacher schedules may change or be critiqued slightly depending on the basal focus/guidelines of the particular week. Some teachers may have a non-basal day, in order to incorporate other reading programs and activities.

### **Materials and Related Practices**

Basal reading programs come with a variety of supplementary materials that will allow the teacher to enhance reading instruction further, in order to reach the needs of the students. When teaching a lesson from the basal reading program in this district, each lesson begins the same way. The teacher reviews, with the students, vocabulary that will be encountered throughout the story. Usually students have to share the meaning of the vocabulary words with the rest of the class, after looking up the definition in the dictionary or in the glossary of the basal reader. Once the vocabulary has been discussed, the students will hear an audio CD, explaining the background of the story. Then across a three-day-period, students will read the story three times, usually once with the CD, once individually, and once with a partner. After the initial reading, teachers ask the students comprehension questions. This was usually done as a group discussion. Around the second reading, students were asked questions pertaining to the story. The questions may refer to comprehension, predicting, or summarizing what has been read, thus far in the story.

Part of the basal reading program was having students complete workbook pages that focus on certain skills, vocabulary words, and a selection test, pertaining to the story of the week. A separate group met after the initial reading of the story. This was done so the students (with a lower reading level) read a leveled reader (short story) that was connected to the theme and skills

of the initial reading, from the basal reader. This was done so the students are able to practice their reading skills, which are at their level. These students read the book as a guided reading group. At the end of the week, the students took a selection test based on the basal story. The selection test focused on vocabulary development and comprehension skills that the students learned throughout the week.

Along with the above, the program provides Big Books and teaching chart that correspond with the story of the week. Each week the students were introduced to a poem that corresponds with the story. This is done to focus on the letter sound(s) for the week. For example, long/short vowels, initial and ending digraphs, and letter combinations. The series also has a New York State resource planner, phonic system source book, phonics take-home readers, phonics workbook, leveled reader resource guides, placement tests, individual reading inventory, running record book, and assessment handbook, for teachers to use. Each grade level basal program was slightly different. The materials are designed to meet the needs for the reading levels of the individual grades. The program comes in a set to include the materials listed above, but the teachers implement them in different ways, within their classrooms.

### **Data Collection**

Throughout the six week period, a variety of data collection techniques was used to gather information pertaining to both students' and teachers' perceptions of the basal reading program. The information that was gathered was surveys, interviews, and observations.

### **Surveys**

One of the data collection processes for this study was in the form of a survey. The teacher survey can be found in appendix A. Each teacher was provided with a survey that I created. The survey focused on specific reading skills, basal readers and gender preferences,

motivation, and the teachers' perceptions with the setup of the program. Each question was to be answered on a Likert scale from 5 to 1. The 5 is strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree, and 1 strongly disagree. Below each question on the survey, the teachers were provided with a comment section. This was for the participants to share any extra information and to explain why they rated the question as they did. The questions were critiqued to fit the teacher's role with the program, to show how they use the program for reading instruction. The teachers were given a week to complete the survey.

The students were also given a survey (Appendix B) that was created by me. Since I was in each of the four classrooms for an observation session, the student survey was given to the students at that time, for completion. Since the teachers were not research assistants, they were advised to not help the students with the survey if a question arose. Since I was present, I guided the students through their questions, without implementing any personal opinions, towards the specific question. The student survey consisted of thirteen questions that are related to the questions on the teacher's survey. The questions on the student survey of the basal reading program focused on motivation, specific reading skills, gender bias, routine of the program, and difficulty level of the basal readers. The students, when answering the questions, placed an "X" in either the *Yes* or *No* box, for the first part of their answer. The second part of their answer was in written form. After each question, on the provided space, students were to explain why they checked either the *Yes* or *No* box. A written explanation for each question was strongly advised, but was optional, since some students may lack necessary writing skills. The students were given approximately 20 minutes to complete the thirteen survey questions.

**Interviews**

The teacher interviews were conducted once the surveys were complete. The interview questions provided me with the opportunity to develop a stronger understanding of how the teachers use the program, along with how the students respond to the program on a daily basis. During the interview, I also had the teachers explain the ways in which they differentiate the program, to meet the students reading needs.

**Observations**

Observations took place when teachers were teaching reading, from the basal reading program. Each teacher was observed once for approximately 30 minutes, during their scheduled Scott Foresman reading instruction time. Throughout the observations, I looked for how the teacher used the program (guide or script), skills that are being taught, differentiation, and students' reactions to the materials. The collected observations were used to further develop an understanding of how the program is used, to contribute towards the perceptions of the teachers and students with the basal reading program.

**Data Analysis****Analyzing the Data.**

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was conducted for this study. The data analysis method that was used for the teacher survey was tallies, which showed results for each individual question. I then calculated the percentage, for each individual question, based on the responses of the four teachers. The teachers' responses were presented on a bar graph. This noted how the four teachers perceived the program, as it is used in their classrooms.

The data analysis method for the student surveys was to calculate percentages for each survey question. The *Yes* or *No* answers were tallied to portray the results of each individual

question. I calculated the tallies to discover the percentage of answers that fell on each individual scale. For example, if the *Yes* box for one of the questions had twenty tallies, I would do twenty (number of tallies) divided by forty (total number of students), to show that 50 percent of the students chose *Yes* for that question. I used the percentages to analyze the similarities and differences in the students' responses. I used the Excel program to graph the results into a pie chart, to present the findings in an easier manner to read and understand.

When comparing the teacher and student responses, the teacher responses were broken down into a “Yes”, “No”, or “Undecided” category. The “strongly agree” and “agree” responses were counted as “Yes” answers and “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses will be counted as “No” answers. The questions that were marked “neutral” were counted as “undecided”. To further portray the similarities and differences between the student and teacher surveys, double sided bar graphs were used to show the findings.

Qualitative analysis included the interview responses and observation notes that contributed to the answers that were provided with the survey. This provided me with the opportunity to use constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965) to merge the mixed methods to develop a stronger understanding of how the teachers and students perceive the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program.

### **Limitations**

With this research study there were limitations. One of the limitations that influenced the outcome of the study is that the classrooms in which the collection of data is stemming from are not classrooms of my own. The first limitation to the study was the return of permission forms by the students, so they are able to take part. I submitted eighty-five permission forms to students in the four classrooms. Out of the eighty-five students, approximately forty returned the permission

form signed. Without the return of the permission forms the number of participants was limited. The written part of the survey also possessed limitations to the study. This aspect of the survey was difficult for students who struggle with the writing process. Students, who also have difficulty expressing their thoughts or opinions in written form, had a difficult time completing the second part of the survey questions. The other limitation that was encountered throughout the study was from the observation time. Having an extra person in the room was distracting for some students and altered their behavior for the time being. This is call researcher effect or the Hawthorne effect (Shuttleworth, 2009). Along with altering the students' behavior, the teacher may enhance the lesson to focus on more key skills and incorporate the students into the lesson more frequently, which may not be their true teaching style.

### **Summary**

The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program possesses both respectable and flawed qualities. Through data collection of two third-grade and two fourth-grade teachers and approximately forty students, the data collection process allowed me to analyze the data to discover the perceptions that the participants possessed. Through surveys, observations, and interviews the perceptions of the program were collected and analyzed. Once the teachers' perceptions and the students' perceptions were analyzed, the two forms of data were compared to see if the teachers and students shared the same perceptions of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program.

## Chapter 4

### Results

This study of two third and fourth grade teachers and their classes took place in a rural elementary school. Since I do not have a classroom of my own, I relied on a convenience sample. The four teachers from the study allowed data collection to take place within their classrooms with their students. Out of approximately 80 students, 43 returned the parent consent form for observation and completion of the survey. Those 43 students signed the statement of consent as well. The four teachers signed a consent form for their participation in an interview, observation session, and survey. To develop a strong understanding of how the teachers and students view the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, I used a variety of data collection techniques. I provided a survey to both the teachers and students. I also interviewed each teacher and did one 30 minute observation of reading instruction with each class. Both the teachers and students were observed, during the observation sessions. The surveys, interviews, and observations provided me with data to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are teachers' perceptions towards the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program?
- 2) What are students' perceptions towards the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program?
- 3) How do the perceptions of the students and teachers compare?

I began my data collection on March 16, 2011, following the approval of each of the four classroom teachers, parents, students, and the school principal. I used my knowledge of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program to help guide the structure of the survey questions, interviews, and observation session.

This research shows the perceptions of the teachers and students are influenced by their experiences with the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program and other literary encounters. The

materials and the procedures that the program provides and recommends, along with how the teachers and students respond to the program, may influence their perceptions towards the basal program. Set-up, motivation, and the development of reading skills, all play an important role to how the teachers and students perceive the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program.

### **Findings: Teacher and Student Observations**

#### **Teachers.**

In three out of the four observations that took place, the teachers utilized the supplementary materials that were provided by the basal program. The audio CD collection of the basal stories, leveled readers, and teaching charts are supplementary materials, which enhanced students' understanding of the vocabulary, skills, and story that the basal was providing for each lesson. The teachers all discussed the focus of that day's lesson, each went over what the lesson was going to be about, and what to expect. In one instance a third grade teacher, teacher #2, used the basal CD, which corresponded with the story of the week, to provide extra essential information about the background, author, and genre of the story. The components of the CD provided the teacher with the opportunity to teach important information about the story. To assess the students' understanding of the story and vocabulary, the teacher prompted the students to complete workbook pages, which are developed for each basal story.

In another third grade observation session, teacher #1, used a teaching (phonics) chart and "rap" song to teach students about the "ck" sound. Throughout the lesson, the teacher provided a strong focus on what was to be expected from the lesson calling it a "phonics guided activity." The teacher used supplementary materials such as the Scott Foresman teaching chart, which consists of phonic songs/poems. This particular one was a rap called "Carmin the Duck." The teacher guided the students through the "rap" having students identify words with

“ck” sound. The teacher followed up the poem with two worksheets to further students’ understanding and awareness of the “ck” sound. The teacher noted that the students greatly enjoyed this aspect of the lesson. This provided the students with an opportunity to sing-along with the basal CD and learn the sound of the day. This Scott Foresman phonics guided activity left the students engaged and sharing information as the lesson proceeded.

Teachers #2 and #1 used supplementary materials from the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The teachers believed the educational aspects of the CDs and teaching chart would enhance the students’ understanding of the new reading materials. Teacher #2 felt the CD of the story provided students with information that allowed them to develop a well-rounded understanding of essential information, such as story and authors’ background, so the story would become more meaningful for the students. Teacher #1 used a teaching chart and sing-along CD because it allowed students to learn new sounds in a way that is fun and meaningful. It provided students with the opportunity to view a variety of different words that have that specific sound. The teacher felt this would help students develop a stronger understanding of what the new sound looks and sounds like, in a variety of different words. The teacher noted that the sing-along provided a fun way for students to have this skill reinforced in a positive and fun manner.

With each observation, the lesson the teacher was teaching from the basal had a specific purpose. This observation session with teacher # 4, who was assisted by a speech therapist, focused on a vocabulary lesson based from the basal program. The entire reading lesson of the day was based on the vocabulary for the upcoming story in the Scott Foresman Basal Reader. Both teachers worked with the students to uncover the definition of words and how the words related to the upcoming basal story. The teachers introduced the new vocabulary words to the

students by having them read the vocabulary words in a paragraph. The teachers had the students use context clues from the paragraph to help determine the meaning of the words and the time period, which the basal story took place. The paragraph states:

With my belongings bound together with a rope. I set off for America to seek my fortune. Because I was too tired to run after the boat trip, I slowly trudged up the pier. First, I needed to find living quarters, so I made my home at the mission. To earn money, I began peddling my paintings, selling them to people in the park. I saved money and purchased my own home.

Once the paragraph and the meaning of the words were discussed, the teacher had the students write the word and definition, which was found in the basal reader, in their vocabulary notebooks. Using their knowledge of the vocabulary words and the content of the paragraph, the teachers discussed with the students what the basal story of the week was about. To further enhance the students' understanding of the vocabulary words and story, the teachers had the students complete worksheets and workbook pages that further enhanced the information that the students were taught.

Teacher #4 focused so much time on the vocabulary for the week because it provided students with the opportunity to develop an understanding of what the vocabulary words are and how they are connected to the story. By the basal providing the vocabulary words in a paragraph, the students were able to see the context in which the words were being used. The vocabulary paragraph provided the students with the foundation in which the story took place. By having students become familiar with the vocabulary words, the story will become more meaningful and easier to understand.

Teacher #3, who is a fourth grade teacher, used other supplementary materials that were not connected with the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The reading lesson consisted of students using Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) or Accelerated Reader (AR). The CCC program focused on specific skills that the students learned from the basal program. The CCC program focused the lesson on interpretive comprehension, literal comprehension, word meaning, word analysis, and reference skills, in a different scenario from the basal program. The teacher believed that the use of additional supplementary materials provided the students with the opportunity to practice key reading skills. This provided the teacher with the opportunity to have students practice skills in a separate setting from the basal, which the teacher felt to be beneficial. The teacher had the students do AR because it provides them with the opportunity to read books that they are interested in and are at their reading levels. The teacher can utilize these supplementary materials by using the data from CCC and AR to assess student reading development, through provided assessments.

Using supplementary materials / programs such as CCC and AR provides students with the opportunity to learn the materials and concepts in a different fashion. Not all students learn the same way or at the same pace. The use of the CCC program supports the reinforcement of skills and concepts, which are taught through the basal program. This reinforces the materials from the basal and provides the information in a different manner. This benefits students who struggle with the materials, by learning the information in another setting. The AR program is also an important program. By incorporating AR, it provides students with the opportunity to read books at their reading level and take AR tests that assess their reading comprehension skills. These programs supplement the basal, which allows students to practice and become comfortable with the reading process.

