Methods Used to Think Critically in Literacy

by

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Chapter One: Introduction

All teacher and students names are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the individuals in this investigation.

I signed in at the office and walked down the long hallway. I entered through the decorative and colorful doorway, where I was greeted by Miss Naz, the second grade teacher. Soon, out the window I saw buses pulling in and unloading children. I heard voices coming down the hallway talking as they entered the rooms. Miss Naz's students put away their belongings and made their lunch choices. They settled into their daily morning routine of checking the front board for the journal prompt. The announcements came on, and the children listened intently. Miss Naz asked the class to come to the rug with their clipboards and pencils. She also asked for two volunteers to bring their morning journals to the front to share with the class what they wrote. The two student volunteers came to the rug immediately eager and full of energy, ready to share what they wrote, and sat in their assigned spot, ready to start. The two students shared their morning journal, then Miss Naz started that day's interactive read aloud lesson. The students listened to the text read aloud, and participated in discussions and activities with their partners and the whole class, activities that went along with the lesson and were part of the interactive read aloud experience.

Fountas and Pinnell (2009) define an interactive read aloud as when a teacher reads aloud a piece of literature to a group of children and invites the students to think and talk about the text before, during, and after reading. In observing the class over the

course of my study during their literacy block, the students demonstrated their love for

this time of the day when they actively participated in the literacy block. The students

came to the carpet eager to learn and loved the texts and the accompanying activities. On

several occasions, the students asked for a book that Miss Naz just read to put in their

book box (a personal bin of books to read throughout the day), or to borrow for the night

to read at home. In all of my observations, rarely did I see any behavior problems arise

during this portion of the literacy block as students were so intensely engaged. Research

recommends read alouds should happen daily in the first three years of school (Fox,

2013). Fox states "Teachers who read aloud regularly will tell you that their children are

never better behaved, or quieter, or more still than when they are listening, rapt, to great

stories written by great writers" (p. 6).

Statement of the Problem

       In the past, teachers would read aloud to their students a book about what they

were studying at that particular time of the year or after lunch to relax. As a child in

elementary school, I remember doing this. My teachers would read a book or a chapter

from a chapter book, normally after lunch. While my teachers were reading aloud, my

classmates and I would just listen; some of us were often not fully attending or were day

dreaming. My teachers would rarely ask us questions about what we read to get us to

think deeper (critically) into the reading and use higher- level thinking skills. On a few

occasions there was discussion, but rarely was there writing that went along with our read

aloud. At times, this read aloud took place during our reading block. I do not recall being actively engaged in the reading. Rather, we just listened, but never participated. This all changed during the 2012-2013 school year when districts started mandating new reading standards with the New York State Common Core. The new Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects were created to ensure that all students upon graduation of high school have the necessary skills and knowledge to enter the next stage in their life of college or workforce (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). To enforce this new change in the reading block, many districts hold mandatory trainings and professional development seminars on interactive read alouds aligned with the new Common Core Standards, in which teachers watch demonstrations and participate in interactive read aloud lessons. Principals observe teachers using interactive read alouds and hold the teachers accountable for this important element of reading instruction. In today's classrooms, students are reading and writing in all subjects throughout the day, and they are more engaged in using in-depth or higher- level thinking skills continually. However, with the introduction of change, some teachers wonder how they are going to modify previous curriculum to match the new Common Core standards (Lapp, Grant, Moss, & Johnson, 2013). Before the Common Core State Standards, the state saw where the gaps were in the literacy block. By changing the standards, the designers of Common Core added missing pieces, and children now have a much larger role in their learning. In addition, students are faced with a more rigorous curriculum, including reading and

understanding higher- level texts, as well as being asked to think more deeply about these texts by answering complex questions.

Significance of the Problem

        In the 2012-2013 school year, the New York State Common Core Standards were introduced into all subjects and grade levels, K-12. The six shifts from Common Core require the students to look closer into the text and be able to think critically, build knowledge, understand vocabulary, and have the ability to answer questions from the text (NYSED, 2011). With these new standards, more is expected of the students during their literacy block. The rigorous literacy curriculum is preparing the students to look at the text differently by digger deeper (thinking more critically and intensely about the text) into the reading to make stronger connections and improve comprehension. Teachers are struggling to change their teaching practices to meet the Common Core Standards while still meeting the needs of the students. Such examples are Common Core English Language Arts Standards 2.1 and 2.10. Common Core English Language Arts Standard 2.1 describes a *Close Read* as using text evidence to prove their (the students') answers by looking back into the text (Lapp, et al., 2013 & Pattison, 2012). Lapp, et al. states:

        Close text readings require students to read a passage without in-depth pre-

        teaching or frontloading by the teacher. This differs from instructional practice in

        which teachers do so much frontloading that the students never get the change to

        "dig deeper" on their own. (p. 111)

Common Core English Language Arts Standard 2.10 describes how the students read a complex text. A complex text is defined as a "grade-level text that should be used to do close readings, analysis, and encourage deep discussion" (Lapp, et al. & Learner First, 2013). For some students, a complex text is at their independent level; for others it is their instructional or frustration level.

Often, a non-fiction text is a complex text; students traditionally have less exposure to this genre of literature, and therefore, are often not as proficient in navigating it. Teachers are now instructing the students on how to navigate through non-fiction texts. There is more emphasis on non-fiction literature: how to navigate the text features, vocabulary, and glossary (Lapp, et al., 2013). Teachers are now starting to ask their students questions to get the students thinking deeper (critically) into the text during read-aloud activities in the classrooms, along with incorporating new ways of learning. Interactive read alouds today include "word-work, comprehension, and discussion" of the text (Corey, 2012, slide 22) to entice the students to think more critically rather than just read a book and be done. Corey states "Kids should enjoy the story first, then dive back into comprehending the story" (Corey, 2012). With Common Core, the children need exposure to more non-fiction and then fiction (NYSED, 2011).

Teachers are looking for material that engages the students in their classrooms to participate in reading activities at each student's ability level. Students of all abilities need daily to engage deeply in texts, talk with peers about what they read and their thinking, and be a member of a supportive learning community (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). For

students to be motivated and engaged in an activity, they have to like or have an interest in a particular activity or topic. When students choose to read a topic, genre or type of literature that they enjoy or are particularly interested in, they are going to be a more motivated and engaged reader because they are invested in their reading and have a personal connection to it (Pinnell & Fountas).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the teaching methods the second grade teacher, Miss Naz, used to motivate and engage her students to think deeper (critically) into the text and use higher- level thinking skills during interactive read aloud lessons. My hope is, as a future early childhood educator, I can use the teaching methods Miss Naz used that I observed in order to effectively motivate and engage my students as she did. My hope is also to take what I have learned and apply it in situations that will help other teachers with what have been shown and demonstrated to be effective strategies and solutions for students to look further into the text, and new ideas to try with their students.

Research Question

What teaching methods does one second grade teacher in an elementary suburban school use to motivate and engage her students to think deeply (critically) into the text during an interactive read aloud?

Study Approach

In this study, I used mixed methods, combining a qualitative and a quantitative approach. With written informed consent from the teacher, parents, and students, I observed and recorded notes from interactive read aloud lessons taught by Miss Naz as she read aloud and incorporated literacy activities. I observed and recorded notes on the teaching methods she used to motivate and engage her students to look deeper into the text, literacy activities incorporated in each lesson, the kinds of higher- level questions posed by Miss Naz, and the students' answers to the questions.

I interviewed the classroom teacher, Miss Naz, about what she does in the lessons and how it affects her students. I also interviewed four students who gave consent and whose parents gave written informed consent to interview their child for the use of my study. The interviews helped me understand how the teacher, Miss Naz, effectively motivated and engaged her students through teaching methods used to think deeper (critically) into the text during interactive read aloud literacy lessons, and how the four student participants viewed interactive read aloud lessons.

With these observations and interviews, I examined patterns in the data I collected and color-coded the data into three different themed areas. I used the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of color-coding the data to make the patterns visible.

Rationale

Through this study I am hoping to gain the knowledge and practice that I need for the future to be able to inquire about and investigate the activities of my students in my classroom on a daily basis. As a new elementary education teacher, I am interested in how to entice young students to be interested in reading and to think deeply (critically) about what they read. I conducted this research study because I was interested in what motivates students to want to listen to books read aloud to them, do literacy activities relating to these books, and learn useful information. Since reading is an essential skill for children, especially in light of new changes in our educational system, I was eager to witness how the teacher engaged her students in thinking deeper (critically) into the text and using higher- level thinking skills.

Definitions of Terms

It is very important to define the terms found in this study (interactive read aloud, *think aloud*, close read, modeling, webquest, think(ing) deeper, turn and talk, and "Smarty Pants" words) so the reader knows the definitions in this study.

- An *interactive read aloud* is when the teacher reads aloud to a group of children and invites them in to think and talk about the text before, during, and after reading" (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009, p. 544).
- A *think aloud* is when the teacher models his or her thought processes during a reading of the text and demonstrates how to use the context clues from the story

to construct meaning (Gunning, 2005; Hilden & Jones, 2013; Morrow, 2009; Tompkins, 2010).

- A *close reading* is when student use text evidence to prove their answers by looking back into the text (Pattison, 2012).

- *Modeling* is when a teacher shows the students how to attain a skill through a demonstration. For example, "When teachers read aloud they're demonstrating how to read fluently with expression, talking about their thought process, and the strategies they are using" (Tompkins, 2010, p. 21).

- A *webquest* is when students use a combination of teacher selected internet sites for an activity (The Source for Learning, 2006).

- *Think(ing) deeper* is when the students in the classroom think analytically, using critical thinking skills to be able to think at a higher- level about the questions posed during the interactive read aloud lesson.

- *Turn and talk* is when children talk about what they already know and share this information with an assigned partner (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

- *"Smarty Pants" words* was a term Miss Naz created to indicate specifically chosen content vocabulary terms from the selected text. The students needed to know and understand this vocabulary in order to be successful in the interactive read aloud lessons.

Summary

Spending a lot of time in early childhood classrooms over the past years as an elementary education teacher has made me interested in how students attend to reading with their teachers. I was also interested in learning how students are engaged in what is being read, what is happening in the text, and what information the students are attending to. With the introduction of the New York State Common Core English Language Arts Standards being implemented in the 2012-2013 school year, the way teachers teach the curriculum has drastically changed. With these new standards, more is expected from students during their literacy block. The rigorous literacy curriculum is preparing the students to look at the text they are reading differently by digging deeper (thinking critically) into the text to make stronger connections and comprehension (Corey, 2012; Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

Through witnessing interactive read aloud lessons taught by Miss Naz in this study, I examined the teaching methods Miss Naz used to motivate and engage her students to think deeper (critically) into the text during interactive read aloud lessons under the New York State Common Core Standards. This study not only helped me to become a better researcher, but demonstrated how a teacher entices her students to be enthusiastic about literacy, since literacy skills are essential for students in their education and beyond.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Reading aloud to students is not a luxury but a necessity….It is a way of nourishing the intellect of

your students, expanding background, vocabulary, and language, developing an appreciation for inquiry,

and creating a literacy community in you classroom (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 215).

This study investigated how one suburban second grade elementary teacher used

motivation and engagement with her students to look critically at the text during

interactive read aloud lessons. The following literature review discusses the important

research and findings in the following areas. The areas include interactive read aloud

defined, the importance of teacher modeling and scaffolding, the impacts of teacher

motivation and engagement of student involvement, the components and effects of

thinking deeper (critically), and benefits of peer collaboration and technology on

motivation and engagement. In each of the subheadings, current research and findings are

discussed.

Interactive Read Aloud Defined

Much research has been conducted about interactive read alouds. In an interactive

read aloud, students are not decoding words, but they are processing and comprehending

texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). According to Linda Hoyt (2007) "Interactive read alouds

are powerful tools for deepening thinking, expanding oral language, highlighting

essential standards, and learning target standards" (p. 2). Harvey and Goudvis (2007)

state:

An interactive read-aloud is all about listening comprehension. The kids do not

have a copy of the text. The teacher reads the text and guides the instruction while

the students listen, talk with each other, and jot down their thinking about the text.

(p. 48)

Interactive read alouds are used for many purposes. Interactive read alouds build

on the background knowledge students already have and give the students a chance to

practice their listening skills. The students' vocabularies are expanded with new terms

and definitions while the students are exposed to various text structures and features.

Teachers model how to read fluently while creating a literacy community in the

classroom. The students are exposed to genres, authors, and illustrators, along with

expanding their literacy knowledge and notions of writer craft (Laminack, Hoyt, &

Alpine School District, 2012). During an interactive read aloud lesson, many things

happen. Before a teacher starts the interactive read aloud lesson, he or she needs to pick a

book that will meet the standards and capture the interests of the students in his or her

class. During the interactive read aloud, the teacher needs to know where to stop and

think aloud, how to engage the students to the best of the teacher's ability, and whether

the students are having fun. After the interactive read aloud, the teacher needs to examine

if the purpose was met, if the children understood what the teacher was reading aloud, if

all students were engaged in the activity, and if the teacher scaffolded the students'

learning enough (Laminack, et al., 2012).

