DEVELOPING THE ELEMENTARY READER: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF 100 BOOK CHALLENGE

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores the practices and perceptions of key stakeholders (administrators, educators, parents, and students) in the development of the elementary reader within the context of 100 Book Challenge. Studying the most influential stakeholders will provide a holistic understanding of the events and beliefs around developing readers. This study revealed that there are routines and habits around securing time to independently read. However, by measuring that time spent reading, it encourages the incentivization of reading which has the potential to undermine the development of lasting reading habits. Additionally, students had access to a wide variety of books and are encouraged to self-select books. Yet, the leveling of books and what is perceived as appropriate reading materials limit and restricts this access.

All participants were selected through stakeholder sampling, a form of purposive sampling (Palys, 2008) to recruit key players in the giving, receiving, and/or administration of 100 Book Challenge. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview, observations, and by collecting documents and artifacts (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Merriam, 1998). Data analysis was completed using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo in which multi-cycle coding methods were applied. Findings show that stakeholders engage in specific practices and have perceptions around the development of the student reader involving (a) having time to read and accounting for daily reading time and (b) having access to texts and self-selected books while also regulating and restricting reading materials.

Key words: elementary reader, developing reader, independent reading, incentivization of reading, leveled texts, student choice, access to texts, 100 Book Challenge, stakeholders

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has that one favorite t-shirt. It's the one that you reach for first, that's soft and worn. My favorite t-shirt was given to me over five years ago during my baby shower thrown by close colleagues. It has the words "It Takes a Village" across the front, and when I looked up from opening the gift, everyone had slipped on a t-shirt that said, "We are the Village." Albeit cliché, this message speaks to my core. We are a society built on social interactions where we work together for common goals. Just like my colleagues let me know I could count on them to be my "village" when I became a mom, our young developing readers need to know they can count on their "village" to guide and support them as well. Many people are responsible for the growth and literacy achievement of children. Students develop literacies at home, at school, and from the world around them. Administrators, educators, parents, and students interact to form this village to help and support each other ensuring students learn to read.

The importance of these interactions, however, is often underrated with governmental policies and mandates putting the focus on how schools and school districts can most improve student reading growth metrics. The accountability measures put in place since high-stakes educational mandates were initiated, have seemingly driven a narrative that it is the responsibility of schools to ensure students are successful readers. Because schools and districts are being held accountable for student success, there is an increased focus on ensuring classroom practices are in place that develop readers who can demonstrate proficiency on state assessments (Au,W., 2007). An unintended result of these accountability measures, I argue, is that the village required to develop readers is

devalued with emphasis being put on mastery of skills and standards rather than fostering lasting reading lasting love for reading and learning. Schools and districts, fearful of not meeting established criteria for student achievement, seek out reading programs that promise student reading success.

The Quest for the Holy Grail

Proponents of state and national accountability measures defend the need for educational accountability suggesting that the promise of rewards or the threat of punishment, as measured by high-stakes testing, will motivate and incentivize educators to improve school performance, teaching effectiveness, and student achievement ("High-Stakes Test Definition," 2013, Morgan, 2016). However, there has been little evidence that these tactics have improved reading achievement. In fact, according to the National Association for Educational Progress (NAEP), there was a decline in fourth grade reading achievement between 2017 and 2019 ("NAEP Report Card: 2019 NEAP Reading Assessment," 2019). Further, many of these accountability measures have led to destructive educational practices. Some researchers argue that high-stakes testing has led to a narrowing of curriculum and instruction (Au, W., 2007; Flippo, 2012b; Polesel, Rice, & Dulfer, 2014). Curriculums have been rewritten to focus on test prep type instruction with a focus on improving reading test scores. Morgan (2016) reported that high stakes testing can lead to cheating, less collaboration, unfair treatment of teachers, and biased teaching. The focus on state testing and meeting accountability measures has had an impact on instruction and schools in many ways as they work to avoid being labeled as a school in need of improvement. There are some educators, schools, and districts that have demonstrated positive results from the accountability tied to high stakes testing

(Vogler, 2002); however, this seems to be the exception, not the norm, especially as it pertains to schools servicing students from low-income families (Morgan, 2016).

Having taught for over twenty years in testing grades, I have experienced the pressures to ensure students improve their reading achievement. I've had my students' scores publicly displayed and compared to other teachers. I've been told to stop teaching science and social studies to make room for more test-prep activities. I've experienced myriad reading programs as districts embark on the quest for the holy grail that will make all students proficient readers.

Ever since the state adoption of the Common Core standards in 2010, a small rural school district located on the Delmarva Peninsula has implemented various elementary literacy programs seeking to address the needs of its students as well meet the demands of the new set of standards and corresponding assessments. The district was awarded Race to the Top money, a federal competitive grant created to spur educational reform, in 2012. With this money, a new reading anthology was adopted by the district which was being marketed as being a multicomponent reading program aligned to the Common Core. Its touted strengths included the use of authentic literature within a basal series. However, after a year of implementation, it was deemed by district leaders that the alignment to the standards appeared to be an afterthought, and they felt the program fell short in the areas of phonics instruction and writing. Adjustments and modifications to the program were implemented the following year including adding in supplemental phonics instruction, however, district leaders still felt that the program was not preparing students for state reading assessments.

In a continued effort to find a reading curriculum that addressed the Common Core Standards and prepare students for revised high stakes tests, the district adopted Understanding by Design (UbD) reading units which were created by Massachusetts educators in 2013 and distributed by the Massachusetts Department of Education under the Creative Common license. These were implemented by the district in the elementary grades in 2014. The following year, Lucy Calkins' Units of Study (UoS) was unveiled for writing instruction, and the Massachusetts units were revised to reflect this school district's specific expectations. While the writer's workshop model of the UoS has remained in place, the reading programs have continued to evolve and change. The core units of reading instruction were most recently contracted to CenterPoint and were re-written in 2018. Those units went through a revision process the summer of 2019 with teams of elementary teachers making adjustments to texts and lessons. Over the years, additional reading blocks of time were added into the instructional schedule where teachers have done variations of guided reading, reader's workshop, or intervention/enrichment time.

Despite the changes and adjustments made by committees of elementary teachers to the literacy programs, there were still problems and gaps identified by teachers, administrators, and district supervisors. They felt there was a continued need for direct phonics instruction and/or a guided reading program to address students' individual reading needs. Because of this, in 2016, another reading program was sought out to address these concerns. After reviewing several contenders, 100 Book Challenge, by the American Reading Company (ARC), was chosen as a supplemental reading program for our district's elementary reading curriculum. At the time of my research, the literacy

block was comprised of Lucy Caulkins UoS, ARCs 100 Book Challenge (reader's workshop), CenterPoint UbD units, and Wilson Fundations in PreK-2.

Brief Overview of 100 Book Challenge

100 Book Challenge checked off many of the boxes of what the school district of the research site was looking for in a reading program to supplement their existing literacy instruction. One aspect of the program was the use of a workshop model where there was a focus on independent reading within a student's independent reading level. This model allowed for student choice in reading and concentrated on putting books in students' hands. The selection of books that comes with the program is extensive and prides itself on including diverse literature. The program's philosophy of reading instruction reflects a belief in increasing the amount of time that students spend reading. Their website includes a quote by Terrance Paul that states, "A child's volume of reading is the single best predictor of test score performance and success in school" (American Reading Company, 2020a). The program encourages 60 minutes of independent reading a day, with 30 minutes occurring in school and 30 minutes at home. Each 15 minutes of reading is considered a step and students are invited to read four steps each day (American Reading Company, 2020a).

