

A SURVEY OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE VALUE OF TEACHER READ-ALOUDS IN PRIMARY-GRADE CLASSROOMS

by

DAWN MOON SPRUILL

(Under the Direction of James F. Baumann)

ABSTRACT

The researcher investigated the perceptions of elementary public school principals on the value of teacher read-alouds in primary-grade classrooms. Participants were 209 public school principals from the state of Georgia who responded to a web-based survey. The researcher obtained data regarding the demographic profile of respondents' school and district, the professional experience of the respondents, and the respondents' perceptions of the value of read-alouds for development of literacy skills and the benefits of teacher read-alouds for specific sub-groups of students. Results suggested that the majority of principals surveyed not only value teacher read-alouds for literacy instruction and for specific sub-groups of students, but that most are cognizant of the impact teacher read-alouds can have on the development of literacy skills and are familiar with the components of effective teacher read-alouds.

INDEX WORDS: elementary principals, literacy instruction, survey research, primary-grade students, teacher read-alouds

A SURVEY OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE VALUE OF
TEACHER READ-ALOUDS IN PRIMARY-GRADE CLASSROOMS

by

DAWN MOON SPRUILL

B.A., Brenau University 1991

M.Ed., Brenau University, 1993

Ed.S, The University of Georgia, 1997

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2007

© 2007

Dawn Moon Spruill

All Rights Reserved

A SURVEY OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE VALUE OF
TEACHER READ-ALOUDS IN PRIMARY-GRADE CLASSROOMS

by

DAWN MOON SPRUILL

Major Professor: James F. Baumann

Committee: Michelle Commeyras
Linda Labbo

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2007

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Thanks to Mom and Dad for the belief that I could do anything I wanted to with my life, as long as I worked hard and stayed focused. Thanks to my husband and my children for putting up with and understanding the need for long nights or weekends of class. There should be an honorary doctorate offered for all family members who have to endure all the long hours, angst and frustration along with the doctoral candidate! Thanks to my father-in-law and mother-in-law for providing child care that made class attendance possible. I know it must be difficult to have a perpetual student in the family and I appreciate everyone's support and the sacrifices that made it possible for me to attend school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my committee, Jim, Linda, and Michelle, for providing encouragement, support, and feedback. Thanks also to Jim Bason for invaluable advice and direction in analysis and reporting of data.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER	
1 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Research Question	2
Organization of the Dissertation	3
2 CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	4
Definition of Teacher Read-Alouds	4
Benefits of Teacher Read-Alouds	5
Effective Teacher Read-Alouds	12
Principal as Instructional Leader	19
Chapter Summary	23
3 CHAPTER 3 METHODS	25
Introduction	25
Research Design	25
Survey Instrument	27
Participants	33
Data Collection Procedures	34

Data Analysis Procedures.....	34
Chapter Summary.....	35
4 CHAPTER 4 RESULTS.....	37
Response Rate	37
Questionnaire Section A: School and District Demographics	38
Questionnaire Section B: Professional Experience	40
Questionnaire Section C: Perceptions Regarding Literacy Instruction.....	43
Chapter Summary.....	54
5 CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS.....	56
Summary	56
Discussion	59
Limitations.....	68
Implications	69
REFERENCES	72
APPENDICES	79
A Elementary School Principal Questionnaire	79
B Screen Shots of the Questionnaire in Web-Based Format.....	86
C Letter of Consent.....	98
D Final Request to Participate/Letter of Consent	100

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Years of Experience as a Teacher.....	40
Table 2: Years of Experience as a Reading Teacher	41
Table 3: Years of Administrative Experience.....	41
Table 4: Perceptions on Expertise as Leaders Impacting Student Achievement.....	42
Table 5: Minutes per Day Devoted to Literacy Instruction	43
Table 6: Percent of Time in Literacy Instruction Devoted to Various Language Arts Activities .	44
Table 7: Value of Teacher Read-Alouds in Developing Various Literacy Components	45
Table 8: Benefits of Teacher Read-Alouds for Specific Sub-Groups of Students	48

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1985 the Commission on Reading released a report titled *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. This landmark research review was funded by the United States Department of Education and sponsored by the National Academy of Education and the National Institute of Education. The Commission on Reading studied reading research from the preceding 25 years. The following statement from that report is often used as justification for the use of teacher read-alouds in the classroom: “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). More recently, noted early literacy researcher William Teale (2003) affirmed the importance of reading aloud to children, stating that it ought to be “woven into the fabric of the classroom” (pp. 135-136). However, he noted that reading aloud should be implemented in sound, productive ways:

Reading aloud is a valued, and even special, instructional activity for most teachers of young children. It deserves that status so long as we continue to be thoughtful about the whats, whys, and hows of it. (pp. 136)

Indeed, research shows that well-planned teacher read-alouds are effective in helping students in kindergarten through second grade enhance their early literacy abilities (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Elley, 1989; Juel & Deffes, 2004; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Stahl, 2003). Research also provides insight regarding effective practices for teacher read-alouds (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Wasik & Bond, 2001; Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, & Fischel, 1994; Whitehurst, Zevenbergen, Crone, Schultz, Velting, & Fischel, 1999). However, for any sound instructional

action to be implemented effectively in elementary classrooms, it is essential that there be a knowledgeable instructional leader in the school (Allington, 2001; Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Blase & Blase, 2000), who often is the building principal.

Considerable theoretical and empirical work outlines the role of an effective principal in today's schools (Barth, 1990; Blase & Blase, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Schlechty, 2002). Two important factors which contribute to a principal's effectiveness in impacting student achievement are the knowledge of best practices for instruction and the ability to monitor classrooms to assure their implementation (Booth & Roswell, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Schlechty, 2002).

In order for read-alouds to be effectively implemented in primary-grade classrooms, the principal must understand the value of read-alouds and encourage teachers to engage in this practice. Hoffman, Roser, and Battle (1993) described challenges that must be addressed if read-aloud time is to be maximized. One challenge is to provide administrators professional growth opportunities on effective read-aloud practices. Hoffman et al. call for administrators to participate in read-aloud professional learning opportunities and to provide support for the new strategies and techniques required for what they term *model practices* for read-alouds.

Research Question

As described in detail in the next chapter, there are many benefits of teacher read-alouds for children's early literacy development. The early years of school are a period of extensive growth in children's basic literacy skills and a window of opportunity for enhancing those skills for all children. Well planned and executed teacher read-alouds are effective in closing some of the achievement gaps that exist between students as they enter school.

Principals who are knowledgeable in reading and language arts instruction and are able to lead teachers in implementing best practices can have a significant impact on student achievement. The principal is responsible for providing professional learning opportunities for teachers to learn how to plan and deliver effective teacher read-alouds in the classroom. Monitoring teachers as they implement teacher read-alouds is also a vital role of an effective principal.

Little is known, however, about principals' understanding of the value of read-alouds, and their knowledge of effective read-aloud components. It was the purpose of this study, therefore, to ascertain elementary public school principals' perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds in primary-grade classrooms. To explore this question, elementary public school principals in Georgia were surveyed about their views on teacher read-alouds. The specific research question addressed in this study was: What are elementary principals' perceptions on the value of teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom?

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter one has provided an introduction, justification and purpose of the study and a statement of the research question. Chapter two contains a review of the literature related to reading aloud to young children and the role of the elementary principal as an instructional leader. Chapter three provides a description of the research methods used to collect the data for this study and the procedures for analyzing it. Chapter four presents the results of the study. Chapter five contains a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, limitations of the research, and implications for future research and instructional practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to ascertain elementary public school principals' perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds in primary-grade classrooms. There are four research literatures germane to this inquiry. These included (a) definitional information about what constituted teacher read-alouds, (b) the benefits of teacher read-alouds for children's literacy development, (c) the characteristics of effective read-aloud events, and (d) the qualities of principals who are strong instructional leaders who might then promote and support teacher read-alouds. These four literatures are reviewed, in turn, in the remainder of this chapter.

Definition of Teacher Read-Alouds

The terms *storybook reading*, *teacher read-alouds*, *dialogic reading*, and *interactive read-alouds* have meanings that are not always well defined and may not be synonymous (DeTemple & Snow, 2003; Elley, 1989; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Morrow & Brittian, 2003). For clarity and consistency, the term *teacher read-alouds* is used in this study. A teacher read-aloud is defined as the classroom activity of a teacher reading children's literature to children. During teacher read-alouds students are often sitting on the floor. The teacher may read through the book without stopping, or she or he may stop and discuss the story and some unfamiliar vocabulary. Students may be invited to interact with the reader although this will not always occur. The term *children's literature* may suggest that only narrative stories are read during read-alouds, but nonfiction, informational text, historical fiction, and virtually every other genre of literature can and should be utilized for effective teacher read-alouds (Duke & Kays, 1998; Gardner, 2004; Heibert & Fisher, 1990).

Benefits of Teacher Read-Alouds

There are several areas of literacy development which can be positively impacted by effective teacher read-alouds with primary-grade children (Chomsky, 1972; Hall & Moats, 2000; Hayes & Ahrens, 1988; Morrow & Brittain, 2003; Snow & Dickinson, 1991; Teale, 2003). Four primary benefits included (a) emergent literacy skills, (b) listening comprehension, (c) vocabulary development, and (d) exposure to complex language.

Emergent Literacy Skills

Snow and Dickinson (1991) described emergent literacy skills as the knowledge children have about literacy prior to formal schooling. This includes knowledge about concepts of print, story structure, letter identification, and vocabulary. Sulzby (1985) illustrated the continuum of children's emergent literacy development as a branching tree structure. Sulzby labeled one side of the tree as picture governed attempts at reading; the child tells the story as if the pictures were the message. The other side of the tree represents children who have learned that the print is the source of the message or the story. First children exhibit an unformed story structure which is characterized by labeling objects in the pictures. Then the child moves to a more formal story structure, which is usually oral language-like in nature. An example of this would be a child "reading" a familiar picture book by retelling the story in her own words. As they have more experience with read-alouds, children will begin to retell the story in a more written language-like format, even though they are still focusing on the pictures as the message of the story. Children later acquire a realization that the print is the message of the story and finally proceed to independent reading.

The adult/child story interaction in teacher read-alouds helps children move along this continuum to the ultimate goal of independent reading. Sulzby (1985) contended that reading

aloud to children enhances their knowledge of story structure, story phrasing, and the characteristics of a written story. Students are then able to apply that knowledge to understand new texts. MacNeil (1989) suggested that the words and word patterns accumulate in layers and as the layers thicken, they govern understanding and appreciation of language.

Teale (2003) characterized teacher read-alouds as activities that help children develop the knowledge, strategies, and dispositions that are fundamental aspects of becoming literate. He cautioned against letting teacher read-alouds become “fillers” or transitional activities. Snow et al. (1998) advocated teacher read-alouds as ideal forums for exploring many dimensions of language and literacy. Teacher read-alouds develop concepts about print, familiarity with vocabulary of book language, an appreciation of text, and motivation to learn to read. Teale (1984) suggested that reading to children develops their awareness of the functions and uses of written language and the form and structure of written language as well as self-monitoring and predictive strategies.

Teacher read-alouds develop familiarity with story structure, with rich language patterns, and identify reading as a pleasurable activity (Hall & Moats, 2000). Strickland and Taylor (1995) stated that understanding story structure is important not only for comprehending a story but also for being able to write a story. They observed that as more books are shared, children begin to attend to the print on the page. After children begin to attend to print, they come to realize that the print carries messages, and their awareness of print and the reading process begins to take shape. Smith (1973) agreed that children gain understanding that print has meaning and that written language is different from speech before they are able to read. Through teacher read-alouds, repeated exposure to the style and structure of written language, and repeated interaction with print, children gain these vital concepts.

Studies have shown that children who have been read to frequently over long periods of time scored significantly better on measures of vocabulary, comprehension, and decoding ability than children in control groups who were not read to by an adult. Chomsky (1972) examined five- to ten-year-old children's exposure to written language and their rate of linguistic development. Chomsky tested students' reading levels and used questionnaires, a weekly home reading log, and parental interviews to obtain information about children's reading background and current reading activity for the children involved in the study. Chomsky reported that children who have been read to regularly in their preschool years made rapid strides in reading and language development at school. Chomsky concluded that "exposure to the more complex language available from reading does seem to go hand in hand with increased knowledge of the language." (p. 33)

An intervention project with kindergarten students which consisted of parent education aimed at increasing book-based interactions with language between parents and children was conducted by Jordan, Snow, and Porche (2000). In this study, there was a pre-test and a post-test which were similar in nature to the aforementioned Chomsky study. The results indicated a positive correlation between the participation in the at-home reading and language development activities and increased language scores for the children. Although this study was not directly related to teacher read-alouds, the activities that were provided to parents for read-alouds were similar to those which have been shown to be effective in teacher read-alouds.

Whitehurst et al. (1999, 1994) report on experimental studies with a program they term *dialogic reading*. Dialogic reading is a structured form of teacher read-aloud that includes the components discussed in this study as being effective strategies for teacher read-alouds. Children in these studies were involved in dialogic reading both at home and at school, during their pre-

school year at a Head Start center. There were significant effects from the intervention across all the domains of literacy. The second study followed up on the children from the first study at the end of their second grade year. Although the effects of the study were not seen at the end of the second grade year, the students who had entered school with low emergent literacy skills had made significant gains toward being on-grade level by the end of the second grade year.

Listening Comprehension

Teacher read-alouds can have positive effects on students' listening comprehension. Brown (1975) and Pelligrini and Galda (1982) conducted experiments in which children participated with their teachers in teacher read-aloud activities. Prior to the story reading, the teacher engaged students in such activities as previewing the story, making predictions about the story, and setting a purpose for listening. During the reading, discussions focusing on the ideas of the story occurred at appropriate times. After the reading, teachers and students discussed predictions and purposes, engaged in role-playing activities and retelling of the stories, and reconstructed the stories through pictures. Comprehension and sense of story structure were positively greater for children in experimental groups than those in control groups.

Morrow and Brittain (2003) described their observations of three classrooms, conducted as an adjunct to their survey of pre-K through eighth-grade teachers' current classroom practices. They reported that all the teachers engaged in activities such as setting a purpose for reading, making predictions, and connecting text to real-life experiences. The teachers also encouraged analytic talk and discussed meanings of unknown words. Morrow and Brittain pointed out that reading aloud creates and satisfies curiosity, opens up new worlds, and nourishes the imagination while functioning as a vehicle for learning that brings enjoyment for both the teacher and the students.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary is the key to success in making the transition from oral to written forms of communication because without knowledge of the word being read, meaning is lost for the reader (National Reading Panel, 2000). The National Reading Panel's (2000) review of research found a strong correlation between a reader's vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Blachowicz and Fisher (2002) provided research-based guidelines for effective vocabulary instruction. One guideline stated that the effective vocabulary teacher builds a word-rich environment in which students are immersed in words for both incidental and intentional learning. Within this guideline, Blachowicz and Fisher recommend reading aloud as an effective strategy for developing a vocabulary that is wide, flexible, and usable. Stahl and Stahl (2004) asserted that to expand a child's vocabulary is to teach that child to think about his or her world.