Three of the four teachers used the basal program, during the allotted observation session. The teachers used the basal manual to deliver the lessons and skills that were derived from the basal creators. At the same time, supplementary materials from the basal program and other programs were used, to allow students to develop a well-rounded understanding of the lesson.

### **Students.**

In all four of the classroom observations, the students were aware of the purpose and expectations of the lesson. In three out of the four classrooms, the students were exposed to lessons from the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. Even though each of the lessons held a different focus, each lesson was straight from the basal manual. One class used supplementary materials, not from the Scott Foresman Basal, that provided the students with the opportunity to use AR and CCC. These students used AR and CCC to further enhance their understanding of key reading skills and techniques, which were taught during basal instruction.

In teacher #2's third grade classroom, students were being introduced to the upcoming story, through a picture walk. The students were making predictions based on the pictures in the story. Approximately 40 percent of the students were making text-to-self connections. The students were animated and excited to share the experiences they had in common with the basal story. To prepare students for the upcoming story, they listened to a CD, which provided background information on the author, illustrator, and the story. Once background information was discussed, the students listened to the story on the basal audio CD. Some students read aloud with the narrator, and others followed along silently. Approximately 4 percent of the students were not paying attention. These students had their head on their desks or were playing with something inside their desk. Throughout this aspect of the lesson, a majority of the students were well engaged knowing what to expect, since the same steps are followed each week with a

new story. Once the story was complete, students received a worksheet that assessed their understanding of the new vocabulary words. The students had the opportunity to work on their own or with a partner. About 75 percent of the students chose to work with a partner. Since the students had to work at their desks, they remained well focused for this aspect of the lesson. Once the assignment was complete, students read a story of their choosing, independently for AR. Students were eager to find a comfortable spot within the classroom to read their books. The teacher only had to remind four students about the rules for AR time.

Throughout this lesson, students were well focused by following along with the story and completing the assigned materials. The picture walk was an important introductory aspect of the lesson, due to providing students with the opportunity to make key connections with the story. Several of the students made text-to-self connections, due to the story being about a boy and his dog. The basal CD was an important aspect of the lesson for the students. The CD provided students with the opportunity to develop an understanding of the story and why the author wrote it. The students enjoyed the narration aspect of the story. When the teacher announced that the students would be following along with the basal CD, the students cheered a little. About six of the students muttered, "I love it when the story is read to us." This provides students who would have a difficult time reading the story, due to it being above their reading level, with the opportunity to understand and enjoy the story. It also provided these students with the confidence to complete the assignments, which correspond with the story.

In teacher #1's third grade classroom, students were being introduced to the "ck" sound, through a phonics guided activity. Throughout the duration of the lesson, students were seated on the classroom carpet. A majority of the students were eager for the lesson, choosing seats on the carpet as close to the teacher as possible. A small percentage of students, 4 boys and 2 girls,

walked over to the carpet slowly, not portraying any interest in the upcoming activity. These students chose seats at the back of the carpet. The lesson was very interactive, providing students with the opportunity to share their knowledge, which allowed them to remain engaged. Approximately 75 percent of the students were raising their hands throughout the lesson, eager to share their knowledge. Once students shared words with the “ck” sound, the teacher introduced a teaching (phonics) chart, which consists of poems that carry the tunes of well-known children’s songs. The students enjoyed this aspect of the lesson. The students heard and sang along with the “rap” twice. Approximately 60 percent of the students were singing-a-long with the song. The other 40% of students listened, but were not fully engaged with the activity. Once students heard the “rap” twice, they were provided with the opportunity to circle new words with the “ck” sound on the teaching chart. The students were very excited and animated, about circling the words with “ck” sound. Approximately 90 percent of the students raised their hands, while saying “Ooooo, me, me” or “I know. I see one.” These reactions show that they were eager to participate in the lesson. To further develop their vocabulary of words with the “ck” sound, students completed a worksheet, which focused on the “ck” sound. This was completed in a whole group setting. The students sat in a circle on the carpet, each reading a sentence and identifying the words with the “ck” sound. Students were not as eager for this aspect of the lesson, but knew exactly what to do, with little instruction. Approximately 95 percent of the students were successful at identifying words with the “ck” sound.

Throughout the lesson, students were well focused, with about 4 students not paying close attention, sitting at the back of the carpet. The students enjoyed the “rap” of “Carmin the Duck.” It provided them with the opportunity to sing along and learn new vocabulary words with the “ck” sound. This provided students with the chance to learn in a fun interactive setting.

The students were eager to identify new words with the “ck” sound in the poem. The majority of the students volunteered to circle a word with the “ck” sound on the teaching chart. The students’ reactions throughout the lesson revealed learning phonics can be fun, interactive, and engaging. By the authors of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program designing lessons such as this, students can enjoy the learning process and be eager to share their new knowledge. When it came time to complete the worksheet, students seemed confident with providing an answer based on the information learned in the lesson. The students did not hesitate when answering the questions on the worksheet, demonstrating that they knew and understood the concept of the lesson.

In the fourth grade classroom of teacher #4, students were using the Scott Foresman Basal to learn new vocabulary words for the upcoming story, based on the Titanic. Throughout the lesson, students were working with their general education teacher and speech therapist. The students carry a great deal of independent work throughout the lesson, so they are able to share their knowledge and hypothesis of the vocabulary words. All the students had a Reader’s Notebook to record the vocabulary words and definitions. The students read the paragraph, which can be found on page 37 of this chapter, to develop an understanding of the time period of the story, along with the meaning of the vocabulary words. Students used their knowledge of context clues to determine a meaning for each vocabulary word. The students picked apart the sentences, using words that they knew, and developed a definition for the vocabulary words, which was shared with the class. Approximately 35 percent of the students volunteered that they used context clues from the paragraph, to develop a definition for each vocabulary word. Another 25 percent of the students volunteered possible definitions, throughout the lesson. As a whole group, the meaning is discussed to develop a well-rounded understanding of the vocab

words and how each relates to the story. In the Reader's Notebook, the students record the actual meaning as it is stated in the back of their basal reader. To further develop their understanding of the new vocabulary words, the students completed workbook pages independently, using definitions in their notebooks to guide them when necessary. Approximately 90 percent of the students completed the workbook pages, without seeking guidance from one of the teachers.

Throughout this observation, students were engaged and focused on developing an understanding of the new vocabulary words. The students used their knowledge of context clues to develop an understanding of how the words related to the upcoming story. The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided these students with the appropriate materials to develop an understanding of the story and key vocabulary terms. Approximately 60 percent of the students portrayed, throughout the activity, that they were able to use context clues from the paragraph, to develop a definition of the words. The other 40 percent did not participate to their fullest extent. These students did not volunteer any knowledge, at any point, throughout the lesson. The vocab paragraph that the basal provided, offers students the opportunity to use their knowledge to develop an awareness of the word, before looking it up in the glossary. This lesson based in the basal is showing students that they have the knowledge and ability to form their own conclusions and understanding of words, by using key context clues that are provided in all stories.

In the fourth grade class of teacher #3, students did not have a lesson directly from the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The classroom teacher sets aside time each week, to be dedicated towards AR and CCC. This lesson was based on supplementary materials that are not based from the basal program. Students did AR, which provided them with the opportunity to read books of their choosing, along with completing quizzes that assess comprehension skills.

The other choice was for students to complete a CCC session called “Readers Workshop”, which focused on integrated reading strands, thematic lesson, and passage comprehension. The specific skills that were targeted were interpretive comprehension, literal comprehension, word meaning, word analysis, and reference skills. The session lasts for approximately 15 minutes. The students were excited about the focus of the day’s lesson. All students had the opportunity to do AR and CCC, during the allotted time. The students that were doing AR were able to find a comfy spot in the room to read. For example, the teacher had carpets and bean bags for students to sit on for independent reading. The students were comfortable and focused on the task. The teacher only had to speak to three of the students, reminding them of the expectations for AR and CCC time. One computer was left available for students to take AR tests. The rest of the computers were being used by students completing a CCC session.

Even though this lesson was not based on the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, it provided the students with the opportunity to read a book of their choosing, which does not occur with the basal program. This lesson provided the students with the opportunity to practice key skills that are developed through basal instruction. This provided the students with the chance to learn key materials in a different setting. Since not everyone learns at the same pace and in the same manner, this provided extra instruction for students that may have a difficult time developing key reading skills, which are taught through the basal program.

### **Teachers and Students Observations Compared.**

Throughout all four of the observations, the teachers made their expectations for the upcoming lesson clear, to the students. The students stated a positive response towards the teacher when the intentions of the day’s lesson were presented. In the third grade classroom of teacher #2, both the teacher and students found the use of the basal audio CD, which provided

students with background information and narration of the story, to be insightful and educational. The teacher used the CD because it provided essential information that enhanced the students' understanding of the upcoming story. Since the reading level may be too high for some students, the narration aspect of the lesson provided those students with a solid understanding of the upcoming story. The students made text-to-self connections between the story and their lives. The students also followed along with the story as the narrator read it to them. Only a handful of students were not completely engaged throughout the lesson. The lesson served a strong purpose for both the teacher and students.

In the third grade class of teacher #1, where students were presented with the phonics guided activity, the teacher used a variety of supplementary materials to make the learning of the "ck" sound exciting and educational, for the students. The teacher was able to make the lesson fun and interactive, by implementing a teaching chart and CD, which enhanced the students' interest in the lesson. By the teacher using these supplementary materials, the students enjoyed the phonics guided lesson. By the lesson being interactive, the students were able to have an active hands-on role with the learning process, which enhanced their interest in the activities. At the same time, the students were providing the teacher with their knowledge of words with the "ck" sound depicting what was learned throughout the basal lesson. By using the supplementary materials from the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, the teacher made the phonics lesson fun and educational. The students enjoyed the lesson, being eager to share their knowledge of the "ck" sound.

The fourth grade vocabulary lesson that was taught by teacher #4 and the schools speech therapist was not as engaging as the phonics lesson described in the previous paragraph. The teachers and students worked together making the lesson interactive, providing the students with

the opportunity to use their reading skills to develop an understanding of the new words. The students were eager to share their definitions, which were developed through the use of context clues, portraying to the teachers that they know how to utilize this important skill. The teachers provided the students with the opportunity to take the lead and to be proud of their developing literary skills. The teachers provided the definitions as stated in the basal, providing the students with the opportunity to compare their definitions to the basal. The teachers and students worked together, showing that the students hold the keys to their education.

The fourth grade class of teacher #3, who used supplementary materials aside from the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, found that the materials provided the teacher with the opportunity to have students work independently. For AR time, the students read a book of their choosing. This provided students with the opportunity to have fun with the reading process, allowing the teacher to assess their development of key reading skills. The teacher wanted students to have fun with reading, showing them that it is something that can be done at home for entertainment. Students also worked on CCC, which is an interactive computer program that students use to reinforce skills, which are taught during basal instruction. The teacher wanted the students to feel that reading and learning key skills can be fun, which in turn makes students eager to read and practice key reading skills.

### **Survey Results: Teachers and Students**

#### **Teacher Surveys.**

##### ***Set-up of scott foresman basal reading program.***

With the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, and with all basal programs, teachers have the choice of whether to use the basal manual as a guide or as a script. The data collected through the teacher surveys showed a variety of different perceptions regarding how the program

should be used. The surveys showed that 50% of the teachers strongly felt the program should be used as a script and 50% strongly felt it should be used as a guide.

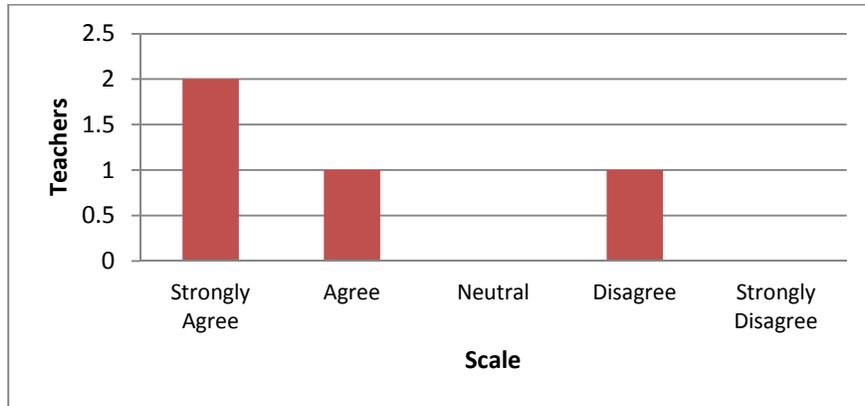


Figure 4.1. Teachers' perceptions of the use of the basal manual as a script. This graph shows the teachers' answers to the question, should the basal reading manual (teacher's book) be used as a script for reading instruction?

The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program can also be used as a guide for basal reading instruction.