The importance of Teacher Modeling and Scaffolding

When teachers exactly model and scaffold the way to do a specific skill or task, the students receive explicit instruction to achieve a specific task or skill taught. The teacher breaks up the skills, concepts, and tasks into steps and guides the students along the way, making sure the students master one step before going to the next. To scaffold the students' learning, the teacher provides supports to the students, and then slowly eases the supports away so the learners do the tasks on their own (Pentimonti & Justice, 2009; Wiseman, 2010). By using the gradual release strategy, children are given supports by their teacher, then slowly, the supports are taken away and the student(s) are able to do more on their own. Vygotsky used the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development and suggested a model is the way students learn and should be instructed. The theory suggested students learn best and should be instructed at their developmental level, and should learn new skills, even if they have not yet mastered the old ones completely (Pentimonti & Justice).

Pentimonti and Justice (2009) conducted a study exploring the ways preschool teachers used the six types of scaffolds (generalizing, reasoning, predicting, co-participating, reducing choices, and eliciting) with their students. The study involved five female Caucasian preschool teachers who worked in a Head Start preschool classroom in a rural part of a Midwestern state. Each of the five preschool teachers in the study had four to seventeen years of experience. The classrooms enrolled 17 to 18 preschool children with an average age of four years and 10 months. Pentimonti and Justice's

research questions included: "To what extent do preschool teachers use high and low

support scaffolds during whole group read aloud sessions? And to what extent does

preschool teachers' perceived frequency of use of specific scaffolds correspond to their

actual use of scaffolds?" (p. 241). At the beginning of the study, the researchers held a

one day training to explain the study to the five teachers and ways the books would be

used with the students. Teachers also received training on ideas and strategies of how to

use the scaffolds during their read aloud sessions, and what the high and low support

scaffolds included. According to Pentimonti and Justice, high support scaffolding/low

support scaffolding included:

> Strategies that help children to successfully participate in activities that may be
>
> difficult for them. The high support strategies include the eliciting strategy, the
>
> reducing choices strategy, and the co-participating strategy. Low support
>
> strategies are those that help children to continue to successfully participate in
>
> activities that may be easy for them by introducing new knowledge and skills.
>
> Low support strategies include the generalizing strategy, the reasoning strategy,
>
> and the predicting strategy (p. 244).

Pentimonti and Justice observed and videotaped each of the five teachers while they read

aloud whole-group to their classes and observed how the teachers used the six scaffolding

strategies with their students. Each session was then analyzed and coded for how

frequently the six scaffolding strategies were used. The five Head Start teachers were also

asked to complete a questionnaire regarding how they used the scaffolding strategies with their students.

Pentimonti and Justice (2009) found that the five teachers used the high scaffolds (co-participating, reduced choices strategy, and the eliciting strategy) the least amount of times. Most of the five teachers used the low support strategies (generalizing strategy, the reasoning strategy, and the predicting strategy) frequently. Pentimonti and Justice also found through analyzing the teacher questionnaires, the teachers reported they used low support strategies with their students the most, but utilized high supports also. This study demonstrated the importance of teachers using scaffolding that was appropriate for their students, and how teachers need to model and scaffold to their students' abilities. When teachers scaffold their students' learning through read alouds to the students and other literacy activities, they help the students to become successful literacy learners.

Wiseman (2010) conducted a study that investigated a teacher's approach to creating strong interactions in the classroom as the teacher and students read and made sense of literature together. This study was conducted in a kindergarten classroom in an urban metropolitan city in the Northeast with 21 African-American students and their Caucasian teacher, Ms. Milner, who had been teaching for 10 years. In the study, the students and teacher were videotaped while engaged in a whole group interactive read aloud lesson and writing activity for 25-45 minutes, four times a week, for nine months. The researchers collected field notes on both the teacher's and students' interactions and responses along with the teacher's instruction to her students. Wiseman also conducted

interviews with the teacher and students and examined the students' journal responses to writing prompts from the interactive read aloud.

Wiseman (2010) analyzed the data by examining the video tapes and transcripts, along with field notes and copies of journal responses for patterns and similarities. The results were then coded and put into four categories of teacher responses (confirming, modeling, extending ideas, and building meaning). The results of Wiseman's study conclude that Ms. Milner constructed meaning through discussion of ideas from the book and that both the students and Ms. Milner confirmed each other's responses. Ms. Milner demonstrated and modeled ideas and concepts for literature from the interactive read alouds, but also scaffolded the students' learning as the months went on to deepen their literacy knowledge and their own ways of thinking through *think alouds*. Through many of the books, Ms. Milner extended an idea for her students to take farther and make connections to. The students and Ms. Milner built meaning together through prior knowledge and rich conversations. This study again shows the importance of teacher modeling and scaffolding the students' learning through strong interactions with the students. The teacher's role is to demonstrate how to examine literature and construct meaning from it, along with modeling strategies for the students to use.

The impacts of Teacher Motivation and Engagement of Student Involvement

Research has shown that teachers use teaching methods and strategies to motivate and engage their students by getting students involved in their learning (Camicia & Read,

2011; Nichols, Young, Rickelman, 2007; Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2010). Pentimonti, et al. investigated the types of literature read aloud to students and their motivation to listen. Camicia and Read discuss how pre-service teachers motivated elementary students to want to read, write, and make connections with the outside world. Nichols, et al. explored the teaching strategies used by middle school content area teachers in their classrooms with their students, to get the students involved in their learning and to reach the learning goal.

Pentimonti, et al. (2010) performed a study exploring the types of literature Early Childhood classroom teachers read aloud during classroom read alouds, to understand what content area topics they addressed, and the state standards they matched. The study was conducted in at–risk poverty preschool classroom settings in Ohio and Virginia with four year old children. The study included 84 female preschool teachers who were primarily Caucasian or African-American. The 84 preschool teachers were part of a larger 30 week study called *Project Sit Together and Read* where each teacher received a new book each week for 30 weeks. Teachers were allowed to also read books of their choosing and kept written reading logs of titles of the books they read each day. In the study, the 84 preschool teachers reported reading anywhere from 11-150 titles across the 30 weeks. Pentimonti, et al. randomly selected 10 percent of those books and analyzed them to discover what kinds of books Early Childhood teachers read during their read aloud sessions to their students. The researchers coded the text titles into four genres: narrative, expository, mixed, and other. The expository and mixed genres were then

categorized into 10 different content areas (community helpers, geography, history, human body, living creatures, mathematical concepts, natural environments, plants, traditions and cultures, and transportation). If a book did not fit into one of those content area categories, it was labeled "other."

Pentimonti, et al. (2010) found that narrative read alouds were used the most in Early Childhood classrooms. Teachers rarely used informational texts. Pentimonti, et al. found that when the teachers read informational texts, they used it as a mixed genre of fiction and non-fiction text. Especially given the Common Core Standards' emphasis on informational text, their findings suggest Early Childhood teachers need to choose age-appropriate informational texts and connect their selections to state standards that can be targeted during the read aloud and extension activities to develop learning within their units and lessons. The teacher can engage the students in the lessons more effectively, and the students will better grasp the ideas of the lesson.

Camicia and Read (2011) conducted a 12-week investigation of how elementary students read and write about public issues with adults; how dialogue journal activities might help pre-service teachers understand the reading, writing, and perspectives of elementary students; and the way the dialogue journals increased the interaction between elementary language arts and social studies curriculum. In the study, Camicia and Read observed 50 pre-service teachers from a western United States university and 50 elementary students (one fourth and one fifth grade class), along with two elementary teachers. The elementary students were each partnered with a pre-service teacher for the

duration of the study. The students wrote with their partners about topics and issues after reading a *Time For Kids* magazine article. At the end of the 12 week investigation, each pre-service teacher wrote a reflection on his or her experience with their elementary student partner.

Camicia and Read (2011) interviewed each of the two teachers included in the study on years of teaching, school atmosphere, and many questions on their approach to teaching social studies and their use of dialogue journal writing with social studies and their curriculum. Camicia and Read found that student motivation to read and write increased with the use of dialogue journals. Camicia and Read note, "Teachers told multiple stories of their students begging to read the dialogue journals when the journals were delivered to their classrooms" (p. 25). The teachers also observed higher-level thinking and expository writing skills with their students. The researchers also found that the pre-service teachers motivated the elementary students to want to read and write, and were making connections with social context, reading, and writing about public issues. The classroom teachers had never seen how pre-service teachers inspired the students in their classroom to be so involved in literacy before. Camicia and Read also found that "Pre-service teachers also became aware of the perspectives of the elementary school students" (p. 26). The authors state " By combining dialogue journals and democratic education, all participants in our study, teachers and students, forged connections between motivation, reading, writing, dialogue, and effective citizenship" (p. 29). In regards to motivation and engagement, when a teacher reads literature that appeals to the

students and demonstrates an interest in the text they are reading by using enthusiasm, the teacher can more effectively motivate and engage the students in the lesson.

Nichols, et al. (2007) conducted a study investigating how and what instructional strategies in reading and writing were implemented by middle school content area teachers in their classrooms. The study was conducted in a Title One school in Southwest Virginia from November 2004 through February 2005, with a select number of participating teachers. Day long professional development seminars were given to each grade-level teacher participant once a month for an entire school year; and one to two instructional strategies were introduced at each seminar by the researchers. At each session, teachers would begin with a discussion of the strategies used in their classrooms, and of the optional readings for that day's strategies. Nichols, et al. interviewed the content area teachers participating in the study regarding their needs of assessment to see what to plan for the professional development (PD) sessions. From the initial needs interview, a lack of resources such as textbooks and materials, and lack of preparation and expertise in writing were a few of the many concerns expressed by the teacher participants. These concerns were further developed into 62 different strategies taught during the day long PD sessions, such as a direct thinking activity, text road map, KWL ("What do we know; what do we want to learn; what have we learned") charts modeling reading and writing, and exit tickets. At the first professional development session, after going over details about the study and what the teachers' responses were from the interview, the researchers introduced one strategy and the *Reading Language Arts*

Instructional Feature Questionnaire (RLAIFQ), which included two parts: first, demographic information, self-reporting on instructional methods, student groupings, content area strategies, trade books, paper marking strategies, technology; then examination of beliefs and instructional practices on a Likert scale of one (never use it) to five (use it all or most of the time). The RLAIFQ was a self-report by each of the teacher participants which was used to determine their familiarity with the strategy and how often they used the strategy in their classrooms. This questionnaire was given at the beginning of the study. The teacher participants also monthly completed an *Instructional Design and Strategy Checklist* on skills, strategies, and assessments the teachers used with their students that month. The questionnaires were collected every month. Nichols, et al. visited each teacher participant's classroom and made observations to make sure what the teachers were self-reporting were correct.

To answer their questions, based on all the data collected (RLAIFQ, *Instructional Design and Strategy Checklist,* and observations) Nichols, et al. (2007) found many teacher participants were familiar with using many of the commonly used groupings such as cooperative grouping, flexible grouping, and whole-class grouping, and reported using these groupings at a higher rate than other forms of instructional design. The English, science, and social studies teachers mostly used whole group direct instruction, while the math teachers mostly used cooperative groupings. Based on all of the data collected, Nichols, et al. also found many teacher participants were familiar with and used graphic organizers, and many commonly used instructional strategies found in classrooms today.

The English teachers used guided reading and the writing process along with free writes, while the math teachers used three-minute pause and reflection along with Reciprocal Teaching, and the science teachers used brainstorming, Concept Maps, and Venn Diagrams. Meanwhile, the social studies teachers used test-taking strategies, underlining a word, and word walls. Think-Pair Share was used by teachers not teaching a content area.

Nichols, et al. (2007) concluded teachers need to examine their teaching to make sure they are knowledgeable on effective teaching strategies and provide the most appropriate strategies for their students to reach their learning goals. Santa (2006) states:

Creating classroom environments that create a community of learners, facilitate discussion, vary instructional design, incorporate instructional strategies, and guide students to their own critical understanding of the learning goal cannot be captured in a scripted teachers' manual, or in a one-shot in-service session (as cited in Nichols, et al., p. 113).

By using effective teaching taught through current research and professional development seminars, teachers can provide learning opportunities for the students to be motivated and engaged to participate in, and be actively involved in the learning process.

The Components and Effects of Thinking Deeper (Critically)

Asking students to think deeper (critically) into the text to comprehend, understand what is happening in the literature, and make personal connections is how the

students are taught to build comprehension and knowledge of literary skills (Alvermann, Swafford, Montero, 2004). Teachers need to have rich classroom discussions during read alouds or anytime the students are reading or writing. Classroom discussions are how children build and add to their prior knowledge (Lyons, 2003). When teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and methods to build knowledge, skills, and make connections, the children learn best, have fun, and get more learning out of the lesson (Tompkins, 2010).

Adomat (2010) conducted a study exploring how young readers build literary understanding through performative responses during read alouds. According to Blau (2003):

> Performative literacy can be identified as an enabling knowledge—knowledge that enables readers to activate and use all the other forms of knowledge that are required for the exercise of anything like a critical or disciplined literacy. It also represents a set of literate practices without which readers cannot continue to grow in knowledge and literary competence through their reading experience (p. 19).