Hayes and Ahrens (1988) researched the difficulty of words in various written language genres and in the oral language present in adult and children's television shows and adult speech in a variety of levels of formality. This study showed that the vocabulary in children's books is more sophisticated than the language of adult television, is above that of a typical conversation between college educated adults, and contains more rare words than any type of oral utterance except expert courtroom testimony. Hayes and Ahrens concluded that individuals will be exposed to new vocabulary most frequently through print.

Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) interpreted this study as evidence that oral text is "lexically impoverished" when compared to written language. Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) correlated exposure to books and vocabulary ability by testing children to see how many titles of popular children's books a child could name. Children were given authentic titles and an equal number of made-up titles. There was a correlation between the number of titles a child

could recognize and the child's vocabulary, with children successful in identifying more authentic titles having correspondingly higher scores on vocabulary tests.

Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, and Shore (1993) showed a dramatic impact on vocabulary attained as a result of storybook reading to kindergarten students. The teachers in this study read 12 books at least nine times to their kindergarten students. There were no illustrations to help students learn from context and they made significant gains in vocabulary. Because it is the formal language used in their culture, these Arabian students are taught in an educational system that provides reading instruction in a language that they do not normally speak and cannot read. When parents read to their children, they usually do it in the family's native language, or they orally retell the stories that they learned in their youth. Thus, the written language instruction is a difficult task for the teachers and the students. Feitelson et al. found that the repeated storybook reading of the 12 stories facilitated students' ability to understand the texts and increased the incidence of their use of the language in their social interactions with peers. Parents were inspired to seek out children's books written in the formal language for the purpose of reading them aloud to their children. All these benefits came solely from context, without any other intervention.

After one reading of a book, Senechal and Cornell (1993) demonstrated gains in children's receptive vocabulary. Senechal, Thomas, and Monker (1995) found that younger children (3-year-olds) benefited from storybook reading with interactive qualities (Whitehurst's dialogic reading) but that older children (4- and 5-year-olds) benefited from repeated storybook reading. They proposed that children with more extensive vocabulary knowledge are able to make more connections and learn more efficiently from simple read-alouds. They further suggest that older children and/or those with larger vocabularies have more basic word concepts that

facilitate learning new words. This fits with Beck and McKeown's (2001) ranking of words into three tiers, with the middle tier of words being easier to acquire because learners already have some concept about words of this type and so are refining and deepening word knowledge.

Exposure to Complex Language

A child's experience with complex language has an influence on vocabulary acquisition and reading development. Hart and Risley (1995) conducted a landmark study of the differences in vocabulary between children of professional parents (college professors) and children of lower socio-economic families whose children were enrolled in a publicly funded preschool program. At 36 months of age, the children of professional parents had a vocabulary of about 1,000 words, compared to about 500 words in the vocabularies of the children from lower socio-economic families. Not only was there a vast difference between the vocabulary sizes, but further research showed a flatter growth curve for the lower students. Stanovich (1986) termed this phenomenon the *Matthew effect* because those students who are rich in vocabulary learn new vocabulary at a faster rate than their less able peers. Hart and Risley followed the students into upper elementary school and found that the students who were behind in vocabulary development when they entered preschool continued to lag behind their more able peers in vocabulary development. Hart and Risley (1995) attributed this vocabulary gap to differences in the depth and complexity of parents' conversation and interaction with their children.

Marzano (2003) and Marzano, and Pickering and Pollock (2001) recommended that educators involve students in programs that increase the number and quality of life experiences. They also recommended that educators develop a program of wide reading that emphasizes vocabulary development and includes direct instruction in vocabulary terms and phrases that are

important to specific subject matter. The most important of these recommendations for early childhood teachers is the wide reading that emphasizes vocabulary meanings.

As previously stated, when one hears the term *children's literature*, narrative texts often come to mind. Gardner (2004) compared the vocabulary in narrative and expository text and found narrative text was easier to read, but it lacked the more complex vocabulary found in expository text. Because of the differences in the vocabulary she found, Gardner recommended that educators choose multiple genres of books for read-alouds.

Duke and Kays (1998) also promote the use of informational text for teacher read-alouds. They conducted a study that provided kindergarten students read-alouds of informational text almost every day. Children exposed to daily informational text read-alouds developed an improved understanding of the structure of informational text and the vocabulary it included. Duke and Kays attribute the reading slump that occurs around the fourth grade to too much emphasis on narrative text in the early years of schooling, which fails to prepare students to begin to learn the content specific vocabulary required in upper grades.

Effective Teacher Read-Alouds

There are several dimensions to effective teacher read-alouds. These include using an interactive style, highlighting vocabulary, and the use of multiple genres.

Interactive Style

Children who are in primary grades have receptive vocabularies that allow them to understand words their emergent reading skills do not permit them to recognize in print (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Beck et al., 2002; Becker, 1977; Biemiller, 2001; Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991, 1997, 2003; Juel & Deffes, 2004). Beck and McKeown (2001) recommended that teachers read-aloud texts that are challenging enough to require grappling

with ideas and taking an active stance toward constructing meaning. Penno, Wilkinson, and Moore (2002) found that interactive read-aloud styles included the types of activities needed to help less able vocabulary learners master new vocabulary, a task they are unable to do through context alone.

Beck et al. (2002) characterized this type of read-aloud as *robust* vocabulary instruction. Robust instruction “offers rich information about words and their uses, provides frequent and varied opportunities for students to think about and use words, and enhances students’ language comprehension and production” (p.2). These types of interventions are effective for acquiring new vocabulary as well as helping students make meaning of their reading. These recommendations were based on research studies (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Beck & McKeown, 2001) that showed an interactive read-aloud is effective for learning new words and for affecting reading comprehension.

These studies are the impetus behind Beck and McKeown’s (2001) Text Talk program. Text Talk encourages teachers to take advantage of social learning by allowing students to interact with the teacher, their peers, and the text as they work to make meaning of the ideas in the text. The teacher asks open-ended questions as the story is read, fostering comprehension and language development. Since children have a tendency to use pictures cues to make meaning, the adult waits until the end of the story to show the pictures. This elicits greater language production and avoids having students draw faulty conclusions based on pictures that do not always match the story. The program is designed to enhance young children’s ability to construct meaning from decontextualized language. TextTalk takes advantage of sophisticated vocabulary in children’s books by explicitly teaching and encouraging use of several words from the story after reading.

Wasik and Bond's (2001) study of 4-year-olds from low income families provided teacher read-alouds paired with defining vocabulary words, asking open-ended questions to promote student discussions, and providing students the opportunity to talk. Children who were provided multiple opportunities to interact with the vocabulary learned more words than those students who simply listened to the books read aloud. The teachers in the treatment group used story props as meaningful contexts to allow students to use the vocabulary from the stories. The results for the treatment group were significant for both receptive and expressive vocabulary acquisition.

Whitehurst et al. (1994; 1999) and Hargrave and Senechal (2000) described the benefits of dialogic reading. De Temple and Snow (2003) defined the theoretical principles of dialogic reading as encouraging the child to become an active learner through the employment of open ended questions, providing feedback that models more sophisticated language, and challenging the child's knowledge and skills by raising the conversation to a level just above their ability. Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory describes this type of learning support as *scaffolding* used the term *zone of proximal development* to describe that range of work which lies just outside one's independent ability.

In dialogic reading, children are actively involved in story time. They are encouraged to discuss the story with the reader as well as with their peers, which provides rich contexts for vocabulary acquisition. Dialogic reading can also overcome the problem of some children simply ignoring the teacher read-alouds and thereby not receiving the benefits of the activity.

Dickinson and Tabors' (2001) research showed that book-reading experiences fostered vocabulary growth, even from incidental exposure. They noted that talk focused on the meaning of the stories and discussion of meanings of unfamiliar words was effective in promoting

vocabulary growth. They studied interactive teacher read-alouds which provided repeated exposure to new words, clarified the meanings of these words through definitions, picture clues, and sentence context, and encouraged deep processing of word meanings. The study showed that children involved in analytical talk with books containing varied vocabulary (rare words and not as much predictable text) made measurable gains in vocabulary. They posited that analytical discussions can help create a stronger conceptual base for children's vocabulary acquisition while providing occasions for use of low frequency, or rare, words.

Stahl and Stahl (2004) encouraged adults to talk before, during, and after teacher read-alouds. Through talk, the teacher can expand children's vocabulary and help them to expand their word knowledge quantitatively as well as qualitatively. De Temple and Snow (2003) described the talk that is most beneficial during read aloud as nonimmediate talk. Nonimmediate talk goes beyond the text to promote making predictions and linking the story to past experiences (text to self), to other books (text to text), and to the real world (text to world). Nonimmediate talk may also promote drawing inferences, analyzing information, or discussing the meanings of words and offer explanations.

Teaching Vocabulary

Stahl and Fairbanks' (1986) meta-analysis revealed that instruction which included both contextual and definitional information promoted vocabulary growth. They argued that direct vocabulary instruction is a useful adjunct to the natural learning that may occur from oral and written context. Students who were given only definitional information and one or two exposures to meaningful information about words (drill and practice) did not appear to have improvement in reading comprehension. If students were given both definitional information and contextual information about words, the instruction was effectual in reading comprehension.

Elley (1989) compared three readings of a book with no word explanations to three readings of the same book with explanations of unfamiliar words. Elley's research began with a pilot study which reported gains in vocabulary for seven and eight year-old students who were read the same text 3 times over a 7-day period. In a follow-up study, students' gains increased significantly when the teacher provided some direct vocabulary instruction before the teacher read-aloud. Vocabulary explanations more than doubled the gains obtained from simply reading the books. In a delayed post-test, the students' decline in knowledge was negligible. Based on these results, Elley recommended repeated readings of books along with a direct vocabulary instruction component.

In a similar study, Wasik and Bond (2001) found that teacher read-alouds with a word explanation component resulted in gains on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), even for words that were not a part of the explanation. Teachers read stories aloud, provided opportunities to interact with the teacher and peers, engaged the children with story props, and followed the reading with extension activities. Wasik and Bond pointed out that this type of teacher read-aloud also led teachers to be more explicit in their day-to-day conversations with students. Teachers reported that they became more aware of the richness or lack of richness in their everyday conversations and endeavored to increase their use of words in conversations that would help expand students' vocabulary knowledge. The increased usage of rich vocabulary in conversations with children in turn led to children becoming more engaged in conversations with peers, thus encountering even more vocabulary. Wasik and Bond noted that this heightened awareness about words in increasingly rich conversations also encouraged students to display more interest in and curiosity about words. The students were observed using richer vocabulary in their conversations with peers during class-time and play-time.

Robbins and Ehri (1994) conducted a similar study with kindergarten students and with similar results. They also discovered that all children benefited from the teacher read-alouds with explicit vocabulary instruction, but children with stronger vocabulary skills prior to the intervention showed greater benefits than students with less-developed vocabulary. They conjectured that teachers may need to provide experiences that assist children with weaker vocabulary skills to become more interested in the story. This is supported by Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, and Deffes (2003) who cautioned that students who hear words that are too hard or rare may simply ignore them.

Stahl and Stahl (2004) also argued that the words selected for vocabulary instruction are important. The words chosen should not be too common, too rare, or too difficult. They call the appropriate words for explanations “Goldilocks” words. These words are neither too hard nor too easy, but just right for students to grasp the meaning or to expand on meaning they already possess.

Beck et al. (2001) identified the difficulty of words chosen for explicit vocabulary instruction as belonging to three different tiers or levels. Tier 1 words are common words that most children know. Tier 3 words are usually related to a specific context or subject and are usually rare. Tier 2 words are those for which children may know some concepts. Examples of tier 2 words would be *enormous*, *nibble*, and *skyscraper*. Because most children already have a schema that includes *big*, *eat*, and *building*, these tier 2 words allow children to connect more sophisticated words to the basic conceptual meanings they have already. Beck et al., in *Bringing Words to Life* (2002), provided a list of suggested books for each elementary grade level along with the words they would recommend for word study. Biemiller (1999) suggested that words

are learned in a general order and provided an ordered list of the words for teaching at each grade level.

De Temple and Snow (2003) suggested that word learning becomes easier as children's vocabularies grow. Children can learn the paradigmatic relationships among words and can then quickly learn new words to fill in the spaces in their paradigms. For example, a child who knows the words for primary colors will have little difficulty in learning words like purple, orange and pink. If a child knows names of numerous dinosaur species, learning a new dinosaur name is much easier for that child compared to a child who knows no names for dinosaurs.

Biemiller (2001, 2004) and Biemiller and Slonim (2001) described an effective vocabulary acquisition program which combined teacher read-alouds with direct vocabulary and comprehension instruction. The teacher provided direct instruction for 8-10 words in context and performed repeated readings of selected texts. Students learned 35% of the targeted words in this study. They contended that if such a program were conducted over the course of a school year, students would learn 6-12 words each week and make significant gains in vocabulary skills. They recommended a minimum of 25 minutes each day be devoted to teacher read-alouds.

Genre

Gardner (2004) cautioned against using narrative stories as the only or predominant genre for teacher read-alouds. Her comparison of narrative and expository text found narrative text was easier to read but it lacked the more complex vocabulary found in expository text. Narrative text emphasizes human characteristics and social/cultural contexts of human interaction. Expository text, on the other hand, is more abstract and based on information and content. Based on the results of her analysis, Gardner recommended that educators choose multiple genres of books for read-alouds.

To investigate the potential difficulty among genres, Duke and Kays (1998) provided kindergarten students read-alouds of informational text almost every day. They found that the children developed an improved understanding of the structure of informational text and the vocabulary it included. Not only were the children capable of interacting with the informational text, they enjoyed the interaction. Duke and Kays pointed to the reading slump that occurs around the fourth grade year and posited that too much emphasis on narrative text may contribute to the problem. Heibert and Fisher (1990) also recommended a balance between narrative and expository text for the same reasons.

In summary, the review of literature on teacher read-alouds clearly indicates that this instructional practice holds a valuable place in literacy instruction. Teacher read-alouds contribute to enhanced emergent literacy skills, listening comprehension, and vocabulary development while providing exposure to complex language. In order to provide the most effective read-alouds, teachers should adopt an interactive reading style, include vocabulary instruction, and employ literature from a wide variety of genres.

Principal as Instructional Leader

In today's schools, principals are expected to be the instructional leaders. The Georgia School Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2006), which are used as a tool for school improvement, call for the principal of the school to effectively assume the role of the lead learner, to be knowledgeable about best practices for instruction, and to consistently provide coaching and supervision for curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

In his foreword to Booth and Roswell's *The Literacy Principal* (2002), Fullan stated that principals need both expertise in the *content* of literacy and expertise in leading the *change process*. Booth and Roswell (2002) provided a Reading Observation Schedule to help principals

determine if teachers are implementing best practices for instruction. The first item on the schedule is: “Are teachers modeling reading through significant and frequent read-aloud sessions, incorporating different types of texts and styles in community-building literacy events?” (p.69). To illustrate the need for principals to be models and mentors of literacy based school change, Booth and Roswell quoted Shelley Harwayne in *Going Public*: “Principals, as well as teachers, can be models; in fact they ‘must’ be models. How can we ask students to lead literate lives if we don’t?” (p. 122) Principals are teachers and must be knowledgeable about effective reading practices and skilled in implementing those practices. Barth (1990) described a good school as a place where everyone is teaching and everyone is learning: students, teachers, and principals.