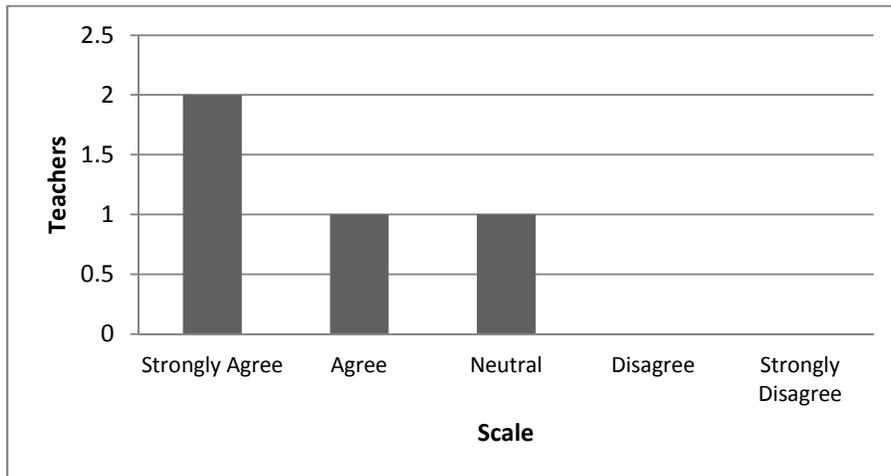


Figure 4.2. Teachers' perceptions of the use of the basal manual as a guide. This graph shows the teachers' answers to the question, should the basal reading manual (teacher's book) be used as a guide for reading instruction?

Teacher #1 reported the program should be used as a script, especially if one is a new teacher. She stated, “The manual contains all the components of reading- the manual helps to prevent gaps in instruction or the teaching of skills. The Scott Foresman program is research based, so I use it mostly as a script, so that all components and skills are taught.” Teacher #2 perceived the basal manual should be used as a script as well because “someone took time to figure out scope and sequence of materials. I think it should basically be used in that manner. Along with supplementary materials, it is nice when you can teach science and social studies units along with literature.” The other two teachers believed the program should be utilized mainly as a guide. Teacher #4 stated “as a guide- it should be differentiated per make-up of the class.” Teacher #3 stated, “teachers ought to teach what their students need. I don’t use it exactly as the manual calls for. I can’t in all honesty use it the way they suggest because my classes are different every year. Some years some skills need extra meat that the basal series doesn’t provide, in order for the students to *get* the skills.” All four teachers portray supportive reasons for why the program can be used in both approaches.

The teachers expressed reasons why the program should be used in a certain manner. The teachers who use the basal program as a script, felt with the research based around the program, this will provide students with the proper information for reading instruction. The basal program also meets the New York State standards that are required to be met by law. By using the program in this manner, the students receive reading instruction that encompasses their need for literary development. The teachers that share this perception portray that each year the lessons need to be critiqued; by using the manual and other supplementary materials, which allow students to receive reading instruction that is catered to their literacy needs and goals.

***Routine.***

With the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, reading instruction is setup in a daily manner. The same set-up is used each week, but with a different story and skill set. Teachers may find that students do well with routine, but others may find that students become bored with the routine basis of the program. According to the survey, 75% of the teachers perceive that the routine basis of the program made students more comfortable with reading instruction and reading in general.

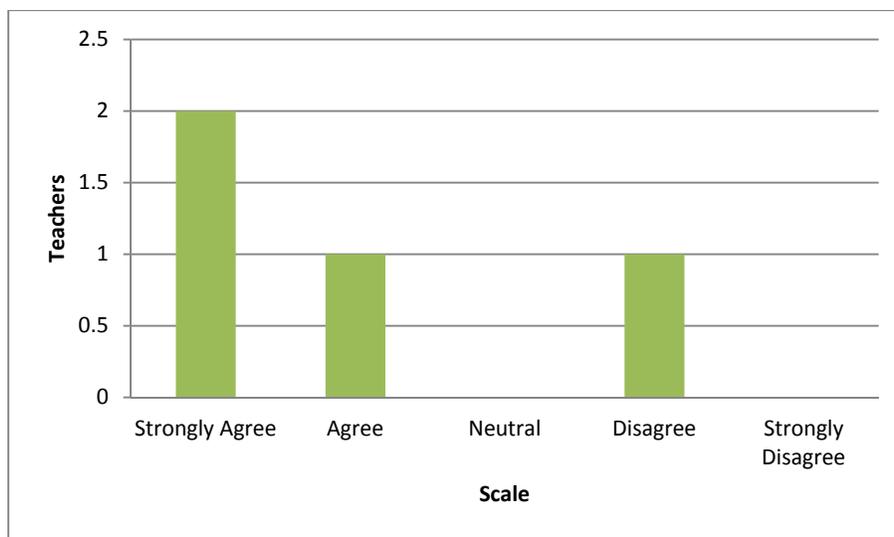


Figure 4.3. Teachers' perceptions of the routine basis of the basal program. This graph shows the teachers' answers to the question; does the routine basis of the program make students comfortable with reading instruction and reading in general?

Teacher #1 stated, "students are comfortable with routine as long as the routine is *spiced up* with supplementary materials." On the other hand, teacher #3 felt the complete opposite, she felt that the routine of the basal reading program "turns students off" to the reading process, due to not find it entertaining. Teacher #3 also stated "students need to read what they are interested in." The students were not interested enough with the basal to motivate them with the reading process.

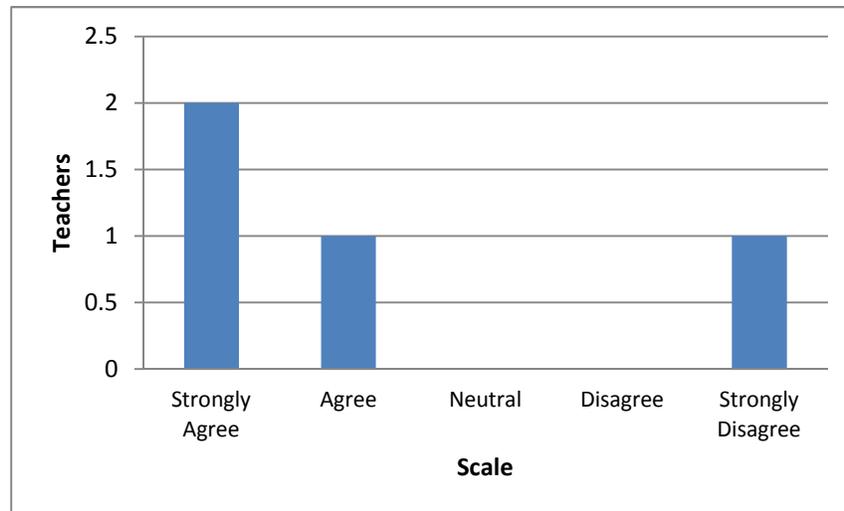
There is a wide variety of supplementary materials that can be used. Some of the supplementary materials are connected to the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program directly and others are pulled from additional reading programs. All four of the teachers who took part in this study, used supplementary materials that correspond with the basal program. Each of the teachers used the supplementary materials in different manners. The supplementary materials that correspond with the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program are leveled readers, teaching chart, and audio CDs of the stories and teaching chart. Other supplementary materials are used, but are not from the basal program, such as critical thinking games, CCC, AR, and other skill lessons and games. Teacher #1 stated, "I like the leveled readers, but I have to create the skill lessons and assessments, which is very time consuming. Assessment for leveled readers is not provided with the program." Teacher #3 stated, "I like the leveled readers, CCC program and the lessons very much. I find them to be beneficial to the students, and I have seen an increase in scores and level of reading." Teacher #4 stated, "Leveled readers are an excellent source to use when teaching students with lower reading levels, than what the main basal provides." The four teachers perceive the supplementary materials that correspond with the program, especially the leveled readers, to be beneficial to the students. The leveled readers provide the students with a lower reading level with an opportunity to read a story at their reading level.

The teachers felt that using supplementary materials such as leveled readers and CCC, provided students with additional reading instruction, which is above and beyond the stories that students read each week in the main basal. The teachers use the leveled readers because these short stories are focused on the specific reading level of the students. The leveled readers provide stories that are at the students' actual reading ability level. This provided students with the opportunity to become more confident with his or her reading abilities and provide the

student, along with the teacher, the ability to focus on the development of additional reading skills. The CCC program is designed to provide literacy reinforcement on skills that students are lacking and provide reading passages based at each student's reading level. This provided teachers with the opportunity to develop an understanding of students reading and skill development.

***Scott foresman basal reading program and development of reading skills.***

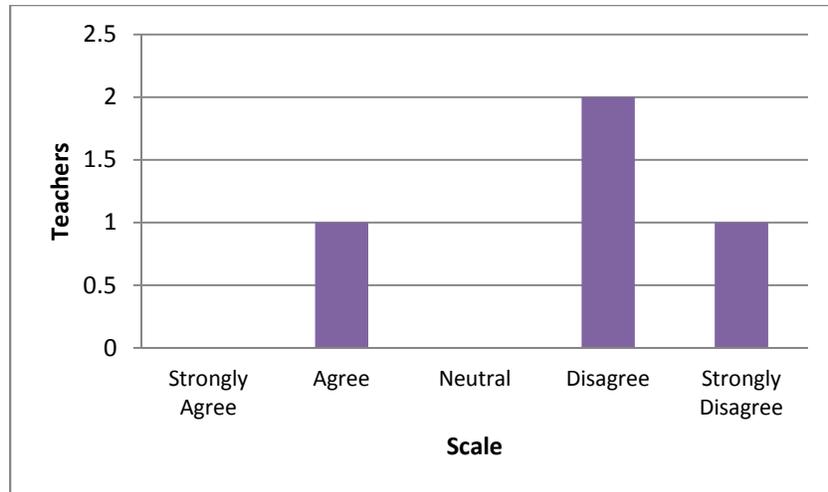
The way in which the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program depicts the teaching of key reading skills effects how teachers perceive this aspect of the program. To become well-rounded readers, teachers need students to develop critical thinking skills such as predicting, inferring, visualizing, and decoding. With the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program being the root of reading instruction, it is important the program provides essential instructional guidance and techniques for these skills to be developed. Out of the four teachers surveyed, 75% of them believed the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided essential practice of reading skills for their students. For these skills to be taught efficiently, all components of the program need to be utilized. Along with the skills lessons, the teachers felt it was important to use worksheets, which corresponded with the specific skills, to help reach the needs of all the students. The worksheets provide students with the opportunity to practice and apply the skills learned in the lesson. This provides the teacher with the opportunity to assess how well each student understood the lesson and the application of the new skill. One out of the four teachers, 25%, felt that the program did not provide the students with the essential practice for them to develop critical thinking skills.



*Figure 4.4.* Teachers' perceptions of the development of their students' critical thinking skills. This graph shows the teachers' answers to the question; does the basal program provide essential practice of skills for students to develop well-rounded critical thinking skills?

Teacher #3 noted the program to be inconsistent. The skills that are focused on and discussed throughout the specific unit may not necessarily be the skill that is going to be tested on the unit assessment. This teacher believes that the basal does not focus assessment totally on the skills that were taught in the particular unit, confusing students with the skills that were learned.

The reading skills the teachers taught from the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program are skills that students need to utilize in all subject areas. Out of the four teachers, 75% of them reported that the students are unable to use key skills, such as decoding and context clues out of context with the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. Only one of the teachers, 25%, felt that the students were able to utilize the critical thinking skills that were learned through the program with other content areas, but only able to do so on occasion.



*Figure 4.5.* Teachers' perceptions of students applying critical thinking skills in other academic areas. This graph shows the teachers' answers to the question, are students able to apply key critical thinking skills to other academic areas, without being reminded?

The transferring of the skills is not consistent with reading outside the basal program. For example, students were not using context clues to help identify unknown words in other subject areas, automatically asking for help, before attempting to identify the unfamiliar word.

Teacher #2 perceived the students were unable to transfer the skills from one content area to another because "we, as teachers, spoon feed students information in an isolated context to the point students are unable and do not understand that these key skills need to be used in all areas of reading, such as science, social studies, and all pieces of literature." The way the program delivers the reading skills, according to the teachers, does not provide students with the foundations that are needed to effectively apply these skills with the reading process and in other subject areas.

Even though students are introduced to key reading skills during the Scott Foresman Basal instruction, students need to have a solid understanding that these skills will be used in all reading spectrums, all the time, not just when reading instruction is taking place. During basal reading instruction, teachers need to emphasize, to the students, that these skills will always be

needed. Just because the unit is complete does not mean that students do not need to use or utilize these skills. When the basal is testing students on skills that were not necessarily introduced in that unit, the program creators are assessing to see whether students are retaining the knowledge of specific reading skills such as decoding, visualization, context clues, and prediction, to name a few. The teachers do not see students utilizing these key skills outside the basal program. According to the teachers students are not making the key connections. When students are asked, what reading strategies could be used to help identify the unknown word to further understand the reading? The majority of the time, students will shrug their shoulders and say “I don’t know.” This is showing that the students are not implementing these skills with other subject areas.

***Motivation.***

Motivation is extremely important when getting students excited to learn about reading. The four teachers were divided on whether the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program motivates their students to read during reading instruction. Do the basal stories make them want to read? Two of the teachers, 50%, reported that the stories from the basal program motivated their students and made them excited about reading.

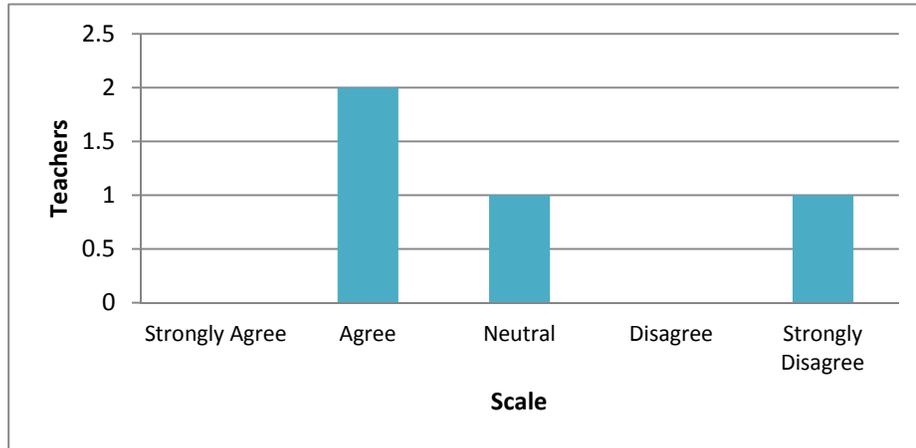


Figure 4. 6. Teachers’ perceptions of basal readers motivating students to read independently. This graph shows the teachers’ answers to the question; do basal readers motivate students to read outside basal reading instruction?