Adomat states that "performative responses allow children to use their imagination and creativity to explore meaning in literature" (p. 207). The study was conducted over a six month time span with eight children (five boys and three girls) and the children's teacher, Diane, in a second grade classroom at a school in a rural setting outside a major metropolitan area on the east coast of the United States. Diane met with the eight second

grade children in a small group once a week for a picture book read aloud in their classroom. Diane's read aloud included open-ended questions that would promote many different responses. Diane listened to the children's responses and conversations rather than steering the children in one direction. Stories for the read aloud were chosen carefully by the students' interests or were requested by the students. Adomat used field notes and videotapes/audiotapes, which were both transcribed, to analyze the 15 small group read aloud sessions. The results of this study indicate that the eight second graders in the study showed many characteristics of: "analytical (33 percent); intertextual (6 percent); personal (26 percent); transparent (2 percent); and performative (33 percent) responses to picture books read aloud. All children showed a blend of categories in building literary understanding of children's literature" (p. 213). Adomat states, "Performative responses open up a new, imaginative world of understanding stories" (p. 218). By having students actively participating in activities during read alouds, the well planned activities encourage the students to think critically into the text to build knowledge, skills, and make connections.

Arya, Hiebert, & Pearson (2011) conducted a study examining the effects of syntactic and lexical complexity on students' understanding of four science curriculum areas, and the students' comprehension of texts given. One hundred forty-two third graders in 10 classrooms across four public elementary schools in northern California were part of this study. Two of the schools were located in an urban setting, one in a suburban area, and one in a rural area. In the first part of the study, students were given a

passage to read orally and answered questions from the *Qualitative Reading Inventory* reading test. Each participant read the passage orally and was timed, and the teacher recorded and asked questions about the passage. The students who could read 75 percent of the words (142 students; five students could not read 75 percent of the words) continued in the study. These students had a range of abilities of fluency and comprehension skills and were used to provide a baseline for the study (Arya, et al.). Those 142 students moved onto the next part of the study and took the *Prior Vocabulary Knowledge* assessment to track their prior knowledge on the science topics to form a baseline. In the following three weeks, the students took the real experimental assessment on the four main science topics. The results of the study conclude that the complexity of the text influenced the comprehension of the participants on two of the passages the participants read. Prior knowledge of words in the two passages in which the participants had difficulty influenced the complexity for each individual, rather than established word frequency (Arya, et al.). Through being exposed to complex text and vocabulary, students learn how to think critically, use background knowledge, and navigate the text to form an educated response.

Benefits of Peer Collaboration and Technology on Motivation and Engagement

Research shows that when students work together in collaborative groups and engage with new technology practices being implemented into classrooms today, students are more motivated and engaged in the activity and acquire life skills they hold for a lifetime (Chohan, 2011; Cviko, McKenney & Voogt, 2012; Stuart & Volk, 2002; Wolfe

& Flewitt, 2010). The following studies show the connections between motivation and engagement of collaboration (Chohan, 2011; Stuart & Volk, 2002) and technology (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010).

Chohan (2011) conducted a study exploring a school-wide mailing program examining students' enthusiasm towards writing and engagement in letter writing with peers. This study was conducted over an eight month period from November to June, during one school year in a suburban outer-city elementary school in southern Ontario, Canada. The school consisted of 1,000 students and served a middle-income population in a primarily South Asian community. This study included 122 students (68 males and 54 females) and five teachers (one male and four females from grades one through five). All of the teachers in the school building were invited to participate in the school-wide mailing program. One teacher from each grade level volunteered to be included in the study. Each class in the school was given a cardboard life-size mailbox and a street name, if their teacher chose to participate. Letters explaining the mailing program were delivered the second week of November. When the school-wide letter mailing program started, students could only write to other students at their grade level. As the program went on, the students could write to other students at different grade levels. Of the teachers who responded that their class would participate in the program, surveys were given to one class at each grade level to assess the students' attitudes toward reading and writing, and their perceptions of themselves as writers before the study began and at the end. In November, 88 students (46 males and 42 females) completed the "Attitude

towards Writing" survey, and in June 107 students (56 boys and 51 girls) completed the survey. Each question had three choices (yes, no, sometimes) and the students had to circle their choice. Chohan held scheduled conferences with the five grade level teachers who volunteered to be a part of the study. These conferences took place during January and March. In the conferences, the teachers and Chohan discussed concerns, questions, and comments, and suggested improvements to the school-wide mail program. Chohan analyzed the data by organizing the students' responses in tables by grade levels, and then combined the results of all grade levels together to compare the girls' and boys' responses. The data from the teacher conferences was also put into a table to view common themes and findings.

Chohan (2011) found that in November, 14 out of 46 (30 percent) boys felt they were good writers, while in June, 30 out of 56 (53 percent) boys felt the same. In November, while 20 out of 42 (48 percent) girls felt they were good writers, 38 out of 51(75 percent) girls felt the same in June. Ninety students (46 boys and 44 girls) in June reported it was important to be a good writer. Chohan's findings from the January teacher conferences revealed that the teachers liked having the school-wide mailing program in their school and felt it increased their students' vocabulary and writing skills, while the children liked sending and receiving letters. There was an increase of letters written, which strengthened positive relationships between students and encouraged families to get involved in their child's writing. Chohan's findings from the March teacher conference discussion also revealed students were developing communication

conventions and that the program increased the students' motivation to write letters.

Chohan concluded the letter writing program was very beneficial for the students'

relationships with each other. Chohan states, "This study provided (the) children with the

opportunity to collaborate in a responsive letter writing program and thereby

strengthened their peer relationships" (p. 43). The students in this study took many

valuable life skills away from the program. This study demonstrates the importance of

peer collaboration and how rewarding it is for the students when they are given a fun way

to communicate with each other, while still learning and practicing skills.

Collaboration between peers at any age is beneficial. Stuart and Volk (2002)

conducted research examining ways university students in literacy courses, who served as

tutors, and students enrolled in the El Barrio Reading Club literacy program collaborated

and the benefits collaboration had on learning. The program ran two summers, but the

study focused on the second summer. The El Barrio Reading Club was a free literacy

program held during the summer of 2001 that served 118 six- to eight-year-olds who

were referred to the program because they struggled in reading. The students in the

program were primarily Puerto Rican, Spanish-English bilingual speaking students, along

with students from other Spanish speaking countries. Two university tutors enrolled in

Literacy classes worked with a small group of five to eight children who attended the

Reading Club for an hour and a half, four days a week, for four weeks. The goal of the

Reading Club was to increase the students' motivation to read culturally relevant

literature, along with helping to increase the student's reading ability. Stuart and Volk

oversaw the Reading Club, since they were the university professors who started the program. The authors collected data in many forms, such as observations of tutoring sessions, interviews with parents, tutors, and other individuals connected to the program, and surveys the tutors filled out at the end of the program about what they learned about collaboration.

Stuart and Volk (2002) found collaboration was used by both the children enrolled in the study and the pair of tutors working with one another. The children were seen collaborating with one another through discussions, such as comparing different versions of the same piece of literature, reading activities such as Choral Reading and paired reading of a book, writing activities such as mapping story elements, and extension projects such as acting out stories and making puppet plays. Stuart & Volk stated, "Collaboration among children seemed to flow"(p. 130). The authors witnessed the children helping each other with games they were playing along with going to each other for help (p. 130). The tutors used collaboration between themselves in many ways, also. Tutors brainstormed ideas for future lessons, had discussions on what went well and what they needed to change for future lessons, co-taught sessions, and shared tasks such as monitoring student behavior while the other tutor was teaching. At the end of the study, the tutors expressed what they learned from the Reading Club summer program. Many expressed the benefits of having peers work together and collaborating with each other, with the children, and the children collaborating with one another. Stuart and Volk concluded teachers need to be collaborators for the development of literacy in their

students, and observed how collaboration among children can change unenthusiastic learners into motivated willing learners. This study demonstrates how peer collaboration is highly effective at any age, and the positive effect collaboration with peers has on the goal being achieved.

Technology is a fun way to practice literacy skills such as fluency, vocabulary, and word decoding. When technology is used in the classroom to practice skills, students are more motivated and engaged in the activity. Cviko, et al. (2012) conducted an eight week study examining teachers' integration of the technology-rich program, PictoPal, and its effects on student learning. The study took place in a primary school in a medium size town in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The student participants in the study came from upper middle-class, native Dutch communities. Included in the study were four kindergarten classes (95 students), two junior kindergarten classrooms, ages four to five, and two senior kindergarten classrooms, ages five to six. Each classroom had a kindergarten teacher with at least 10 years of experience. The PictoPal program included eight different activities linked to the theme of the season spring to expose the students to different types of literacy text such as lists, reports, and letters. Off-computer activities were also designed to introduce different types of text to the children. The study examined the teachers' perceptions of the activities, students' engagement in the activities, teachers' integration of on-and off- computer activities, and students' emergent literacy proficiency. Data was collected using audio-taped and transcribed interviews from teacher participants on their perceptions of teaching/learning, technology and innovation,

observation checklists measuring student engagement on- computer activities and teachers' integration of PictoPal by the researchers, and emergent literacy tests given prior to the start of the study and after week eight to the students to measure their emergent literacy proficiency.

Cviko, et al. (2012) analyzed the data by examining the four teacher interviews for common variables and commonalities among responses and comparing those to the kindergarten teachers' responses about technology integration in their classrooms. The emergent literacy test data was also analyzed and compared to the on- and off- computer activities and students' engagement in computer activities. Cviko, et al. found all four of the kindergarten teachers had fairly positive attitudes about PictoPal. The senior kindergarten teachers integrated on- and off- computer activities more than their junior counterparts, and their students were more engaged in the computer activities than those of the junior kindergarten teachers. The results from the emergent literacy test showed a significant difference between the junior and senior kindergarten classes based on the junior classes' improvement. Cviko, et al. concluded that teachers should take a developmental approach as helpers to construct meaning for their students on and off the computer. The authors also suggest that the developmental approach of the teachers shown in this study will encourage and enhance the students' use of literacy and related language, and will combine students together in literacy related activities on and off the computer.

Literacy through technology is ever-changing, and students need to be exposed to it at a young age to be able to acquire the skills to navigate the new world of technology. Wolfe and Flewitt (2010) conducted a study investigating three- and four-year-old children's experiences with literacy while they participated in printed and digital technologies at home and at school. The authors discussed how the new technologies in literacy affect student's literacy learning. The study was made up of 10 (five boys and five girls) pre-school children, and took place at home and at school in an affluent city suburb. Before the study started, parents were given a questionnaire to complete about themselves, their child, and literacy in their homes. Of the 41 responses received, 10 children were chosen for the study and observed. Data for the study was collected through the use of questionnaires completed by staff and parents of the students attending the pre-school. Wolfe and Flewitt also created case studies of the children participating in the study that included field notes of children playing and participating in activities on and off the computer, along with interviews with parents and staff of the school. Interviews were audio-taped and lasted 30-50 minutes. In the interviews, individuals talked about the children, the children's interests, and the children's use of technology, along with questions about the school the child attended, their understanding of literacy development, and their own knowledge of technology.

Wolfe and Flewitt (2010) reported that the questionnaire given to parents revealed ownership of electronics such as a computer, internet, and TV which were widespread, time restricted, and closely monitored. Wolfe and Flewitt report the preschool teachers

had mixed feelings about the new technologies in the classroom; as one teacher stated, "I think in moderation new technologies are a good thing however that can be damaging... 'family time' and communication can suffer because of children being allowed to absorb themselves within these 'electronic worlds' (Questionnaire comment: anonymous EY Practitioner)" (p. 391). Wolfe and Flewitt conclude that three- and four-year-old children already know how to navigate technologies at a young age. The authors also state:

> All children need the opportunity to become proficient or 'literate' in their uses of new media. It is essential for early years practitioners to be provided with the curriculum guidance and training they need to help them understand how this might be achieved most effectively (p. 397).

Wolfe and Flewitt also argue that "Understanding the role of digital technologies in the processes of young children's literacy development is crucial to ensure that all children have equal access to opportunities to learn in schools today" (p. 397). Children learn literacy skills that they carry with them their whole lives through the use of technology. Having children use technology for literacy exposes them to the skills to navigate the new world of technology.

Summary

In this section, I reviewed current research related to my study on aspects of interactive read alouds (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Hilden & Jones, 2013; Hoyt, 2007; Laminack, et al., 2012), modeling and scaffolding (Pentimonti & Justice, 2009;

Wiseman, 2010), motivation and engagement by the teacher (Camicia & Read, 2011;

Nichols, et al., 2007; Pentimonti, et al., 2010), thinking deeper (Adomat, 2010; Arya, et

al., 2011), the role of peer collaboration (Chohan 2011; Stuart & Volk, 2002), and

technology (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010) that play a role in the motivation

and engagement of student learning. When teachers exactly model and scaffold the way

to do a specific skill or tasks to their students, the students receive explicit instruction

(Pentimonti & Justice, 2009). Teachers also make learning fun during lessons; it opens up

the children's imaginations to a whole new level (Adomat, 2010; Pentimonti & Justice,

2009; Wiseman, 2010). Current literature shows just that. Interactive read alouds expand

children's vocabularies, teach fluency, and expose the children to a wide variety of

literature (Adomat, 2010; Arya, et al., 2011; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Hilden & Jones,

2013; Laminack, Hoyt, Alpine School District, 2012; Wiseman, 2010). When teachers

teach to the children's ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) (Pentimonti & Justice,

2009) through modeling and scaffolding (Pentimonti, et al., 2010) what good reading

looks and sounds like through literature appealing to the students, they motivate their

students to be successful readers who want to continue reading. Peer collaboration and

technology are also contributing factors in motivating and engaging students in literacy

related activities (Chohan 2011; Cviko, et al., 2012; Stuart &Volk, 2002; Wolfe &

Flewitt, 2010), by encouraging the students to want to participate.