Allington (2001) stated that the primary work of the school administrator must be to improve classroom instruction. Allington and Cunningham (2002) suggested that “administrators need to ask not, ‘Are we doing something?’ but, ‘Are we doing the right things?’” (p. 87) Administrators who possess knowledge of instructional content and appropriate strategies for teaching that content are better able to work with teachers as they implement the best practices for instruction that will ensure that all students experience reading success.

Fullan (2001) evaluated a variety of large-scale reform efforts (e.g. school improvement processes in the Guilford County School District in Greensboro, North Carolina, and a literacy project with the Toronto District School Board). Based on analyses of these efforts he recommended that today’s administrators acquire two types of expertise to make a serious impact on literacy in schools. The first is expertise in leading the change process, and the second is expertise in the content of the literature regarding best practices for instruction.

Blase and Blase's (2000) survey research described an effective principal through the eyes of a teacher. If a principal is to make an impact on student learning, two major themes were identified: (a) talking about instructional issues and (b) promoting teachers' professional growth. The teachers surveyed described an effective administrator as one who discussed instructional issues knowledgably and frequently. These discussions should occur not only in the context of instructional conferences but as a part of everyday professional conversations. The teachers also described an effective principal as one who praised effective teaching practices. Effective principals provided suggestions for improvement of instructional effectiveness and the opportunity for the professional learning needed to make the suggested improvements.

Marzano et al. (2005) performed a meta-analysis of 69 studies involving 2,802 schools and computed the correlation between the leadership behavior of the principal in the school and the average academic achievement of the students in the school. They reported the results of this meta-analysis as a list of 21 responsibilities of a school leader that positively correlate with student achievement. Knowledge about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practice is one of those responsibilities, as is involvement in design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. These responsibilities have a positive correlation of .25 and .20, respectively, with student academic achievement.

Schlechty (2002) called providing professional development opportunities the heart of what principals should be doing in their role as instructional leaders in their schools. To illustrate his point, Schlechty used this adage: "Followers know what leaders expect by what the leaders inspect and what they respect," (p. 59) to indicate how a principal is involved in promoting professional growth every time she walks down the hall, visits classrooms, conducts observations, and comments on what she has seen and heard. This is one way a principal is able

to share her knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practice with teachers and her expectations for classroom instructional practices such as teacher read-alouds. Schlechty indicated that principals are demonstrating if something is important by whether or not they inspect that process or procedure.

Through the use of a survey and analysis of student reading scores, Broughton and Riley (1991) examined the relationship between elementary principals' knowledge of reading and elementary school students' reading achievement. They used a questionnaire designed to measure principals' level of involvement in school reading programs. The data showed a positive correlation between principals' involvement in evaluation of the reading program and student reading achievement.

Andrews and Soder (1987) used a questionnaire to survey principals in the Seattle School District to measure strategic interactions between principals and teachers. The results revealed there was a positive correlation between principal leadership and student academic achievement where principals were involved in improvement of classroom instruction, engaged in professional growth, and participated in the improvement of classroom circumstances that enhance learning.

Jacobson, Reutzel, and Hollingsworth (1992) surveyed a random sample of 1,244 elementary school principals across the United States to determine their perceptions of current issues in elementary reading instruction and to discover what sources the principals used to obtain current information about reading instruction. The results of this study documented that elementary school public school principals were aware of important reading issues but they needed readily accessible and practical information to allow them to assure that best practices were implemented in classrooms.

Thus, the research literature on the principal as instructional leader reveals a link between public school principals' knowledge of best practices, their expectations for implementation of these practices, and students' reading achievement.

Summary

For the purpose of this study, teacher read-alouds are defined as the classroom activity of a teacher reading children's literature to children. The benefits of teacher read-alouds include the development of emergent literacy skills, increasing listening comprehension, development of vocabulary, and exposure to complex language. Effective teacher read-alouds utilize an interactive style, include vocabulary instruction, and include texts from multiple genres of literatures.

The review of literature presented demonstrates that reading aloud to children is a common practice in the elementary school. There is also considerable evidence for the benefits of read-alouds in children's early reading development. Research also described the need for principals to be instructional leaders. This literature demonstrated that an effective principal is one who is the instructional leader for curriculum development and that this type of leadership has a powerful impact on children's achievement.

There is also research that indicated that teachers value read-alouds as components of literacy instruction (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Ro, 2000, 1998; Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). Teachers value of read-alouds was evident in their answer to the question of how much instructional time they devoted to components of literature on a scale of 1 to 4 (1=none, 4=Considerable); the average response for teacher read-alouds was 3.4 (Baumann et al., 2000). This score ranked second only to the component of comprehension. In the same study, 93% of the teachers indicated that they relegated significant amounts of time

to reading aloud to students. Baumann et al. (1998) reported that the teachers who responded to their questionnaire rated reading aloud as the practice which they employed most regularly. Jacobs et al. (2000) reported that teachers regularly read-aloud to their students, although the amount of time devoted to this practice decreased as grade levels increased. Ariail and Albright (2006) and Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that both teachers and students at the middle-school level still valued teacher read-alouds as an instructional practice, and recommended an increase in teacher-read aloud practices for middle-school level students.

We have little information, however, about the value elementary principals place on the practice of reading aloud; hence, we do not know if principals promote reading aloud in their schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to ascertain public elementary school principals' perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine elementary public school principals' perceptions on the value of teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom. The researcher sought to determine if elementary public school principals consider teacher read-alouds to be a valuable instructional tool in the primary grades. Demographic data for the respondents and their schools were also collected. A survey questionnaire created for this study was delivered in a web-based format. Public school principals of schools in Georgia serving students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade were surveyed. Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis procedures, and respondents' answers to open questions were analyzed qualitatively. This chapter reports the methodology of the study including a description of the research design, the population examined, the instrument used for collecting data, and the procedures followed to collect and analyze the data.

Research Design

A survey is defined by Gay and Airasian (2003) as “an attempt to collect data from members of a population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables.” Sue and Ritter (2007) described a survey as a system for collecting information. The survey process begins with defining objectives and ends with data analysis and reporting of results (Dillman, 1978). Sue and Ritter, (2007) described the eight steps of conducting an online survey.

1. define objectives: determine what you want to know, determine the audience for the results;
2. define the population and choose a sampling frame: look for an existing one or create one, consider probability and non-probability sampling strategies;
3. design a data collection strategy: evaluate time and budget, estimate resources, choose a survey method;
4. develop a questionnaire: write the questions, pretest the questionnaire;
5. collect data: monitor responses, follow-up non-responses;
6. manage the data: input, clean, and transform the data;
7. analyze the data; and
8. disseminate the results.

Surveys can be administered in a variety of ways such as through telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, self-administered mail questionnaires, e-mail questionnaires, or web-based surveys. E-mail survey questionnaires are usually contained in the body of the email or as an attachment. Respondents participate in the survey by replying to the original e-mail. Web-based survey questionnaires are on a web-site and participants are sent a request to participate, usually via e-mail, which includes a link to the site. A web-based survey design was chosen for this study because the e-mail addresses of elementary principals are easily accessed and because public school principals have a high rate of Internet access (Baumann & Bason, 2004). Web-based surveys also are cost effective, relatively fast, and make data management efficient and reliable.

This survey research study employed traditional standards for questionnaire construction, in particular Dillman's (1978) "total design method." Additional perspectives and procedures for

conceptualizing and designing this study were drawn from works by Vockell and Asher (1995), Gay and Airasian (2003), and Sue and Ritter (2007), other authorities in the field of survey research.

Several sources were consulted for general educational questionnaire construction (e.g., Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004; Fowler, 1995) and especially for constructing questionnaires that explore literacy research questions and problems (Baumann & Bason, 2004). Given that this was a web-based questionnaire, procedures and guidelines for conducting electronic surveys by Dillman (2007), Sue and Ritter (2007), Thomas (2004), and Thach (1995) were especially useful in constructing a survey instrument and establishing procedures for an electronic survey.

Technical support and consultation were provided by Dr. James Bason, the Director of the University of Georgia's Survey Research Center (SRC). SRC technical services were used for instrument construction, and the web-based questionnaire was distributed via the server and interface provided by the SRC. Data reduction and analysis were also accomplished with support from the SRC.

Survey Instrument

Questionnaires

As described by Berdie, Anderson, and Neibuhr (1986) a questionnaire is a series of predetermined questions which are self-administered, administered by mail, or asked by an interviewer. Additionally, a questionnaire is a scientific instrument for measurement and for collecting a particular kind of data. According to Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002), Berdie, Anderson, and Neibuhr (1986), Best and Kahn (2006), Bledsoe (1972), Gay and Airasian (2003),

and Keeves (1997) there are important characteristics of a questionnaire which enhance the potential for it to be effective. An effective questionnaire

- seeks information that is not directly available from other sources;
- is as brief as possible;
- has sufficient “face” appeal or deals with a topic of sufficient interest or importance to gain a response;
- contains directions that are clear and complete;
- assures that important terms are understood by the respondent or are defined;
- contains questions that are worded as simply and as clearly as possible
- contains questions that are worded in positive, not negative, terms;
- includes questions that provide an opportunity for easy, accurate, and unambiguous responses;
- is organized from general to specific;
- provides for some depth to the response in order to avoid superficial replies;
- is phrased in such a way that the responses will not be embarrassing to the respondent and allays suspicion concerning hidden purposes;
- is attractive in appearance and neatly arranged;
- focuses on a single topic or idea;
- questions within the knowledge of the respondents; and
- is easy to tabulate and interpret. These guidelines were considered when the instrument for this survey was created.

Initial drafting

A questionnaire was created specifically for this project. Several resources and guidelines from the professional literature (e.g., Bradburn et al., 2004; Fowler, 1995) were used to determine appropriate formats and how to structure questions for clarity. In addition, the researcher examined published survey research studies in the field of literacy that were used as guides in designing this questionnaire (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Baumann et al., 2000; Commeyras & DeGroff, 1998; Hoffman et al., 1993; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Jacobson et al., 1992; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; and Sharon, 1973-1974).

A first draft of the questionnaire was constructed as one of the requirements of a University of Georgia class on survey research that the researcher took from Dr. Diane Samdahl. This initial questionnaire consisted of 36 questions which were not divided into sections. The first 12 questions were related to the respondent's professional experience and demographic profile of their schools. The next 4 questions inquired the amount of time respondents felt should be devoted to storybook reading each day in each of the target grades and the amount of time teachers should spend on follow-up to storybook reading. The questionnaire also included questions about specific read-aloud programs implemented in the respondent's school and how and when a teacher should teach vocabulary. A Likert scale was to be utilized to respond to statements such as:

- Students should interact with the reader during storybook reading;
- The teacher should read aloud to the whole class;
- The teacher should read aloud to small groups of children;
- I would conduct a formal observation on a teacher who is reading aloud to students; and

- Reading in my school is based predominately on a basal series.

Survey review, revision, and pilot testing

A critique and review of the questionnaire occurred in five steps. First, students enrolled in the survey research course provided feedback about the clarity, formatting, and effectiveness of the initial draft of the questionnaire in obtaining the desired information. Some suggestions from peers were to include a title and some explanation of terms such as storybook reading. Peers also suggested breaking the questionnaire into sections and including directions specific to each section. The questionnaire was revised on the basis of this feedback.

Next, the revised questionnaire received further feedback and suggestions for improvement from the instructor of the survey research class. The instructor suggested refining the questions to focus on the basic things the researcher really wanted to know from principals. A question about the school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status was discussed at length because it could be considered intrusive or punitive; thus impacting the way principals would answer the questions in the survey. The questionnaire was revised based on this feedback. This iteration of the questionnaire included a statement of the intent of the survey and a definition of the term storybook reading. The first section of questions inquired about the respondent's teaching and administrative experience. Secondly, the questionnaire requested information on the demographic profile of the respondent's school and school district. The question about the school's AYP status for the last 4 years was included in this questionnaire. The third section of the questionnaire related to students and storybook reading, requesting the amount of time students were engaged in storybook reading during the school day and whether or not this amount of time was too short, just right, or too long. Finally, the fourth section sought to

determine, through the use of a Likert-like scale, the value the respondents place on storybook reading for the development of skills in primary-grade students' literacy development.

Third, the revised questionnaire was then reviewed by the researcher's major professor and discussed in several meetings. He suggested removing the description of the survey's intent, so as to avoid biasing the respondents' answers. The directions simply stated that the questions inquired about literacy instruction in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. The 8 questions about the respondent's school and school district demographics were moved to the first section of the questionnaire and after discussion, the question about AYP status was removed. The second section inquired about respondent's professional experience and consisted of 3 questions. The third section consisted of 6 questions, one of which utilized a Likert-like scale and 3 of which were open questions. The decision was made to format the questionnaire so that respondents would not be able to go back to previous questions once they had submitted an answer. The questionnaire was revised following these sessions.

Fourth, a hard copy of the questionnaire was delivered to 12 elementary assistant principals in the county where the researcher was employed. These assistant principals were asked to complete the questionnaire and to provide feedback about clarity of questions and ease of understanding directions. Eight of the assistant principals responded; the feedback received was primarily related to ease of understanding directions. It was noted that some questions did not include the unit for the answer, for example years, percent, or schools. The questionnaire was revised another time in response to the assistant principals' feedback.

Finally, during the prospectus defense members of the researcher's doctoral committee reviewed the questionnaire. Further suggestions for revisions and additions were considered including the addition of the statements designed to determine respondents' perceptions of their

expertise as a leader capable of impacting student achievement, consolidation of the Likert-like scale questions into two questions, and deletion of one of the open questions. A final form of the questionnaire was completed after these revisions (see Appendix A for the final form of the questionnaire).

The final questionnaire was formatted to conform to web-based presentation, which was accomplished with the help of Dr. Jim Bason and staff at the University of Georgia's SRC. The final questionnaire was uploaded to the secure URL for distribution. See Appendix B for screen shots of the survey as it was presented to participants when they logged on to the Internet web site.

On the basis of the initial drafting and iterative review and revision process, the questionnaire included three sections as follows (see Appendix A for the full questionnaire):

1. School and district demographics: This section included 9 questions that inquired about the respondent's (a) school (grade levels enrolled; total school enrollment: enrollments at Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2; school location – rural, suburban, or urban); (b) student makeup (percent free and reduced lunch eligibility and race/ethnicity distribution), and (c) school system size and location.
2. Principal professional experience: This section, which included 4 questions, requested information about the principals' professional experience: (a) teaching experience (total years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and experience in teaching of reading); (b) experience as a building level administrator (number of years and grade levels supervised); and (c) perceptions of their expertise in leadership abilities which impact student achievement.

3. Literacy instruction: This section, which included 4 questions that directly addressed the research question, that is, items that inquired about the principal's perspectives on effective literacy practices: (a) amount of time allotted for literacy instruction; (b) percentage of time devoted to components of literacy; (c) the value of teacher read-alouds for development of literacy skill; and (d) the benefits of teacher read-alouds for six different groups of students: English language learners, below-grade-level readers, on-grade-level readers, above-grade-level readers, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and student from high socio-economic backgrounds. The final two questions required short responses. One asked whether or not they would conduct a formal observation on a teacher read-aloud and asked for components they would look for in an effective read-alouds if they responded yes or an explanation of their answer if they responded no. The second asked for additional comments regarding teacher read-alouds.