Teacher #4 stated, “The stories from the basal program often lead to my students reading other similar stories on their own.” This teacher reported that the program provided stories that spark the students’ interests to read above and beyond the stories in their basals.

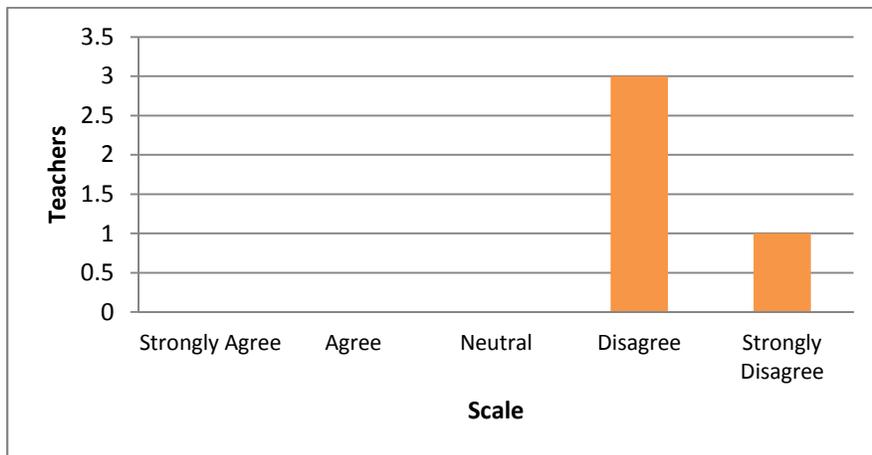


Figure 4.7. Teachers’ perceptions of student motivation and basal stories. This graph shows the teachers’ answers to the question; do students lack motivation towards reading, due to how they feel about the stories in their basal reading program?

Teacher #2 was neutral; it all depended on the story that the students were reading that week and how much the story, author, and genre were discussed, before the reading of the story. Teacher

#3 felt that the basal stories definitely did not motivate the students. The students did not find the basal stories interesting enough to make them motivated with the reading process.

The way students felt about reading instruction influences their views of the reading process. If students found the stories in the basal to be dry, boring, or even difficult to read, this type of experience may sour students with the whole reading process. Teachers #1 and #4 gave the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program much credit for catching students' interest with the reading process. The teachers believed that most of the time the stories that the students were reading from the basal provided them motivation to seek additional books that were similar to the basal story. This showed that the stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided students with the motivation and support needed to become independent readers. The other two teachers, #2 and #3, noted that their students do not always get their motivation from the basal readers. The students depicted disinterest in the stories and used other aspects, outside the program to motivate their independent reading. Teacher #3 emphasizes how important it is that students have access to reading materials that they are interested in. Teacher #2 stated that students are "intrinsically" motivated to read. The basal program does not always provide students with the topics that are interesting enough to read about. It is important for the basal to have all types of stories and genres to reach the interests of the students. Without reaching a student's interest, it is going to be difficult to make that student excited to learn how to read and to read often.

Each teacher was asked how the students responded to the program overall. The two third grade teachers, #1 and #2, expressed that the students enjoyed how the basal program introduced the stories. By the teachers providing the students with background information and authors' purpose, teachers noticed students being more focused on the story. The teachers found

that the students do not respond well to the assessments finding them to be dry, tedious, and boring. The teachers believe that the students respond well to the stories that the basal provides, but the worksheets and assessments that are used do not spark interest in learning the skills to become well-rounded readers. The teachers noticed that students can use reading skills in isolation with the basal program. When teaching other subjects, students do not know to use the same skills from basal instruction to help them read and analyze the materials. The fourth grade teachers, #3 and #4, reported that the students do not respond well to the format that the program provides to learn key reading skills. Teacher #4 stated the “basal provides the framework, but the students do not always use the skills that they learn outside the lesson.” The main issue the teachers expressed was that the skill lessons, worksheets, and assessments that the basal uses are not always a fun interactive way for the students to learn. Learning the skills in isolation did not provide students with the foundations that are needed to learn and utilize skills in other academic areas outside the basal lesson.

### **Student Survey Results**

Student perceptions of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program are extremely important. The way students view reading within the classroom may influence their views of reading in general. It is important to have a solid understanding of how students perceive the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program whether the students view it to be interesting, educational, easy, intriguing, dry, boring, or difficult. Any of these perceptions that students may possess towards the program can greatly influence how they view reading educationally and recreationally. If students enjoy the program they are more likely to have a positive point of view towards reading in general; but if students struggle with the program and do not find it beneficial, then the students are more likely to hold a negative perception towards reading. The

survey that the third and fourth grade students completed showed how the students view the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, along with how the program could be changed and critiqued to make students excited about the reading process.

***Do students like to read?***

In order to fully understand students' perceptions about the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program it is important to know whether or not the students like to read. According to the survey, 72% of the students like to read, 12% do not, and 16% like to read on occasion.

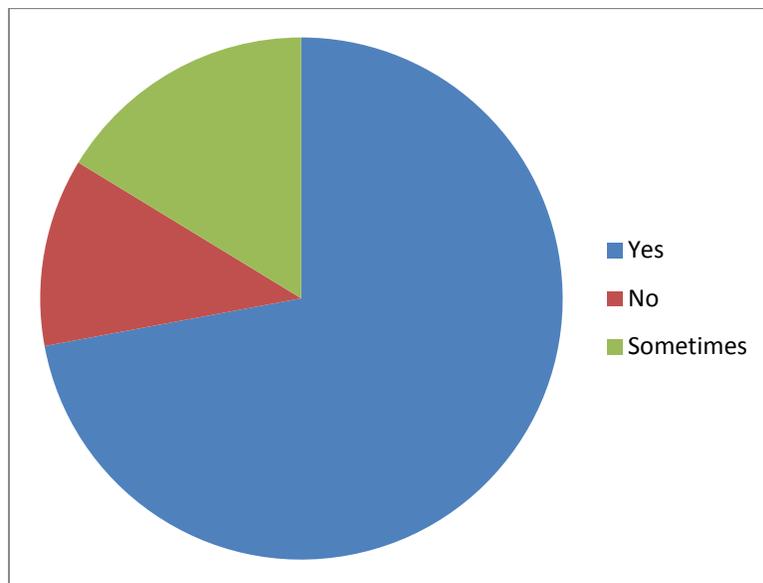


Figure 4.8. Students' perceptions of reading. This graph shows the students' answers to the question, do you like to read?

This portrays that the majority of the students perceive reading in a positive manner. The type of stories/materials that students like to read according to the comment section of the student survey are *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Box Car Children*, *Magic School Bus*, *Magic Tree House*, *Twilight*, *Little House on the Praire*, and magazines/books about sports. None of the students listed the basal or any of its stories in the comment section. This shows that the stories in the basals are not at the top of the students independent reading list.

**Motivation.**

For students to become motivated with basal reading instruction, they need to be excited to read stories in their basals and find them interesting. According to the survey, 47% found the stories to be interesting, 16% did not, and 37% found the stories to be interesting and exciting on occasion.

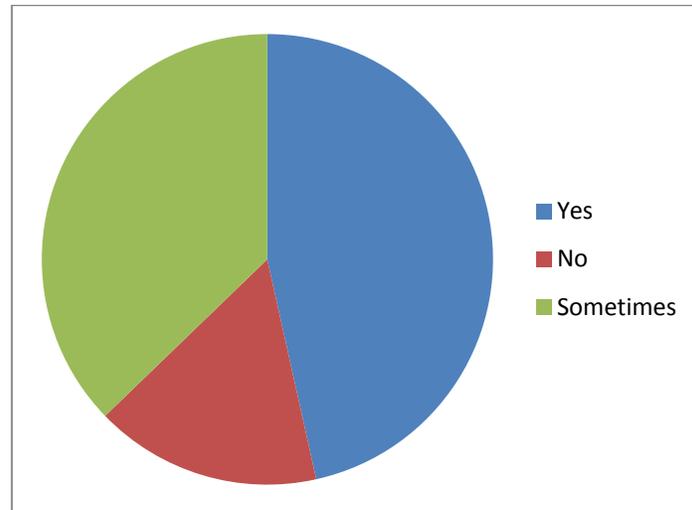


Figure 4. 9. Students' perceptions of stories in basal readers. This graph shows the students' answers to the question, are the stories in the basal readers interesting?

According to the survey results, the students found the stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program to be interesting, which sparked their interest in the reading process. The students found the nonfiction stories to be interesting because they provided fascinating details and information about historical figures and events, such as the *Titanic* and Babe Ruth. The other nonfiction pieces the students enjoyed reading about in the the Scott Foresman Basal were focused on places and animals that can be found around the world. The students found the fictional stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program to be funny and adventurous because the stories are complex with good details and information. Students greatly enjoyed the wide variety of topics that the basal provided. Approximately two students commented, "I do

feel interested and excited when it is time for reading because there are different stories to read and different things to read about, plus learn the meaning to a variety of words.” “The stories give you lessons and teach you all kinds of different things.” These comments that came from third and fourth grade students portray positive views of the stories in the basal program. These students found the stories interesting and educational. Even though the students did not list the stories from the basal, as stories they like to read, the basal stories have similarities to the books that the students listed. For example, the Babe Ruth story in the basal is connected to baseball. The students stated, they like magazines and books about sports. This shows that even if the basal stories are not part of a mainstream book, the basal has stories that students can relate to and find interesting.

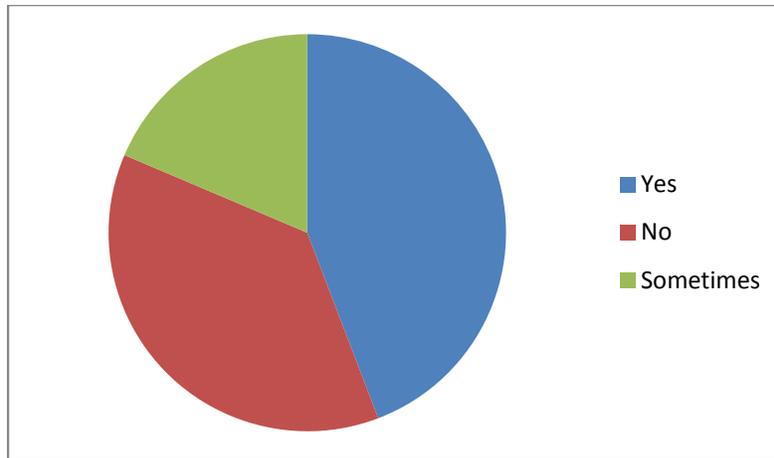
Not all the students view the basal stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program in such a positive manner (see figure 9). According to the survey, some students perceived the stories to be boring because they are not filled with “action and adventure.” The main complaint from the third and fourth grade students with the basal stories was the stories are boring and not overly interesting. Another issue that students have with the basal stories was that the stories are too difficult to read, so the students are unable to develop a strong understanding of what the story is about. By the stories being too difficult for some students to read, the students may develop a negative point of view towards the basal. The students will not know whether they like the stories because the reading level is too high for them to successfully read a story on their own. One student commented, “sometimes the stories are interesting, but sometimes I do not understand what the stories are about.” This comment portrays an interesting perception. The students may not enjoy the stories in their basals because the stories are too difficult for them to

read. If the students are unable to read the story, the difficulty level is only going to make them frustrated and perceive the basal stories in a negative manner.

According to the survey results, there are reasons for students to have either a positive or negative perception towards the basal reader. Some students do enjoy the stories; most of the positive feedback was about the nonfiction pieces. Students portrayed a less positive perception towards the fictional pieces, finding they do not hold enough action and adventure, mostly this perception was from the male students. Overall the female population held more of a positive perception towards the fictional pieces of the basal reader. By enjoying the stories, students may be more engaged with the basal lesson. The reading level of the basal stories may be above the reading level of some students. For students to be fully motivated with the learning process they need to be interested with the stories, be able to read them, and enjoy the learning process that ensues.

### ***Reading beyond the basal.***

The way in which students perceive the stories in their Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, can greatly influence how they perceive reading outside the program. According to the survey, 44% felt that the stories in the basal made them want to read stories outside the basal program, 37% did not, and 19% felt that it encouraged them to read stories outside the basal on occasion.



*Figure 4.10.* Students' perceptions of the basal readers making them want to read beyond reading class. This graph shows the students' answers to the question; do the stories in your basal readers provide motivation to read outside reading class?

The students who reported that the stories in their basal reader encouraged them to read independently, above and beyond reading instruction, indicated the basal stories were “fun” and “cool.” Some students shared that they just love to read everything. It is so important for students to perceive reading in a positive manner. The way in which students learn how to read will greatly influence their views of reading in general. Other students did not perceive the influence of the basal program in such a positive manner. According to other students, the stories from the basal program were all boring, so reading in general is boring. One student commented, “certain topics make me want to throwup” referring to the stories in his basal reader. Another student commented, “reading is not one of my best subjects, so I really do not like to read.” A number of students commented about their dislike of reading. One student stated, the only time reading is enjoyable is when the teacher is reading a story. These negative remarks could be stemming from the students' dislike of the stories; content or from the difficulty level that the basal stories possess. If students read below the reading level of the stories in the basal for reading instruction, the basal may sour the student on the independent reading process.