100 Book Challenge also offers a systematic approach to assessing and teaching reading using the Independent Reading Level Assessment Framework (IRLA). According to ARC's website, "American Reading Company's Independent Reading Level Assessment is a game-changing formative assessment for reading that changes the daily behaviors of teachers, students, and administrators." Teachers, or Expert Coaches as named by ARC, conduct individual reading conferences with students discussing what

they are reading while also working on individualized reading skills and strategies. Teachers record evidence of the conference using the online data collection system, School Pace, where students' reading data are entered and monitored while being analyzed by teachers and administrators. Data that can be entered includes the specific literacy skills mastered within a student's identified reading level, the skill or strategy that is currently being worked on, and the number of steps the student has read. Not only that, but evidence around conferences, word checks assessments, engagement levels, and time spent on power goals creates a collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The 100 Book Challenge, with its use of the IRLA, starts by identifying what a student can do, then determines a color-coded level where they can read independently. Each level within the IRLA provides an identified set of skills, strategies, and behaviors a student needs to learn to accelerate their reading growth (American Reading Company, 2020a). It's important to note that the leveling of texts can be controversial. It can restrict access to books and put everyone's reading levels on display (Dawkins, 2017). Students often become defined by their level with teachers, administrators, students, and even parents referring to children by their reading level (Kontovourki, 2012).

Another aspect of the program is the home component of 100 Book Challenge. It is not only expected that students read 30 minutes or two steps at home, but that parents, or Home Coaches, as named by ARC, sign a reading log stating that the child read 30 minutes at home as well. Per ARC and the Home Coach contract, Home Coaches need to ensure children have a place to read free from distractions. For home reading practice, students are equipped with a 100 Book Challenge folder containing their reading log and a skill card of strategies that students can work on within their level. Students also take

home a bag of five to ten ARC leveled books; these books are meant to ensure access to reading materials at home. 100 Book Challenge incorporates components to help build parents' capacity of supporting their children in their reading development, by naming parents as Home Coaches and sending skill cards and books home to practice.

Teaching during the age of accountability in education has been, at times, oppressive. Many of the components of 100 Book Challenge, however, provided promise of moving reading instruction beyond teaching set skills and standards, and instead facilitated opportunities for students to develop into lifelong readers and encouraged the teachers to know their students as readers too (American Reading Company, 2020a). Not only that, but the program intentionally included families in supporting readers as well. The inclusion of the village sets this program apart from any of the other reading programs as it recognizes the importance of all stakeholders in the development of student readers.

Developing the Student Reader-The Village

Few would argue that many people such parents and teachers are responsible for the reading development of children. The following sections present a brief overview of perceived roles and responsibilities of administrators, educators, parents, and students in fostering reading development. Much of the information used in the overviews was obtained using readily accessible information using a simple internet search or through the Department of Education website. Three of the documents that informed this section included "Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade" published by the Institute of Educational Sciences (Foorman et al., 2016), "A Child Becomes a Reader Proven Ideas From Research for Parents

Kindergarten through Grade 3" published by The National Institute for Literacy (Armbruster et al., (2006), and "Tips for Supporting Reading at Home" also published by the Institute of Educational Sciences (*Tips for Supporting Reading at Home*, n.d.) By referencing these readily accessible documents, my intention is to provide a greater public perception of roles each stakeholder plays in fostering the reading development of students.

Administrators

When people think of a principal's role in a school, it is common to assume that the principal is responsible for disciplining students and evaluating teachers. However, due to the high levels of accountability placed on schools, administrators have an increased responsibility to ensure student achievement which has increased the focus on the role principals have in student learning, especially regarding early literacy (Myracle, 2020). Principals need to have a deep understanding of early childhood development, literacy content, and appropriate instructional practices and learning environments (Loewenberg, 2016; Myracle, 2020). This is apparent in current educational policy stating that principals take on the role of instructional leaders and should be supported though professional development to build their capacity ("Every Student Succeeds Act," 2022). Principals need to develop a culture of learning, build relationships with families and early education providers, and ensure effective, developmentally appropriate teaching and assessment (Loewenberg, 2016). Principals need to have a vast amount of knowledge and understanding of what is important about literacy and to put forth actions that will improve instruction comprising rigorous expectations for students, the inclusion of digital literacies, and understanding the role of diversity and equality in literacy

learning (Swan Dagen & Bean, 2020). Not only that, but it is essential for administrators to choose curriculums that address the dynamic aspects of learning to read (Myracle, 2020). Although a recommendation, few have the leverage to choose curriculum unilaterally. Administrators have a pivotal role in supporting the development of student literacy learning. They need to be instructional leaders, have a deep understanding of literacy development, and choose curriculums that allow teachers to apply their pedagogical knowledge to tailor instruction and meet needs of individual students.

Elementary Educators

Effective elementary educators are dynamic and have a deep understanding of literacy and literacy development. They understand literacy learning, know the standards, know their students as learners, set high expectations and encourage risk taking, use flexible teaching strategies, and engage students in challenging content (Hervey, 2021). It is the combination of these factors that help to develop young readers; however, their role is often bound by the current trends in literacy education and direction of district and school leaders. Since the inception of educational accountability, teachers, especially elementary teachers, have lost much of the autonomy that once allowed them to teach literacy in ways they best saw fit. Teachers are becoming implementors of programs instead of the professionals of education for which they were trained (Flippo, 2012b). These programs often are aligned with the findings of large national reports on educational effectiveness where teachers are evaluated in part for how well they are implementing the reading programs and how well their students demonstrate reading achievement. Often the act of reading is measured through metrics on a spreadsheet. Teacher’s attentions are drawn from developing readers to ensuring students do well on

assessments. This is a true disservice to the profession of teachers and their students. Despite research that strongly demonstrates the importance of knowledgeable and experienced teachers in children's literacy learning, teacher autonomy is diminished when there is more of a focus on fidelity to programs and less on teacher expertise (Y. M. Goodman, 2012). In discussing teacher autonomy, Flippo (2012a) emphasizes the critical need for teachers to be afforded the autonomy to make decisions regarding the contexts and practices of reading while also always being reflective and intentional.

Parents

Parents play an essential role in fostering a child's literacy development. Conventional wisdom understands the power of reading to children. The experience of being read to creates a family intimacy and instills an importance of reading for pleasure (Brandt, 2009). It also provides a model of reading that demonstrates proper tone, pausing, and emphasis of words (*Tips for Supporting Reading Skills at Home*, n.d.). Not only should parents read to their children, but they should also have conversations before, during, and after reading together (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2006; *Tips for Supporting Reading Skills at Home*, n.d.). Talking often to children can build listening and speaking stills that help to develop an understanding of language use, function, and patterns (Armbruster et al., 2006). Having children read aloud at home is a practice that can support all readers. With proper support and education, parents can coach them, while they read aloud, on various strategies that can improve comprehension and engagement with reading. It is recommended that parents work with their children to help them break sentences into words and words into syllables as well as support children in sounding out words smoothly (*Tips for Supporting Reading Skills at Home*, n.d.).

Besides acting as models and helping coach their children in reading, parents also should be aware of what students are learning in school. Parents have been encouraged to look for reading accuracy, fluency, the development of vocabulary, and increasing comprehension in classrooms (Armbruster et al., 2006). The recommended strategies outlined above are heavily focused on skills and accuracy; however, it is critical to foster engaging and meaningful literacy activities to motivate and entice young readers. Parents are a critical part of a child's reading development. They need to be models of literacy, reading coaches, and have an awareness of what their children are learning in school. But not only that, they also need to cultivate experiences that allow for meaning making and the comprehension of texts.

Elementary Students

Along with the support of their village (administrators, teachers, parents), students can develop into readers. To gain lifelong reading habits and acquire the skills valued in educational settings, students need a variety of experiences which foster, support, and guide their reading development. There are numerous strategies shared on how children can be supported in learning to read. Students need to develop academic language which is necessary to navigate the formal communication structures used at school and in books (Armbruster et al., 2006; Foorman et al., 2016). Young readers should engage in conversations about both informational and narrative text. Not only that, but children need to develop an awareness of sounds in speech and how they link to letters (Foorman et al., 2016). Children should understand that letters and combination of letters make sounds and when they are put together, they made words. Additionally, children need to be able to decode words, analyze word parts, and recognize words

(Armbruster et al., 2006; Foorman et al., 2016). Children need to understand that words can be made up of various letter combinations, as well as word parts including prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Finally, it is argued that children should read text that helps to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Foorman et al., 2016). This comes from reading and rereading appropriately challenging texts, understanding the meanings of words, and being able to construct meaning from what is read. The focus on skill-based approaches to reading is prominent in supporting the developing reader. This can be problematic in that students may think of reading as something they have to do correctly, instead of something they do to create meaning.