Participants

The research population included all public school principals of elementary and primary public schools in Georgia (N=1,079). The names of these individuals were available at the Georgia Department of Education's website, www.doe.k12.ga.us. This list included email addresses for all public school principals of these schools. It is difficult to determine the grade configuration of a school based solely on the name because some elementary schools serve students in Grades K-5 and others only serve students in Grades 3-5. In a district where elementary schools serve students in Grades 3-5, a primary school serves the K-2 students.

Because of the inability to determine exactly which grade levels are served by the list of 1,079 schools, the first item in the web-based questionnaire asked what grade levels were served

in the school. If K-2 students were not served, the principal was directed to the end of the questionnaire, thanked for their time, and exited from the survey site.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher secured permission to conduct the study from the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB). To secure informed consent from all participants, the email invitation included an approved cover letter (see Appendix C) that explained the purpose, intent, and use of the survey data. Participants were informed that the confidentiality of responses was protected by the secure server at the University of Georgia SRC. Public school principals who agreed to proceed with the study were asked to access the questionnaire via a link to the URL included in the email invitation.

The SRC at the University of Georgia collected the data and periodically reported to the researcher the number of responses received. After two weeks, principals who did not respond to the first invitation were sent a second electronic request to participate in the survey. The first survey request was sent mid-May and the second was sent in early June. In Georgia, some public school principals are on contract during the summer and some are not. Because of this, a final electronic request (see Appendix D) was sent to non-respondents in late July.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data from items 1 to 17 of the questionnaire were entered and coded using the *Statistical Package for the Social Services* (SPSS). Initial analysis involved computing basic descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, mean, and standard deviation. To determine if level of administrative expertise or years of experience led to differences in perceptions of value for the areas if literacy impacted by teacher read-alouds or benefits to specific sub-groups of students, four series of ANOVA analyses were run with the comparison groups and there were

no significant results. All statistical tests were non-directional with a predetermined alpha level of .05.

The short answer questions were analyzed using a content analysis similar to the procedures utilized by Baumann et al. (2000) in their survey research. This analysis process involved three steps (a) the responses to the item were downloaded from the web survey data base to a word processing program; (b) the researcher and two colleagues independently reviewed the open-ended responses for themes, highlighting the responses that denoted common themes; and (c) the reviewers met and discussed their results and negotiated final themes when their opinions varied.

The preceding process was employed four different times. The first was when analyzing narrative comments for “Yes” responses to Item 18. In this analysis, the researcher and colleagues drew from the review of literature, which indicated that the three primary components of effective teacher read-alouds were interactive style, explicit vocabulary instruction, and the use of multiple genres. The open-ended responses were examined for evidence that the principals would look for any and all of the three components during their teacher observations of read-alouds.

In the second analysis, the researcher and colleagues returned to the “Yes” responses for Item 18 and coded other themes that were evident in the principals’ comments. In the third and fourth analyses, respectively, the researcher and colleagues examined the “No” responses to Item 18 and the “Other” comments to Item 19, following the same procedures.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the design of the research study, the creation of the survey instrument, participants in the study, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures.

The study was designed as a web-based survey of public school principals in the state of Georgia with students enrolled at the target grades of Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Using a five step process which included feedback from various sources and information gathered from a pilot administration, a questionnaire was designed to determine the perceptions of elementary public school principals on the value of teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom. The survey was administered with technical assistance from the SRC at the University of Georgia, including data reduction and analysis. To determine if level of administrative expertise or years of experience led to differences in perceptions of value for the areas if literacy impacted by teacher read-alouds or benefits to specific sub-groups of students, four series of ANOVA analyses were run with the comparison groups. The data obtained from the first 17 items were input into SPSS and basic descriptive analyses were computed. The open-ended questions were analyzed for themes using content analysis techniques.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The research question in this study was: What are elementary principals' perceptions on the value of teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom? The results of the study addressing this question are presented in this chapter. The survey response rate is presented in the first section. Next, data from the survey are presented according to the three major sections of the survey: (a) school and district demographics, (b) principals' professional experience, and (c) principals' descriptions of and values for their K-3 literacy program, and specifically their values of teacher read-alouds. A summary concludes the chapter.

Data from Section A provided an overall description of the population of principal participants, from which one can ascertain whether the population approximates the overall population of public school principals in Georgia. Data from Section B outlined the participants' overall professional experiences, and they provide a mechanism to explore potential differences in principal's values of read-alouds by their experiential level. Section C includes data that directly addressed the research question.

Response Rate

An electronic request to complete the questionnaire developed for this study (see Appendix C) was sent to 1, 079 public school principals in Georgia that contained K-2 grade levels, which defined the overall population for this survey research. After the two follow-up requests for surveys, a total of 234 respondents had visited the Survey Research Center web site that hosted the survey; 209 of these answered some or all of the survey questions which equaled a 19.3% overall response rate.

Of the 1,079 public school principals who were sent an electronic request to participate, 99 responded that they worked in a system which had a board policy requiring prior approval from their central office before they may participate in research. Thirteen of the 1,079 responded that they do not serve students in the target grades of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Forty-six of the electronic survey requests bounced back as undeliverable due to incorrect email addresses.

The final response rate was calculated first by reducing the initial population size (1,079) by the number of public school principals who responded that prior approval was required, the undeliverable requests, and the principals who were ineligible because of the grade configuration of their schools (a total of 158 public school principals). This reduced the population size to 921, yielding a functional response rate of 22.6% (i.e., 209/921). This functional response rate translated into a +/- 6.0% sampling error at the 95% confidence interval.

Questionnaire Section A: School and District Demographics

Section A of the survey included 9 items that inquired about demographics of the schools and school districts. These data allow one to ascertain whether the final sample approximates the overall population of public school principals in Georgia. Item 1 asked principals if their school served K-2 students to ensure that the correct persons were being surveyed. If respondents indicated “No,” (i.e., the 13 principals listed above), then they were electronically skipped to a thank-you note for attempting to complete the survey, and their survey was excluded from analysis.

Item 2 asked principals to specify the grade levels in their school, and Items 3 and 4 asked for school enrollment. Principals listed school enrollments from 37 to 3154 students, with the average being 648, and the median enrollment being 570. Suspecting that the 3,154

enrollment could be an error, the researcher checked enrollment data in Georgia, and no schools reported an enrollment greater than 2,000 for the 2007-2008 school year. Recalculating the central tendencies with this high school enrollment eliminated resulted in a mean school enrollment of 636 and a median of 567.

Item 4 asked for enrollments for grades relevant to this study. Principals listed grade level enrollments as follows: a kindergarten mean of 119.19 (SD = 94.93, range 14-1,116), a Grade 1 mean of 113.10 (SD = 60.54, range 19-391), and a Grade 2 mean of 109.71 (SD = 57.54, range 14-364).

When asked about the location of the school districts (Item 5), 43.3% of the principals indicated that their schools were in rural communities, 36.8% were in suburban areas, and 19.9% were urban. The mean percentage of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch (Item 6) for respondents' schools was 58.99% (SD = 25.92, range = 2-100%).

With regard to race and ethnicity of students (Item 7), the average percents across the population were 2.43% of the students attending respondents' schools were Asian-Pacific Islander, 39.04% were Black, 9.91% were Hispanic, 3.00% were Multi-racial, 0.91% were Native American, 50.51% were White, and 1.09% Other. These percentages do not sum to 100% because some respondents skipped a group if they had no students enrolled who fit into that group, and the web-based survey program calculated percentages based on the number of respondents to each section of the question. However, the overall percentages are a reasonably accurate picture of racial/ethnic demographics of the schools.

The researcher compared the school location (i.e. rural, suburban, urban) to the distribution of population found on the Georgia Facts section of the University of Georgia Family and Consumer Sciences website, and the population figures were similar to the actual

population distribution in the state of Georgia. The researcher compared sample statistics for racial/ethnic distribution and eligibility for free/reduced-price lunches to data from the Georgia K-12 Public Schools Annual Report Card for 2005-2006 (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2006), and the population school figures approximated the parameters of all Georgia schools. Item 9 asked principals which Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) served their school, and all RESAs in the state were represented in the sample. In sum, the population demographics approximated those of public elementary schools serving K-2 students in the state of Georgia.

Questionnaire Section B: Professional Experience

Section B of the survey includes 4 items that asked the elementary school principals about their professional experience. Data from this section provide a mechanism to explore potential differences in principals' values of read-alouds by their experiential level.

Table 1 presents the data for Item 10, which asked for the years of experience teaching the respondent had at grade levels from Prekindergarten to Grade 12. Overall, the participating principals averaged a little over 13 years of classroom teaching experience.

Table 1

Years of Experience as a Teacher

Grade Levels	N	Range	Mean	Median	SD
Pre-Kindergarten	47	0-15	<1	0	2.35
Kindergarten	74	0-20	3.24	1	4.85
First Grade	83	0-25	3.24	1	4.53
Second Grade	78	0-14	2.63	1	3.18
Third Grade	81	0-17	3.48	2	3.93
Fourth Grade	80	0-14	3.06	2	3.50
Fifth Grade	93	0-17	4.58	3	4.53
Sixth – Eighth Grades	97	0-20	4.93	3	4.30
Ninth – Twelfth Grades	61	0-20	4.82	3	5.12
Total	172	0-25	13.28	12	6.33

Item 11 requested respondents to report their years of experience and grade levels taught as a teacher of reading. The grade levels were grouped into K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The results of this question are presented in Table 2. The participating principals averaged a little over 13 years of experience as a teacher of reading.

Table 2

Years of Experience as a Reading Teacher

Grade Levels	N	Range	Mean	Median	SD
K – 2	146	0-25	7.12	6	5.90
3 – 5	148	0-17	6.38	5	4.55
6 – 8	107	0-16	4.60	3	3.91
9 – 12	79	0-20	4.79	3	5.37
Total	179	0-25	13.25	12	6.38

The next question (Item 12) asked how many years of experience respondents had as a building level administrator at the primary/elementary school, middle school/junior high school, and high school levels. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Years of Administrative Experience

Grade Levels	N	Range	Mean	Median	SD
Primary/Elementary	181	1-32	8.52	7	5.64
Middle School/Junior High	64	0-15	3.30	2	3.03
High School	42	0-8	2.12	1	2.40
Total	181	1-35	10.18	9	5.00

The final question (Item 13) in section B of the questionnaire requested respondents to self-assess their levels of expertise in three areas of leadership: (a) leading the change process in

their schools, (b) implementing best instructional practices, and (c) providing instructional coaching and supervision. These were Likert-like scale items in which respondents determined whether they (1) Disagreed, (2) Somewhat Disagreed, (3) Agreed, or (4) Strongly Agreed. The results for these questions are presented in table 4.

Table 4

Perceptions on Expertise as Leaders Impacting Student Achievement

	Mean Score	Percent Selecting “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”
I am an expert in leading the change process for my school.	3.24	91.9
I am an expert in implementing best instructional practices in the classrooms of my school.	3.24	94.2
I am the instructional leader in my school and routinely provide coaching and supervision for curriculum, assessment, and instruction.	3.38	96.0

As can be seen from inspecting Table 4, the principals rated themselves highly in all three areas of instructional leadership. If one collapses the percent of principals who selected Agree or Strongly Agree for each item, it is clear that the majority judged themselves to be expert in leading the change process (91.9%), implementing best practices (94.2%), and providing coaching and supervision (96.0%). Another demonstration that principals considered themselves to be experts is that only 2 respondents checked “Disagree” and a range of 5-12 respondents checked “Strongly Disagree” to any of these items.

Questionnaire Section C: Perceptions Regarding Literacy Instruction

The third and final section of the questionnaire directly addressed the research question. Specifically, Section C consisted of six objective and open-response questions designed to determine principals' perceptions of highly effective literacy instruction and their value for teacher read-alouds at Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2.

Item 14 inquired about the minutes per day that should be devoted to literacy instruction. This provided a means to gauge principals' overall value for literacy instruction at Grades K-2, with more minutes suggesting a greater value for read-alouds. Results (see Table 5) revealed an average recommended time across grade levels of about 140 minutes. However, there was great variation in principals' responses as noted by the high standard deviations. The ranges as shown in Table 5, revealed that the minutes for reading instruction varied from 30 to 45 minutes to 300 minutes per grade level. Given this variation, the median number of 120 minutes, might be the better index to describe the central tendency for minutes for literacy instruction.

Table 5

Minutes per Day Devoted to Literacy Instruction

Grade Levels	N	Range	Mean	Median	SD
Kindergarten	173	30-300	140.31	120	46.10
Grade 1	170	45-300	142.35	120	44.45
Grade 2	171	45-300	142.31	120	44.86

Item 15 asked the principals how time for literacy instruction should be allocated across the language arts activities of skill and strategy instruction, teacher read-alouds, and independent self-selected reading. This provided a means to gauge principals' overall value for read-alouds at

Grades K-2 by requiring them to specify the proportion of time they would allocate to teacher read-alouds, with a larger proportion suggesting a greater value.

As shown by responses to this item in Table 6, principals recommended that a little more than half the time for language arts activities be devoted to skill and strategy instruction, with the balance being devoted to teacher read-alouds and student independent reading. The percentage of time principals recommended to be allotted for teacher read-alouds decreased slightly across the K-2 range (26.9% to 19.9%), with the percentage of time recommended for independent reading increasing with grade level (19% to 28%). On average, however, principals suggested that about 23% of time devoted to K-2 literacy instruction be dedicated to teacher read-alouds.

Table 6

<i>Percent of Time in Literacy Instruction Devoted to Various Language Arts Activities</i>			
Activity	K	1	2
Skill/strategy instruction	54.42	55.49	52.87
Teacher read-alouds	26.92	21.66	19.86
Independent self-selected Reading	19.27	23.68	27.55

Question 16 of the survey asked principals directly to indicate the value they placed on teacher read-alouds for developing 10 literacy components: listening comprehension, concepts of print, vocabulary, reading fluency, phonemic awareness, writing, independent/self-selected reading, knowledge of literature genres, background knowledge, attention span, positive attitude toward reading, and understanding of story structure. Respondents also had the opportunity to write-in up to three additional components. Each component was rated on a four-point Likert-

like scale: (1) Not At All Valuable, (2) Somewhat Valuable, (3) Valuable, and (4) Extremely Valuable.

Table 7 presents results in two ways. First, column 2 presents the mean item score on the four-point scale. For instance, a mean of 2.00 would correspond to the “Somewhat Valuable” choice, and 3.0 would correspond to the “Valuable” choice. As can be seen, all item means were greater than 3.0, with a range from 3.09 (writing) to 3.79 (positive attitude toward reading). Thus, the principals indicated that teacher read-alouds were valuable to extremely valuable in promoting all the components surveyed, with 6 of the 10 components being closer to extremely valuable (i.e., greater than 3.5).