Students were asked if the basal stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program were easy or difficult for them to read. According to the survey, approximately 74% felt the stories were at their reading level, 12% found stories to be difficult, and 14% perceived the stories to be to difficult to read on occasion.

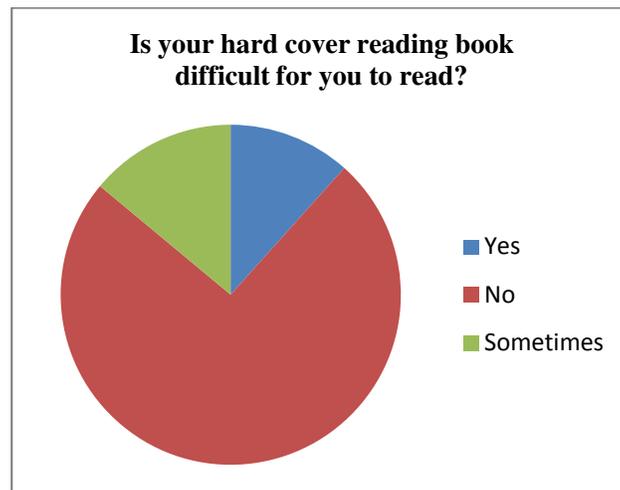


Figure 4.11. Students' perceptions of whether the basal readers are difficult to read. This graph shows the students' answers to the question, is the basal readers difficult to read?

These percentages suggested that the majority of the students are able to read the stories in their basal readers with little to no help. The most popular comment from students who were able to read the basal stories easily was that the stories were at their reading level. The students commented that they "read a lot, because they love reading." The students who found the stories to be difficult stated their views more in depth. These students expressed that they struggle with the reading level of the stories in their basal reader. These students discussed how the words are too difficult for their reading level. By the words in the story being too difficult, the students do not have a solid understanding of the story. Due to the stories being above the students' reading levels, some students wrote that they hate reading because it is difficult and frustrating. For these students, the basal program is not working in their favor. For reading to be this difficult and frustrating these students are going to lose interest in the reading process. For them to feel

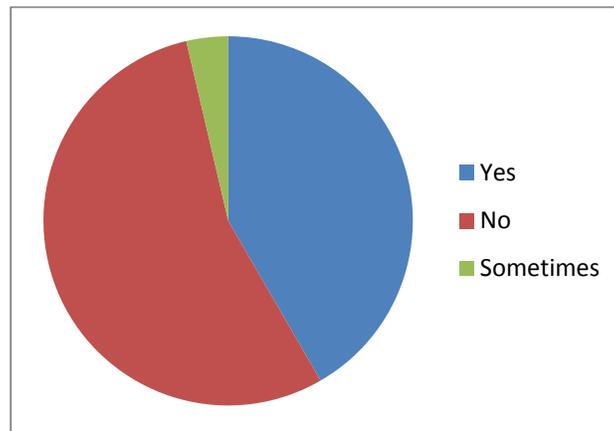
this frustrated with the basal stories will only make them view the reading process in a negative manner.

The students who revealed a positive perception towards the stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program were students who did not have a difficult time reading the stories in their basal reader. These students were able to read the stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program with little to no difficulty, which in turn allows them to use their reading skills to further their knowledge and progression with the reading process. The students who depicted the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program in a negative manner were students who struggled with the reading level of the stories. The difficulty level of the basal stories only frustrates these students. The students then do not develop a strong understanding of the story. The students are not only struggling with the story, but become weak in the use of other reading skills that have been taught to them throughout basal instruction. Even though the majority of students felt the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program is at their reading level, the students who do not share these same views are in a sense being left behind. As teachers it is important to identify these students and work with them, so they are able to develop the skills needed to become well rounded readers.

***Instruction.***

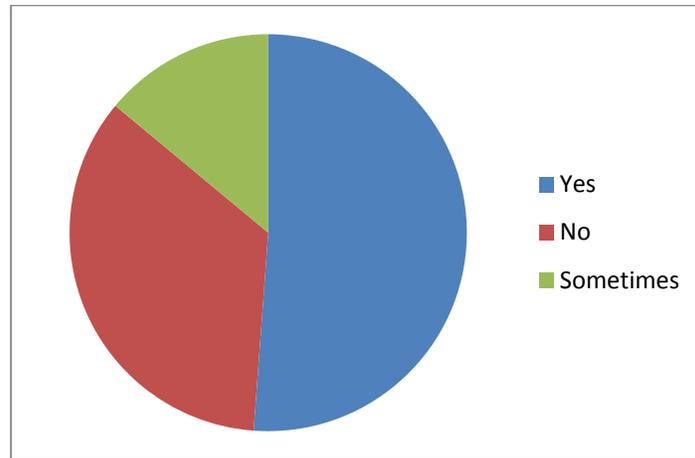
When using the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program there are basically two ways in which teachers will utilize the program, either as a guide or as a script. For students, if the teacher uses the program as a script, this will determine that there will be a strict routine to reading instruction. On the other hand, teachers may use the program as a guide, which means the teacher would pick and choose aspects of the basal lessons to use throughout the week, to ensure the exact needs of the students are being met. By using the program as a guide there

would be no exact routine to the basal reading instruction. For some students routine is comforting. The students take comfort in knowing what to expect, so they can prepare for the upcoming lesson. For some students this may seem boring. By following the same routine each week, students may lose interest in the reading lesson, which may reflect in their perceptions of reading in general. According to the survey, 42% of the students found comfort with the routine basis of the basal program and 55% did not like the routine basis of the program.



*Figure 4.12.* Students' perceptions of routine with the basal program. This graph shows the students' answers to the question; do you like routine to reading instruction (knowing what is going to happen each day)?

The students portrayed similar results when asked if they prefer it when the teacher changes the routine of reading instruction, not knowing what is going to happen. When teachers change routine, 51% of the student enjoyed the differentiaion in instruction, 35% did not , and 14% enjoyed the change of routine on occasoin.



*Figure 4.13.* Students' perceptions of teachers changing routine of reading instruction. This graph shows the students' answers to the question; do you like it when teachers change routine to reading instruction?

For some students the routine basis of the program brought them comfort in the learning process. One student wrote, "I do not like it when stuff changes. It makes me feel like someone is trying to boss me around. If my teacher starts changing the routine of stuff I get mad." Other students noted that the routine basis of the basal program allowed them to enjoy reading instruction because they like to know what is going to happen. Students expressed that it allowed them to be prepared for the lesson, "I always like to know what's going to happen" and "It helps me, so then I can be prepared for reading." For some students it is the comfort in knowing what the day holds for them. They know which day(s) they are reading the story, learning a new skill or vocabulary. Some students need to have routine, due to a learning disability. By students knowing what is going to happen with basal reading instruction each day, the students are able to mentally prepare for the upcoming lesson.

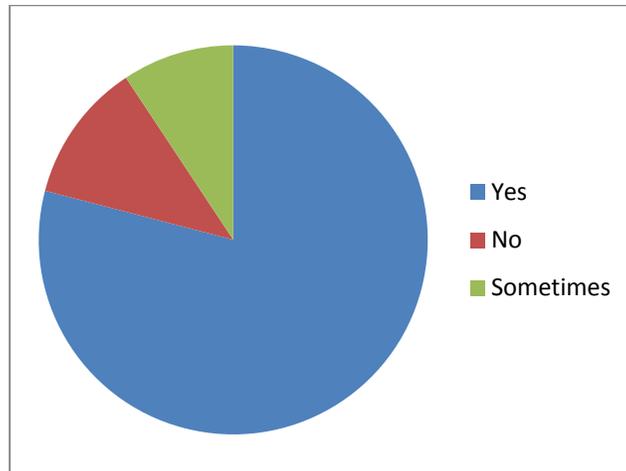
On the other hand, not all students enjoy the routine basis of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The routine basis of the program may become dry and boring. One student wrote, "It gets annoying, I hate it." Other students commented that reading instruction is the

same thing every week, which in turn makes reading boring. Other students perceive the routine of the program to be boring, even with a new story every week, “it is boring like school. It doesn’t get my attention.” Other students stated that they like to be surprised; they do not want to know what’s going to happen each day. These responses from the third and fourth grade students show the routine of the basal program does not make them excited about reading. They find it to be boring, dry and tedious. This is not allowing students to become excited with reading instruction or the reading process.

These results and comments suggest that the majority of the students do not like the strict routine basis of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program (see figure 13). Some of the students like it when reading instruction is changed up, so they do not know what is going to happen each day. Approximately 35% of the students, on the other hand, found the routine basis of the program to be comforting.

### ***Critical thinking skills.***

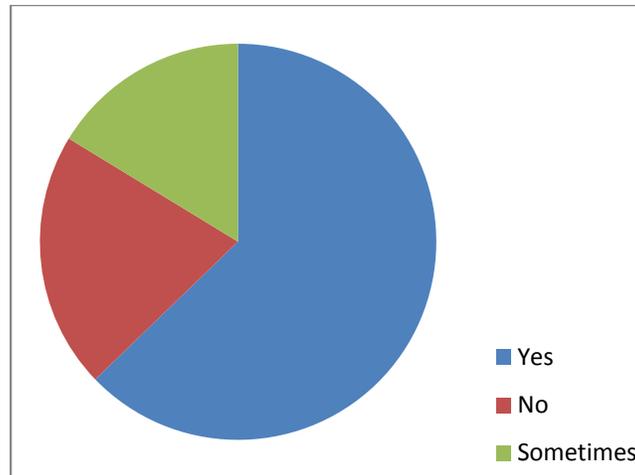
Learning key reading skills is an important part to all reading programs. The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provides specific skill lessons on all of these aspects such as comprehension, decoding, and predicting to name a few. It is important for students to have an understanding of what each of these critical thinking components are and how they are used with the reading process. According to the survey, 79% of the students felt that the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided them with a solid understanding of key reading skills. Only 12% of the students felt that the program did not help them understand how to use these skills with the reading process.



*Figure 4.14.* Students' perceptions of development of key reading skills. This graph shows the students' answers to the question; do the basal readers and workbook provide an understanding of the different reading skills that need to be learned?

The students reported to have an understanding that these skills are necessary when partaking in the reading process. The students discussed how they have learned how to predict and use other reading skills by using key elements of the story, such as pictures to figure out unknown words. The basal program also provides students with questions that correspond with each story. This shows the students are developing a knowledge of these skills to help them understand the components of the story.

At the same time, it is important that students realize the critical thinking skills need to be used in other subject areas to help identify what's going on in all types of reading. According to the survey, 63% of the students felt that they are able to use their reading skills in other subject areas, 21% did not, and 16% felt that they are able to utilize these skills in other subject areas on occasion.



*Figure 4.15.* Students' perceptions of using critical thinking skills in other subject areas. This graph shows the students' answers to the question; are you able to utilize reading skills in other subject areas to help identify what is going on?

The students stated that they are able to use these skills in other subject areas such as writing, spelling, and math (word problems). Students stated that they are able to use context clues and combining letter sounds, which was learned from basal reading instruction. Other students noted that they do not use them for other subject areas because it is a skill that they learned for reading class, or they do not know how to use the skills effectively in other areas of reading.

According to the survey results, the students noted that the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided a strong instructional basis for the development of key reading skills, along with the understanding of how and when to use these skills. There was a small percentage of students who admitted to not knowing how or when to implement these skills, especially in other subject areas.

Instruction, motivation, and the development of critical thinking skills are all important aspects that determine how students perceive the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. Whether the students perceive the program to be educational and interesting or boring and difficult will have an important influence on how they view reading as a whole. It is important

that all students are able to receive a well-rounded education at their level, so the skills that are learned are able to be used in a productive manner, which will enable students to become strong readers.

### **Findings: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions Compared**

#### **Teacher and Student Surveys.**

The aspects that will be compared amongst students and teachers are development of key reading skills, motivation, gender bias, and routine based on the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. Each of these aspects play a major role in how both teachers and students perceive the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. Comparing the two views will show how well of an understanding teachers have of their students. This will reveal how well teachers are analyzing students perceptions.

#### ***Key reading skills.***

Both students and teachers were asked if the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided the students with efficient guidelines and lessons to develop a well-rounded understanding of key critical thinking skills such as comprehension, decoding, and predicting. According to the comparison of the survey results both teachers, 75%, and students, 79%, perceived the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided essential skill development for students to develop an understanding of critical thinking skills.

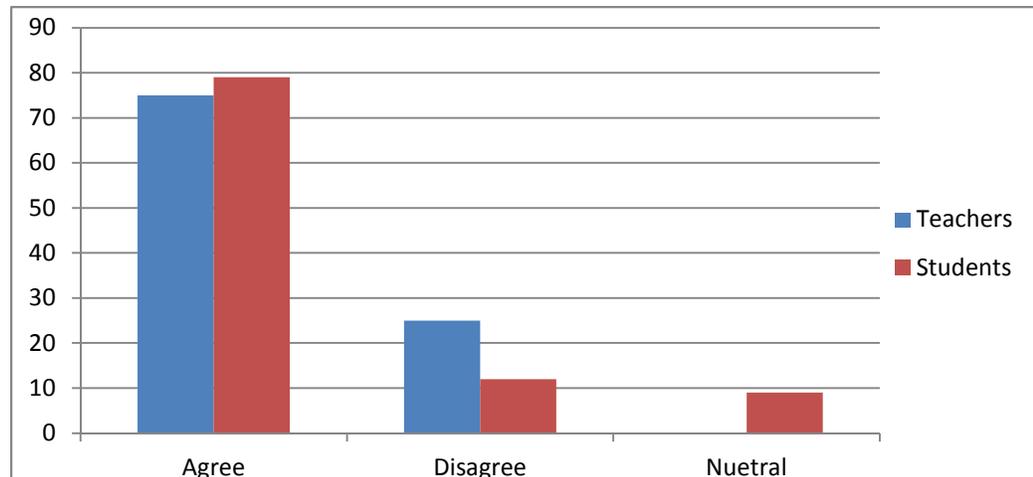


Figure 4.16. Teachers' and students' perceptions of the influence of the basal program on the development of critical thinking skills. This graph shows teachers' and students' perceptions of whether the basal reading program provides students with an understanding and essential practice to develop critical thinking skills.