The development of student readers requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders. The combined efforts of administrators, educators, parents, and students can grow readers and support the development of lasting habits. However, it is rare that all stakeholders have knowledge of each other's practices and perceptions around developing the student reader. This collaborative understanding is important as they all work towards the common goal of students becoming readers and developing lasting practices around reading. Insight needs to be gained in understanding stakeholders' perspectives and actions in cultivating reading behaviors of students. 100 Book Challenge, by American Reading Company (ARC), claims to be an independent reading program with the goal of developing avid, lifelong readers which will help them flourish throughout their lives (*Frequently Asked Questions of 100 Book Challenge*, 2021). This program provides an appropriate context to explore the roles of stakeholders as it incorporates student reading both at school and at home.

Research Question

When it comes to the topic of supporting developing readers, student achievement results make for attention grabbing headlines and propaganda that drives many educational agendas. However, this presents a very narrow view of reading development and one that takes away from the holistic efforts necessary to develop life-long readers. It is my intention to add to and extend the scholarship around children's reading development through this qualitative case study which explored the wider context of reading development which includes the most influential stakeholders. This case is bound within the context of 100 Book Challenge because the program not only addresses specific reading skills and strategies, but also promotes wide independent reading. Not only that, but also the home-school connection provides the opportunity to investigate multiple stakeholders and how they understand their role in the development of readers. To shed light into the holistic perspectives and/or experiences of stakeholders as well as add to the pool of research that provides rich descriptions of authentic educational experiences, I explored the following research question: What are multiple stakeholders' (administrators, educators, parents, and students) practices and perceptions of reading around the development of the elementary reader within the context of 100 Book Challenge?

Statement of Problem

The need for accountability that pervades many schools and classrooms has stifled reading curriculums and instructional practices (Au, W., 2007; Dewitz & Graves, 2021; Polesel et al., 2014). This accountability is often nearly solely based on the bottom line of test scores (Shannon, Edmondson, Ortega, Pitcher, & Robbins, 2009), which

narrows curriculum to what is being tested and shifts instruction to be very teacher centered (Au, W., 2007; Dewitz & Graves, 2021). This leaves little room to embrace the wider community necessary to develop student readers. It takes a collective effort between students, families, educators, and administrators to ensure not only that students are learning the foundational and academic skills of reading but also that they are adopting habits around reading, which can increase vocabulary, comprehension, an understanding of the world around them, and content knowledge (Au, K., 2012; Fisher & Frey, 2018; Jones et al., 2012; Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, & Mendelsohn, 2020; Schiefele et al., 2012). Because 100 Book Challenge involves the participation of administrators, educators, families, and students, it provided an appropriate context to explore the larger picture of developing student readers, going beyond discrete skills and singular data points. It created the opportunity to investigate the roles of each stakeholder and report on how they relate to one another. The following research question guided this study: What are multiple stakeholders' practices and perceptions of reading around the development of the student reader within the context of 100 Book Challenge?

Key Terms

100 Book Challenge: Common Core standards-based reading and accountability program developed by the American Reading Company (ARC) (American Reading Company, 2020a)

Balanced literacy instruction: curricular manifestations that include instructional components in phonics or word decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; Padak & Rasinski, 2012)

Expert Coach: the title given by ARC to educators responsible for student reading development

Home Coach: the title given by ARC to parent or family supports at home that support the student reader

Independent reading level: American Reading Company defines this as the level at which a student can read a book with 98% accuracy within the 100 Book Challenge. These levels are color coded and grade level aligned from lavender (Read to Me) to Gold (11-12th grade) (American Reading Company, 2020a).

Power Goal: a targeted reading skill identified through student teacher conferencing using the IRLA that a student should learn next to accelerate their reading growth (American Reading Company, 2020b)

Stakeholders: administrators, educators, students, and parents (or caregivers or families) involved with 100 Book Challenge at the research site

Steps: every 15 minutes of independent reading that is recorded on a reading log (American Reading Company, 2020a)

The Village: the community of stakeholders responsible for the development of reading in elementary children which includes administrators, educators, families, and students (peers and students themselves)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The goal of this study was to provide a holistic view of stakeholders' practices and perceptions of the development of the elementary reader within the context of 100 Book Challenge. I investigated how administrators', educators', parents', and students' roles work for and against each other while supporting students' reading development.

The teaching and learning of reading have long been a contested topic with varying theories, myriad best practices, and divergent perspectives on how students learn to read. Literacy researchers often vie for their viewpoints as the authority in reading, which potentially results in oversimplistic reading models touted as best (Alexander & Fox, 2013). For the purpose of my study, and in support of my positionality, this research is situated based on the theoretical perspectives hightlighted in "Reading Researchers in Search of Common Ground: The Expert Study Revisited" (Flippo, 2012a) and the assertions put forth in "Reading: The Grand Illusion: How and Why People Make Sense of Print" (K. S. Goodman et al., 2016). The ideas presented by Flippo (2012a) and Goodman et al. (2016) are complementary in their pedagogical views in that they expand upon the simplistic view of instruction that puts emphasis on explicit, direct instruction that is sequential and structured (Ordetx, 2021). It is important to note that I was inclusive of research which may differ from my theoretical perspectives. As both a practitioner and a scholar, I am aware of the tension between sociocultural perspectives and more cognitive perspectives in everyday classrooms, many of which cannot be resolved. Therefore, I felt the inclusion of multiple points of view, which support common goals were appropriate to include.

For this review, I first provide an overview of these two theoretical perspectives. This is followed by a synthesis of literature examining critical components in the development of readers including schema and background knowledge, vocabulary and the construction of meaning, and motivation. Additionally, I also explore the literature pertaining to access of books, choice, and leveled texts. These components are an integral part of 100 Book Challenge as well as impact the motivation of readers.

This review concludes with a synthesis of empirical studies focusing on the perceptions and practices of reading by administrators, educators, families, and students. There are numerous studies exploring practices and perceptions of these various stakeholder groups (Evans & Hulak, 2020; Holder, Wilson-Jones, Phillips, Jones, & Jones, 2017; Pachtman & Wilson, 2006; Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006); however, there was only one that included a holistic view of all stakeholders (Fletcher, 2018). This validates the need for my study investigating multiple stakeholders to gain a more comprehensive understanding of each group's roles in supporting the reading development of students.

There were specific inclusion criteria used to search and identify studies to include in the literature review. Firstly, I searched for both qualitative and quantitative studies to provide a diverse perspective of findings. Additionally, I bound my search by publication dates to include studies published between 2000 and present. Finally, my search used myriad combinations of words which included: reading practices, reading, elementary, perceptions of reading, stakeholders, administrators or principals or leaders, educators or teacher, parents or families or caregivers, and students or children. Once the results were populated, I narrowed my selection to focus on elementary aged students.

There were instances where I expanded the initial inclusion criteria. For one, if there were studies that were particularly relevant, I included studies that were published prior to 2000. In addition, I also included some studies that targeted middle schools or emergent readers if the findings would be applicable and informative to my study and if they were more recent.

The Development of the Elementary Reader

The importance of reading cannot be underscored. Reading can be an escape or a way to make sense of things around us; it provides a source of information and communication, and it is essential for functioning and being a productive citizen of the world. The goal of ensuring a literate society is the responsibility of all and cannot be solely measured by test scores. However, teaching reading has become more about mastering skills and standards, which has the potential to alienate important stakeholders of developing the student reader. When the language around reading centers on achievement, there is a tendency to put the onus almost solely on school systems whereas they are the ones often held accountable by students' achievement on standardized tests. Families are not equipped (nor should they be) to teach specific reading standards such as: RI 3.3 Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect ("English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 3 | Common Core State Standards Initiative," n.d.). However, there are tangible ways for all stakeholders to develop the student reader that have positive benefits to students by building comprehension and fostering life-long reading

habits. This example illustrates a potential disconnect between home literacies and school literacies. This points to the need for schools to work closely with families.