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

This study was designed to explore how a second grade teacher, Miss Naz, motivated and engaged her students during an interactive read aloud to think deeper (critically) into the text and use higher- level thinking skills. In this chapter, I describe who the participants were, the context of the study, the procedures I used, the data collection methods I used, and my positionality as a researcher for the study. I also discuss how the data was analyzed and what limitations were present for the study.

Research Question

"What teaching methods does one second grade teacher in an elementary suburban school use to motivate and engage her students to think deeply (critically) into the text during interactive read aloud lessons?"

Participants

I conducted my study in a general education, second grade classroom located in a public suburban elementary school in Rochester, New York. The district consists of six school buildings: a high school, a ninth grade academy, a middle school, and three elementary buildings. This study included all children in one second grade class and the teacher, Miss Naz. The class was comprised of 19 students, nine boys and ten girls, ages seven and eight. Two of the students in the class were considered "English as Second Language" (ESL) students from the Ukraine. Both of these students spoke and understood English, but received ESL services daily for thirty minutes. One student in the

class had a 504-Plan, and received Occupational Therapy along with Speech services. Six

students in the class also attended AIS services for reading support daily.

Since it was my hope to work with all students in the class, I sent home a letter to

all parents/guardians describing the study, asking for parent/guardian permission. I asked

permission from all students because they were all a part of the lesson. All of the

students' parents or guardians responded, allowing their children to be part of the class

study. To choose the focal students, four student participants (one boy and three girls),

whose parents or guardians had given written informed consent for their children to be

selected for an interview, were randomly selected by drawing names from a hat. Each

student participant gave written informed assent and the teacher gave consent to

participate in an interview.

Context of the Study

The classroom where the study took place contained four clusters of desks in the

center of the room. Most of the classroom meetings and whole group lessons took place

along the front wall. In this section of the room, there was a colorful rug for the children

to sit on with a SMARTboard on the wall to their right. To the left of the "meeting area"

were three computers for the children to use throughout the day for different activities.

Behind the computers was the classroom "Book Nook." In this area was where the

children's book boxes were kept and the classroom library was located. On the other side

of the room on the back wall were the children's lockers and the teacher's kidney shaped

reading table. The interactive read aloud lessons observed lasted approximately 40-45 minutes and would happen between 9:15-10 a.m.

My Positionality as the Researcher

I am a graduate student in the Childhood Literacy Education program at the College at Brockport in my final semester of my graduate studies, and I plan to complete my degree in January 2014. I am a New York State certified teacher in Early Childhood and Childhood Education birth through grade six, along with Student with Disabilities birth through grade six. I hold a bachelors degree from Buffalo State College in Early/Childhood Education and a masters degree from Nazareth College in Special Education. I taught one year at the pre-k level as a lead teacher and have experience as a substitute and Student Behavioral Assistant at all grade levels pre-k through high school. I currently am a substitute teacher in three school districts around the Rochester area. My teaching philosophy stems from the belief that every child is unique and that I need to focus on serving the needs of each individual student. Every child can learn if he or she is given the proper love, support, and guidance. It is imperative that I differentiate instruction to match each student's strengths and weaknesses, which ensures that he or she will receive quality instruction based on their individual learning styles. I also believe it is crucial to place students in challenging situations where they can still be successful. It is my belief that when teachers read literature students are interested in or do engaging activities that capture the students' attention, the students are more apt to learn important

skills and knowledge from the lesson, have a longer attention span, and have fewer behavior problems.

Procedure

On January 18, 2013, with approval from the school principal, the second grade teacher Miss Naz, and the students' parents, I began collecting data though the use of anecdotal observational notes, an interview with Miss Naz, and interviews with the four student participants in the class. Each interactive read aloud started in the same way. Miss Naz would ask the students to come to the rug, sometimes with a pencil and a clipboard. I would sit at one of the student's desks on the side of the carpet and scribe in a notebook what transpired during the entire interactive read aloud, including anything that was written on the easel, SMARTboard, and collected visuals that were distributed.

This study was conducted over a six week period of time from January through February 2013. I conducted the study one to two days a week during the interactive read aloud time in the second grade classroom. The following describes what I did over the six weeks of the study. In weeks one and two, I observed what teaching methods Miss Naz used to motivate and engage her students to think deeper (critically) to "dig" into the text and recorded anecdotal observational notes. In weeks three and four, I continued to observe and record anecdotal observational notes. I conducted an interview with Miss Naz in week three, and I interviewed two of the student participants in week three and the other two in week four. In week five I continued to observe what teaching methods Miss

Naz used to motivate and engage her students to think deeper (critically) into the text and recorded anecdotal observational notes. In week six I made final observations for the study.

Data Collection Methods

During the course of this study, I used three different tools to collect my data, as shown in the following sections. The data was collected using anecdotal observational notes, a teacher interview, and an interview with each of the four student participants from the class. Through these methods, I hoped to learn more about how Miss Naz successfully motivated and engaged her students to think deeply (critically) about the text during interactive read aloud lessons.

Anecdotal observational notes. I observed the teaching methods Miss Naz used to motivate and engage her students to think deeply (critically) into the text during the interactive read aloud. I specifically made notes on what Miss Naz did, and what she said, what the students' responses were to her questions, and what the activities were during the interactive read aloud.

Teacher interview. I conducted an interview with the second grade classroom teacher I observed for my study, Miss Naz. I asked her questions to gain information about her teaching strategies she uses with her class related to interactive read aloud activities. I asked Miss Naz questions relating to what she does to motivate her students to participate in the interactive read aloud lessons, how she incorporates all interests and

learning styles into her lessons, how she utilizes whole/small groupings, to explain what a typical daily interactive read aloud lesson includes, and what visuals and technology she uses, if any. The teacher interview can be found in Appendix A.

Student interviews. I interviewed the four student participants from the class for this study to gain first hand information on their opinions of activities related to the interactive read aloud lessons. I interviewed each student once. I asked each student the same five questions: what they like about reading and why, what their favorite interactive read aloud activity was and why, what their least favorite interactive read aloud activity was and why, what Miss Naz did to help the students learn, and if they liked to hear non-fiction or fiction literature read aloud in class and why. The student interview can be found in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the information I obtained from the anecdotal observations and the interviews administered to the teacher and students to culminate my findings. I analyzed my data by using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), color-coding the data to make the patterns visible. I color-coded the anecdotal observational notes and the five different interviews I had administered and examined for commonalities among the responses, and what was discussed during the interactive read alouds to begin forming groups. I then grouped together the underlying themes, patterns, and generalities throughout the data and analyzed each category.

By forming the groups, I was able to perceive what was similar in each category across the seven sessions of interactive read aloud lessons and five interviews. I broke my data up into teaching methods used, which teaching methods seemed to be motivating and engaging to the students, and which teaching methods seemed to promote a deeper (critical) thinking level.

Limitations

This study conducted involved two limitations. The first limitation was in the data collection methods I used, especially since I was not able to observe every single day. Observations made in the classroom one day may be different another day. The second limitation was that the questions I asked in the interviews could be interpreted differently such as with Student Participant B's discussion of the least favorite thing he likes to do in an interactive read aloud session.

Summary

In order to answer my research question regarding how a second grade teacher effectively motivated and engaged her students to examine the text deeper (critically), I engaged in a six-week study in a suburban second grade classroom located in the Rochester area. I observed and interviewed the second grade teacher, Miss Naz, along with four student participants in her class. I hoped to have gained the knowledge, skills, and teaching methods shown in this study to effectively educate my future students to

examine a piece of literature and be able to think critically about the text and navigate its

complexity.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a second grade teacher, Miss Naz, effectively motivated and engaged her students to look deeper (critically) into the text during an interactive read aloud experience. Over the course of six weeks, I focused on the teaching methods Miss Naz used and how these teaching methods effectively engaged and motivated the students to look deeper (critically) into the text during their interactive read aloud literacy block. My objective was to examine the teaching methods Miss Naz administered to her students during the interactive read aloud literacy block and to investigate the students' level of participation.

To answer my research question, I collected three different forms of data over six weeks in order to accurately triangulate my results. This data included an interview with the second grade teacher Miss Naz, an interview with each of the four students chosen for the study, and my observational notes from seven interactive read aloud sessions.

In this study, I focused on the three main parts of my research question. The first part of my research examined the teaching methods Miss Naz used in her daily interactive read aloud sessions. The second part focused on which teaching methods seemed to be motivating and engaging to the students. The third and final part analyzed which teaching methods seemed to promote a deeper (critical) thinking level. In order to answer the three parts to my research question, I used the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), color-coding the data to make patterns visible.

The analysis of the data revealed many different types of literacy-related items, activities, and teacher strategies associated with interactive read alouds, many of which were similar to results of studies discussed in previous research included in Chapter Two, the literature review. The studies included the use of teacher modeling and scaffolding of different aspects of daily lessons (Camicia & Read, 2011; Pentimonti, et al., 2010; Wiseman, 2010), the choice of genre of books read (Pentimont, et al., 2010), teacher interactions with students, the teacher's use of discussion of the text and confirmation of students responses along with higher- level questions asked by the teacher (Wiseman, 2010), student use of background or prior knowledge, teacher *think alouds* and student collaboration (Adomat, 2010; Chohan 2011; Stuart & Volk, 2002), the use of technology in the classroom (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010) and vocabulary development (Arya, et al., 2011).

Findings

In the following section, I discuss the first part of my research question: *what teaching methods did Miss Naz use with her students to motivate and engage them to think deeper (critically) into the text during her daily interactive read aloud lessons*? In this first section I describe each teaching method Miss Naz used and how each teaching method was used in the seven observations I witnessed. I will go deeper in the following two sections, guided by my research question with a more explicit analysis of how each

method motivated and engaged the students and promoted the students to think deeper (critically) into the text during the interactive read aloud experience.

What teaching methods did Miss Naz use with her students in her daily interactive read aloud lesson?

Figure 4.1 below is an outline of all seven interactive read aloud session observed and the teaching methods Miss Naz used with her class. Each teaching method category will then be individually presented within its own subheading section that follows.

	Think alouds	Visuals	Working in partners	Books used	Technology	Asking higher-level questions	Teacher modeling and scaffolding	Vocabulary
Observation 1	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Observation 2		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observation 3	X	X		X		X	X	X
Observation 4	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Observation 5		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observation 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observation 7		X	X	X		X	X	X

Figure 4.1. Teaching Methods the Second Grade Teacher Used with the Class during interactive read aloud Lessons. The teaching methods teachers use in their classrooms are significant for all types of learners. In Miss Naz's interactive read aloud lessons, she used teaching methods to reach all style of learners in her classroom. Miss Naz's teaching methods included *think alouds*, visuals, working in partners, books used, technology, asking higher- level questions, teacher modeling and scaffolding, and vocabulary.

Think alouds. A think aloud is when a teacher orally expresses what is going

through his or her mind about an event, character, or setting while reading. During my

six weeks observing Miss Naz and her class, I saw think alouds used in four of the seven

(57 percent) interactive read aloud lessons observed. Miss Naz used this teaching method

and strategy of a think aloud to model how to express her ideas about what the author was saying and what was happening in the text. She modeled and taught this skill to motivate her students to critically analyze what was happening deeper (critically) in the text while she was reading. Miss Naz also used this skill when examining certain pictures from the text printed out for the students and used context clues to make an educated prediction about what was happening in the text. Think alouds were another way Miss Naz motivated and engaged her students to think more critically about what the text, pictures, and author's words meant.

Visuals. Visuals were also incorporated into all seven (100 percent) of the daily interactive read aloud lessons and were an important teaching method used. The visuals were strong motivators and engaged the students into the lessons. The visuals included graphic organizers, the SMARTboard, printed pages from the books read of pictures and events, and Miss Naz's facial expressions while reading the books. The graphic organizers helped the children see the text elements on the easel and on their clipboards; the SMARTboard was used for students to interact with pictures and activities pertaining to the text the students were using in the lesson. In two of the lessons, the children held in their hands pictures of pages from two books printed out to examine, and talk about with their partners.

Working in partners. One teaching method that had a major impact of motivating and engaging the student to think deeply (critically) into the text was working in partners. Having the students work in partners was incorporated in six of the seven (86 percent) interactive read aloud lessons observed throughout this study. The students were grouped for the interactive read aloud lessons with their turn and talk partners. The two students would sit next to each other on the classroom meeting rug. The turn and talk partners were already assigned before my study started. It appeared to me that each turn and talk pair consisted of a strong leveled reader and a lower level reader, though I never got confirmation from Miss Naz on this. Throughout the daily interactive read aloud lessons, Miss Naz would ask the class questions about particular events, characters, or vocabulary terms from the piece of literature they were working with to talk about with their turn and talk buddy. Miss Naz would give the students a few minutes to discuss the idea, question, or term with their partner before coming back together to converse with the whole group. On other occasions, the students were grouped by Miss Naz in groups of four. Miss Naz gave the class explicit instructions of what she wanted the pairs to discuss or accomplish and answered any questions the students had before having the students get started.