On the other hand, teachers did not agree with the students being able to use the critical thinking skills beyond basal reading instruction. Students ,63%, felt that they were able to apply key critical thinking skills to other academic areas without being reminded, due to the skill lessons that were provided through basal instruction. The teachers ,75%, felt that students were unable to successfully utilize their critical thinking skills beyond the basal program.

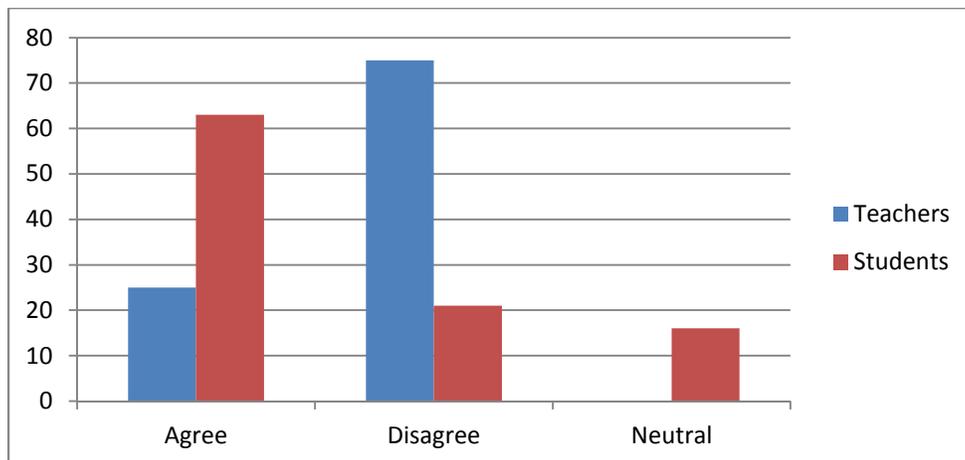


Figure 4.17. Teachers' and students' perceptions of students using critical thinking skills in other academic areas. This graph show teacher and student answers to the question, are students able to apply key critical thinking skills to other academic areas without being reminded?

The students were only able to use these skills in isolation, during workbook or other lessons that corresponded with the basal program.

According to the comparison of the survey results, teachers and students agree that the lessons, which the basal provided, provides students with a solid understanding of key reading skills. Both teachers and students felt confident with the reading skill development and the use of these skills in isolation within the boundaries of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. On the other hand, teachers do not see students using these skills effectively in other subject areas. Students think that they are, but according to their teachers they are not. Students know that there are critical thinking skills that need to be used in the reading process in order to develop a strong understanding of the content, but whether the students are using these skills appropriately and affectively is unclear.

***Motivation.***

Motivation is extremely important for students to have to become enthused and excited with reading, along with learning all the other aspects of the reading process. Both students, 47%, and teachers, 50%, felt that the basal readers motivated students to read during reading instruction. Students, 37%, and teachers, 25%, perceived that the basal stories motivate students to read on occasion.

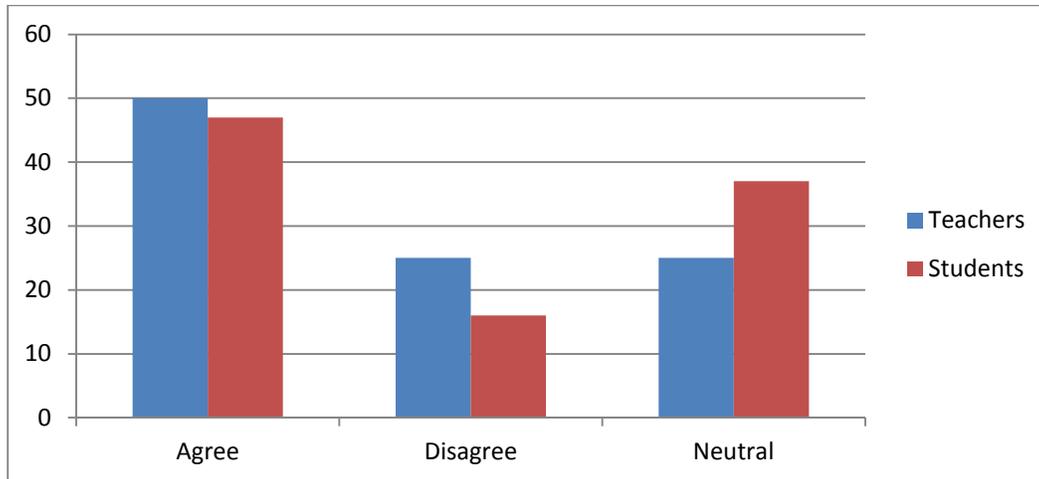


Figure 4.18. Teachers' and students' perceptions of whether basal readers motivate students to read during reading instruction. The graph shows teacher and student answers to the question, do basal readers motivate students to read during reading class?

These percentages suggest that majority of the teachers and students view the stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program in a positive manner. This revealed that students and teachers believed the stories in the basal reader to be interesting, along with focusing on topics that students want to read about. If the stories in their basal readers are making them excited to read during reading class, then in turn it provides students with motivation to read independently when reading instruction is not taking place.

### ***Gender bias.***

The discussion of gender bias in basal readers was a topic that I came across, while researching basal reading programs. Gender bias can become a major issue for students if they perceive the stories to be focused more towards one gender than the other. If this does become an issue, then one gender may perceive the stories in the basal in a negative manner, and in turn may perceive reading in a negative manner overall. According to survey results, students strongly disagree, 61%, that the stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program focus more on one gender than the other. Overall, the students felt that the stories are equally for everyone.

Seventy-five percent of the teachers were neutral because it depended on the basal story that was being read each week.

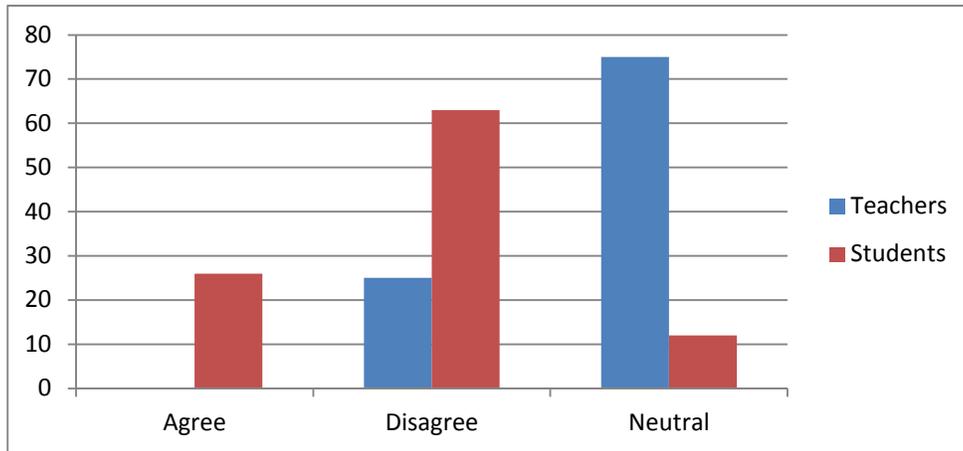


Figure 4.19. Teachers’ and students’ perceptions of whether basal readers appeal more towards the female population. This graph show the teachers’ and students’ answers to the question, do the stories in the basal readers appeal more to girls?

The teachers and students from this study felt the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program was targeted towards both genders equally. Overall the two parties felt the stories are for everyone.

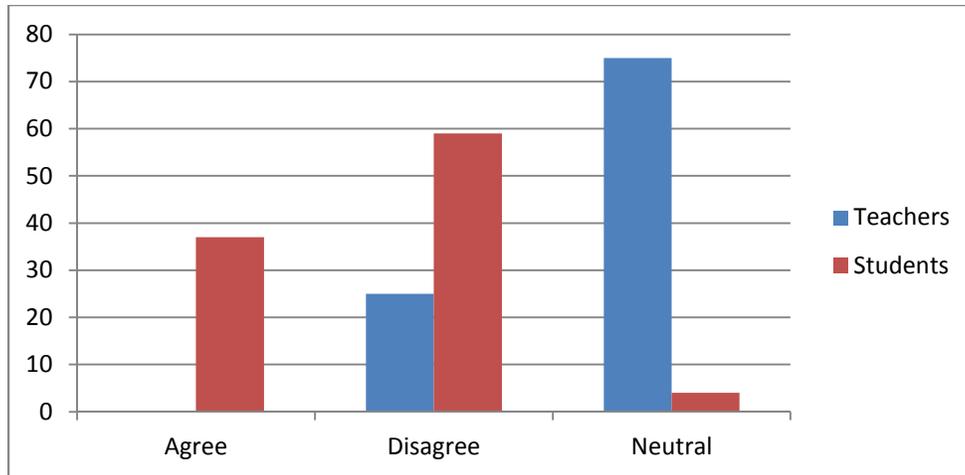
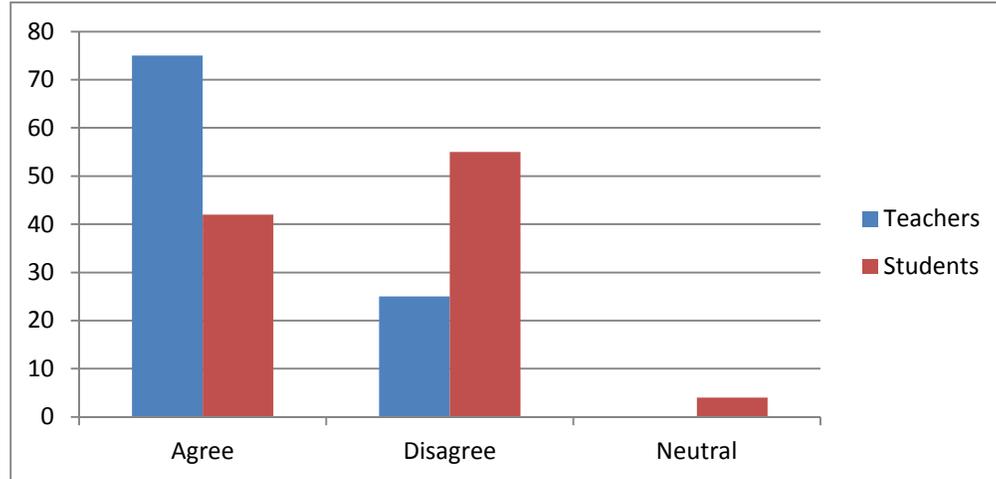


Figure 4.20. Teachers' and students' perceptions of whether the basal stories appeal more towards the male population. This graph shows the teachers' and students' answers to the question, do the basal readers appeal more towards boys?

On occasion the stories in the basal readers may appeal to one gender over the other, but overall the stories in the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program are designed so all students will be motivated with the reading process, during basal instruction.

### ***Routine.***

With the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, routine plays a major role with how the program is designed. Each week the days are setup and designed for the teacher. It all basically looks the same except there are new skills, spelling words, and story. When asked if students enjoy the routine basis of the basal reading program, students and teachers did not agree. The majority of the teachers, 75%, perceived that the students enjoyed the routine basis of the basal program. The teachers thought the students liked knowing the focus each day. The majority of the students, 55%, did not enjoy the routine basis of the basal reading instruction.



*Figure 4.21.* Teachers' and students' perceptions of whether students enjoy the routine basis of the basal reading program. The graph shows teachers' and students' answers to the question, does the routine basis of the program make students more comfortable with reading instruction?

The students voiced they like surprise and are bored with the routine basis of reading instruction. If teachers perceive students to be enjoying the routine basis of basal instruction, they will not feel the need to critique the lessons to make the students more interested and excited with the learning process. The teachers themselves may prefer the routine basis of the basal, due to the fact, that there is little to no planning, since the basal developers have done the work of creating the lesson plans.

### **Teacher Interviews**

The interview aspect of the data collection process had teachers analyzing the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program on a variety of levels. The interview focused on advantages and disadvantages of the program, peer interaction during basal lessons, how basal instruction is differentiated for students with special needs, and what supplemental materials are used to further support students literacy development. Teachers' perceptions and views on these topics provided insight on how the program is used and utilized within the classrooms.

**Advantages and Disadvantages.**

With the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, the teachers noted both advantages and disadvantages of using the reading program. All four of the teachers, felt that the program provided a good framework for teachers to work from. The scope and sequence manner of the materials help with the teaching of the lessons to ensure standards are being met. The program also has a prescribed set of skills for the teachers to teach. The stories and skills are scaffolded to fit the needs of each grade level. The supplementary materials that the program provides such as leveled readers, CD's of the stories, and teaching charts help with the teaching of skills and focus on different reading levels amongst the students.