Reading is a complex and dynamic process (Goodman, Fries, & Straus, 2016). It requires making sense of print and using background knowledge to make meaning from the text (Anderson, 2013; Gee, 2013; Goodman et al., 2016). This requires understanding and integrating language structures including the predictability of language, as well as the language, grammatical, and textual patterns (K. S. Goodman et al., 2016). There are a variety of practices that can facilitate this understanding and support literacy development. These practices include the following: modeling, reading appropriately challenging books, encouraging student choice of reading materials, discussing reading, having access to a wide variety of reading materials, student motivation, and time to read (Flippo, 2012a; Jones, Reutzel, & Smith, 2012). While teaching reading can be a polarizing topic, with differing views ranging from direct instruction of discrete skills to a whole language approach grounded in the belief that students can learn to read by using strategies that show how language is constructed to make meaning (Flippo, 2012a). The following section details areas of consensus around reading instruction identified in the Expert Study as reported by Flippo (2012a).

Common Ground

Despite decades of reading research, a debate continues around the optimal way to teach reading. However, the groundbreaking study, the Expert Study, revealed multiple areas in which researchers from diverse philosophical backgrounds agreed upon certain contexts and practices that would facilitate learning to read (Flippo, 2012a). The findings included the following: combining reading and other language processes,

creating purposes for reading, shaping student' perceptions and expectations, having access to reading materials, and providing varied reading instruction to name a few (Padak & Rasinski, 2012). While it seems the study's results are intended for application in classroom settings, I assert that the included practices are tangible and accessible by all stakeholders. A brief discussion of these contexts and practices is described below.

Combining reading and other language processes is one way all stakeholders can support the developing reader. Children should be encouraged to talk and to engage in conversations around what they read and experience in the world. Moreover, they should be involved in integrated activities that promote reading and writing development (Flippo, 2012b). This relates to my study as administrators, educators, parents, and fellow students can ask questions and discuss what a child is reading, along with engaging in conversations about personal experiences. Writing opportunities, to share about what students read or what they have done, can also benefit their reading development. The combination of reading and other literacy practices builds content knowledge and can motivate children to read (Malloy & Gambrell, 2012). These are practices that all stakeholders can implement which help to develop an understanding of language processes.

Access to books and securing time to read is another practice that supports the development of readers. Researchers in the Expert Study concurred that having access to books and having time to read was imperative in learning to read. Students also need to be able to read from a variety of genres and topics as well as read books of their own choosing. They need to read for both specific purposes and for fun (Flippo, 2012b). All stakeholders can encourage and create reading time—dedicated time where everyone can

read and share what they read. Parents can engage children in reading in everyday household tasks such as reading the directions on a box of macaroni and cheese or the recipe for pancakes. Families can snuggle before bed and read. Teachers can set aside time each day for students to read books, as well as expose students to different books by sharing various texts with them. Administrators can support independent reading at their schools. Students need to see reading as an activity that is purposeful and enjoyable which can motivate children to read. This emphasis of reading also exposes students to patterns of language and vocabulary which is important in creating meaning from text and is valued by educational institutions.

Another area of common ground is that students benefit from observing reading models. When children see their parents and peers read, they begin to value the practice and see it as something that is more than a task done at school. Moreover, children of all ages should be read aloud to. They get inspired and are exposed to texts that may excite them or pique their curiosity (Au, K., 2012). By modeling reading, teachers and parents can motivate and engage readers.

There were additional areas that reading researchers had consensus on, but for the purpose of this study, I focused on the ones that were most applicable to all stakeholders in this study which can be embraced both at home and at school. The next section focused on how reader's develop meaning from text. Following that, I take a more in-depth look at areas of reading development, which reflect the areas of common ground and practices that support comprehension including: schema and background knowledge, vocabulary, motivation, access to books, and student choice.

The Grand Illusion

This section is devoted to the theory of reading presented by Goodman et al. (2016). Goodman, Fries, and Strauss (2016) have asserted that there has been a grand illusion around learning to read and argue that the idea that "reading involves the accurate, sequential recognition of words and that accurate word recognition is necessary for comprehension" is a misconception (p. xx). Instead, they provided evidence that proficient readers don't even look at upwards of 40% of words on the page; however, they will still read them out loud. Not only that, but they found that readers will also omit words from oral reading that are directly fixated on. Many teachers and parents stress that readers read every word on every page correctly; however proficient readers often don't notice their miscues when they make sense in the text (Flippo, 2012a). This echoed the findings of Kim, Knox, and Brown (2007) who reported readers were mostly concerned with constructing meaning and either did not see unexpected responses or didn't self-correct miscues when they did not affect the meaning. However, miscues that didn't fit with the predictions the reader made are often revisited and self-corrected by the reader (Goodman et al., 2016). This can be attributed to readers using their knowledge of language and its patterns to predict, confirm, and disconfirm by integrating socio-cognitive reading strategies (Goodman et al., 2016). This is important because it demonstrates a focus on reading for meaning instead of reading for accuracy. Without gaining meaning from text, simply decoding words is irrelevant.

Because of findings reported above, Goodman et al. (2016) suggest the idea of teaching reading as separate subjects is insufficient and unnatural. People develop language from immersion, use, and the need to communicate. Most people don't have to

be taught to talk because the ability to think symbolically and create language is innate in the human species. They argue why reading should be taught interpedently with other subjects:

> Reading and writing should not be taught as school subjects to be learned parallel to math, science, social studies, and the arts. Instead, literacy should be learned in the process of its use. The learning will happen: (1) If the learners see reading and writing as necessary to connect with others (2) If the learners are participants in a culture in which written language is used to connect (2016, p. 141).

This viewpoint is not new. It aligns with ideas proposed by Vygotsky who suggested learning to read and write should be done "in the same way as children learn to speak" (as cited in K. S. Goodman et al., 2016, p. 141). Instead of teaching emergent readers a variety of isolated skills, Smith (1973) suggests simply this: "[R]espond to what the child is trying to do" (as cited in Flippo, 2012a, p. 142). In other words, provide support, assistance, and instruction dependent on what a child needs, as well as what they are interested in, at the time. The focus of reading instruction should be based on the individual reader, not because of a presubscribed sequence of isolated skills. This is especially powerful as parents, as well as other stakeholders, can apply these strategies with children in their everyday lives.

If Goodman, Fries, and Strauss (2016) are correct, then the popular and sometimes problematic assumption, that reading instruction is best taught through a specific sequence of isolated skills, can lead to deficit-centered reading instruction. Instead, adopting practices that make reading immersive and a necessary part of learners' lives may be more appropriate. The benefit of this method is all stakeholders can adopt

and engage in these approaches, allowing developing readers to be supported in effective and meaningful ways. Stakeholders can engage with readers as individuals and provide support and instruction based on what a student needs. The next sections dig deeper into specific strategies that can support developing readers.

Schema and Background Knowledge

Another important component of developing readers is to ensure they are equipped with the necessary schema and background knowledge to make meaning from text. Anderson (2013) discusses schema theory and how a reader's schema (i.e., knowledge of the world) is essential for comprehending, learning, and remembering ideas they read about. In order for readers to understand what they read, they need to use their prior knowledge to make sense of the text (Anderson, 2013; K. S. Goodman et al., 2016). Readers each have their own knowledge to draw from; therefore, a reader will interpret texts differently. However, the more background knowledge a student has about a certain topic, the more likely the reader is to recall important details (Anderson, 2013). Background knowledge is built through the experiences and interactions a person has with other people, texts, and environments. One benefit of being exposed to such diverse experiences is the development of a greater vocabulary. Stakeholders can support developing readers by exposing them to a wide variety of texts and experiences. Administrators can ensure time for science and social studies. Teachers can plan field trips. Additionally, parents can engage their children in everyday events and activities.

Schema does not only encompass life experiences, but it also includes knowledge of language and language patterns (Gee, 2013; K. S. Goodman et al., 2016). Students need authentic opportunities encouraging language development and

understanding which include: speaking, listening, and authentic opportunities to read. This is important for readers because, as they interact with text, they are continuously making predictions about what is going to happen next (Goodman et al., 2016). Based on readers' schema, of both their knowledge of the world and language structures, what the reader reads is either confirmed or disconfirmed (Anderson, 2013; K. S. Goodman et al., 2016). For example, if a student is reading about a farm and they encounter the sentence, "The pig rolled around in the mud," the student would need to understand that the word following *the* would be a noun (even if they cannot identify it as a noun) and use their content knowledge to know that pigs are often associated with rolling in the mud. In this hypothetical example, if a child thinks the sentence says, "The play rolled around in the mud," it would be natural for the reader to stop and reread as the word play does not fit in with the child's schema of language patterns or knowledge of barnyard animals.