Table 7

Value of Teacher Read-Alouds in Developing Various Literacy Components

Literacy Component	N	Mean Item Score	SD	Percent Selecting “Valuable” and “Extremely Valuable”
Positive Attitude Toward Reading	161	3.79	.47	95.7
Vocabulary	162	3.78	.52	96.3
Listening Comprehension	162	3.77	.50	96.3
Understanding of Story Structure	161	3.60	.57	97.5
Background Knowledge	161	3.58	.62	94.4
Reading Fluency	162	3.57	.72	90.1
Attention Span	160	3.37	.78	85.0
Knowledge of Literature Genres	160	3.36	.73	86.3
Phonemic Awareness	161	3.27	.74	83.9
Concepts of Print	161	3.24	.83	80.7
Independent/Self-Selected Reading	159	3.19	.77	83.6
Writing	161	3.09	.84	78.3

Second, the third column of Table 7 presents the percentage of principals selecting either “Valuable” or “Extremely Valuable” for Item 16. These percentages ranged from 78.3% for

writing to 97.5% for understanding story structure, indicating that more than three-fourths of principals considered all the components to be enhanced by teacher read-alouds. The components rated the highest by the principals (percentages of 90% or greater “Valuable” or Extremely Valuable”) included listening comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, background knowledge, reading attitude, and story structure.

Thirty-four principals wrote one or more “other” statements at the end of Item 16 expressing other literacy components that might be enhanced by teacher read-alouds. The most common “other” responses included modeling in some fashion (e.g. the enjoyment of reading, speaking, comprehension strategies, and word attack skills), curriculum integration, and author’s craft/writing.

It is obvious from the previously presented data that principals find teacher read-alouds to be valuable in promoting a variety of literacy components. However, to determine whether there were possible differences in perceptions by principals’ level of leadership expertise, a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted for each component in Item 16. Leadership expertise (Item 13) was categorized into two levels: inexpert (disagree or somewhat disagree that I am an expert) and expert (agree and strongly agree that I am an expert). ANOVAs were then run in which the dependent variable was the value of teacher read-alouds for the development of components of literacy (e.g. listening comprehension) and the independent variable was the principals’ level of expertise in leadership abilities. Results revealed that none of the ANOVAs reached a level of statistical significance (all p values >.05), indicating that leadership experience did not interact with principals’ perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds on the various literacy components.

In order to determine whether there were possible differences in perceptions by principals' professional experience, a second set of ANOVAs were conducted for each component in Item 16. Experience as a teacher, reading teacher, and administrator was categorized into three levels: moderately experienced (less than 10 years), considerably experienced (11 to 20 years), and highly experienced (greater than 21 years.). ANOVAS were then run in which the dependent variable was the value of teacher read-alouds for development of components of literacy (Item 16) and the independent variable was level of experience as a teacher (Item 10, see Table 1), experience as a reading teacher (Item 11, see Table 2), and experience as a building-level administrator (Item 12). Results revealed that none of the ANOVAs reached a level of statistical significance (all p values > .05), indicating that neither teaching experience, reading teaching experience, nor administrative experience interacted with principals' perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds on the various literacy components.

Item 17 pursued the value of read-alouds further by asking if reading aloud was beneficial to six sub-groups of students: English language learners, below-grade-level readers, on-grade-level readers, above-grade-level readers, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students from high socio-economic backgrounds. Using a scale similar to Item 16, principals indicated the benefit for each group of students by selecting one point on a four-point Likert-like scale: 1=Not At All Beneficial, 2=Somewhat Beneficial, 3=Beneficial, and 4=Extremely Beneficial.

Table 8 presents the results of Item 17 just as they were presented for Item 16. Column 2 presents the mean item score on the four-point scale. As can be seen, all item means were greater than 3.50, with a range from 3.58 (students from high socio-economic backgrounds) to 3.89 (students from low socio-economic backgrounds). Thus, the principals indicated that teacher

read-alouds were beneficial to all 6 groups of students surveyed, with 3 of the 6 groups being very close to extremely beneficial (i.e., greater than 3.85).

Column 3 of table 8 presents the percentage of principals selecting either “Beneficial” or “Extremely Beneficial” for Item 17. These percents ranged from 92.6% for both above grade level readers and students from high socio-economic backgrounds to 98.8% for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. These data indicate that more than 90% of principals considered that teacher read-alouds as beneficial to all the sub-groups of students.

Table 8

Benefits of Teacher Read-Alouds for Specific Sub-Groups of Students

Student Group	N	Mean Item Score	SD	Percent Selecting “Beneficial” and “Extremely Beneficial”
English Language Learners	163	3.86	.16	97.5%
Below-Grade-Level Readers	161	3.87	.16	97.5%
On-Grade-Level Readers	162	3.71	.19	96.3%
Above-Grade-Level Readers	163	3.56	.26	92.6%
Students from Low Socio- Economic Backgrounds	162	3.89	.11	98.8%
Students from High Socio- Economic Backgrounds	162	3.58	.26	92.6%

As with the components of literacy, it is obvious that principals reported that teacher read-alouds were valuable in the development of literacy for the specified sub-groups of students. However, to determine whether there were possible differences in perceptions of value by principals’ level of leadership expertise (Item 13), a third series of ANOVAs were conducted

for each sub-group of students in Item 17. Leadership expertise was categorized into two levels: inexpert (disagree or somewhat disagree that I am an expert) and expert (agree and strongly agree that I am an expert). ANOVAs were then run in which the dependent variable was the value of teacher read-alouds for each sub-group of students (e.g. English language learners) and the independent variable was the principals' levels of expertise in leadership abilities. Results revealed that none of the ANOVAs reached a level of statistical significance (all p values $> .05$), indicating that leadership experience did not interact with principals' perceptions of the benefits of teacher read-alouds for the sub-groups of students.

To determine whether there were possible differences in value by principals' professional experience a fourth series of ANOVAs were conducted for each sub-group of students in Item 17. Experience as a teacher, a reading teacher, and an administrator was categorized into three levels: moderately experienced (less than 10 years), considerably experienced (11 to 20 years), and highly experienced (greater than 21 years.). ANOVAs were then run in which the dependent variable was the benefits of teacher read-alouds for specific sub-groups of students and the independent variable was levels of experience as a teacher (Item 10), experience as a reading teacher (Item 11), and experience as a building-level administrator (Item 12). Results revealed that none of the ANOVAs reached a level of statistical significance (all p values $> .05$), indicating that teaching experience, reading teaching experience, nor administrative experience did not interact with principals' perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds on the various literacy components.

The final two items of the survey, Items 18 and 19, were open-ended questions. Item 18 was a two-part question which addressed the research question both quantitatively and qualitatively. The first part of Item 18 asked if respondents would conduct a formal observation

on a teacher engaged in reading aloud to students. An affirmative response would indicate that principals considered teacher read-alouds to be an effective instructional strategy. The majority of respondents (n=141, 88.1%) affirmed that a teacher read-aloud would be used as part of a formal observation process. These respondents were directed to a sub-question asking for a list of what they would look for during their observation, that is, specific indicators of an effective teacher read-aloud.

The first lens for reviewing the responses to the sub-question was to determine if principals included the traits of effective read-alouds described in Chapter 2 of this study: (a) use of an interactive style of reading, (b) teaching vocabulary, and (c) use of multiple genres of literature. There were 137 respondents who listed the components they would look for during their observation as indicators of an effective teacher read-aloud.

The use of an interactive reading style was listed by 60% (n=83) of the respondents. One respondent wrote that the read-aloud should include “children responding to pictures, meaning and language. Conversation about the plot. Conversation about personal connections. Conversation about comparisons to other stories.” Another respondent replied that he or she would look for “how the teacher engages the listener. How the teacher uses questioning skills during the read-aloud. How the teacher uses text to text, text to self, text to world connections in the lessons.” One principal would look for the teacher to be “engaging the learners; developing content, high-level comprehension questions, supporting student response.” Teacher read-alouds should “have an activity that mentally engages students either before, during, or after read-alouds,” wrote one respondent. “Is it interactive,” asked one respondent, “Teacher and students should be thinking about, talking about, and responding to the text being shared.” Clearly, an

interactive reading style was a dimension of teacher read-alouds that principals considered important, and thus they would look for interactivity during teacher observations.

Inclusion of vocabulary instruction was listed by 37% (n=51) of the study participants. Some respondents listed skill instruction as an effective read-aloud strategy, which may have included vocabulary instruction, but these were not included in the count. A few respondents simply listed vocabulary but most were more specific and listed “vocabulary instruction,” “vocabulary development,” teaching vocabulary,” and “discussing vocabulary,” as effective components of teacher read-alouds. One respondent would look for a teacher to be “pointing out potential problems such as difficult vocabulary.” Another principal would want to see “evidence of preparation...and identification of key vocabulary” when observing a teacher read-aloud. Although attention to vocabulary is mentioned often in the literature as something that ought to be addressed during teacher read-alouds, only about one in three principals in this study indicated that they would look for this.

The use of multiple genres for teacher read-alouds was listed by 12% (n=18) of the study participants who responded yes to Item 18. Those who listed genre usually linked it to a genre study such as “selection of the book or text and discussion of genre” or “effective use of questioning strategies to promote student understanding of vocabulary, story structure, literal and inferential comprehension, purpose, genre study.” One respondent would look for “selection of material (different genres) and a “hook” to peak students’ interest.” A principal stated that teacher who is engaged in an effective read aloud should use “specific questions which relate to the literature...can the student differentiate between genres?” The number of principals who indicated they would look for use of a variety of genres is low but one must consider that

respondents were asked about a single observation. It would be difficult to see multiple genres in a single snapshot of instruction.

A second lens for reviewing the responses to the Item 18 sub-question was to find other themes common to the principals' comments. Many principals (61%, n=84) indicated that the read-aloud time should have included prior planning to integrate it into the literacy standards being taught or into other content areas. Examples of comments about prior planning are, "read aloud-with instruction," "strong mini-lesson," "preparation," "How it helps to meet the standard she is teaching...what is the next step in the lesson plan?", and "The book should be tied to the reading instruction of the day: it should be a touchstone text that clearly is an example for the reading genre or skill being taught." Another principal stated, "I would look for clear evidence of planning in the choice of the book read aloud; how does it connect to what is going on instructionally in the classroom. Also by planning, I would look to see that the teacher had planned strategically in her pauses during reading." Thus, 6 out of 10 principals noted the importance of teacher planning when it comes to teacher read-alouds to K-2 children.

Fluency in some manner (e.g., "fluency", "modeling reading", "voice, tone, expression", or "accent and energy") was listed by 41% (n=56) principals as a component of an effective teacher read-aloud. Other comments about fluency included "the teacher should be modeling fluency and read with expression", "reading expression, the ability to use rhythm", and "tone, expression, intonation." One respondent indicated he/she would look for "expressions and voice inflection of actions and events in the story."

Twenty-six percent (n=36) of principals indicated that teacher read-alouds should not be stand-alone activities, but students should engage in some extension activity such as writing or comparison to other books. Comments about extension activities included "follow-up activities,"

“use the story for a writing activity,” “cross-curriculum opportunities,” “making text to text connections,” and “tie in to standards and reference to previous learning.”

Twelve percent (n=19) of the principals responded, “No,” they would not conduct a formal observation of a teacher engaged in reading aloud to students. They were directed to a sub-question that asked to for an explanation of their answer. One of these explanations would actually support the idea of effective teacher read-alouds as the respondent replied he/she would not formally observe a teacher read-aloud “unless she/he is actively engaging the students along with the reading!” Another response was, “I say no, but it just depends on what all the teacher does during the teacher read-aloud.” Other responses indicated that the principal would “not consider that time to be a full indication of a teacher’s abilities” or “I would only be observing that the teacher can read.” One participant replied, “Teachers read aloud to their students mostly during ‘calming’ periods of the day: before or after lunch, recess, specials or at the end of the day.” A principal stated that “we still use the old GTOI (Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument) form and process. It is too difficult to find examples of all the measured variables when the teacher is reading aloud for most of the observation.” Finally, one principal found “read-alouds very valuable – I would provide feedback as to engagement of the students, effective questioning, and use in the lesson but not use as the only formal observation.

The final question (Item 19) was also open-ended and asked for additional comments from respondents regarding teacher read-alouds. There are 63 responses to the request for additional comments. Eighty-two percent (n=52) of the comments were very positive (e.g. “I find them to be very important and require all of my teachers to do this each day. It must be built into their schedule.” and “Teacher read-aloud is a valuable time of our school day. We find that our students LOVE to hear their teachers read aloud. The ‘Junie B. Jones’ series is a favorite in

grades K-2.”). Negative comments (e.g. “Read Alouds should be kept at a minimum. Students can read aloud and accomplish the same objectives.”) were given by three percent (n=2) of the respondents.

Eleven percent (n=7) of respondents touched on the issue of time and the fact that read-alouds sometimes fall victim to lack of time. One principal stated that “our teachers are finding it more difficult to squeeze in effective read-alouds with the various scripted reading programs that are implemented in our system.” Another principal said that read-alouds are “a very beneficial tool which is squeezed out of reading instruction because teachers are under pressure to fit it all in. More time is needed.”

Chapter Summary

All elementary public school principals of Georgia elementary schools were sent survey requests. The final number of respondents was 209 of a functional population size of 921. This yielded a functional response rate of 22.6% with a +/- 6.0% sampling error at the 95% confidence interval.

Section A of the questionnaire requested demographic information about the respondents’ schools and school districts. Results of this section indicated that the respondents’ demographics approximated the demographics of public elementary schools serving K-2 students in the state of Georgia.

Section B requested data regarding the respondents’ professional experience as teachers and administrators and their self-assessment of levels of expertise in leadership. Principals reported years of experience as a teacher ranging from 0 – 25, with a mean of 13.28 and a median of 12 (SD=6.33). Years of experience as a reading teacher ranged from 0 – 25, with a mean of 13.25, and a median of 12 (SD=6.38). Years of administrative experience ranged from

1-35, with a mean of 10.18, and a median of 9 (SD=5). Principals rated themselves highly in all three of the areas of instructional leadership, indicating they considered themselves to be experts in leading the change process, implementing best instructional practices in classrooms, and being the instructional leader who provides coaching and supervision for curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Section C asked questions about the responding principals' value for teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom for development of literacy components and for various sub-groups of students. The results of these questions indicated a high level of value is placed on teacher read-alouds by elementary principals. The levels of perceived expertise in leadership data obtained in Section B were used to determine if there were possible differences in perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds by the principals' leadership expertise. A series of ANOVAs were conducted with these data where levels of leadership expertise represented the independent variables and value of teacher read-alouds for development of various literacy components represented the dependent variable. The results were not statistically significant for experience for all analyses. Further ANOVAs were conducted using the professional experience data as the independent variables and the value of teacher read-alouds for specific sub-groups of students were the dependent variables. The results were not statistically significant for experience for all analyses.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter is organized into four sections including (a) a summary of the study; (b) a discussion of the results and conclusions drawn from the study; (c) the limitations of the study; and (d) implications of the study for future research and for practice.

Summary

The research question addressed in this study was: What are elementary principals' perceptions on the value of teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom? The participants for this study were drawn from the population of public school principals in the state of Georgia who serve students in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2. The study used a web-based survey that employed a questionnaire created to explore principals' perceptions of the value of teacher read-alouds. Data were collected and analyzed with technical support from the University of Georgia Survey Research Center (SRC).