Along with advantages to the program there are a variety of disadvantages as well. The teachers reported that the biggest disadvantage with the program is the amount of materials the program has set for the teacher to teach, within the specified time frame is not feasible. Along with the abundance of materials, the skills that are being taught during each unit may not be the specific skills that will be tested or may be asked in a manner students are not familiar with. The program is not consistent from practice material to assessment. Also, the basal stories are too long for the age groups and are above the reading level for a majority of the students. This makes the teaching and learning process difficult for both parties.

**Peer Interaction.**

Peer interaction is an important aspect of a student's social development. Teachers were asked, in what ways they perceive peer interaction to support students' literacy development, during basal reading instruction. According to the teacher interviews, the teachers perceive the most beneficial forms of peer interaction during basal instruction are partner reading with the basal stories, along with reading centers. These two forms of peer interaction allow students to

work together closely on materials that are directly from the basal program, as well as learn from each other. The teachers also perceive incorporating peer interaction through the completion of worksheets, reading games, and through the studying of spelling and vocabulary words, to be beneficial. This provides students with the opportunity to have fun with the learning process.

### **Supporting Students with Special Needs in Basal Instruction.**

The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program is set-up to teach all students in the same manner, in a whole group setting, even though not all students learn in the same way. Some students may have a learning disability or special need that calls for additional instruction to support their literacy development. According to the interviews, teachers perceive that following through with guided reading, in reading centers, is the most productive way to further develop these reading skills. Within guided reading groups, teachers #1, #3, and #4 use the leveled readers, which are part of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. These books are at the students' reading levels providing these struggling students with the opportunity to practice key reading skills. Along with practicing these critical thinking skills students are practicing reading aloud and can discuss important aspects of the story. Teacher #3 perceived the importance of using leveled readers, along with other supplementary materials such as Academic Intervention Services. "With these students being in the classroom, I have separate expectations set for them. The leveled readers are at their reading levels, and the CCC program is designed to start where the students are at with their literacy development, and provide them practice with skills they individually need. As they are doing the leveled readers, I do guided reading with them, while at the same time keeping high expectations of their work." The teachers perceive using other supplementary materials, along with leveled readers, provides these students with the

opportunity to utilize these key literacy techniques in a supportive environment, which provides reading education at their level.

### **Incorporation of Supplementary Materials.**

The use of supplementary materials is important to further enhance a student's reading development. There are a variety of supplementary materials that these four teachers have at their disposal. Some of the supplementary materials are connected directly to the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program and others are not. The teachers perceive some materials to be more beneficial than others. According to the teacher interviews, all four of the teachers used a variety of supplementary materials. The materials that are directly related to the program are workbook pages, leveled readers, teaching charts, CD's of the stories and background information. Other supplementary materials that the teachers use that are not directly from the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program are reading skill games, CCC, AR, and online skill activities and lessons. The teachers went more in depth about their perceptions regarding the supplementary materials provided by the basal program. Teacher #4 stated, "Leveled readers are an excellent source to use when teaching students with lower reading levels, than what the main basal provides." It provides students with a lower reading level the opportunity to use key reading skills to read stories successfully. The basal does not provide assessments on the leveled readers, so it is difficult for the teachers to collect assessment data from the lower level readers. It is important to assess a students' knowledge of materials that are at a level where they can read the materials successfully. Teacher #3 discussed the beneficial aspect of incorporating supplementary materials into the lessons. This teacher stated, "I found the supplementary materials to be beneficial to the students, and have seen an increase in scores, and level of reading." This teacher perceived the supplementary materials from the basal to further develop

student reading abilities. Even though additional materials are used outside the program, the basal provided materials that are also beneficial to the students' reading development. The basal program does provide alternative materials, but the program lacks assessment materials that correspond with the leveled readers. This makes it difficult to collect data on students who struggle with the main basal.

### **Overall Analysis**

According to the observations, surveys, and interviews both the teachers and students have expressed both positive and negative qualities of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The teachers believed the most effective way to use the basal program in the classroom is based on the group of students who is being taught. Some teachers felt that the students will benefit from the program being used as a script, due to the program being designed to meet the state standards, and was developed to teach a variety of key reading skills and vocabulary that the students need. Other teachers perceive that the program is best used as a guide. By using the program as a guide, the teachers had the opportunity to develop lessons that were designed specifically for their classes. Since not all students learn exactly the same, each group may need the materials to be presented in a different manner or reinforced with different materials. The supplementary materials the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provided are useful according to the teachers' perceptions. The supplementary materials bring extra substance to the lesson to further develop students' literacy development. Teachers did perceive the main basal stories to be above many students' reading level, which made it difficult to truly assess a student's knowledge. The basal provides leveled readers for students with a lower reading level, but does not provide assessments. This program does not provide students with a lower reading level, the means to be assessed in a manner that truly portrays their knowledge.

Overall, the teachers believed it is an efficient program that has a variety of supplementary materials, which can reach the literacy needs of the students.

Overall, students reported the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program and its materials to be educational. The majority of the students enjoyed the stories and the supplementary materials, such as the CD's and teaching charts that teachers used to enhance the reading lesson. The students that did not perceive the program in a positive manner were the students who struggled with the main basal stories. These students expressed that they did not like the stories or the lessons, mainly because they did not have a solid understanding of the story due to the content being above their reading level. Students that were able to read the materials perceived the program in positive manner, along with the reading process. Even though teachers perceived the students to enjoy the routine basis that the basal provided, the students did not. The students portrayed that they would enjoy the reading lessons more if the lesson was not based on routine. The students like activities to change and to learn in different ways, which makes the learning process more interesting. Even though the program is designed in a certain manner, teachers need to assess the makeup of the class, to determine the best approach to deliver the basal materials to reach the students' interests and needs.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to develop a stronger understanding of how teachers and students in an elementary setting perceive the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. The study focused on teachers' and students' perceptions through an observation session, teacher and student survey, and teacher interview. Both the teachers and students possessed insights into the positive and negative qualities of the basal program. The perceptions of the students are just as important as the teachers. The students found the supplementary materials of the program to be educational and enjoyable. The content of the main basal may be above some students' reading level, which may make the learning process difficult and frustrating. In this chapter three conclusions, implications, and recommendations will be presented.

#### Conclusions

The following conclusions regarding the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program were reached: teachers report leveled readers are beneficial to student reading development, students are not using reading skills outside the basal reading program, and using the basal program as a guide or script are both effective ways to utilize the basal program.

#### **Teachers Report Leveled Readers are Beneficial to Students' Reading Development.**

Through data collection and analyses the leveled readers proved to be a beneficial component of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, as stated by Hoffman et. al. (2000) to help support high risk students. The teachers were able to utilize this component of the program to cater to the needs of the struggling readers, whose reading level fell below that of the main basal. The leveled readers provided these students with texts, which supported their development of reading skills and techniques.

The leveled readers also provide students who are above the main basal reading level with the opportunity to practice their skills on books that meet their reading needs. Enriching and challenging these students is important. The leveled readers provide these students with the opportunity to demonstrate their true reading level and abilities, providing the teacher with a clear assessment on each student. With the leveled readers, the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program is supporting all students no matter their reading level to become strong independent readers.

The teachers perceived leveled books to provide beneficial educational qualities, which reach above and beyond that of the main basal. By using leveled readers, teachers were able to analyze students' skills in a setting that met their needs as developing readers. The majority of the teachers viewed leveled books to be a fair way to assess these students on their reading skills and development. Only one teacher, #2, did not utilize the leveled readers, due to providing students with an unfair advantage with assessments. The other teachers did not view the assessment of students on leveled readers to be unfair because all students were being assessed on materials that were at their reading levels. The leveled readers provided these teachers with the opportunity to collect data, which assessed students on the appropriate level of materials.

#### **Students are Not Using Reading Skills outside the Basal Reading Program.**

When students are partaking in the reading process outside the basal program, teachers are not seeing students using reading skills and techniques to help them decipher unknown words. These skills and techniques that students should be implementing were taught through basal instruction. Duffy et. al. (1987) felt the best way for students to develop a strong understanding of reading skills is by learning within the reading process, instead of in isolation. The majority of the students perceive they are utilizing these skills to further develop an

understanding of the materials and content, which they are reading. This portrays that there is a gap in communication between the teachers and students.

The basal program puts forth well designed lessons focusing on key reading skills, which students need to become well-rounded readers. Such skills that students need to be implementing are visualization, decoding, inference, and comprehension. The majority of the students perceive themselves to have an understanding of key reading skills that the basal program provides instruction for. The students portrayed through the student survey that basal instruction has provided them with the understanding that reading skills are needed with every aspect of the reading process. Also reading skills need to be implemented to enhance understanding of reading materials outside the basal program. There are lessons which focus on each skill and how readers use them with the reading process, but students are not implementing these skills effectively in other subject areas according to the teachers.

Students exhibit an understanding that reading skills and techniques are used with all aspects of the reading process, but do not necessarily know when or how to implement them. If students perceive themselves as using these skills correctly and efficiently to assist in their educational development, but the students are not actually using the skills correctly, the students will not perceive a reason to further develop the use of these skills.

### **Using Basal Program as a Guide or Script are Both Effective Ways to Utilize the Basal Program.**

The way the basal program is going to be utilized within the classroom needs to be determined by the teacher. The basal program is an effective tool when used in both manners as a guide or as a script. When the basal program is used as a script the teacher is more likely to meet the state standards and teach the students the materials in the manner the basal creators

intended; by doing so the students will be exposed to a variety of skills, techniques, and words in each lesson to broaden their awareness of literacy materials. Maslin (2007) expressed that by following the basal closely, students were allowed to move up a continuum where the material becomes more challenging. On the other hand, the basal program is also effective when used as a guide. Baumann and Heubach (1996) agreed that the classroom teacher may decide to use the program as a guide to better meet the needs of the students. If one's class needs further instruction or the basal instruction needs to be modified to reach the needs of the students, then the use of the basal program as a guide would best meet the needs of the class.

Teachers #1 through #4 were torn on how they perceived the program would be best utilized. Some of the teachers felt the program would be best used as a script due to the fact the program is being used as intended. Since the scope and sequence of the program has been designed to be delivered in a certain manner, then the program should be utilized in that manner. Others portrayed it would be best to use the program as guide; that way the program can be critiqued to meet the needs of the students. Either way the program is used may help develop the students' literacy skills. It all depends on the makeup of the class to determine the best way to utilize the basal materials and deliver the basal lessons.

### **Implications for Students' Learning**

The following implications for students' learning were reached after researching students' perceptions of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program. I identified four ways students benefit from a research based program.

### **How Students Benefit from a Research Based Program.**

The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program consists of many aspects that benefit students' reading development. The program has been designed for the materials to meet the

New York State Standards, which if followed as intended; the program's content will help the teacher meet the literacy developmental needs of the students. Also basal programs are research based, so the components and methods have been verified to work (Schreiner, 2010). The basal program provides a great deal of beneficial materials for students' literacy education and development. The program provides additional reading materials beyond the main basal readers for students who maybe struggling with the reading levels of the main basal. The basal program also provides leveled readers for the advanced students. Catering to the needs of the students is just as important. These students have access to leveled readers that have reading levels above that of the main basal. Enriching these students will provide them with the opportunity to be challenged and to further develop the skills and techniques learned through the basal program.

Another aspect of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program that is beneficial to the students is the variety of supplementary materials, which are used to further enhance student reading instruction. The CD component of the program portrays to the students that there are many facets that go into the development of a story. At the end of each story, the basal program provides information about the author and illustrator sharing information about how the story came to be. The students enjoyed and benefited from this supplementary aspect of the basal program. These materials provided students with the opportunity to develop confidence with the reading process. With the leveled readers, students are able to read a story and answer questions on the materials successfully, due to the fact the story is at the reading levels of the students. The students were also able to understand how the genre of the story affected the content, along with how the influence of the author's background affected the development of the story. The students developed a well-rounded understanding of how the story came about, the history behind it, along with what inspired the author to write the story.

The teaching charts are another supplementary material that the basal creators implemented to benefit students reading development and skills. Through the observation process, the teaching chart was an important aspect that was used to further students' understanding of key skills and literacy development. Throughout the lesson, the students were engaged with the teaching chart by having an interactive role with the learning process. The basal creators implemented songs to correspond with the poems, which enhanced students' understanding of the key skills that were being reinforced throughout the lesson. This is beneficial for the students because it provided them with the opportunity to partake in a lesson that was fun and interactive, which catered to the development of their literacy skills.

These research based components have proven to be beneficial to the literacy growth of the students. Through the proper teacher instruction, the lessons provided by the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program have been essential in student reading development. The data collection process of both the teachers and students has provided data to portray that these aspects are beneficial to the reading education of the students. These features offered by the basal program provide the framework for teachers to follow, so students are provided with a balanced literacy education, which will reach their needs as developing readers. The program is balanced and constructed to meet New York State Standards, so all aspects of the reading process are being taught.

### **Implications for My Teaching**

The following implications for my teaching were made regarding the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program: educational influences and benefits of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program, key reading skills reaching beyond basal instruction, and using basal program as a guide or script are both effective ways to utilize the basal program.

**Educational Influences and Benefits of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program.**

Throughout the data collection process and analysis, the teachers have portrayed ways the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program is both beneficial and lacking. The teachers provided a number of ways the basal program can be used as is or critiqued to meet the needs of the students. The best part of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program is the basal creators have designed the materials to reach the needs and expectations of the New York State Standards. Even if the teachers use the basal manual as a guide the teachers are reassured that the materials are meeting the state standards. The design and set-up of the basal manual helps guide new teachers develop a foundation for their reading lessons. The format of the basal also helps seasoned teachers by providing them with different ideas and ways to teach reading and its key components.