Books used. Miss Naz used six different books in her interactive read aloud lessons. Using a variety of fictional texts motivated and engaged her students to think critically about the reading and lessons from the text. The books that Miss Naz chose to

read for the interactive read alouds were all fictional stories, very child friendly, and were

written in language and content developmentally appropriate for a second grader. Each of

the six books were also chosen for a particular skill and reason. They included: *The*

Empty Pot (Demi, 1990) about a Chinese boy, Ping, who was given a flower seed by the

emperor to grow in order for Ping to be the emperor's successor. The seed did not grow,

but Ping was honest with the emperor and became the king. This book taught the children

to always be honest and true. The students were engaged in this book because the main

character Ping was their age. The book *Simon's Hook* (Burnett, 2000) was about a child

who was teased because of his haircut. His grandma taught him skills or ways to not be

affected by the negative actions of his peers. This book was chosen to teach the students

strategies on what to do if they, or someone they see, is being bullied. *Simon's Hook*

(Burnett) engaged the students with the colorful cartoon illustrations the illustrator used,

and the strategies displayed with anti-bullying being so popular in classrooms today. *Hey*

Little Ant (Hoose, 1998) is told from an ant's point of view about a boy who wants to

squish him. The ant pleads to the boy explaining how he is just like him. This book

taught the children about peer-pressure, empathy, compassion, and respect for others.

Having the ant talk in the book captured the students' attention and engaged the students

to listen and participate in the thought-provoking ideas. *Tomás and the Library Lady*

*(*Mora, 1997) is about a boy, Tomás, whose family are migrant farm workers. They travel

all summer long for work from state to state and tell stories at night. Tomás memorized

all of the stories, and his grandfather tells him there are more books at the library. Tomás

goes to the library one afternoon and finds a whole new love of books and creates a special bond with the librarian. This book was chosen to remind the students to be appreciative and grateful for what they have. The details in *Tomás and the Library Lady (*Mora) captured the students' attention. The concepts of moving from town to town or state to state were connections some of the students could relate to. *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990), and *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971) were about how the natural landscape is being cut down and affecting the animals and creatures that live in the forests. This book taught the students how all living things depend on one another. *The Lorax* (Seuss) engaged the students because many of the students had watched the movie before. Also engaging to the students was Dr. Seuss's use of words such as "glupiti-gulp" and "slipiti-slup", which captivated the students' attention. With the animals talking and the details in the illustrations of *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry), the students were also very engaged in this book.

   Technology. Technology was incorporated into three of the seven (43 percent) interactive read aloud lessons. The use of technology is strongly tied to motivation and engagement (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). Technology included the use of the SMARTboard, the program *Kidspiration*, and the internet for webquests. The text, certain pictures, activities, and vocabulary from the texts were put on the SMARTboard for the whole class to see and interact with. For example, four pictures from *Tomás and the Library Lady (*Mora, 1997) were put on the SMARTboard for the whole class to go

over after the students discussed with their partners the sequential order of the four

pictures according to the story. *Kidspiration* is a program for kindergarten through grade

five students that strengthens the students' literacy (reading and writing) skills.

According to Children's Software Online (2013), "Students build graphic organizers by

combining pictures, text, and spoken words to represent thoughts and information.

Younger learners develop early literacy skills, and more advanced students improve

comprehension skills and better organize ideas for writing." An example of how

Kidspiration was used was when the class read, *Hey Little Ant* (Hoose, 1998). After

reading the book, each group of four students was given a job (Sci"ant"ist, Defend"ant"s,

"Ant"ologist, and Termin"ant"ors). The students had to do a webquest to find information

to support their "job" and decide whether or not to squish the ant. During the webquest,

the students used *Kidspiration* to organize their information in order to write their

position and reasons for squishing or not squishing the ant.

Asking higher- level questions. The types of questions Miss Naz asked her

students enticed the students to think more actively and provide more in depth responses

about what she was asking about the text, characters, or events. This teaching method

successfully motivated and engaged the students to think more critically about the

questions Miss Naz asked. The questions were not obvious "right there" in front of them

kinds of questions such as dates, names, information written exactly in the text (known

answer questions). The answers to Miss Naz's questions were not in the story. The

students needed to think about what they already knew (their background knowledge), what the author told them in the text, and how that information fit together. By using higher- level thinking questions, Miss Naz was constructing meaning by having the student thinking critically and hard about the text, events, and characters to a higher thinking level. The types of questions Miss Naz asked also sparked a lot of classroom discussions. In one instance Miss Naz asked the students, "Why do you think the character chose to say that?" This caused the students to consider what they had heard about the character, their intentions, and to make inferences about character behavior based on this information. To me, this seemed far more engaging than a simple right there question such as "What did the character do on this page?"

Teacher modeling and scaffolding. Teacher modeling was an important teaching method used by Miss Naz to motivate and engage her students into the lessons. She constantly modeled throughout all of her interactive read alouds the proper way to hold a book, read fluently, how to use expression in her voice and the pronunciation of higher-level vocabulary words. Miss Naz modeled the method of a *think aloud* on how to orally express what she was thinking about an event, character, or setting while reading. Miss Naz also modeled how to think critically into the text for meaning of events, characters, overall message, and connections to other stories.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary was observed through the use of "Smarty Pants" words. This was a phrase and teaching method Miss Naz used to motivate and encourage her

students to think critically into the text to know what the words meant. The three to four

words would be posted on the front whiteboard when the students came in the classroom

each morning when a new text was being introduced. During the interactive read aloud

lesson, as the text was introduced, the class would talk about the "Smarty Pants" words

for the day and what the students thought each word meant before reading.

Which teaching methods seemed to be motivating and engaging to the students?

Many of the teaching methods Miss Naz used with her students during the

interactive read aloud lessons motivated and engaged the students to want to participate

and be part of the classroom learning community in all activities and discussions I

witnessed. These teaching methods included *think alouds*, the use of visuals, working in

partners, books used, and incorporation of a variety of technologies into the lessons. I

observed these through many of the examples examined in this section.

   Think alouds. When teachers use the *think aloud* strategy, children can get a clear

picture in their minds of how to think outside the story and make connections to

themselves, the world, or to other texts; Hilden and Jones (2013) state, "The teacher

makes the crucial comprehension process visible via *think alouds*" (p. 17). In an

interview with Miss Naz, I asked her how she motivates her students to want to

participate in the interactive read aloud lessons. Her response was "Through *think alouds,*

they (the students) want to please me and do the same things I do." This teaching method

demonstrates how useful this strategy is. It shows how much of an impact Miss Naz has

on the students in her class, how much they appreciate her, and how they are motivated to *think aloud* when reading or writing on their own. When Miss Naz used *think alouds,* it gave the students a clear model of how to effectively use a comprehension strategy. This finding is supported by Camicia and Read's (2011) study that indicated the pre-service teachers had a large impact on elementary students regarding what they wanted to read and write, and helped them make connections within their reading and writing.

Figure 4.2 shows how *think alouds* were used in four out of seven interactive read aloud lessons observed.

Observation Number	Teaching Method Used	Ways the Teaching Method were Used
Observation 1	X	How to *think aloud* about setting, the emperor, and why Ping was sad.
Observation 2		
Observation 3	X	How Miss Naz would react to a bully using the five "Swim Free" strategies discussed in *Simon's Hook* (Burnett, 2000).
Observation 4	X	How Miss Naz would react to a given scenario using the five "Swim Free" strategies discussed in *Simon's Hook* (Burnett, 2000).
Observation 5		
Observation 6	X	Thought aloud of a character trait word for Tomás and discussed his character at the beginning, middle, and end.
Observation 7		

Figure 4.2. Teaching Methods the Second Grade Teacher Used with the Class during interactive read aloud Lessons-*Think alouds.*

In observation one, Miss Naz conducted a *think aloud* about why Ping might have been so sad. Out loud, Miss Naz talked about the picture and words on the page. She discussed (out loud) how the picture showed Ping with a frown on his face and all the kids laughing. In the text, it said "he (Ping) hung his head." Miss Naz expressed, "I think he (Ping) is sad because maybe his seeds did not grow." The children raised their hands eagerly to give an idea. Here Miss Naz demonstrated how to *think aloud* while she was

reading. She motivated the children to use clues from the text (pictures and words) to make predictions of what is happening at that particular part. She expressed to the students in this example, "Using what you know from personal experiences, what the pictures describes to you, and what the words in the text are saying of why Ping may be sad, you can make a prediction." I witnessed on many occasions the children discussing with their partners what they "thought" was happening when discussing different texts and elements.

Another example of how Miss Naz motivated her students through a *think aloud* was in observation three. In the lesson, the students were learning how to stand up to someone if they were being bullied, or saw someone else being bullied. Miss Naz read to the students the book, *Simon's Hook* (Burnett, 2000). While reading the book, the class discussed what each of the five "Learn to Swim Free" strategies (distract, stay away, agree, laugh or make a joke, do little to nothing) meant. Out loud, Miss Naz thought what she would say or do to stop the bully as the students listened. The children were very enthusiastic to raise their hands to give an idea after Miss Naz gave her strategies. Miss Naz, in this example, demonstrated how she motivated and engaged her students to think of ideas and strategies regarding how they would act if they were, or if they saw someone being bullied through her *think aloud*. In both of these examples, the eagerness of the students to quickly raise their hands indicated that Miss Naz's use of the *think aloud* teaching method motivated and engaged the students into the text to think deeper, and

encouraged the students to participate in the activities during the interactive read aloud

lessons.

      Visuals. Activities using visuals were incorporated into all sessions observed in

this study, as figure 4.3 shows. The visuals in these observations were shown in the form

of posters, graphic organizers, and photocopies of pages from the text read during past

interactive read alouds, and the SMARTboard.

Observation Number	Teaching Method Used	Ways the Teaching Method were Used
Observation 1	X	Book and story organizer (setting, characters, beginning, middle, and end).
Observation 2	X	Book, beginning, middle, and end graphic organizer, four photo-copied pages from the book, and character trait poster.
Observation 3	X	Book, five "Swim Free" strategies web, paper heart, "Bully Bee" stuffed animal and bullying scenarios.
Observation 4	X	Book, 5 "Swim Free" strategies web, and mini-posters.
Observation 5	X	Book, t-chart graphic organizer, and "job" posters created.
Observation 6	X	Book, four photo-copied pages from the book, and a graphic organizer of Tomás's feelings and character trait words at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
Observation 7	X	Books and compare and contrast Venn Diagram.

Figure 4.3. Teaching Methods the Second Grade Teacher Used with the Class during interactive read aloud Lessons- Visuals

The use of visuals was one teaching method Miss Naz used to motivate and engage her students, and was seen as highly motivating to the students. In an interview with Miss Naz, I asked her how she incorporates all the interests of her students into her daily interactive read aloud lessons and what visuals does she utilize in her lessons. She shared with me, to motivate and engage her students, she uses a lot of hands-on activities, books and activities on the SMARTboard, and always has something in their hands such as photo-copied pictures from the books, graphic organizers, or small dry-erase boards.

I witnessed how use of photocopied pictures from the text, motivated and engaged the students. The students were exceptionally excited to examine the photo-copied pictures and activate what they remembered from the story in each example, and conversed briefly with each other about details from the pictures. The first example comes from observation two, after Miss Naz handed to each pair (turn and talk) the four photo-copied pictures from the text, *The Empty Pot* (Demi, 1990). The students had to talk about what was happening in the pictures and what they remembered about that particular part of the story they read the previous day. When each group was done, they went over each picture as a whole class. The second example is with the text *Tomás and the Library Lady (*Mora, 1997), observation six. The students were once again given four pictures they had to put in sequential order of beginning, middle, and end. The children talked and discussed each picture (with their turn and talk partners) and what part of the story they thought the picture belonged to. I observed Miss Naz kneeling down next to a group and asking the students "does this (picture) make sense, what is happening in the

picture and what do you remember?" I witnessed a few groups did this on their own when they did not agree on the placement of a picture. After talking and recalling what the students remembered coming before or after the event in the picture, the students came to their conclusions of where to put the picture. In each of these two examples, the use of visuals motivated and engaged the students to recall events and pull apart the text. The visuals also contributed to their eagerness to discuss each of the pictures they were working with for meaning of what was happening, and where or when it happened. Another example of a visual that was motivating and engaging to the students was the use of posters. In observation four with the text *Simon's Hook* (Burnett, 2000), after discussing what a bully was and talking about ways a bully could be stopped the previous day, the students, with an assigned partner by Miss Naz, rotated around the room to mini-posters with different scenarios. Each pair had to talk together about what they would do and wrote their response on the poster. This example revealed to me how motivated and engaged the students were to discuss and write on the poster with their partner what they would do in that particular situation and how they would react. It was apparent the students learned why bullying was such a problem, and what they could do to help stop it. The students demonstrated their prior knowledge and their knowledge learned through many great ideas shared on the posters.

Graphic organizers were another teaching method that highly motivated and engaged the students in the lessons. In observation five after all students shared what their groups found associated with either squishing or not squishing the ant, Miss Naz

introduced the writing prompt for the following day: Would you squish or not squish the

ant and why? The students examined the t-chart graphic organizer they created earlier in

the lesson about specific evidence from the book and what others groups found in their

webquest of information pertaining to saving or squishing the ant. The teaching method

of using graphic organizers demonstrated the students were highly motivated and

engaged to use them. The students became their "job" experts, using their background

knowledge of what they know about ants at home and in the world, and information they

established while doing their research. The students were excited to share their opinions

and backed up their responses with evidence from the chart.

      Working in partners. When the students worked in some form of collaborative

partnership or small groups, they seemed to be more motivated to participate and engaged

in dialogue and the task they were working on. Adomat (2010) reported his findings

about group work and working together in partners. Adomat's study relates to my

findings because I saw some form of partner work happening in the classroom during six

of the seven interactive read aloud lesson I witnessed.