The Elementary School Principal Questionnaire developed for this study consisted of three sections (see Appendix A).

1. *School and District Demographics*: The demographic section of the survey included data about the respondent's school and district such as the grade levels enrolled, total enrollment: enrollments in the targeted primary grades, school location (rural, suburban, urban), student demographics (free and reduced-price lunch eligibility and race/ethnicity) and system size and location.

2. *Professional Experience*: This section of the instrument asked for information on the respondent's professional experience including overall teaching experience, reading teaching experience, and building level administrative experience.
3. *Perceptions Regarding Literacy Instruction*: In the section regarding literacy instruction, participants were asked to respond to items detailing the amount of time that should be spent daily on literacy instruction, and how that time should be divided between the components of fluency, phonemic awareness, word identification, comprehension, writing, teacher read-aloud, and independent, self-selected reading. Respondents were also asked to rate the value of teacher read-alouds for listening comprehension, concepts of print, vocabulary, social skills, knowledge of literature genres, background knowledge, attention span, developing a positive attitude toward reading, and understanding of story structure. Participants were also asked the benefits of teacher read-alouds for English language learners, below-grade-level readers, on-grade-level readers, above-grade-level readers, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students from high socio-economic backgrounds. Another question asked respondents (yes/no) if they would conduct a formal observation during a teacher read-aloud, after which they were asked to provide a narrative explanation for their yes or no response. The final question asked respondents to provide any additional comments regarding teacher read-alouds in a narrative form.

The questionnaires were delivered to all Georgia elementary school public school principals via email and responses were collected on a secure server at the SRC. The initial request was followed by two additional requests to respond to the survey. Requests for

participation were sent to 1,079 public school principals. Of these requests some were returned as undeliverable, some respondents were not allowed to respond because of local district policies, and some respondents indicated they do not serve students in the targeted primary grades. The final total of responses was 209 with a functional response rate of 22.6%, and a sampling error of $\pm 6.0\%$ at the 95% confidence interval.

The results of the Section A revealed that the average respondents had 570 students enrolled in school. On average, 119 of the students were kindergartners, 113 were first-graders, and 110 were second-graders. About 60% of the students in the school were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, with the racial/ethnic distribution as follows; 2% Asian-Pacific Islander, 39% Black, 10% Hispanic, 3% Multi-racial, 1% Native American, 51% White, and 1% are Other races/ethnicities.

The average respondent was a teacher for 13 years and was an administrator for 10 years. The average principals rated themselves as an expert in the three areas of administrative skills that have been shown to be related to student achievement: leading the change process, implementing best practices in the classrooms, and providing coaching and supervision for curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

The average principal indicated that students in K-2 should be involved in literacy activities for 120 to 140 minutes per day. Principals noted that slightly more than half of that time should be devoted to skill and strategy instruction, and the rest divided between teacher read-alouds and independent self-selected reading, according to the average respondent.

The average principal found teacher read-alouds to be valuable for promoting various components of literacy. These include listening comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, background knowledge, reading attitude, and story structure. When asked about the benefits of teacher read-

alouds for specific sub-groups of students (e.g., English language learners, below-grade-level readers, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds), the average respondent indicated that teacher read-alouds were valuable for all 6 of the groups mentioned, but they indicated that teacher read-alouds were most beneficial for English Language Learners, Below-Grade-Level Readers, and Students from Low Socio-Economic Backgrounds.

In the open-ended questions, the some respondents indicated that they would conduct a formal observation on a teacher during a teacher read-aloud and would look for an interactive style of reading, inclusion of vocabulary instruction, and use of multiple genres. The some principals would also look for evidence of prior planning, modeling of fluency, and extension activities beyond the read-aloud into literacy or other curriculum areas.

Discussion

The research question explored in this study was: What are elementary principal's perceptions on the value of teacher read-alouds in the primary-grade classroom? In broad terms, the results indicate that principals consider teacher read-alouds a highly valued component of literacy instruction in the primary-grade classroom.

By indicating that they find teacher read-alouds to be an effective instructional strategy for literacy development, principals are demonstrating that their beliefs align with the research about the effectiveness of teacher read-alouds for the development of a variety of language and literacy skills (Van Kleeck, Stahl, & Bauer, 2003). Specifically, the principals' responses to the survey were in agreement with the research-based findings of the value of reading aloud for promoting emergent literacy skills (Chomsky, 1972; Jordan et al., 2000; and Whitehurst et al., 1994), listening comprehension (Brown, 1975; Morrow & Brittain, 2003; and Pelligrini & Galda, 1982), vocabulary development (Feitelson et al., 1993; Senechal & Cornell, 1993; and Senechal

et al., 1995), and exposure to complex language (Duke & Kays, 1998; Gardner, 2004; and Marzano, 2003).

Principals also indicated that teacher read-alouds are beneficial for those students who may be below-grade-level readers or students from low socio-economic backgrounds). These principals' values align with research that has demonstrated that teacher read-alouds are beneficial for students who may be considered at-risk because of their under-developed literacy skills (e.g. Feitelson et al., 1993; Juel et al, 2003; Penno et al., 2002; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Senechal et al., 1995; and Stanovich, 1986).

Specific findings from the study that support this generalization are as follows:

- Principals recommended that primary-grade teachers provide a little over 2 hours of literacy instruction daily. Of this time, they recommended that teachers at kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, on average, devote 27, 22, and 19 minutes, respectively, to teacher read-alouds.
- Principals indicated that teacher read-alouds were beneficial in developing a wide variety of literacy components, including listening comprehension, vocabulary, reading fluency, background knowledge, and a positive attitude toward reading (see Table 7).
- Principals believed that teacher read-alouds were beneficial for all students (see Table 8), with some indication that they perceived English language learners, below-grade-level readers, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds would benefit most.
- A significant majority of principals (88%) noted that they would observe teacher read-alouds as a part of a teacher's formal evaluation process.

- Twelve percent of the principals indicated they would not choose to observe during teacher read-alouds. However, when asked for an explanation, some of principals indicated that if the teacher read-aloud was interactive, they would conduct an observation.
- Thirty percent of principals chose to list additional comments at the end of the survey. The most commonly noted points were the value of teacher read-alouds, the need for teacher read-alouds to be an integral part of literacy instruction, and that teacher read-alouds sometimes were a victim to lack of time.

As stated earlier, the researcher could not locate any survey studies of elementary principals' views on teacher read-alouds, so there are no data to compare directly to the results of this dissertation study. However, there are some tangential data that provides insight into administrators' views on teacher read-alouds.

Baumann et al. (2000) conducted a modified replication of the classic *The First R* report of elementary reading instruction in the 1960s (Austin & Morrison, 1963) by surveying elementary teachers, elementary principals, and district administrators about various aspects of elementary reading instruction. Administrators were asked about their perspectives on reading instruction, and about 80% of building and district administrators selected either a holistic (about 16%) or balanced (about 64%) approach to reading instruction, which might be viewed as embracing teacher read-alouds. In contrast, only about 20% of administrators identified with a skills-based approach, which may not support read-alouds as enthusiastically.

Similarly, the research of Jacobson et al. (1992) on the reading perceptions of elementary school principals indicated that principals supported integrated approaches to reading instruction, rather than isolated skill based instruction. When asked about the content of effective teacher

read-alouds, the principals in the present study seemed to indicate that they consider teacher read-alouds an integrated approach to reading instruction by noting that many components of literacy can be impacted using this instructional strategy.

Although there are no data that directly addressed administrators' views on teacher read-alouds, there is information about teachers' perceptions of read-alouds, which provide a context for principals' perceptions. For example, Baumann et al. (2000) surveyed public school elementary teachers who estimated the amount of time they devoted to reading-aloud as a 3.4 on a four-point scale ranging from *None* to *Considerable*, suggesting that they, like elementary principals, considered read-alouds to be an important component of the literacy curriculum.

Similarly, Jacobs et al. (2000) surveyed elementary teachers and their read-aloud practices, concluding that "book reading does occur often in elementary classrooms" (p. 190). More specifically, Jacobs et al. reported that K-2 teachers read picture books regularly to their students. When asked how many days out of the last 10 they had read picture books to their students, the teachers in the research of Jacobs et al. reported a range of 9.43 for Kindergarten to 7.28 for Grade Two. These data also indicate that teachers and principals are aligned regarding the value of read-alouds to beginning readers.

By rating themselves as experts in leadership abilities, the principals surveyed in this study present themselves as an administrator who has a positive influence on student achievement (Broughton & Riley, 1991; Fullan, 2001; and Marzano et al., 2005). This representation is probably due at least in part to Georgia's emphasis on school standards. The self-assessment and/or peer-assessment tool for many schools is the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS). This instrument allows schools to determine their

progress toward full implementation of the Georgia School Standards (GSS) which describe best practices.

One of the strands in the GSS is the leadership strand, which includes those areas of leadership ability addressed by Item 13 of the questionnaire developed for this study. The principals in this dissertation study ranked themselves as expert leaders, and this is important, according to Andrews and Soder (1987), because expert leaders are able to “set expectations for continual improvement of the instructional program.” (p. 9) According to Andrews and Soder, expert leadership has a significant impact on student achievement, such that “normal equivalent gain scores of students in strong-leader schools were significantly greater in...total reading.” (p.10) Andrews and Soder’s study indicated that principals who are strong leaders will have knowledge about reading programs and be able to supervise their effective implementation in classrooms. The results of Andrews and Soder’s study align with the results of this dissertation study since the principals indicated they were experts in leadership and demonstrated knowledge about effective read-aloud strategies.

As previously stated, the principals in this dissertation study were familiar with the components of effective teacher read-alouds and the benefits of read-alouds to sub-groups of students. They may have used professional literature to stay abreast of trends and issues in reading education, since researchers (e.g. Baumann et al., 2000; Commeyras & DeGroff, 1998; and Jacobson et al., 1992) found that many principals stay informed on current trends in education and recommended best practices by reading professional literature such as *The Reading Teacher*, *Educational Leadership*, and *The Elementary School Principal*.

The principals in the current study varied widely in responses to questions about the amount of time that should be devoted to literacy instruction (range = 30 – 300 minutes). Some

of this variation may be due to requirements of various grants and literacy programs in Georgia. The high end of the continuum may be explained by the Reading First program in Georgia that requires 300 minutes of reading instruction each day, and approximately 4% of schools in Georgia serving primary grade children are recipients of a Reading First grant. The mean of 140.31 reported by principals in this study is close to the 143 minutes reported by elementary public school teachers in the United States (Baumann et al. (1998).

When asked in the present study about the percentage of time that should be devoted to reading aloud as a part of the literacy instruction block, the average percentage of time recommended by principals ranged from 19% for second grade to 27% for kindergarten. Based on the average of about 140 total minutes for the literacy block, this converts to an average of 32 minutes for teacher read-alouds each day. This recommendation is similar the reported actual practice of 25 minutes reported by Hoffman et al. (1993).

In the present study, the amount of time that principals recommended should be allocated for teacher read-alouds decreased from kindergarten to Grade 2 (i.e., from 27% of the total literacy block to 19% of the block. There is evidence that teachers likewise report less time for read-alouds across the grades. This is corroborated by a nationwide survey of elementary teachers conducted by Jacobs et al. (2000), in which K-6 teachers reported that the amount of time they devoted to read-alouds was less for each grade level. In the present study, as the percentage of time devoted to read-alouds decreased, the percentage of time devoted to student self-selected reading increased. This would seem to indicate that both principals and teachers find teacher read-alouds more valuable for prereaders or beginning readers. However, there is research that indicates the value of teacher read-alouds continuing into middle school (Ariail &

Albright, 2006; and Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), but it does not seem to have strongly impacted principals' perceptions or classroom practice.

When planning this study, my expectation was that public school principals would indicate that they value teacher read-alouds, but I expected to see more variation in the responses. This expectation was based both on personal experience as a teacher and as an administrator and also on conversations with teachers who indicated that they had worked for principals who did not want to see teacher read-alouds in classrooms. Teale (2003) expressed this idea when recounting the story of a kindergarten teacher whose principal came by to do a classroom observation as part of the teacher's annual evaluation process. The teacher invited the principal in and said that she was about to read a story to her students. The principal replied, "I'll come back sometime when you're teaching." (p.135)

Unlike the principal Teale (2003) described, who clearly did not consider reading aloud to be "teaching" or perhaps even a valuable use of class time at all, the principals surveyed in this study consistently indicated that they found teacher read-alouds valuable for literacy instruction. A possible explanation for the strong value for read-alouds expressed by the principals in this study may be Georgia's increased emphasis on the principal being the instructional leader of the school. This may be partially explained by the focus on accountability brought about by No Child Left Behind's required monitoring of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Additionally, there are several programs in Georgia that may have influenced the amount of knowledge principals have and values they place on teacher read-alouds. Georgia's response to the Reading Excellence Act was to institute a program entitled Local Reading Improvement (LRI), which was followed by Georgia's Reading First. Both programs included a strong

professional learning component which recommended interactive teacher read-alouds as important instructional practices.

Another influence on many of Georgia's schools is the Learning Focused Schools (LFS) instructional model. Professional learning opportunities for this model of instruction have been promoted through Georgia's RESA system. The LFS concept is grounded on recommendations from recent research on the most effective teaching strategies, including that importance of interactive teacher read-alouds in promoting children's language and literacy development.

The review of literature for this study revealed four areas where teacher read-alouds can positively affect literacy development, that is by enhancing emergent literacy skills (Chomsky, 1972; Jordan et al., 2000; and Whitehurst et al., 1994), listening comprehension (Brown, 1975; Morrow & Brittain, 2003; and Pelligrini & Galda, 1982), vocabulary development (Feitelson et al., 1993; Senechal & Cornell, 1993; and Senechal et al. (1995), and exposure to complex language (Duke & Kays, 1998; Gardner, 2004; and Marzano, 2003). The principals' responses in this dissertation study indicated that they possessed knowledge of this research. Ninety-six percent of the principals indicated that reading aloud had a positive impact on children's listening comprehension and vocabulary development. Over 90% of the principals also indicated that teacher read-alouds have a positive impact on children's reading fluency, background knowledge, developing a positive attitude toward reading and understanding of story structure; all of which can be considered as emergent literacy skills.

Principals indicated that teacher read-alouds were beneficial for all students. However they considered them slightly more valuable for English language learners, below-grade-level readers, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. This indicates they may be familiar with the results from studies conducted with English language learners. One such study was

conducted by Feitelson et al. (1993). This study showed that children who participated in read-aloud sessions with books that were in their national language (but not their spoken language) showed significant literacy growth in the second language.

The principals in the current study indicated that teacher read-alouds were valuable for those students who may be considered at-risk (English language learners, below-grade-level readers, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds) than for their peers who are not considered at-risk. This perception differs from the results of research studies (e.g., Juel et al, 2003; Penno et al., 2002; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Senechal et al., 1995; and Stanovich, 1986) which indicate that students who are at-risk may not benefit as much from teacher read-alouds as their peers who are not considered at-risk. All students can benefit from teacher read-alouds but students who have more developed literacy skills will develop literacy skills at a faster pace than their peers who may be struggling. Students who are considered at-risk need more exposure to teacher read-alouds to build their vocabulary and background knowledge to a point that allows them to build schema for their learning and facilitate their growth. Special care should be given to assure that the read-alouds are effectively planned to include the components of effective teacher read-alouds so that those at-risk students can make the gains they need to close achievement gaps between themselves and their grade-level peers.