The framework of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program helps guide teacher instruction, so all components are developing the literacy skills of the students. As a teacher, I perceive the supplementary materials of the basal program to be beneficial to student learning. The use of the CD's, teaching chart, and leveled readers are all important to further develop students' understanding of key literacy techniques and skills, which are needed to become well-rounded readers. I perceive these aspects to be imperative to incorporate into any classroom. Each of the supplementary materials that the program possesses caters to the development of students' reading skills. The leveled readers that were used in three out of the four classrooms portrayed the importance of having additional reading materials that students can read successfully to further develop key reading skills. The leveled readers enhance the importance that not all students are at the same reading levels. The leveled readers cater to the individual needs of the students. This ensures that the literacy needs of the students are being met.

Other supplementary materials that the program possesses are great tools to use to further enhance student understanding. The teaching chart is beneficial because it goes above and beyond teaching students from a boring worksheet. Students are able to take an interactive approach to this teaching technique. Music and a poem is usually the root of the lesson. This not only catches the attention of the students, but shows them that learning key sounds, skills, and techniques can be fun. As a teacher, I found all these aspects to be beneficial. It is important to know the make-up of one's students. A supplementary material or teaching technique may work for one class, but not another.

### **Key Reading Skills Reaching Beyond Basal Instruction.**

Through the data collection process, the teachers and students portrayed different views on the success of students being able to implement key reading skills in different subject areas. The students portrayed that they were able to implement reading skills in other subject areas, beyond the confines of the basal program. On the other hand, teachers were not seeing evidence of students implementing these skills in other subject areas. Some students did confess to believing the only time to use reading skills were with the basal program in isolation. These students understood it to be a reading skill, so the only time these skills were implemented was during basal instruction.

As a teacher, these findings are telling me when teaching critical thinking skills, the teacher needs to make students aware that these skills are to always be used when one is involved with the reading process. This very important misunderstanding between the teachers and students is greatly beneficial to the way I perceive myself teaching reading skills in the future. It is clear that some students have the understanding that the reading skills that are being taught through basal instruction are meant to be used in all aspects of the reading process, while

others are just seeing it as a skill that they need when the teacher is teaching reading. Even if some of these students perceive themselves using reading skills in other subject areas, the teachers are not seeing the signs of the skills being implemented accurately. When teaching other subject areas, teachers need to teach key reading terms such as inferring, decoding, predicting, and visualizing, so students are aware that even though we are learning science, the skills that were learned during basal reading instruction still apply. The teacher then needs to discuss how the particular skill would be used in a variety of settings. If students are perceiving that either they are using the skills accurately when they are not, or not using them at all because the teacher has moved on to a different subject, the basal instruction is not portraying to the students that reading skills are used everywhere, not just when the teacher is teaching from the basal manual.

**Using Basal Program as a Guide or Script are Both Effective Ways to Utilize the Basal Program.**

The basal reading manual can be used as a guide or as a script. Using it as a guide would allow the teacher to pick and choose certain aspects of the basal lessons that would best meet the needs of one's class. Using the basal as a script would mean the teacher is using the basal exactly as the basal creators intended. A main concern amongst the teachers was by following the program as a script, the teacher may not be catering to the needs of the students. Each class may need reading instruction to be presented in a slightly different manner. Modifications may need to be implemented, so the lesson and certain materials can be reinforced beyond what the basal program has provided. As a teacher, it is important to look at the needs of the class as a whole, but also the needs of each individual student. The lessons and materials that the basal

creators have provided may not be what every class needs to develop a strong understanding of the key literacy skills and techniques.

As a teacher, I feel both instructional techniques are acceptable ways to teach basal reading instruction. I cannot choose the best way in which to utilize the program without analyzing and assessing the makeup of a particular group of students. Teachers need to assess the makeup of each class to determine the best way to utilize the program. It is important to have a solid understanding of student needs in order to utilize the basal to its fullest potential. As a teacher, it is important to have a solid understanding of each student's reading strengths and weaknesses. By knowing the students' strengths and weaknesses, the teacher can pick and choose components of the basal program that will best support the students' literacy development. By focusing on certain aspects of the basal program and reinforcing skills by pulling additional materials may be the best way to reach the needs of certain classes. Others may benefit from the basal program being implemented as a script strictly sticking to the materials that the basal creators created to teach the literacy needs of the students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following recommendations for future research was made regarding the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program: identify students' real interests, look at other grade level perceptions, follow students through their academic careers with the basal program, and compare perceptions of teachers and students between two different basal programs.

#### **Identifying Students Real Interests.**

To further develop an understanding of students who expressed a dislike towards the basal stories and their content, a research study could be developed that focuses around these students. The researcher would collect a list of interests from approximately 10 students. To

further develop an understanding on each student's interests and perceptions of the basal program, the students will complete an interview session and survey prior to the beginning of the study. This will portray student views and opinions towards reading and the basal program. The researcher would use the collected data to find basal stories and leveled readers that are connected to the interests of the students. The researcher would pull stories from a variety of basal programs to ensure a variety of stories were collected. The researcher would also utilize the assessments that are connected to each basal story for the study. The researcher would ensure the stories were near or at the students' reading levels to ensure the best results. The stories would be implemented, according to reading level.

These students would follow the same instructional techniques as before, but with stories that interest them. The researcher would work with these students for approximately 8 to 10 weeks, providing students with the opportunity to adjust to the new environment of reading instruction. Students will complete assessments for each basal story. The student assessments from before will be compared to the assessments of the study to see if the students have improved with comprehension, prediction, inference, along with a variety of other aspects of the reading process. The students will also be interviewed and surveyed at the end of study. The students will share new thoughts, insights, and comments about the basal instruction and stories from the study. These will be compared with the interview and survey results that were collected before the study began. The results will portray whether or not the students' performance improved with the modifications to the basal instruction.

#### **Look at Other Grade Level Perceptions.**

To further the investigation of this research study, fellow researchers could develop a deeper understanding of teachers' and students' perceptions of the Scott Foresman Basal

Reading Program, or any other basal reading program, by collecting data on students and teachers in first through sixth grade. The data collection techniques for the younger students would need to be modified in order for those students to portray their perceptions of the basal program in an accurate manner. The older students in fifth and sixth grade would be able to use the data collection technique that was designed for the third and fourth grade students in this study. The fifth and sixth graders would be able to expand on their perceptions with the explanation aspect of the survey, due to the fact their writing skills are more advanced and developed.

By continuing and expanding on this research study, the data would share how an abundance of teachers and students feel about the program, throughout a variety of grade levels. This will portray whether students and teachers in grades first through sixth share similar or differing perceptions of the basal program. By continuing the collection of these key perceptions, a researcher may learn how the basal program is affecting both teachers and students. If the basal program is used beyond sixth grade, the researcher can continue the data collection process to the highest grade that the basal is used.

#### **Follow Students through Academic Career with the Basal Program.**

A future research opportunity is to follow a group of students from first grade to the highest grade the basal is used. The collection of data on each of these students' perceptions and literacy growth through the use of the basal program would portray a number of ways the program is influencing the students' literacy development. The researcher may compare the students' perceptions to the students' grades to see if there are correlations between positive and negative perceptions to the student's success in the classroom. The data collection process that could be used with these students would be a survey and interview, along with the classroom

teacher's agreement to share work and grades that correspond to the basal curriculum. The collection of data on these students each academic year would portray how their perceptions and literacy growth evolves as they progress through the basal program. The students will be able to share what aspects of the program they perceive to be beneficial, along with aspects that they do not enjoy. The data collected will show whether or not students' perceptions shift as their literacy development grows and how it shapes their views of the reading process throughout time.

### **Compare Perceptions of Teachers and Students between Two Different Basal Programs.**

This future research investigation would collect data on two different basal programs. The researcher would have to use two different school districts that share similar demographics. This way the student populations are in similar settings, inside and outside school. This will help limit differences amongst the school population, which may influence the outcome of the study. The study would focus on all age groups of students that use a basal program for their reading education. For example, if the basal was used from first through sixth grade, then the study would collect data from students and teachers from each grade level that the basal program is used. The researcher would conduct observations in classrooms in each grade level of each school to develop an understanding of how the basal program is used by both teachers and students. The teachers in each grade level would be interviewed and given a survey to further collect data on the program and how the teachers perceive and use the program to teach reading. The students would complete a survey with an explanation component to voice their perceptions, towards the basal program in their school. Teachers would provide an average reading level for each grade, along with samples of students' work with the basal program. These classroom samples will further enhance how the basal influences the reading development of the students.

Once the data collection is complete, the researcher would use the data to develop a conclusion on which basal programs help develop students' literacy needs the best. This conclusion would be supported by the data collected, plus students' work samples to show which basal program holds the most effective materials to develop students' literacy needs. This would provide schools who are seeking a new basal program for their reading curriculum with information that would help guide their decision on which basal program would be best for their school.

### **Final Thoughts**

The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program portrays both positive and negative qualities. It is imperative that students develop a strong base of understanding of the knowledge and use of key reading skills. The way teachers and students perceive the development of these skills is important. The students' perceptions of the basal program greatly affect how they view the reading process. Teachers need to know and understand students' perceptions towards all aspects of the program. This will show teachers ways in which the program is succeeding and lacking. Having a well-rounded understanding of students' perceptions will provide teachers with the opportunity to create and implement modifications to basal instruction that will better meet the reading development of the students.

The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program has set lessons for teachers. Even though the lessons are designed to meet New York State Standards does not necessarily mean that the instructional components of the main basal are meeting the literacy needs of the students. Half of the teachers from the study expressed the basal should be followed and implemented as so, due to the fact lessons are designed to meet state standards. On the other hand, other teachers from the study believed that the program may need to be changed and critiqued to fully meet the

needs of the students. Since every student learns in a slightly different manner, certain modifications may be needed to fully reach the needs of the student's literacy development. Over all, teachers perceived that the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program has numerous positive qualities from the pre-determined lessons to the abundance of supplementary materials. Teachers believed that the students benefit from the basal instruction as their reading development continues with the progression of the program.

As stated by Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas (1993), teachers need to use the program to reach the needs and interests of the students, which will then spark interest in the reading process. The way in which reading instruction is presented to students is important. The steps in which the teacher delivers the lesson sets the foundation that will help students learn the key skills that are connected to reading. This process also may be the decision maker for students regarding whether they enjoy the reading process. The use of a basal reading program can be an imperative tool to use to teach students key literacy skills and techniques. Teachers need to have a solid understanding of their students' perceptions of the basal program. These perceptions can guide teachers with how the program is implemented in the classroom. The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program possesses a variety of negative and positive qualities. It is up to the teachers on how the program will be implemented to develop students' literacy needs. The Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program provides essential materials that make reading education fun and educational for the students.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Male: \_\_\_\_ or Female: \_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Teacher Survey Basal Reading Program

**Directions:** Complete each of the following questions pertaining to the Basal Reading Program as it affects you in your classroom. Each question is answered on a scale from 5 to 1. 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree. Please leave comments to explain your answer on the scale.

- 1) Do you think the basal reading program that is used in your classroom provides essential practice of skills for students to develop well-rounded critical thinking skills?

5 = Strongly Agree    4 = Agree    3 = Neutral    2 = Disagree    1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 2) Do basal readers motivate your students to read during reading class? (Do the stories make them want to read?)

5 = Strongly Agree    4 = Agree    3 = Neutral    2 = Disagree    1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Do you think the stories in the basal readers appeal more to the girls?

5 = Strongly Agree    4 = Agree    3 = Neutral    2 = Disagree    1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4) Do you think the stories in the basal readers appeal more to the boys?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

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5) Do basal readers motivate your students to read more frequently outside of reading class?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

6) Do you feel your students lack motivation towards reading, due to how they feel about the stories in their basal reading program?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

7) Do you feel the routine basis of the program makes students more comfortable with reading instruction and reading in general?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

8) Do you feel the routine of the basal reading program “turns students off” to the reading process because they do not find it entertaining? (Loss of motivation)

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

9) Do you think teachers should use the basal reading manual (teacher's book) as a script?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10) Are student's able to apply the key critical thinking skills to other academic areas without being reminded?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11) Do you think teachers should use the basal reading manual (teacher's book) as a guide for reading instruction, so instruction can be critiqued to meet student's needs?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12) Are the reading levels of the stories in the basal reader compatible to each students reading level?

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

Male: \_\_\_\_ or Female: \_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

### Student Survey Basal Reading Program

**Directions:** Please complete the following survey. The survey questions are focused on how you feel about the stories in your hard cover reading books and the skills that you learn. Each question is answered by checking a “Yes” or “No” box. After each question there is a space provided for you to explain your “Yes” or “No” answer. Explanations for your answers are required. Question “13” only requires an explanation.

- 1) Do you think your hard cover-reading book and workbooks provide you with a solid understanding of the different skills that you need to learn? (Comprehension, decoding, predicting)

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 2) Do you find the stories in your hard cover reading book interesting? (Are you excited to read the stories)

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Do you think the stories in your hard cover reading book targeted towards girls?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4) Do you think the stories in your hard cover reading book are targeted towards boys?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5) Do you think the stories in your hard cover reading book are targeted towards both boys and girls equally?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Do the stories in your hard cover reading book make you want to read outside of reading class?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7) Do you like to have routine to your reading class? (Knowing what going to happen each day)

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8) Do you like it when teachers change routine, so you do not know what's going to happen next in a reading lesson?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9) Are you able to use your reading skills in other subjects to help you read and identify what's going on?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10) Do you like to read?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11) Is your hard cover reading books difficult for you to read?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12) Is your hard cover reading books easy for you to read?

YES

NO

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13) What kind of books do you like to read?

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