      I witnessed many examples of the students being motivated and engaged in the

lessons by working with a partner or in a small group. One example was, in observation

five, using the book, *Hey Little Ant* (Hoose, 1998)*.* The children were given a job

(Sci"ant"ist, Defend"ant"s, "Ant"ologist, and Termin"ant"ors) and put into a small group

to work. Each group had to use information from the book and do a webquest to find

information, facts, and evidence to support whether they should squish or save the ant. I

observed groups exchanging ideas of what would be good information to support their

"job" and whether or not to squish the ant based on their schema and what they learned

from the webquest. I witnessed debating between team members on facts and ideas along

with the justification of the ideas and facts expressed. It was evident the students'

participation in activities and with each other contributed to small group collaborations

between all groups.

 In observation six using the book, *Tomás and the Library Lady (*Mora, 1997), I

observed great partnership also. At the end of the lesson working with their turn and talk

partner, the students had to come up with a character feeling word to describe how Tomás

felt at the beginning, middle and end of the story. Here, the students demonstrated

detailed discussions of what would be a good feeling word to describe Tomás at different

parts of the text.

In both of these examples, ideas were shared between group members where the

students could hear what other group members were thinking about a character or a

situation and why. Also, whenever group work was involved in the interactive read aloud

lessons, the students were enthusiastic about participating with their partner or small

group and about starting to work. This showed that the students loved working together

and were motivated by each other to come up with great ideas which kept each student

engaged in the lessons. The observations showed how well working in partners

encouraged the students to be motivated to participate each day in the activities the class

was doing, and how engaged in the lessons the students were.

        Books used. In all of the interactive read alouds, a different book was used each

lesson. Each of the six books that were used in the observations was a fictional book. In

an interview with the four students in the study, I asked the students what kind of books

(non-fiction or fiction) they preferred their teacher to read during their interactive read

aloud time. At the beginning of the study, I asked the four participants the question on

types of books (non-fiction or fiction) they like to hear, before I knew what genre of

books would be used for all the interactive read aloud lessons. Figure 4.4 shows the result

of the interviews.

	Fiction Stories	**Non-Fiction Stories**
Student A		X
Student B	X	X
Student C	X	X
Student D	X	

Figure 4.4. Participant's Favorite Kinds of interactive read aloud Books.

        As indicated in table 4.4 above, the participants liked a variety of books. Students

B and C responded that fiction books were funny. Student D responded that she liked

fiction books because "anything can happen." Student A liked non-fiction books because

"you can learn a lot of things about it," While Student B liked non-fiction books because

"you get to learn about real things," and Student C liked non-fiction books because "they are cool books and full of facts." It is interesting to note, both Students B and C liked both fiction and non-fiction books and, again, all of the books read during the interactive read alouds were fiction books.

The information gathered from the interviews appears to indicate that, to motivate and engage students in a lesson, the text the teacher reads aloud needs to be something the students like, that appeals to the students, or is a genre the students would be interested in. For example, the book, *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971), was highly motivating because many of the children loved the author Dr. Seuss and had seen the movie, *The Lorax* (Seuss). The children also were highly motivated and engaged using this book because they could make text-to-text connections to *The Lorax* (Seuss) after Miss Naz read *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990) the day before.

This teaching method of books used demonstrates that the fiction books Miss Naz picked for the lessons during the interactive read alouds engaged and captivated the attention of the whole class during the lessons and activities. All of the books Miss Naz picked were chosen for a particular skill and reason and were about something the students were interested in, or would appeal to a second grader. Pentimonti, et al. (2010) indicated that by the teacher choosing age appropriate literature for the children on topics the students will like and will be interested in, the teacher can engage the students in the lessons more effectively.

Technology. I observed that the teaching method of using technology was incorporated frequently throughout this study through the use of the SMARTboard and classroom computers. In an interview with Miss Naz, I asked Miss Naz how she used technology in her lessons. Her response was that she displays the books and pictures on the SMARTboard for the whole class to see. She also articulated how she uses the SMARTboard for vocabulary at times for the children to interact with. Miss Naz expressed to me how her students love doing webquests, searching the internet for information on a given topic; she also uses the program *Kidspriation* to help the children connect visual thoughts with written expression, and improve their writing skills.

One instance in which I observed the use of technology was in observation five where the children read the text, *Hey Little Ant* (Hoose, 1998). After reading the text, the students were assigned one of four parts (Sci"ant"ist, Defend"ant"s, "Ant"ologist, and Termin"ant"ors), and a group to work with. Each group had to use the information from the book and do a webquest to find information, facts, and evidence to support whether they should squish the ant, or save the ant by not squishing it. When everyone was done, they shared their findings and created a t-chart to organize their information into "to squish" or "not to squish."

I witnessed the children's excitement with this activity when Miss Naz explained the directions to the class. The students were going to use information from the book and do a webquest to gather information, and then organize the information into a short

paragraph on their group's position and reasons of squishing or not squishing the ant using *Kidspriation*. The children were excited, happy, smiling, and energized to get started.

It appears that technology in today's classrooms is a contributor to student motivation, engagement, and learning. I observed students sharing and discussing ideas and information with each other, along with using creativity to become 21st century learners. This finding is supported by Adomat's (2010) study that indicated that performative responses allow children to use their imaginations and creativity to explore meaning in literature.

Which teaching methods seemed to promote a deeper (critical) thinking level?

Many of the teaching methods Miss Naz used with her students in the interactive read aloud lessons demonstrated that they contributed to the students' ability to think beyond the text critically and analytically to be part of the classroom learning community. The teaching methods included: working in partners, answering higher- level questions asked by Miss Naz, teacher modeling and scaffolding, and vocabulary. I witnessed the teaching methods through many of the examples shown in this section. The students demonstrated the teaching methods by displaying grand discussions with their partners or through whole group discussions, and thinking critically into the text about characters, events, or problems.

Working in partners. Throughout this study, I observed the teaching method of working in partners that contributed to the students thinking more critically into and beyond the text. During six out of seven of the interactive read aloud sessions, the students worked in partners or groups during the lessons. Figure 4.5 shows which observations included the use of partners or group work that was incorporated into the interactive read aloud lessons.

Observation Number	Teaching Method Used	Ways the Teaching Method were Used
Observation 1	X	Discussion on what a successor was? Why would it be an honor to be an emperor? What did the word worthy mean? Came up with a character trait word from the list to describe Ping.
Observation 2	X	Discussed with each other the printed pictures and what was happening.
Observation 3		
Observation 4	X	Collaboratively worked together to come up with a response to the prompt on the posters.
Observation 5	X	Researched and formed a collaborative group response to their assigned part about ants.
Observation 6	X	Put printed pictures in sequential order, discussed feelings and character trait words for Tomás at the beginning, middle and end of the story.
Observation 7	X	Discussed how *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry, 1990) and *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971) were similar.

Figure 4.5. Teaching Methods the Second Grade Teacher Used with the Class during interactive read aloud Lessons- *Working in partners.*

The teaching method of working in partners was incorporated in six of seven interactive read aloud sessions that contained some form of partnership. In observation one, after Miss Naz introduced the book *The Empty Pot* (Demi, 1990) and started reading, the students had to turn and talk about the question: "What do you think a

successor to the throne is?" I observed one pair of turn and talk partners' conversation who were sitting close to me. The pair discussed what they thought a "successor" was, using critical thinking skills to think into and beyond the text. I listened to what they talked about. One of the partners said, "We know the story is about a king. He appears old in the picture. Maybe successor means to take over?" The other partner justified her answer and said "Yeah, I think you are right, a successor is someone who will take over the throne." Here together the two partners shared ideas of what they thought a successor was. Together, the students formed an answer to share with the class. In this example, the students demonstrated their ability to use critical thinking skills to collaborate with one another through discussion of the text, to contribute to each other's ideas, and to make connections.

Other examples of great team work and the children working together was in observations four and five. In observation four, after discussing what a bully was and talking about ways to stop a bully the previous day, the students, with a partner assigned by Miss Naz, rotated around the room to mini-posters with different scenarios. Each pair had to talk together about what they would do and write it in the poster. In observation five, the class split into four groups and had to do a webquest on a specific topic about ants after reading the text, *Hey Little Ant* (Hoose, 1998). In their groups, the students had to find facts and evidence to support the topic assigned to their group. The students demonstrated their ability to collaboratively work together as members of a group to

think critically about the text and questions posed by Miss Naz. The students formed ideas, found research and evidence, and used their background knowledge to make educated responses. These two examples showed how the activities encouraged the students to think critically into the text and promoted a deeper thinking level.

Through this observation, it was revealed to me how the teaching method of working in partners allowed the students in their pairs to collaboratively discuss the questions posed by Miss Naz. It appeared the two partners could examine the text deeper with a critical eye for meaning and evidence from the text. As the students worked in pairs, they used both partners' ideas to form a deeper critical understanding of the text and what Miss Naz was having them confer about to come up with an educated, well thought out answer to share with the class. This initiative was stated in the Adomat (2010) study that discussed how performative responses allow children to use their imagination and creativity to explore meaning in literature.

Asking higher- level questions. The teaching method of asking higher- level questions demonstrated how Miss Naz's use of the teaching method contributed to the students using critical thinking skills to form answers to questions posed by her. The students needed to think about what they already knew (their background knowledge), what the author told them in the text, and how it fit together. The questions asked were meant to construct meaning by the students thinking critically and hard about the text, events, and characters. The method of asking higher- level questions was shown in the

entire interactive read aloud observations. As figure 4.6 shows, Miss Naz used higher-level questions to entice her students to think about what the text and pictures were saying, and what the overall meanings of the stories were all about.

Observation Number	**Teaching Method Used**	**Examples of Higher- Level Questions**
Observation 1	X	What a successor was? Why would it be an honor to be an emperor? What did the word worthy mean? Came up with a character trait word from the list to describe Ping.
Observation 2	X	Explain what the emperor, Ping, and children were doing and why? How could the students tell? Give a character trait word for Ping?
Observation 3	X	How would the students react in a given bullying scenario and why?
Observation 4	X	How would the students react in a given bullying scenario and why?
Observation 5	X	Would the students squish or not squish the ant and why?
Observation 6	X	What did the students know about Tomás? Why did he not have any books? Vocabulary words- eager and appreciative and what they meant. How did Tomás feel at different times in the story?
Observation 7	X	How did the trees in both books affect the animals? If the students were the last boy, what would they do with the seed? What was similar between *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry, 1990) and *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971)?

Figure 4.6. Teaching Methods the Second Grade Teacher Used with the Class during interactive read aloud Lessons- *Asking higher- level questions.*

In observation five, after all students shared what their groups found associated with either squishing or not squishing the ant, Miss Naz introduced the writing prompt for the following day (Would you squish or not squish the ant and why?), and started a class discussion (on ideas to use). The discussion sparked a lot of good evidence from the text and webquests with ideas, information, and facts the students learned. I witnessed the students becoming their "job" experts, using their background knowledge of what they knew about ants at home, in the world, and information they established while doing their research. The students examined the t-chart graphic organizer they created earlier in the lesson about specific evidence from the book, and what others groups found in their webquest of information pertaining to saving or squishing the ants. The students demonstrated their thinking through responses such as: "I would not squish the ant because they are important. On the chart it says that they eat our trash" and "I would squish the ant because they are annoying. We had them in our house over the summer. The chart says they are all over the world." These two responses demonstrate how the two students used their critical thinking skills, prior knowledge, and evidence from the text and t-chart to answer Miss Naz's higher- level question to form their answers for the journal prompt the next day.

Higher- level questioning was also found in observation seven. Miss Naz asked higher- level questions throughout the whole lesson to entice the students into diving more critically into the text and other texts they read. A few examples of her use of

higher- level thinking questions were when the class compared *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry, 1990) and *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971); after reading the first few pages of *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971), Miss Naz asked the students if there were any text-to-text connections about the trees being cut down. After a response that in *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry, 1990), the trees were cut down too, Miss Naz asked "How did the trees in both books affect the animals?" (In *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry, 1990) the trees were homes for the animals and in *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971) the trees were food for the animals). The class discussed in more detail how the land was affected in both texts. Another higher- level question Miss Naz asked the students was when she said, "I want you to use the two texts, *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry, 1990) and *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971), and think about how they are similar," and "If you were the last boy, what would you do with the seed?" In observation one, Miss Naz also used higher- level questions with her students. These questions led the students to think beyond the text. Examples of the questions were:"What do you think a successor to the throne is?", "Why would it be an honor to be an emperor?", "What does worthy mean?", and "Think of a character trait word from your list to describe Ping." Here Miss Naz asked higher- level open-ended questions to entice her students to think critically beyond the texts in these examples to formulate their answers; Hilden and Jones (2013) state, "Open-ended questions encourage students to actively process the content" (p. 17). The answers to Miss Naz's questions were not present in the story. The students needed to think about what they already knew (their background knowledge), what the author told them in the text, and

how all the information fit together. The questions asked were meant to construct meaning by the students thinking critically and hard about the text, events, and characters.

It appears from the types of questions listed above posed by Miss Naz, asking higher- level questions made the students think deeper about the reading. Her questions were meant to entice the students to think more actively and critically about what she was asking about the text, characters, or events. The questions asked were meant to construct meaning by the students thinking critical. The students activated their background knowledge of what they knew to form their answers from the outside world and evidence from the text (words, pictures, captions). This conclusion was supported by the findings from Wiseman's (2010) study which concluded that the teacher (Ms. Milner) constructed meaning for her students and extended ideas for her students to take farther.