This process breaks down, however, when one's schema does not support the written text. For example, second language learners or limited language learners might not have the necessary understanding of language patterns to accurately predict and disprove what is being read. This knowledge varies based on the various Discourses one belongs (Gee, 2013). In this case the reader may have believed what they read made sense because of their prior knowledge (K. S. Goodman et al., 2016). Teachers need to be careful not to count some children as failures to comprehend because their own schemas do not match that of the majority culture (Anderson, 2013).

There are ways in which educators can foster the building and application of background knowledge. Anderson (2013) gives suggestions for design of materials and classroom instruction to help students with the comprehension of texts using their

schema. These practices include helping students activate prior knowledge, building prerequisite knowledge, helping students to integrate what they know to make meaningful predictions, and highlighting the structure of text. In this scenario, the reader needs language model immersion and to engage in experiences that can grow their background knowledge. When the reader is able to connect to what they already know (Anderson, 2013), they are able to construct meaning from the text effectively and efficiently (Liwanag, Martens, Martens, & Pelatti, 2017).

Another significant part of background knowledge is vocabulary. Engaging in experiences and interacting with texts builds student vocabulary, but having a rich vocabulary is also a part of background knowledge so that readers have the capacity to understand what is read. The following section explores the importance of vocabulary and its role in making meaning from text.

Vocabulary development and meaning making. Vocabulary is an integral part in gaining meaning from the text. Numerous studies have explored how vocabulary words known at certain ages can impact children's reading development (Cunningham & O'Donnell, 2012; National Reading Panel, 2000; Sénéchal, Ouellette, & Rodney, 2013; Stahl & Stahl, 2012). Individuals begin acquiring vocabulary before they can talk. Exposure to oral language and texts contribute greatly to a child's acquisition of vocabulary. Much of a child's vocabulary is developed at home through interactions with parents, exposure to literature, and access to print (Biemiller, 2003; Hart & Risely, 1995). By the time children reach three years old, the trends in amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction are well established (Hart & Risley, 1995). This points to

the necessity of exposing student to texts and engaging them in activities, while also interacting with talk that both explains events and builds curiosity.

Stahl and Stahl (2012) argue texts are powerful tools for building vocabulary. They assert that texts contain more complex sentence forms, use more complex and exact vocabulary, and makes fewer assumptions about a shared knowledge base (Stahl & Stahl, 2012). These findings have important consequences for vocabulary acquisition. Stahl and Stahl (2012) maintain, "this language of school includes words that are used in school, but not necessarily in children's homes or neighborhoods" (p. 79), suggesting normal parent interactions are not enough to prepare students with the necessary vocabulary for school. Stahl and Stahl (2012) write, "[…]the maximum vocabulary learning[…]comes from reading books. Storybook reading is the most powerful source of new vocabulary, including those academic words that are valued in school discourse" (p. 78). Students need to be exposed to a variety of literature which will help to develop language that is valued in academic institutions. Immersion in both written and oral language is attributed to high rates of vocabulary growth in many children (Nagy & Scott, 2013). These results speak volumes to the importance of print exposure. The more children interact with texts, the better they understand the complexities of language, and they are likely to develop a more extensive vocabulary knowledge.

Exposure to a wide variety of engaging texts and oral language helps develop vocabulary. Additionally, knowledge of how words are built is crucial. Students can grow their vocabulary exponentially by understanding the morphemes, or meaningful parts, of words (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Nagy & Scott, 2013). When students can identify and know the meaning of the root word, they can apply that knowledge to

various forms and derivatives of that word. Anglin (1993) discovered that for the 4,000 root words that children in the study learned, they knew 14,000 derived words (as cited in Nagy & Scott, 2013). These findings are significant; they suggest reading and engaging in conversations alone are not enough for a child's development of vocabulary. Students need to understand how words are constructed and that the parts of words impact the meaning. Then, they can apply this knowledge to new words that share similar morphemes.

Knowledge of language structures and patterns, as well as understanding how words are built, can contribute to vocabulary development. Much of this can be accomplished through the exposure to rich oral language and a variety of written text. Vocabulary is essential to gaining meaning from text and is necessary in both emergent readers and more proficient readers alike. All the recommended strategies suggested can be implemented at home and school. These practices set up students to be able to more efficiently understand what they are reading.

Reading Motivation

Motivation is essential in learning to read and developing meaning from text. Malloy and Gambrell (2012) discuss motivated readers, arguing students who read more experience a deeper learning, and they often demonstrate increased achievement. Reading motivation is multifaceted in nature and can vary by reader and context (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). It is often described or classified in terms of constructs and dimensions. Different researchers use their own varying systems of classification, which evolve and are refined over time (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield, 2012; Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2013; Wang, Jia, & Jin, 2020).

My study was informed using the 11 constructs for reading motivation proposed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997). For this review of literature, I have categorized them, as grouped by Wang, Jia, and Jin (2020), into four categories: competency beliefs, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and social motivation. While many researchers classified the dimensions of motivation as either extrinsic or intrinsic, Wang et al. (2020)

Table 1

Wang, Jia, and Jin's 11 Dimensions of Motivation

Higher Order Categories	Dimension
Competency Beliefs	Self-efficacy Challenge Work Avoidance
Intrinsic Motivation	Curiosity Involvement Importance
Extrinsic Motivation	Recognition Grades Competition
Social Motivation	Social Compliance

Note. (Wang et al., 2020)

also included the categories of competency beliefs and social motivation. Table 1 illustrates how the dimensions of motivation were classified. I chose these constructs because they more accurately captured the various areas of reading motivation discussed

in the literature reviewed. I contend most dimensions are more commonly classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic in nature, but I found the addition of competency beliefs and social motivation important to include as separate categories.

Competency beliefs. The way a student views themselves as a reader affects their reading motivation. Self-efficacy, challenge, and work avoidance are dimensions of motivation that can be attributed to competency beliefs. Although there are some variations in studies, the general consensus is that the more competent readers view themselves, the more motivated they are to read; conversely, students with lower self-efficacy will avoid reading activities (Bright & Loman, 2020; Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, & Rinehart, 1999; Schiefele et al., 2012; Wigfield & McCann, 1996). A study conducted by Bright and Loman (2020) documented the effects of an Indigo Love of Reading Foundation grant and teacher professional learning in literacy on the motivation of middle school students. They found students' beliefs of their reading competence showed the greatest gains in levels of motivation. The participants in their study reported positive responses to scenarios they viewed as a challenge including reading challenging texts and learning difficult concepts by reading. The students were motivated by the challenge. It is interesting to note, however, that these authors also reported that the intrinsic motivation to read is "important to building student competency and confidence in choosing books to read" (Bright & Loman, 2020, p. 20), illustrating the recursive nature of reading motivation. The more competent a reader views themselves, the more motivated they are to read. The reverse can be true, too: the more motivated a student is to read, the more competency they believe they have. Wigfield and McCann (1996) reported that positive reading efficacy was related to increases in reading frequency. This

suggests that students who have positive views of themselves not only want to read but read more. Since poor self-efficacy can lead to a decrease in motivation, steps need to be taken to help improve student's beliefs in their competence.

Intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be defined as the willingness to read because the activity is satisfying or rewarding in its own right (Schiefele et al., 2012). Readers read because they want to on their own accord, not because of some external force. Wigfield et al. (1996) argue the most valuable form of motivation is intrinsic motivation. Curiosity, involvement, and importance are associated with intrinsic motivation (Wang et al., 2020). When students are curious about topics or genres, they will find satisfaction in reading about them. Students who are involved readers get lost in the stories and can empathize with the characters of the story (Schiefele et al., 2012). Additionally, students who attach importance to reading develop intrinsic motivation (Bright & Loman, 2020). This can result in improved comprehension, especially within the dimension of involvement and curiosity (Schiefele & Löweke, 2018). However, in a longitudinal study conducted by Schiefele, Stutz, and Schaffner (2016), the research showed that involvement contributed to the comprehension at the word and sentence level but not at the passage level, suggesting students are more engaged with the text, but the motivation alone is not responsible for overall comprehension. While it remains inconclusive on how much intrinsic motivation plays in comprehension, researchers agree that when readers are intrinsically motivated, they read more often and are more competent readers (Schiefele et al., 2012; Wigfield & McCann, 1996). Readers who are intrinsically motivated to read seek out information, escape into books, and read for specific purposes which are foundational to creating lasting reading habits.

Extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is defined as reading for reasons that are external to both the activity of reading and the topic of the text (Schiefele et al., 2012). Extrinsically motivated readers are reading to get a positive outcome or attempt to avoid a negative one (Schiefele et al., 2012). This includes the dimensions of recognition, grades, and competition (Wang et al., 2020). Recognition is the pleasure of receiving a tangible form of recognition for success, grades is the desire to be favorably evaluated by the teacher, and competition includes the desire to outperform others in reading (Wigfield, Wilde, Baker, Fernandez-Fein, & Scher, 1996). Extrinsically motivated readers read for some sort of outside stimuli. This type of incentive has the potential to affect the motivation of readers. One common form of incentive is to keep track of reading using a reading log and reward milestones with prizes or recognition. When students are required to keep track of the books they read or the number of pages read, some perceived that as forcing them to read (Smith, 2017). However, Smith (2017) also conceded incentives can be beneficial to encourage reluctant readers. She found incentives to read were more advantageous when students had a choice of the reading material. The research into the use of incentives to spur extrinsic motivation has had varying results. Edmunds and Hancock (2003) cite numerous studies, demonstrating non-reading related rewards and books as rewards have a positive effect on reading motivation. As true for other forms of motivation, extrinsic motivation is not guaranteed for all readers and may not have the same effect on everyone. While it has the potential to motivate some readers, it is not a fool proof way to get students to read more. This suggests parents, educators, students, and other important stakeholders need to closely

look at individual students, as well as the type of reinforcement being offered to ensure it is having the desired effects.

Social motivation. The influence of people involved in the lives of the reader has on the reading motivation of students cannot be underscored. Students are motivated to read because they see others value reading, which promotes discussion, and the desire to carry out the expectation of others (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Wang et al., 2020; Wigfield & McCann, 1996). Several studies have found that specific people can influence readers more than others (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Klauda & Wigfield, 2012; Wigfield et al., 1996). Klauda and Wigfield (2012) found that parents and friends affect reading motivation. While parents have more influence than friends (Klauda & Wigfield, 2012), mothers were found to affect reading motivation more than fathers (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Klauda & Wigfield, 2012). Students were not just impelled to read by others, but the desire and enjoyment of talking about books was a motivational force, too (Bright & Loman, 2020; Fisher & Frey, 2018; Gambrell, 1996, 2011; Wigfield & McCann, 1996). Another social aspect influencing motivation was talking about and promoting books. Fisher and Frey (2018) assert, “When trusted others make recommendations about a text, potential readers are more likely to read it” (p. 92). This sharing of texts lets a reader know about the topic or plot and decide on if they would like to read it. Gambrell (2011) noted the persuasive power of bookselling various books. This practice is effective as students are more likely to choose books they know something about. Fisher and Frey (2018) found both book talks, which include providing an overview of the text, and having discussions about books that were read by multiple people, were motivating for some students. These book talks and discussions about

books can happen between students, teachers and students, and family and students. People are social in nature, so unsurprisingly, social influences can impact reader motivation.

Reader motivation is multidimensional and variable by person and context. It is also debatable on what constitutes certain motivations and motivational forces as precondition or consequences. The theoretical perspectives and findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies can be contradictory. Still, scholars agree reading motivation is beneficial to students to encourage them to read more. It should not be assumed that reader motivation is a one size fits all construct, however.

Access to Books

An important component for student readers' development is access to a wide range of books and texts in school and at home. Students who have a plentiful supply of books increase the likelihood they engage in reading (Guice, Allington, & Johnston, 1994). In fact, access to many books improves attitudes towards reading (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Guryan, Kim, & Park, 2016; Mctague & Abrams, 2011). Moreover, print exposure via book access can result in higher reading abilities of students (Fisher & Frey, 2018). Ensuring students have access to books in the classroom and at home is vital in motivating readers and increasing their exposure to print.

Classroom libraries. Classroom libraries are influential in motivating and engaging students. When students are in close proximity to books, there is a coercive effect on students, and they are more apt to pick up books to read (Neuman, 1999). Gambrell (1996) argues a book-rich classroom fosters reading motivation, and Pachtman and Wilson's (2006) survey results found that fifth graders reported having a lot of books

in the classroom library was the most important thing in motivating them to read. The International Reading Association (2000) recommends that classroom libraries have at least seven books per child in a class library (as cited in Jones, Reutzel, & Smith, 2012). This is not always the case nor is it always enough to promote reading. Neuman (1999) looked at the access to books across 100 early learning classrooms and observed only a few classrooms equipped with classroom libraries. A study that examined students' access to texts, which were freely available to children in their classrooms, found the number of books per classroom varied greatly between elementary schools across states, although most exceeded the number suggested by ILA (Hodges, Wright, Roberts, Norman, & Coleman, 2019). While many schools exceeded the recommended average number of books, there were at least 6 schools that did not meet minimum number of books. However, Hodges et al. (2000) found that although classroom libraries were present, they were not observed being used very often, suggesting a classroom library alone is not enough to motivate readers. Teachers need to create routines and expectations on how and when to use the classroom library. Students reported that having daily opportunities to visit classroom libraries were important to them (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). This is relevant to my study as a significant component of 100 Book Challenge is to supply classrooms with a collection of books, which includes approximately 150 texts.

The types of books in classroom libraries also impacts student motivation. Classroom libraries should have a wide variety of popular texts (Au, K., 2012; Worthy, 1996; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999). This is especially true for upper elementary and middle school students. A study about motivating reluctant readers found that

students often lost the interest to read because the texts that they loved to read were not available in school (Worthy, 1996). The texts' unavailability can be contributed to multiple reasons. Worthy et al. (1999) found that teachers either didn't view students' interests as appropriate for school or because they felt pressure to provide only "quality" literature in their classrooms (p. 22). However, the number one reason for a lack of popular reading materials was an absence of money to buy them (Worthy et al., 1999). For classroom libraries to motivate and foster students to read, the books and resources need to be accessible, and children need to have the ability to regularly access those books. The libraries need to include texts that are appealing to the readers. District and school leaders need to secure the funding to maintain classroom libraries so that students have access to a wide variety of diverse and popular texts.

Social access. Student access to books does not only mean having access to physical texts. The people who surround the developing reader have multiple opportunities to increase access and exposure of books through read alouds and book talks, which can introduce students to new titles and genres. Gambrell (2011) asserts teachers can provide access to a wide range of materials through teacher read-alouds and facilitating book selling sessions. Engaging in regular read-alouds and doing a book sharing session once a week significantly increases the number of books that students know about. As noted in the social motivation section, students are more likely to choose a book they know something about (Gambrell, 2011). This social interaction should not be restricted to teachers and students. Fisher and Frey (2018) assert that when trusted others make recommendations about a text, students are more likely to read them. The social experiences of discussing and sharing books is important. Students need to have

the opportunities to interact with books and share them with a wider social circle (Mctague & Abrams, 2011). This social circle can include educators, administrators, friends, and families.

One way that parents can increase access to texts is by sharing books with their children. They can choose books to read aloud to them. Listening to stories not only motivates students to read, it also develops concepts of story, awareness of print, and exposure to rich language (Green, Lilly, & Barrett, 2002). Although parent read-alouds are a regular routine in many families with young children, it often stops as children become independent readers despite the fact that children continue to have the desire to be read to (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018). By not capitalizing on continuing the routines of read-alouds, parents are missing opportunities to engage with their children and to expose them to various books they may not otherwise have read.