As an administrator, I have conducted observations of teachers involved in read-alouds and the teachers voiced their surprise because previous principals would not have done so. Therefore, I had expected that the open-ended question about observing a teacher during read-aloud would garner a high percentage of “No” responses. However, 88% of the principals indicated that they would conduct a formal observation during teacher read-alouds and then went on to indicate knowledge of the components of effective teacher read-alouds such as in

interactive style, teaching vocabulary, using multiple genres of literature, prior planning, and extension activities after the read-aloud activity. In addition to the 88% who answered “Yes,” the responses given for the “No” answers actually indicated that if the teacher read-aloud was interactive, included instruction, and was effectively planned; then the principal *would* observe the activity as part of a teachers’ annual evaluation process. The results of the current study indicated that principals not only value teacher read-alouds, but they are cognizant of the implications for practice from current research (Beck et al, 2002; Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Duke & Kays, 1998; Elley, 1989; Gardner, 2004; and Wasik & Bond, 2001).

The narrative answers to Item 19 provided more details about principals’ perspectives on read-alouds. Only one respondent had a negative comment here, stating that “read-alouds should be kept to a minimum.” Some respondents indicated that instructional time is in short supply and teacher read-alouds are sometimes “the first part to be left out if time is a factor,” and that “teachers do not have time for this type of instruction anymore.” These statements echo United States elementary school teachers’ concerns for lack of the time needed for quality literacy instruction that were noted in Baumann et al. (1998).

Limitations

When considering the results and conclusions of this study, one must consider the limitations of the study. Specifically, there were three primary limitations. First, the relatively low response rate and correspondingly high sampling error of +/-6.0% limits the findings and conclusions due to a lack of precision in the descriptive and inferential statistics generated in the data analysis. Second, social desirability bias (Baumann & Bason, 2004; Bradburn et al., 2004) might have influenced the respondents’ answers such that the trends in the data were more

favorable than actual practice. Third, the web-based survey precludes the advantages of face-to-face interviews and social observations which would have allowed the researcher to determine whether principals' statements about the value of teacher read-alouds are actually reflected in their schools.

Implications

The results of this study have several implications for future research on teacher read-alouds. First, additional research is needed and should be directed to a larger group of public school principals, ideally employing a national probability sample. The results of the current study can only be generalized to public school principals in the state of Georgia, so further research is needed to determine if the perceptions of public school principals are similar or different in other areas of the country, or across the whole country.

Second, further research should examine teachers' perceptions on teacher read-alouds. For example, another survey study could include both administrators and teachers to allow comparison of the two groups. This type of study could help answer such questions as: Do principals communicate to teachers their expectations that teacher read-alouds will take place? Do they communicate that they expect teacher read-alouds to be conducted in an interactive style and incorporate vocabulary instruction and the use of multiple genres?

Third, determining actual practice in the classroom with regard to teacher read-alouds would be valuable. What teachers say, just as what principals say, may or may not match what is actually occurring in classrooms. Therefore, future research is needed to illuminate both teacher perceptions and teacher practices with regard to teacher read-alouds.

In terms of implications for educational practices, the results of this study should be communicated to public school principals to assist them as they endeavor to implement best

practices for literacy instruction into their classrooms. This researcher plans to present at the state conference for Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals. The results of this study and implications for practice might also be published in professional literature. When choosing a venue for publication of the results, consideration should be given to the results of the research of Jacobson et al. that indicated principals were more likely to read the literature that is more interpretive, informal, and less technical, due to time constraints.

Perhaps the sharing of the findings of this study will prompt principals to reflect on their current perceptions of teacher read-alouds and compare what they have said to actual practices in the classroom. Principals and their staffs could use the results of this survey to self-assess their emphasis on teacher read-alouds, as well as other aspects of primary-grade literacy instruction.

In conclusions, there are three primary findings of this study:

1. The principals of public elementary schools in Georgia consider teacher read-alouds to be a valuable component of literacy instruction for the primary-grades.
2. Principals are aware of the components which are a part of effective teacher read-alouds.
3. Principals find teacher read-alouds beneficial for all their students, especially those who may be considered at-risk learners.

This study provides insights into the perspectives of elementary public school principals on the value of teacher read-alouds as a tool for literacy instruction. Prior to the conduct of this study, there was considerable research which indicated that teacher read-alouds were valuable, but there was little information about how principals viewed teacher read-alouds and whether or not they encourage them as a routine classroom practice. As a result of this study, we have evidence that principals value teacher read-alouds and have knowledge of the areas of literacy

that can be impacted by their use and the components of effective teacher read-alouds. For example, as one principal noted, “Teacher read-alouds are a valuable tool in the hands of an instructor who uses them to promote learning and a love of reading.”

References

- Allington, R.L. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. New York: Longman.
- Allington, R.L. & Cunningham, P.M. (2002). *Schools that work: Where all children read and write, Second edition*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Anderson, R.C., Heibert, E.H., Scott, J.A. & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- Andrews, R.L., & Soder, R. (1987). Principal leadership and student achievement. *Educational Leadership*, 44(6), 9-11.
- Ariail, M., & Albright, L.K. (2006). A survey of teachers' read-aloud practices in middle schools. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 45(2), 69-89.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C., Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to research in education*. Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston.
- Austin, M.C. & Morrison, C. (1963). *The first R: The Harvard report on reading in elementary schools*. New York: Macmillan.
- Barth, R.S. (1990). A personal vision of a good school. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71(7), 512-516.
- Baumann, J.F., & Bason, J.J. (2004). Survey research. In N.K. Duke & M. H. Mallette (Eds.), *Literacy Research Methodologies*, (pp. 287-307).
- Baumann, J.F., Hoffman, J.V., Duffy-Hester, A.M., & Ro, J.M. (2000). The first R yesterday and today: U.S. elementary reading instruction practices reported by teachers and administrators. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(5), 338-363.
- Baumann, J.F., Hoffman, J.V., Duffy-Hester, A.M., & Ro, J.M (1998). Where are teachers' voices in the phonics/whole language debate? Results from a survey of U.S. elementary classroom teachers. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 51(8), 636-650.
- Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (1991). Conditions of vocabulary acquisition. In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research: Volume III*, (pp. 789-814). New York: Longman.
- Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (2001). Text talk: Capturing the benefits of read aloud experiences for young children. *The Reading Teacher*, 55, 10-35.

- Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (2007). Increasing young low-income children's oral vocabulary repertoires through rich and focused instruction. *The Elementary School Journal*, 107(3), 251-271.
- Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: Guilford.
- Becker, W.C. (1977). Teaching reading and language to the disadvantaged: What we have learned from field research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 47, 518-543.
- Berdie, D.R., Anderson, J.F., & Neibuhr, M.A. (1986). *Questionnaires: Design and use*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Best, J.W. & Kahn, J.V. (2006). *Research in education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Biemiller, A. (1999). *Language and reading success*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.
- Biemiller, A. (2001). Teaching vocabulary: Early, direct, and sequential. *American Educator*, 25 (1), 24-28, 47.
- Biemiller, A. (2004). Teaching vocabulary in primary grades: Vocabulary instruction needed. In J.F. Baumann & E.J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice*, (pp. 28-40). New York: Guilford.
- Biemiller, A., & Slonim, N. (2001). Estimating root word vocabulary growth in normative and advantaged populations: Evidence for a common sequence of vocabulary acquisition. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 498-520.
- Blachowicz, C.L.Z., & Fisher, P.J.L. (2002). *Teaching vocabulary in all classrooms*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Blase, J. & Blase, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130-141.
- Bledsoe, J.C. (1972). *Essentials of educational research*. Athens, GA: Optima House.
- Booth, D., & Roswell, J. (2002). *The literacy principal*. Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers.
- Bradburn, N., Sudman, S., & Wansink, B. (2004). *Asking Questions: The definitive guide to questionnaire design – for market research, political polls, and social and health questionnaires*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Broughton, R.D., & Riley, J.D. (1991). The relationship between principals' knowledge of reading process and elementary school reading achievement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED341952)

- Brown, A. (1975). Recognition, reconstruction and recall of narrative sequences of preoperational children. *Child Development*, 46, 155-166.
- Chomsky, C. (1972). Stages in language development. *Harvard Educational Review*, 42(1), 1-33.
- Commeyras, M., & DeGroff, L. (1998). Literacy professionals' perspectives on professional development and pedagogy: A United States survey. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(4), 434-472.
- Cunningham, A.E., & Stanovich, K.E. (1991). Tracking the unique effects of print exposure in children: Associations with vocabulary, general knowledge, and spelling. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 264-274.
- Cunningham, A.E., & Stanovich, K.E. (1997). Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and ability 10 years later. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 934-945.
- Cunningham, A.E., & Stanovich, K.E. (2003). Reading matters: How reading engagement influences cognition. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J. Squire, & J. Jenson (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language, Second edition*, (pp. 666-675). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- De Temple, J., & Snow, C.E., (2003) In A. van Kleeck, S.A, Stahl, and E.B. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children: Parents and teachers* (pp. 16-36). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Dickinson, D.K., & Tabors, P.O. (2001). *Beginning literacy with language: Young children learning at home and at school*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Dillman, D.A. (1978). *Mail and telephone surveys: The total design method*. New York: Wiley.
- Dillman, D.A. (2007). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method*. New York: Wiley.
- Duke, N.K., & Kays, J. (1998). "Can I say 'Once upon a time'?" : Kindergarten children developing knowledge of information book language. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(2), 295-318.
- Elley, W.B. (1989). Vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24, 174 – 187.
- Feitelson, D., Goldstein, Z., Iraqi, J., & Shore, D.L. (1993). Effects of listening to story reading on aspects of literacy acquisition in a diglossic situation. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 28, 70-79.
- Fowler, F.J. (1995). *Improving survey questions: Design and Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gardner, D. (2004). Vocabulary input through extensive reading: A comparison of words found in children's narrative and expository reading materials. *Applied Linguistics*, 25, 1-37.
- Gay, L.R., & Airasian, P. (2003). *Educational Research: Competencies for analysis and applications*.
- Georgia Department of Education. (2006). *Georgia School Standards*. Retrieved February 10, 2007, from: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us>.
- Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (2006). *2005-2006 State of Georgia K-12 Public Schools Annual Report Card for State of Georgia*. www.gaoas.org.
- Hall, S.L., & Moats, L.C. (2000). Why reading to children is important. *American Educator*, 24, 26-33.
- Hargrave, A.C., & Senechal, M. (2000). A book reading intervention with preschool children who have limited vocabularies: The benefits of regular reading and dialogic reading. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15, 75-79.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T.R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children*. Baltimore: P.H. Brookes.
- Hayes, D.P., & Ahrens, M.G. (1988). Vocabulary simplification for children: A special case of "motherese." *Journal of Child Language*, 15, 395-410.
- Heibert, E.H., & Fisher, C.W. (1990). Whole language: Three themes for the future. *Educational Leadership*, 47(6), 62-64.
- Hoffman, J.V., Roser, N.L., & Battle, J. (1993). Reading aloud in classrooms: From the modal toward a "model." *The Reading Teacher*, 46(6), 496-503.
- Ivey, G., & Broaddus, K. (2001). "Just plain reading": A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(4), 350-377.
- Jacobs, J.S., Morrison, T.G., & Swinyard, W.R. (2000). Reading aloud to students: A national probability study of classroom reading practices of elementary school teachers. *Reading Psychology*, 21, 171-193.
- Jacobson, J., Reutzel, D.R., & Hollingsworth, P.M. (1992). Reading perceptions of elementary school principals. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 85, 370-380.

- Jordan, G., Snow, C.E., & Porche, M., (2000). Project EASE: Easing children's transition to kindergarten literacy through planned parent involvement. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35, 524-546.
- Juel, C., Biancarosa, G., Coker, D., & Deffes, R. (2003). Walking with Rosie: A cautionary tale of literacy instruction, *Educational Leadership*, 60(7), 12-18.
- Juel, C., & Deffes, R. (2004). Effects of reading storybooks aloud to children. *Journal of Educational Research*, 88, 69-85.
- Keeves, J.P. (1997). *Educational research, methodology, and measurement: An international handbook*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- MacNeil, R. (1989). *Wordstruck: A memoir*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Marzano, R.J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D.J., & Pollock, J.E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Marzano, R.J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B.A. (2005). *School leadership that works*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- McKenna, M.C., Kear, D.J., & Ellsworth, R.A. (1995). Children's attitudes toward reading: A national survey. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30(4), 934-956.
- Morrow, L.M., & Brittain, R. (2003). The nature of storybook reading in the elementary school: Current practices. In A. van Kleeck, S.A, Stahl, and E.B. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children: Parents and teachers* (pp. 140-158). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implication for reading instruction*. (NIH Publication no. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Pelligrini, A., & Galda, L. (1982). The effects of thematic-fantasy play training on the development of children's story comprehension. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19, 443-452.
- Penno, J.F., Wilkinson, I.A.D., & Moore, D.W, (2002). Vocabulary acquisition from teacher explanation and repeated listening to stories: Do they overcome the Matthew Effect? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94, 23-33.
- Robbins, C., & Ehri, L.C. (1994). Reading storybooks to kindergartners helps them learn new vocabulary words. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 86, 54-64.

- Schlechty, P.C. (2002). *Working on the work: An action plan for teachers, principals, and superintendents*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Senechal, M., & Cornell, E. (1993). Vocabulary acquisition through shared reading experiences. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 28, 360-374.
- Senechal, M., Thomas, E., & Monker, J. (1995). Individual differences in 4-year-old children's acquisition of vocabulary in storybook reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 87, 218-229.
- Sharon, A.T. (1973-1974). What do adults read? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 9(2), 148-169.
- Smith, F. (1973). Twelve easy ways to make learning to read difficult. In F. Smith (Ed.), *Psycholinguistics and reading*. New York: Rinehart and Winston.
- Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Snow, C.E., & Dickinson, D.K. (1991) Skills that aren't basic in a new conception of literacy. In E.M. Jennings & A.C. Purves (Eds.), *Literate systems and individual lives: Perspective on literacy and schooling* (pp. 179-191). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Stahl, S.A. (2003). What do we expect storybook reading to do? How storybook reading impacts word recognition. In A. van Kleeck, S.A. Stahl, and E.B. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children: Parents and teachers* (pp. 363-383). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Stahl, S.A., & Fairbanks, M.M., (1986). The effects of vocabulary instruction: A model-based meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 56, 72-110.
- Stahl, S.A., & Stahl, K.A.D. (2004). Word wizards all! Teaching word meanings in preschool and primary education. In J.F. Baumann & E.J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 59-78).
- Stanovich, K.E. (1986). Matthew effect in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 360-406.
- Strickland, D.S. & Taylor, D., (1995). Family storybook reading. Implications for children, families, and curriculum. In D.S. Strickland & L.M. Morrow (Eds.), *Emerging Literacy: Young children learn to read and write*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Sue, V.M. & Ritter, L.A. (2007). *Conducting online surveys*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Sulzby, E. (1985). Children's emergent reading of favorite storybooks: A developmental study. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, (4), 458-481.