Teacher modeling and scaffolding. Teacher modeling and scaffolding was another teaching method Miss Naz used with her students. This teaching method was an important aspect in student learning because students need varying levels of support in order to comprehend a text. In some cases students need concrete modeling in order to understand expectations and learn skills. In other situations students may need teacher support in order to access a text. Teacher knowledge of student needs is therefore crucial in determining the amount of modeling and scaffolding needed. As is examined in Pentimonti, et al. (2010), using the six types of scaffolds (generalizing, reasoning,

predicting, co-participating, reducing choices, and eliciting), affects the children's learning. Teacher modeling and scaffolding was an important method used by Miss Naz. She constantly modeled throughout all of her interactive read alouds the proper way to hold a book, read fluently, how to use expression in her voice, and the pronunciation of higher- level words. Miss Naz also modeled the teaching method and strategy of a *think aloud* by orally expressing what she was thinking about an event, character, or setting while reading, along with modeling how to think critically into the text to create meaning of events, characters, overall message, and connections to other stories. As shown in figure 4.7, teacher modeling and scaffolding was visible in all observations. Miss Naz observed student responses to her questions and determined how to scaffold her instruction appropriately.

Observation Number	Teaching Method Used	Ways the Teaching Method were Used
Observation 1	X	Location of the setting in the story using pictures and author's words. How to spell a word correctly using the text if unsure.
Observation 2	X	Recapped from the previous day. Justified students' responses as going through four printed pictures of the story. Modeled how to think of a character trait word to describe Ping.
Observation 3	X	Modeled how words can hurt others using a paper heart. How to react to a bully using the five "Swim Free" strategies.
Observation 4	X	Modeled how to react to a given prompt dealing with bullying.
Observation 5	X	Filled in the "T-Chart" graphic organizer while going back through the book with reasons the text said to squish or not squish the ant.
Observation 6	X	Recalled events into the students' memories with questions while students in a group looked at printed pictures to put in sequential order of events, What made sense? What was happening in the picture? What did the students remember?
Observation 7	X	Recalled events for *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990) and *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971) to fill-in on the Venn Diagram. Asked: What is the text-to-text connection and scaffolded ideas for similarities.

Figure 4.7. Teaching Methods the Second Grade Teacher Used with the Class during interactive read aloud Lessons- *Teacher modeling and scaffolding.*

Miss Naz used teacher modeling and scaffolding in all of her daily interactive read aloud lessons observed. In observation one, Miss Naz modeled how she knew where the story took place by examining the text, pictures and details. "From the picture, I can tell it is spring because I see flowers blooming and in the text, it says the story takes place in China." Miss Naz also modeled through a *think aloud* using evidence from the text and her background knowledge of what she concluded an emperor was: "An emperor must be like the king or the president. He sits on a throne." A second example from observation one is the way Miss Naz modeled how to look back into the text to make sure the word was spelled correctly. She spelled the word "successor", but stated she was not sure if the way she wrote it on the chart was correct; so she looked back in the text for the word. Miss Naz also modeled for her students, while reading the story, that Ping was sad. "The picture shows him with a frown, and the author said he was hanging his head." The last example is from observation one. Miss Naz modeled how to think about a character's personality or what he or she was like in the text, to think of a character trait word for that character. She modeled how Ping was not like the other characters that were selfish, but rather, he was honest. In observation one, Miss Naz also demonstrated for her students how to use text elements to make an educated prediction based on background knowledge and text features.

A second example comes from observation three. At the beginning of the lesson, Miss Naz modeled how, when a person utters mean or hurtful words to friends or others,

the words stay with the person forever. Miss Naz showed the students this through a

paper heart and had the students say mean or hurtful things to her as she folded the heart.

After the heart was in a small ball-like figure, Miss Naz had the students say nice things

to her to make her feel good while she slowly un-folded it. She explained how all the

hurtful words stay with a person forever, just like the creases in the paper heart, no matter

how many nice things you say to make up for the hurtful words said. In the second part of

the lesson, Miss Naz modeled from the book the class read the previous day, *Simon's*

Hook (Burnett, 2000), the five "Swim Free" strategies. She modeled for each strategy an

example a person could say or do to the bully. After Miss Naz was done, she gave the

children a chance to try a strategy on their own with the stuffed animal, "Bully Bee."

When the student's name stick was pulled, Miss Naz would throw them the "Bully Bee"

and read to the student a situation. The student had to react with one of the five strategies

from "Swim Free." By the two examples shown, Miss Naz demonstrated her ability to

model and scaffold her students' learning through the use of guidance. Through modeling

and scaffolding, it appears she taught and demonstrated for her students text elements,

how to make connections, ideas and concepts for literature, how to deepen their literacy

knowledge, and their own ways of thinking through prior knowledge and discussion.

These results were similar to those found by Wiseman (2010) and Camicia and Read

(2011) in their studies. In both studies, the authors concluded teachers who use scaffolds

deepen their students' literacy background knowledge and take what the students already

know farther. This finding leads the students to a deeper comprehension level and overall success.

      Vocabulary. Vocabulary was another teaching method Miss Naz used with her students to entice her students to think critically into the text during the interactive read aloud lessons. The use of vocabulary was observed frequently throughout the study. As stated earlier, "Smarty Pants" words was a phrase Miss Naz used in her classroom to motivate, engage, and encourage her students to want to know what the words meant. Miss Naz would write a list of words on the board for the students to write in their journals when a new text was being introduced. The list contained three to four words. During the interactive read aloud lesson, as the text was introduced, the class would talk about the "Smarty Pants" words for the day, and what the students thought each word meant.

      One example of the vocabulary discussed comes from observation seven. Here Miss Naz asked the students what "smog" was during the reading of *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971). This was one of the "Smarty Pants" words listed on the board earlier that day. "Glupiti-gulp" and "slipiti-slup" were also discussed to determine what they would be in our world (pollution) but were not two of the "Smarty Pants" words. Two other examples were from observation six's reading of *Tomás and the Library Lady (*Mora, 1997). Two of the "Smarty Pants" words were "eager" and "appreciative." During the interactive read aloud observation, the class talked about what the word "eager" meant and why Tomás

was so "eager" to get a book from the library. "Appreciative" was also discussed and how it meant thankful. It appeared Miss Naz picked the "Smarty Pants" words based on words from the text the class heard that had a significant meaning to the text and the overall comprehension of the literature piece. She demonstrated this teaching method of using vocabulary to motivate and engage the students to use of critical thinking skills during the interactive read aloud lessons. Miss Naz motivated and engaged the students by using the term "Smarty Pants" words that captured the students attention, but also had the students thinking more in depth about what the word meant in the text, and what the students already knew based on their background knowledge. This is similar to what Arya, et al. (2011) found in their study, indicating that comprehension of the text and vocabulary within the text is based on the complexity of the text.

Summary

Through my role as a participant observer studying how a second grade teacher motivated and engaged her students to think deeper (critically) into the text during an interactive read aloud, I was able to gain a better understanding of how Miss Naz developed literacy through activities and what the teacher's role in literacy-related activities were. I observed the teaching methods Miss Naz used in her daily interactive read aloud lessons, which teaching methods seemed to be motivating and engaging to the students, and which teaching methods seemed to promote deeper thinking. I triangulated my data through interviews with four students and Miss Naz, along with seven

observations of the daily lessons. I was able to see many patterns, correlations, and

connections between the activities the children were engaged in and the ways Miss Naz

enticed her students to think critically and dig deeper into the text for meaning and

comprehension. Throughout the seven interactive read aloud sessions I observed, the

children were motivated and engaged through the use of the eight literacy-related

interactive read aloud teaching methods (*think alouds*, visuals, working in partners, books

used, technology, asking higher- level questions, teacher modeling and scaffolding, and

"Smarty Pants" vocabulary words associated with the text being read) during the

interactive read aloud lessons. I found that when Miss Naz used these teaching methods

listed above with her class to think into a text deeper into the text, the students were more

motivated to learn, and engaged in the lessons.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

As previously indicated, the purpose of my research was to investigate the teaching methods a second grade teacher, Miss Naz, used to motivate and engage her students to think deeply (critically) into the text during interactive read aloud lessons. Through my observations of the seven interactive read aloud sessions, and interviews with the four student participants and Miss Naz, I determined that the eight teaching methods (*think alouds*, visuals, working in partners, books used, technology, asking higher- level questions, teacher modeling and scaffolding, and vocabulary) were effective at motivating and engaging the students to dive deeper (think critically) into the text during the interactive read aloud lessons. In the following sections of this chapter I undertake a comprehensive discussion of the conclusions of my study based on the findings of my research along with implications for student learning and my future teaching, as well as recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

After observing a diverse array of literacy-related teaching methods used in the daily interactive read aloud lessons, my research revealed the effectiveness of each of the teaching methods used. Based on the findings of my research, I came to three conclusions. First, I conclude that when teachers use a variety of input/output teaching methods, the students are more motivated and engaged to think deeper (critically) into the text during their interactive read aloud lessons. Secondly, I conclude that the teaching

methods used by the teacher (Miss Naz) promote higher- level thinking skills in the students, and lastly I conclude that the opportunity for students to collaborate with each other leads to deeper thinking by the students into the text. These three conclusions show the effectiveness of the teaching methods used to entice the students to be motivated and engaged in the daily interactive read aloud lessons and to use critical thinking skills to think deeper (critically) into the text to make connections, as well as form ideas and use their prior knowledge to make sense of the text.

When teachers use a variety of input/output teaching methods, the students are more motivated and engaged to think deeper (critically) into the text. It was observed in my study that the input/output teaching methods of technology (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010), visuals (Camicia & Read, 2011; Nichols, et al., 2007; Pentimonti, et al., 2010), and books used were effective at motivating and engaging the students in the lessons. These input/output teaching methods used were similar to those discussed in previous research, presented in my literature review section. As a result, these teaching methods motivated students to think deeper (critically) into the text. My first conclusion is that when Miss Naz used technology, visuals, and books the students were more motivated and engaged in developing different literacy skills to examine the text critically for a deeper understanding to become creative thinkers. The students appeared to be focused, on task, and eager to learn.

Technology. The use of technology as a motivating and engaging strategy is argued to play a key role in allowing the students to be exposed to a wide variety of sources connected to literature (Cviko, McKenney &Voogt, 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). It is crucial that students be exposed to a variety of sources to become successful literacy learners with skills gained through technology (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). Students today are becoming 21st century learners with the literacy technology they are exposed to (Cviko, et al., 2012). Students today love computers, iPads, and other technology devices in their classrooms where they can practice literacy skills such as fluency and comprehension (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). Technology in the classroom was seen as a significant motivator in this study. An example of this was the eagerness of the students to use technology in observation five when Miss Naz was explaining the directions for the activity to accompany the book, *Hey Little Ant* (Hoose,1998), as described in the "*Technology*" section of Chapter Four. This example demonstrates the students' eagerness and excitement to get started and to use technology for the activity of the webquest and *Kidspiration*.

Visuals. Visuals are tools that provided students with a clear picture in their minds of exactly what is happening in the text along with aiding the students in examining the text with a critical eye. When graphic organizers are used as visuals, the graphic organizer organizes the information from the text or literacy activity into easy navigation for the students to form an idea(s) using what is presented on the graphic

organizer and the students' background knowledge (Nichols, et al., 2007). An example of how visuals helped aid in students' comprehension of the text comes from the "*Visuals*" section of Chapter Four in observation five. The students used graphic organizers to organize their thinking about different feelings of characters at different parts of the text. In observations two and six, visuals were represented by photo-copied pictures from the text. The students held the visual pictures to confer about and recalled details associated with the text. Similarly, small posters were also incorporated in observation five where the students commented on a prompt associated with bullying given by Miss Naz. In these examples, the teaching method of visuals demonstrated how the visuals were highly motivating and engaging to the students when they were able to use them as a tool to examine the text with a critical eye to recall events, discuss ideas, and pull apart the text for an overall deeper understanding and meaning.

     Books. Exposing students to higher- level texts will entice the students to want to listen, make connections, and lead the students to becoming better at comprehending the text and improving their literacy skills (Alvermann, et al., 2004; Arya, et al., 2011; Adomat, 2010; Camicia & Read, 2011; Lyons, 2003; Tompkins, 2010). The seven books in the study were written at the students' comprehension level or slightly above. The word choice used in the books, The *Empty Pot* (Demi, 1990), *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990), *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971), and *Tomás and the Library Lady (*Mora, 1997) exposed the students to higher- level vocabulary words and other languages and cultures (Arya, et

al., 2011). As shown in the "*Visuals*" section of Chapter Four, the teaching method of

selecting books that were highly engaging texts for the seven interactive read aloud

lessons was also a strong motivator for the students to think more deeply (critically)

about the text to make meaning. The books selected in the study demonstrate that the

kinds of books Miss Naz picked for the lessons during the interactive read alouds in fact

engaged and captivated the whole class' attention during the lessons and activities. The

students' strong level of focus, comprehension, and participation demonstrated their

engagement in all of the seven texts read aloud. All of the books Miss Naz picked were

chosen for a particular skill and reason; they all were something the students were

interested in and would appeal to second grade students. Pentimonti, et al., (2010)

reported similar results in their study. Their study indicated that if a teacher chooses age

appropriate literature for the children on topics they (the students) will like and will be

interested in, the teacher can engage the students in the lessons more effectively.