Student Choice

The self-selection of books also impacts student motivation to read. Gambrell (1996, 2011) affirms that when students have a choice about what they read, they are more motivated to read. Educators and parents should capitalize on strategies to encourage reading by allowing students to choose their own reading material. Researchers have found that that when students self-select texts, they are more likely to read and in turn read more often (Fisher & Frey, 2018; Worthy, 1996). Students rank having choice about what to read second to having access to a lot of books in a study investigating what students think is important to motivating them to read (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). When students read self-selected texts, they can develop their own tastes and preferences of books (Au, K., 2012; Bright & Loman, 2020). Despite the benefits,

readers should be coached and encouraged to read books that are well matched to them as readers. When students have free rein to choose what they want to read, they can sometimes choose books that are too challenging or at a level in which little reading growth can occur (Guryan et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2012). In fact, Jones et al. (2020) assert that controlling text difficulty to ensure the optimal level of success may be more important than allowing unguided choice. Additionally, students have been found to read more when they read books that are well matched. (Guryan et al., 2016). Student choice is an important part of motivating students to read; however, guidance should be given to ensure students are reading books that best suited for them as readers.

There are multiple dimensions of reading motivation that have been studied, refined, classified, and reclassified. Essentially, motivation is classified as either intrinsic, extrinsic, social, or as a reflection of competency. It seems that students can fall across the spectrum of motivations, and they vary in results of such motivations. There are two practices that overwhelmingly report positive effects on motivation: ensuring student readers have access to books and allowing readers to self-select what they want to read. These practices routinely lead to more interest and engagement in reading.

Leveled Texts

The use of leveled books can be beneficial in providing individualized reading instruction; however, there are significant drawbacks that have the potential to be detrimental to elementary readers. The use of leveled texts have been a part of primary reading instruction for decades (Rog & Burton, 2001; Shanahan, 2020; Walski, 2020). Leveled reading materials can help teachers select texts to best support the instructional needs of their students (Ankrum, 2021; Rog & Burton, 2001; Walski, 2020). However,

researchers caution that they are most effective when used in conjunction of a balanced literacy program where students have access to leveled readers, but also complex and grade level texts (Ankrum, 2021; Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Walski, 2020).

It is important that elementary readers not only read texts that are deemed at their level, but also have experiences with more complex texts. Walski (2020) argues that students' brains need to be exercised by grappling with challenging texts as students who only read within their independent reading levels may not grow in stamina or strength. This is supported by findings presented by Shanahan (2020) who reported that students who were placed in books above their reading level made significantly larger learning gains. Because students need experiences with complex texts, it's concerning that many teachers restrict student's choice of reading to only books within their levels (Kontovourki, 2012; Walski, 2020). This not only can affect reading growth and stamina, but it can also alter a student's motivation to read. Restricting a child's choice of texts to those only within a child's reading level can deter otherwise excited readers and dampen their willingness to read (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Rog & Burton, 2001; Walski, 2020).

Students should be able to choose books for pleasure reading that appeal to their interests and connect to their background knowledge. However, the leveling of books often restricts this practice. Students are often not permitted to read books that they may find appealing due to topic or genre because they are outside of their reading level (Walski, 2020). Not only could this affect a student's motivation to read, but it also can create its own challenges with students not being able to understand what they are reading. The assigned level of a book does not guarantee that a student will have the

capacity to navigate the content of a text effectively and efficiently. A student's interest and background knowledge have a significant impact on the readability of a text for that particular student (Rog & Burton, 2001). If a student is unfamiliar with the background of a story, it can be too challenging even if the books is deemed to be within a child's reading level (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005). By focusing on assigned levels of books and limiting students to only reading within those levels, it does not guarantee that students are getting what they need to grow as readers.

The leveling of books also fosters a practice in which readers become identified by their reading levels. Fountas and Pinnell (2018) assert that books are leveled, not children (as cited in Walski, 2020). However, Kontovourki (2012) found that the leveling of books were used as markers of who the students were as readers in the classroom. She reported that despite teachers insisting that levels were private, by labeling book bins and the books themselves with the levels and requiring students to only read within their levels, students were unable to escape the resulting identification of being readers within certain levels. It was so pervasive, that students took it upon themselves to regulate each other about what they could and couldn't read (Kontovourki, 2012).

There is a place for leveled books in a balanced literacy program so that teachers can provide instruction and support to facilitate the growth of readers. However, readers should not be restricted to only reading within certain levels. Readers need access to a variety of texts that match their interests, sociocultural identities, and background experiences (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005). They need to engage with both demanding and less demanding texts do that they can encounter the language and ideas that are age-

appropriate (Shanahan, 2020). By not providing diverse and varied experiences with texts, it becomes a social justice and equity issue (Hastings, 2016; Shanahan, 2020). Students need to encounter texts that they can relate to, that challenge them, and be exposed to language and content appropriate for their stage of development.

Reading Practices and Perceptions: What do the Villagers Think and Do?

There are many people responsible for the development of student readers. This village of stakeholders include administrators, educators, parents, and the students. The following section provides a synthesis of the findings from empirical studies gaining insight into the practices and perceptions of these individuals as related to the development of the student reader. The inclusion criteria for selected articles included a focus on the practices and perceptions of stakeholders in the development of the elementary aged students. As noted earlier, exceptions were made, however, which expanded the criteria to middle school when the study was more recent and still applicable to the study. In addition, some literature which focused on parents was situated with emergent readers. Because many of the practices could be applied to older children, I included them in this review. Finally, to ensure continuity, I have presented a synthesis of findings organized by stakeholder in the same order as they are presented throughout the study.

Administrators

Administrators are the leaders of districts and schools, and they are being called on to be instructional leaders. The literature regarding the direct role administrators play in a student's reading development is scant with much of the research being dated (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Jacobson, Ruetzel, & Hollingsworth, 1992;

Lickteig, Parnell, & Ellis, 1995) or having occurred in countries outside of the United States (Mockler & Stacey, 2021; Plaatjies, 2019; Tiatri, 2018). However, several studies have reported on indirect ways that student reading development is fostered through clear missions, making reading a priority, and providing professional development (Garcia, Maxwell, & McNair, n.d.; Mackey, Pitcher, & Decman, 2006; Townsend & Bayetto, 2021). Still, information can be gained on the perceptions and practices of administrators as it pertains to the development of student readers.

Administrator practices. Regardless of the call for administrators to be instructional leaders, two studies found that a school principals' leadership has no direct effect on students' reading acheivement (Hallinger et al., 1996; Tiatri, 2018). However, the results suggested that principals can have an indirect effect through actions that shape a school's learning climate. One way that has been reported to impact student achievement is to have a clear school mission (Hallinger et al., 1996; Mackey et al., 2006). Additionally, administrators who promoted and supported teacher learning and growth in teaching reading indirectly affected students' reading development (Mackey et al., 2006; Tiatri, 2018). In a study examining four elementary principals, there was only one profile that resulted in continued growth in student reading acheivement (Mackey et al., 2006). It was found that the principal who had a strong, personal understanding of the schools' vision, who also led professional development, sought understanding himself, and provided materials to see the vision implented, had the most growth in student reading acheivement. This differed from the two other principals who lacked clear visions and whose instructional leadership was influenced by state politics or delegated responsiblitity to the school system and faculty. The achievement of students

under those administrators declined (Mackey et al., 2006). In a more generalized study focusing on best practices of elementary adminstrators to promote student acheivement, several themes were attributed to success, which included the following: leadership with data, relationships, ownership and collaboration, developing teacher leaders, and having an instructional awareness and involvement (Crum, Sherman, & Myran, 2009). Not all studies explored adminstrator practices in relation to reading acheivement, but instead reported ways to foster and promote literacy development. There were several ways that principals can support literacy including: placing literacy as a priorty, setting high expections, providing moral support, acquiring materials, and being involved with children (Holder et al., 2017; Lickteig et al., 1995). Thus, there are effective practices that administrators can adopt to support the development of student readers. Principals need to have an understanding of literacy development and engage in professional learning to continue to build capacity in this area. Additionally, they need to support teachers' professional learning, as well. It is not enough just to build capacity around reading development. Principals also should engender a climate of trust and support.