- Teale, W. (2003). Reading aloud to young children as a classroom instructional activity: Insights from research and practice. In A. van Kleeck, S.A. Stahl, and E.B. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children: Parents and teachers* (pp. 114-139). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Teale, W. (1984). Reading to young children: Its significance for literacy development. In H. Goelman, A.A Oberg, & F. Smith (Eds.), *Awakening to literacy*. London: Heinemann.
- Thach, L. (1995). Using electronic mail to conduct survey research. *Educational Technology*, 35 (2), 27-31.
- Thomas, S.J. (2004). *Using web and paper questionnaires for data-based decision making*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Van Kleeck, A., Stahl, S.A., and Bauer, E.B. (Eds.) (2003). *On reading books to children: Parents and teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum
- Vockell, E.L., & Asher, J.W. (1995). *Educational Research*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. (M. Cole, J. Scribner, E. Souberman, & V. John Steiner, Trans.). Oxford, England: Harvard University Press.
- Wasik, B.A., & Bond, M.A. (2001). Beyond the pages of a book: Interactive book reading and language development in preschool classrooms. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 243-250.
- Whitehurst, G.J., Arnold, D.S., Epstein, J.N., Angell, A.L., Smith, M., & Fischel, J.E. (1994). A picture book reading intervention in day care and home for children from low-income families. *Developmental Psychology*, 30, 679-689.
- Whitehurst, G.J., Zevenbergen, A.A., Crone, D.A., Schultz, M.D., Velting, O.N., & Fischel, J.E. (1999). Outcomes of an emergent literacy intervention from Head Start through second grade. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91, 261-272.

APPENDIX A

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Elementary School Principal Questionnaire

Directions: Please reply to the following questions that inquire about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. If your school does not serve students in any of these grades, please complete only item #1.

A. School and District Demographics

1. Does your school serve students in grades K, 1, or 2? YES NO

2. Please circle the grade level(s) enrolled in your school:

PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 to 8 9 to 2

3. How many students are enrolled in your school? _____ students

4. How many students are enrolled in the following grades?

_____ Kindergarten _____ 1st grade _____ 2nd grade

5. Which of the following best describes the location of your school?

☐ Rural ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban

6. Please indicate the percentage of students at your school who are eligible for free/reduced lunch.
_____ %

7. Please indicate the percentage of students in each of these racial/ethnic groups.

Asian-Pacific Islander	_____ %
Black	_____ %
Hispanic	_____ %
Multi-racial	_____ %
Native American	_____ %
White	_____ %
Other	_____ %
Total	100 %

8. How many **schools** in your system serve K-2 students? _____ schools

9. Which Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) serves your school district?

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chattahoochee-Flint | <input type="checkbox"/> Griffin | <input type="checkbox"/> North Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> Okefenokee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coastal Plains | <input type="checkbox"/> Heart of Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> Northeast Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> Pioneer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CSRA | <input type="checkbox"/> Metro | <input type="checkbox"/> Northwest Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> Southwest Georgia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First District | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> Oconee | <input type="checkbox"/> West Georgia |

B. Your Professional Experience

10. How many years have you **taught** in each of the following grade levels?

PreK	_____ years
Kindergarten	_____ years
1 st grade	_____ years
2 nd grade	_____ years
3 rd grade	_____ years
4 th grade	_____ years
5 th grade	_____ years
6 th to 8 th grades	_____ years
9 th to 12 th grades	_____ years

Total years teaching experience: _____ Total

11. Have you taught **reading** at any of the grade level ranges listed below? Please check “yes” or “no” for each range. For those marked “yes,” please indicate how many years you taught reading at that grade level range.

K-2	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	_____ years
3-5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	_____ years
6 to 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	_____ years
9 to 12	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	_____ years

Total years teaching reading: _____ years

12. How many years experience do you have as a building level **administrator**? Please indicate the total number of years at each type of school. Then indicate your total years of building level administrative experience.

Primary/Elementary School _____ years

Middle School/Junior High School _____ years

High School _____ years

Total years as building level administrator: _____ Total

13. Please indicate your level of expertise with these elements of building level administration.

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am an expert in leading the change process for my school	1	2	3	4
I am an expert in implementing best instructional practices in the classrooms of my school.	1	2	3	4
I am the instructional leader in my school and routinely provide coaching and supervision for curriculum, assessment, and instruction.	1	2	3	4

C. Literacy Instruction

14. In highly effective K, 1, and 2 classrooms, how many minutes per day should be devoted to literacy instruction?

Number of minutes per day devoted to literacy instruction at:

K **1** **2**

_____ minutes per day _____ minutes per day _____ minutes per day

15. How should the time devoted daily to literacy instruction at K, 1, and 2 be allocated across various language arts activities? Please indicate the percentage of time that should be allocated to the following components for each of the grade levels.

	K	1	2
Skill and Strategy Instruction			
Teacher Read Aloud	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %
Independent, Self Selected Reading	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %
	100 %	100 %	100 %

16. Teachers at K, 1, and 2 will often **read aloud** to their students during the school day. How valuable is the practice of teacher read-aloud for the development of each of the following? Please mark 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each row. If you see other ways reading aloud might be valuable, please add those at the end and indicate their value.

	Not At All Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Listening comprehension	1	2	3	4
Concepts of print	1	2	3	4
Vocabulary	1	2	3	4
Reading fluency	1	2	3	4
Phonemic awareness	1	2	3	4
Writing	1	2	3	4
Independent/self-selected reading	1	2	3	4
Knowledge of literature genres	1	2	3	4
Background knowledge	1	2	3	4
Attention span	1	2	3	4
Positive attitude toward reading	1	2	3	4
Understanding of story structure	1	2	3	4
Other specify _____	1	2	3	4
Other specify _____	1	2	3	4
Other specify _____	1	2	3	4

17. Teacher read-alouds are beneficial for:

	Not At All Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Beneficial	Extremely Beneficial
English language learners	1	2	3	4
Below-grade-level readers	1	2	3	4
On-grade-level readers	1	2	3	4
Above-grade-level readers	1	2	3	4
Students from low socio-economic backgrounds	1	2	3	4
Students from high socio-economic backgrounds	1	2	3	4

18. Would you conduct a formal observation on a teacher engaged in reading aloud to students?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please list what you would look for during your observation as indicators of an effective teacher read-aloud.

If no, please explain your answer.

19. Do you have any additional comments regarding teacher read-alouds?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. I know how busy your schedule is and I appreciate you taking the time to answer these questions. Dawn Spruill

APPENDIX B

SCREEN SHOTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN WEB-BASED FORMAT



The University of Georgia

Please enter your password in the field below.

Continue



The University of Georgia

Dear Elementary Principal:

You are invited to participate in a research study that inquires about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. This survey will be conducted by the University of Georgia Survey Research Center on behalf of Dawn M. Spruill, a doctoral student in the department of Literacy & Language Education at the University of Georgia and principal of Walker Park Elementary School in Walton County.

The purpose of this survey research project is to investigate the perspectives of elementary principals in Georgia about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. All principals of Georgia public elementary schools that contain students K-2 students are invited to voluntarily participate in the survey.

If you should choose to participate in this study, you will complete an online survey that includes basic demographic questions, questions about your professional experience, and questions about your perceptions regarding literacy instruction in general and teacher read aloud specifically.

Completion of the survey is expected to take less than 30 minutes. Please note that Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept confidential and no participant will be individually identified. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty, or skip any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. There is no more than minimal risk anticipated with participation in this study, and there is expected to be no tangible benefit for you as a result of participation in this study.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask now or at a later date. You may contact me at 770-995-8074 or 770-267-8311. You can also reach me via email at dmspruill@comcast.net.

Thank you for the invaluable help that you are providing by participating in this research study. It is expected that the results of this study will be presented at a Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals (GAESP) or Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) conference in 2008.

Sincerely,

Dawn M. Spruill
Doctoral Student
University of Georgia
309 Aderhold
Athens, GA 30602
(770) 995-8074
E-mail: dmspruill@comcast.net

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduation Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia, 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

By clicking on the "BEGIN SURVEY" button below you are agreeing to participate in the research.

BEGIN SURVEY

Directions: Please reply to the following questions that inquire about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade.

A. School and District Demographics

1. Does your school serve students in grades K, 1, or 2?



Yes



No

Continue

Reset

copyright 2007 Dawn M. Spruill

Directions: Please reply to the following questions that inquire about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade.

A. School and District Demographics

1. Does your school serve students in grades K, 1, or 2?



Yes



No

Continue

Reset

copyright 2007 Dawn M. Spruill

3. How many students are enrolled in your school?

students

4. How many students are enrolled in the following grades?

Kindergarten

1st grade

2nd grade

5. Which of the following best describes the location of your school?



Rural



Suburban



Urban

Continue

Reset

copyright 2007 Dawn M. Spruill

6. Please indicate the percentage of students at your school who are eligible for free/reduced lunch.

%

7. Please indicate the percentage of students in each of these racial/ethnic groups.

Asian-Pacific Islander	<input type="text"/>	%
Black	<input type="text"/>	%
Hispanic	<input type="text"/>	%
Multi-racial	<input type="text"/>	%
Native American	<input type="text"/>	%
White	<input type="text"/>	%
Other	<input type="text"/>	%
Total	<input type="text"/>	%

8. How many **schools** in your system serve K-2 students?

schools

Continue

Reset

copyright 2007 Dawn M. Spruill

Your Progress



9. Which Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) serves your school district?

Select one



B. Your Professional Experience

10. How many years have you **taught** in each of the following grade levels?

PreK	<input type="text"/>
Kindergarten	<input type="text"/>
1st grade	<input type="text"/>
2nd grade	<input type="text"/>
3rd grade	<input type="text"/>
4th grade	<input type="text"/>
5th grade	<input type="text"/>
6th to 8th grades	<input type="text"/>
9th to 12th grades	<input type="text"/>
Total years teaching experience:	<input type="text"/>

Continue

Reset

11. Have you taught **reading** at any of the grade level ranges listed below? Please check “yes” or “no” for each range. For those marked “yes,” please indicate how many years you taught reading at that grade level range.

	Yes	No		
K-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	years
3-5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	years
6 to 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	years
9 to 12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	years
Total years teaching reading			<input type="text"/>	years

12. How many years experience do you have as a building level **administrator**? Please indicate the total number of years at each type of school. Then indicate your total years of building level administrative experience.

Primary/Elementary School	<input type="text"/>	years
Middle School/Junior High School	<input type="text"/>	years
High School	<input type="text"/>	years
Total years as building level administrator:	<input type="text"/>	years

[Continue](#)[Reset](#)

13. Please indicate your level of expertise with these elements of building level administration.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am an expert in leading the change process for my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am an expert in implementing best instructional practices in the classrooms of my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am the instructional leader in my school and routinely provide coaching and supervision for curriculum, assessment, and instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

C. Literacy Instruction

14. In highly effective K, 1, and 2 classrooms, how many minutes per day should be devoted to literacy instruction?

Number of minutes per day devoted to literacy instruction at:

K	<input type="text"/>	minutes per day
1	<input type="text"/>	minutes per day
2	<input type="text"/>	minutes per day

Continue

Reset

15. How should the time devoted daily to literacy instruction at K, 1, and 2 be allocated across various language arts activities? Please indicate the percentage of time that should be allocated to the following components for each of the grade levels.

	K	1	2
Skill and Strategy Instruction	<input type="text"/> %	<input type="text"/> %	<input type="text"/> %
Teacher Read Aloud	<input type="text"/> %	<input type="text"/> %	<input type="text"/> %
Independent, Self Selected Reading	<input type="text"/> %	<input type="text"/> %	<input type="text"/> %
	100 %	100 %	100 %

Continue

Reset

16. Teachers at K, 1, and 2 will often **read aloud** to their students during the school day. How valuable is the practice of teacher read-aloud for the development of each of the following? Please mark 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each row. If you see other ways reading aloud might be valuable, please add those at the end and indicate their value.

	Not at all Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concepts of print	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading fluency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phonemic awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independent/self-selected reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge of literature genres	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Background knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attention span	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Positive attitude toward reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding of story structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other specify 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other specify 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other specify 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Teacher read-alouds are beneficial for:

	Not at all Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Beneficial	Extremely Beneficial
English language learners	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Below-grade-level readers	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-grade-level readers	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Above-grade-level readers	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students from low socio-economic backgrounds	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students from high socio-economic backgrounds	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Your Progress



18. Would you conduct a formal observation on a teacher engaged in reading aloud to students?

☒ Yes

☒ No

If yes, please list what you would look for during your observation as indicators of an effective teacher read-aloud.

If no, please explain your answer.

Continue

Reset

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Elementary Principal:

You are invited to participate in a research study that inquires about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. This survey will be conducted by the University of Georgia Survey Research Center on behalf of Dawn M. Spruill, a doctoral student in the department of Literacy & Language Education at the University of Georgia and principal of Walker Park Elementary School in Walton County.

The purpose of this survey research project is to investigate the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. All principals of Georgia public elementary schools that contain students K-2 students are invited to voluntarily participate in the survey.

If you should choose to participate in this study, you will complete a web-based survey that includes basic demographic questions, questions about your professional experience, and questions about your perceptions regarding literacy instruction in general and teacher read aloud specifically.

Completion of the survey is expected to take less than 30 minutes. Please note that Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be kept confidential and no participant will be individually identified. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty, or skip any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. There is no more than minimal risk anticipated with participation in this study, and there is expected to be no tangible benefit for you as a result of participation in this study.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask now or at a later date. You may contact me at 770-995-8074 or 770-267-8311. You can also reach me via email at dmspruill@comcast.net.

Thank you for the invaluable help that you are providing by participating in this research study. It is expected that the results of this study will be presented at a Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals (GAESP) or Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) conference in 2008.

Sincerely,

Dawn M. Spruill
Doctoral Student
University of Georgia
309 Aderhold
Athens, GA 30602
(770) 995-8074
E-mail: dmspruill@comcast.net

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduation Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia, 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX D

FINAL REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE/LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Elementary Principal:

I am asking once again for your participation in a web-based research study that inquires about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. Although I realize that your schedule is very busy, it is extremely important that as many Georgia elementary school principals as possible complete the survey. Many of your colleagues have already completed the survey. The survey is being conducted by the University of Georgia Survey Research Center on behalf of Dawn M. Spruill, a doctoral student in the department of Literacy & Language Education at the University of Georgia and principal of Walker Park Elementary School in Walton County.

The purpose of this survey research project is to investigate the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia about literacy instruction in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. All principals of Georgia public elementary schools that contain students K-2 students are invited to voluntarily participate in the survey. All information that you provide will be strictly confidential.

If you are a principal in Gwinnett County, this research has been approved by the Gwinnett County Department of Research and Evaluation. The File ID for the study is 2007-56, and the approval letter can be accessed at [APPROVAL LETTER LINK HERE].

To access the survey, please click on the following link. Your password to enter the survey is [PASSWORD HERE].

Thank you in advance for your assistance. Should you have any questions regarding this project, please contact Principal Dawn Spruill at dmspruill@comcast.net. Should you have any technical problems in accessing the survey, please contact Steve Quinlan at mytquin@uga.edu.

[SURVEY LINK HERE].