Based on the results from this study, I conclude that using a variety of

input/output teaching methods such as technology, visuals, and books that appeal to

second grade students, will successfully motivate and engage the students to think more

deeply (critically) into the text. This in turns helps the students to develop critical

thinking skills, make strong connections, use background knowledge, and form educated

responses.

Teaching methods used by the teacher promote higher- level thinking skills in the students. Researchers have concluded that teachers play a significant role in a student's learning and deepen what they already know (Adomat, 2010; Alvermann, et al., 2004; Arya, et al., 2011; Camicia & Read, 2011; Nichols, et al., 2007; Pentimonti & Justice, 2009; Wiseman, 2010). The teacher's role in the classroom is to be a role model in his or her students' education and to make sure the students are acquiring the necessary skills they need to be successful (Camicia & Read, 2011; Nichols, et al., 2007; Pentimonti & Justice, 2009; Wiseman, 2010). The teacher demonstrates the desired skills through modeling his or her thinking during lessons, and scaffolds the students' learning through asking thought-provoking questions, along with using vocabulary words to encourage the students to think critically about what is being asked about the text. I conclude the teaching methods used by the teacher promote higher- level thinking skills in the students and motivate and engage the students into the lessons.

When teachers use *think alouds* with their students, they are teaching their students how to make inferences. Using the *think aloud* strategy, the teacher models how to use evidence from the text and background knowledge to form an educated idea or response (Nichols, et al., 2007). Teacher modeling was demonstrated in this study through the use of *think alouds* in Chapter Four. As Miss Naz was reading the text aloud to her students, she would stop at certain parts of the text and think out loud by orally expressing her thoughts about an event, character, or setting, modeling how to think

critically about the text to create meaning of events, characters, overall message, and

connections to other stories for her students. When students have a strong model to

follow and are shown a specific strategy, the students are more apt to try the strategy or

skill on their own (Wiseman, 2010). The students in this study demonstrated their ability

to think out loud with their turn and talk partner after observing Miss Naz thinking out

loud as described in the "*Think aloud*" section of Chapter Four during observation one,

using the book *The Empty Pot* (Demi, 1990).

Open-ended higher- level questioning by teachers leads to the students thinking beyond

the text and using critical thinking skills to formulate their answers. Hilden & Jones

(2013) state, "Open-ended questions encourage students to actively process the content"

(p. 17). When teachers ask open-ended, higher- level questions, the students'

comprehension of the text and literacy-related activities improves because the students

use critical thinking skills to construct meaning of the text, to make connections, and to

form educated answers using their prior knowledge and new information gained from

what they learned about a character, event, or problem (Adomat, 2010; Alvermann, et al.,

2004; Arya, et al., 2011; Camicia & Read, 2011; Lyons, 2003; Tompkins, 2010). An

example from the study is found in the "*Asking higher thinking level questions*" section

of Chapter Four, observation one. After reading both *The Great Kapok Tree (*Cherry,

1990) and *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971), Miss Naz asked a higher- level thinking question: "If

you were the last boy, what would you do with the seed?" This open-ended question was

meant to entice the students to think critically beyond the texts to formulate their answers. The students' answers to the question demonstrated how they had to think critically about what they would do and what they acquired from the text to structure their responses.

The use of vocabulary was another teacher led method that motivated the students to want to participate and be engaged in the lessons. When teachers use higher- level content vocabulary words with their students, the students feel grown up and want to know more advanced words (Arya, et al., 2011; Nichols, et al., 2007). I observed the students growing excited to learn the new words that their friends may not have known so that they could feel knowledgeable. In the study, "Smarty Pants" words were discussed in the "*Vocabulary*" section of Chapter Four, observation six, reading *Tomás and the Library Lady (*Mora, 1997). The two "Smarty Pants" words were "eager" and "appreciative." During the interactive read aloud observation, the class talked about what the word "eager" meant and why Tomás was so "eager" to get a book from the library, along with "appreciative" and how it meant thankful. When teachers use content specific vocabulary terms such as these examples, the students are more motivated and engaged in the text and literacy-related activities.

Based on this information, I conclude that teachers play a significant role in a student's learning. The teachers deepen what the students already know through the teaching methods they use with his or her students to promote higher- level thinking

skills. This information shows that teachers need to make sure they are always modeling and scaffolding literacy skills and strategies, along with asking higher- level questions that will entice the students to think critically using what they already know and new information gained.

Opportunity for students to collaborate with each other leads to deeper thinking into the text by the students. My final conclusion is the most momentous to this study. The use of collaboration through working in partners was the most significant way the students were motivated and engaged to think critically about the text during the interactive read aloud lessons. By working collaboratively to figure out how to do something, the students used critical thinking skills to collaborate with one another through discussion of the text, contributed to each other's ideas, and made connections to form an educated answer that they then shared with their class (Cviko, et al., 2012; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). An example of this is described in detail in the second section of "*Working in partners*" in Chapter Four, observation one, using the book *The Empty Pot* (Demi, 1990). Miss Naz had the pairs confer about the question "What do you think a successor to the throne is?" I witnessed immense and focused conversations between pairs discussing their thinking of what the question meant and how it related to the text. Each pair observed was using critical thinking skills demonstrated by Miss Naz through her *think aloud*, and each pair shared and discussed ideas with each other to form the answers they shared with the class.

This information supports my final conclusion that peer collaboration is a motivating and engaging tool for students to use to critically examine the text during an interactive read aloud. By examining the text collaboratively, the students form educated, well-rounded answers.

Implications for Student Learning

The result of this study provides many implications for student learning. Students should be provided with effective instruction through modeling and scaffolding every day. When first explicitly shown a skill by the teacher in a step-by-step process, the students benefit from this explicit teaching. The students then can properly utilize the skills taught to be successful (Camicia & Read, 2011; Nichols, et al., 2007; Pentimonti & Justice, 2009; Wiseman, 2010). According to this study, students are able to develop these skills more effectively when first modeled by their teacher. Also, giving students the opportunity to use their critical thinking skills as they engage in meaningful conversations with adults and peers promotes independence, interest and engagement with the text.

The second and final implication for student learning found in this study is the essential need for collaborative partner work throughout the literacy block. Students learn from each other through communication. The use of peer interaction and communication fulfills their social need of social engagement (Adomat, 2010; Cviko, et al., 2012;

Nichols, et al., 2007; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). By working together with peers, the

students learn problem solving and cooperation skills that will last a lifetime.

Implications for My Teaching

       This study contains many implications for my teaching as well. The outcomes and

ideas from my research provided me with teaching methods to incorporate into my own

classroom someday. In my classroom, I will use a variety of hands-on activities and

visuals such as pictures, posters, graphic organizers, and technology. These teaching

methods have been shown to be effective at enticing the students to think critically into

the text (Cviko, et al., 2012; Nichols, et al., 2007; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). In my

research I found that students were more engaged and responsive when there was a visual

support on display to provide an additional form of information to auditory input. As a

result, I will be sure to use many different forms of charts to organize and guide their

thinking in learning activities we do. In addition, I will also use many forms of

technology with my students. I will research the technology websites I want my students

to use for literacy-related activities and create a porta-portal, which is a list of specifically

chosen website links on our classroom website that my students can access at school or at

home to practice concepts and skills taught in the classroom.

       Furthermore, I witnessed the significant role the teacher plays in the children's

learning. To promote their independence, in my classroom, I will model and scaffold my

students' instruction appropriately, providing different levels of support for different

learners (Camicia & Read, 2011; Nichols, et al., 2007; Pentimonti & Justice, 2009; Wiseman, 2010). For capable students, I will not give as much guidance to see how they will do. For students who need more guidance, I will use more explicit instruction to share information and scaffold their learning into a step-by-step process until they are able to perform the skill independently. In my teaching, I also need to make sure I am asking thought provoking higher- level questions and listening to my students' responses to the questions throughout all my lessons, everyday (Adomat, 2010; Alvermann, et al., 2004; Arya, et al. , 2011; Lyons, 2003; Tompkins, 2010). If the students are responding to answers quickly, I know they have not put a lot of thought into their answer. The connections and inferences the students make to and about the text we are reading are also important. Answers that give evidence of thought about the larger picture will show connections, details, growth, and knowledge of the content. Answers that focus on only a small detail will tell me the students need more practice, that they do not understand the question, or the question was not at their developmental level. The teaching methods I witnessed in this study will help guide my planning of lessons, what activities I do with my students, my reflection of how the lesson went, and what changes might need to be made.

Lastly, I saw how beneficial peer collaboration between pairs was to the students' learning. In my classroom, I will use partner work with my students as much as possible. By using peer collaboration literacy activities such as "Think-Pair-Share" that builds the students' communication and literacy skills, the students will be interacting with each

other through peer collaboration and social engagement, all while still attending to the task given (Adomat, 2010; Cviko, et al., 2012; Nichols, et al., 2007; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010).

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study demonstrated eight effective teaching methods (*think alouds*, visuals, working in partners, books used, technology, asking higher- level questions, teacher modeling and scaffolding, and vocabulary) one second grade teacher used with her students to motivate and engage her students to think deeply (critically) into the text during an interactive read aloud that were effective. Further research would be valuable to examine the teaching methods used among teachers at different grade levels, in different districts, and how the responses would differ from interview questions among students with different socioeconomic backgrounds.

How would the teaching methods used at different grade levels within the same school building differ to motivate and engage the students to think deeper into the text during interactive read aloud lessons? In my study, I only examined one grade and developmental level of students. I witnessed effective teaching methods that one second grade classroom teacher used to motivate and engage her students to think critically into the text. I suggest for future research, examining multiple grade levels in the same school building to determine what teaching methods teachers use with their students and how the teaching methods differ across grade levels. This further research

would help the building administration and teachers distinguish what teaching methods were highly effective at each grade and developmental level for future planning.

How would the teaching methods used in interactive read aloud lessons appear in two second grade classrooms, in two different school districts?

After conducting this study, it would be interesting to compare two second grade classroom teachers' use of teaching methods over the same time period of six weeks in two different school districts. It would be interesting to investigate what teaching methods each of the teacher's used with their students to motivate and engage the students to think critically during interactive read aloud lessons and how their teaching methods differ. This investigation would be important to districts in planning for future professional development meetings and seminars to demonstrate what teaching methods have shown to effectively work at examining the text critically with second grade students.

Conduct interviews with students with different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds in different districts and compare their responses to the questions. In this study all four student participants were from the same socioeconomic background and were exposed to the same literacy experiences during the interactive read aloud lessons. Further research is needed to explore students of different socioeconomic status backgrounds and their responses to the same set of questions pertaining to interactive read aloud activities as shown in Appendix B. By conducting this research and comparing

the students' responses, possible different motivators among students of different

socioeconomic status would be visible. The responses of what was motivating in one

status might be very different among the other. It would be interesting to observe the

similarities and differences among the economic statuses.

Final Thoughts

As previously discussed in Chapter One, in today's classrooms, students are

reading and writing in all subjects throughout the day. The students are engaged using in-

depth or higher-level questioning and thinking skills continually. However, with the

introduction of change, including the Common Core Learning Standards, teachers

wonder how they are going to modify previous curriculum to match the new Common

Core standards. Students today are faced with more rigorous curriculum. Students who

are below benchmark and are already behind in meeting standards might have a more

difficult time meeting these higher standards. Students of all abilities need to daily,

engage deeply in texts, talk with peers about what they read and their thinking, and be

members of a supportive learning community (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). The findings

from this study show the eight effective teaching methods (*think alouds*, visuals, working

in partners, books used, technology, asking higher- level questions, teacher modeling and

scaffolding, and vocabulary) as used by one second grade teacher in an elementary

suburban school to motivate and engage her students to think deeply during an interactive

read aloud. This study demonstrates the three key important findings. First, teachers

using a variety of input/output teaching methods such as technology, visuals, and books that appeal to second grade students will successfully motivate and engage the students into the text to use critical thinking skills, make strong connections, use background knowledge, and form educated responses. Secondly, teachers play a significant role in a student's learning, and deepen what the students already know via the teaching methods they use with their students to promote higher- level thinking skills. Lastly, in this study the use of collaboration through working in partners was the most significant way to motivate and engage them to think critically about the text during the interactive read aloud lessons.

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Appendices

Appendix A   **Teacher Interview Protocol**

Participant's Letter: _____Date: _____

<u>Questions:</u>

1. How do you incorporate the interests of your students into your daily interactive read aloud lessons?

2. How do you incorporate the learning styles of all the children into your daily interactive read aloud lessons?

3. What do you do to motivate your students to want to participate in the interactive read aloud?

4. Please explain what a typical interactive read aloud lesson is like?

5. What visuals do you utilize in your lessons?

6. How do you use technology in your lessons?

7. How do you use whole group, small group or both when teaching an interactive read aloud lesson?

8. Is there any additional information you would like to share with me you think would help me understand how you motivate your students to think deeper into the text?

*This protocol was self-developed

Appendix B   **Student Interview Protocol**

Participant's Letter: _____   Date: _____

<u>Questions:</u>

1. What do you like most about reading? Why?

2. What is your favorite activity that your teacher does with you during your

   interactive read aloud time? Why?

3. What is your least favorite activity you do during an interactive read aloud? Why?

4. Do you prefer your teacher to read non-fiction or fiction?

5. What does your teacher do to help you read?

*This protocol was self-developed.