Administrator perceptions. There were three studies reviewed that focused specifically on elementary school principal's perceptions of reading development. One study found that administrators had perceptions of what promoted or hindered reading development of students (Holder et al., 2017). Principals believed that lack of early literacy exposure, lack of family support, and lack of teacher and parental expectations was to blame for the underwhelming reading achievement. Consequently, family support, early literacy exposure, teacher effectiveness, and teacher and parental expectations were believed to promote reading growth (Holder et al., 2017). Garcia,

Maxwell, and McNair (n.d) found that adminstrators' perceptions fell into two categories when it came to supporting both developing readers and ELL readers. These included perceptions of urgency and passion. It was reported that adminstrators were empassioned and felt a sense of urgency to ensure a quality curriculum was being implemented, focus on instructional challenges that hindered literacy, use a variety of instructional interventions, and implement consistent progress monitoring of student reading growth (Garcia et al., n.d.). In a quantiative study with 581 survey respondants, principals were asked to rate what they viewed as critial and unresolved in readng instruction as well as what was resolved (Jacobson et al., 1992). They found there was continued uncertainty of the type of reading program to use, how to assess reading progress, as well as if ability grouping was best. What principals reported as feeling resolved was if reading skills should be isolated or intergrated with langague arts, phonics being taught as a prerequisite to reading instruction, and that at-risk students should receive more reading isntruciotn. Despite the perceptions of these areas being resolved or unresolved, it was unclear what position principals took on these matters. An important takeaway, however, is that principals have perceptions on reading instruction, but understanding the specifics of those perceptions is still needed.

Elementary Teachers

The literature pertaining to teachers' perceptions and practices of reading showed many findings had to do with their thoughts of the curriculum, reading program, or instruction. The studies revealed a vast difference between teachers who taught from more traditional approaches that focused on skills and strategies, as compared to educators who focused more on the development of the reader.

Teacher practices. Unsurprisingly, this review of literature revealed numerous instructional reading practices occurring during reading instruction. These practices were often directly correlated with the specific reading program or framework of reading instruction.

Several studies reported on the practices of teachers who taught using basal readers (Scharer, 1993; Valencia et al., 2006). When teachers taught from a basal reading program, instructional practices were often focused on whole group instruction with little individualization or differentiation. Teachers engaged in prereading activities, including direct instruction of predetermined vocabulary, asking prediction questions, and reading aloud the text before students read it independently (Valencia et al., 2006). Specific reading skill instruction was provided and assessed using worksheets (Scharer, 1992; Valencia et al., 2006). The primary form of assessment was end of unit comprehension and skill tests (Scharer, 1992; Valencia et al., 2006). What is most concerning, however, are the reading practices specifically omitted. In a longitudinal qualitative study conducted by Valencia et al., (2006) teachers admitted to giving up silent reading time, higher level comprehension instruction, and building students' ownership and motivation to read. Not only that, but teachers would reduce the number of days spent reading stories and the number of vocabulary words being taught to save time and keep up with predetermined pacing (Valencia et al., 2006). Many of these reading practices, or lack thereof, appear to be the result of an expectation to teach a program, not students. This reflects teachers who are trying to keep up the pace of instruction instead of doing what is needed to ensure all students receive a rich literacy experience. Valencia et al. (2006) noted teachers who taught from the basal reading programs did little to adjust or change

their instructional strategies, but instead took components out of their instruction to maintain pacing.

The instructional reading practices differed greatly when teachers used a framework that afforded them more autonomy to make instructional decisions. For one, student assessment and instruction was ongoing and individualized. Running records and reading inventories were used to get to know students as readers (Baumann, Hoffman, & Duffy-Hester, 2000; Griswold & Bunch, 2014; Scharer, 1992; Valencia et al., 2006). Not only that but formative assessment measures such as anecdotal records, observation checklists, and student portfolios were used to track students' growth and inform instruction (Baumann et al., 2000).

Various reading instructional practices and structures were employed. Individual reading conferences were ongoing where teachers would both informally assess a student and provide mini-lessons on specific reading skills or strategies (Griswold & Bunch, 2014; Scharer, 1992). Not all teachers conducted reading conferences. Some teachers used literature circles or discussion groups to promote comprehension strategies and address student needs (Valencia et al., 2006). Baumann et al., (2000) found teachers used a variety of instructional structures including whole class, flexible groups, ability groups, and individualized instruction. One teacher developed his own instructional routine, which included reading and responding to texts, a comprehension and thinking skills activity, decoding and phonological awareness practice, and allowing for reading self-selected books (Valencia et al., 2006). These structures allowed flexibility for teachers to address students' needs.

Reading alouds were also a common practice found in many classrooms. Teachers would promote reading by conducting read-alouds where they would model higher level thinking and provide time for students to read self-selected books (Griswold & Bunch, 2014; Scharer, 1992; Valencia et al., 2006). Corcoran and Mamalaki (2009) reported teachers read aloud three times a week while Fletcher (2018) reported some teachers read aloud daily. As discussed previously, read-alouds increase student access to text; however, this is not the only benefit. Harvey and Goudvis (2017) report:

> When teaching reading comprehension, we do a good deal of instruction via reading aloud. But we need to remember that if we read aloud only for the purpose of instruction, we will ruin reading aloud. We need to read aloud every day for the sheer joy of it! (p. 56).

Read alouds are an essential part of fostering reading development. It's an effective and engaging practice that motivates student, exposed them to academic language, and provides models of proficient reading.

In addition to reading aloud, there were other ways that teachers promoted reading. Fletcher (2018) reported teachers having an awareness of their students' reading needs and would vary pacing or activities to maintain engagement and positive attitudes. In another study which directly reported on efforts of teachers to direct students to books of interest, Bright and Loman (2020) found that teachers engaged in professional learning around various books, genres, and themes with the intention that teachers can help students select books they would enjoy reading.

There is a clear difference of instructional practices from teachers who teach from basal and scripted reading programs to those that use a more balanced literacy

approach. The former focuses on discrete skills while the latter appears to emphasize more purposeful and engaging interactions with texts.

Teacher perceptions. Teachers' perceptions of reading, or more specifically the teaching of reading, are shaped by curriculum, reading programs, their philosophy of teaching, and their desire to ensure all students learn to read.

Curriculum, reading programs, and the accompanying materials appear to have a significant impact on teachers' perceptions of teaching reading. Valencia et al. (2006) shared findings from a longitudinal study following four beginning teachers in their first three years of teaching reading. Each teacher taught reading under very different circumstances. Two of the teachers taught a tightly structured basal reading program with varying degrees of autonomy, and two of the teachers had almost total freedom to teach reading as they saw fit if it aligned within the district framework or addressed the state standards. At the end of the study, three of the four teachers perceived the curricular and instructional materials as essential to their reading instruction (Valencia et al, 2006). The materials provided a sense of assurance and confidence that they were providing high quality instruction and covering important curriculum (Valencia et al, 2006). Interestingly, although there was this perception that the materials would ensure good reading instruction, the teachers who taught from the basal series had conflicted feelings. Despite their reliance on the materials, both struggled with the fact that the basal program was not meeting their perceived need of a balanced literacy program (Valencia et al, 2006). Baumann et al. (2000) also reported on teachers' perceptions of reading programs. They found that when prompted to give a letter grade to their reading program, the average response was a B when it came to developing skillful, motivated,

and critical readers. Although these studies varied in how perceptions were reported, it seemed that teachers felt improvements could be made to improve developing readers.

Another common teacher perception is around professional learning and support. Two studies reported teachers view a lack of support and professional development for effective instruction. Teachers who taught from the basal program, touted as a comprehensive literacy program, felt they were providing quality instruction. However, when one teacher was asked to train new teachers in the program, she realized how little she knew about it as she never had any training herself (Valencia et al., 2006). Teachers who were transitioning to using trade-books for reading instruction began to doubt their own knowledge about both reading and literature (Scharer, 1992). This differed from the findings of Bright and Loman (2000). They reported that teachers felt supported in their instruction due to school wide focus on literacy, their principals support, and the professional learning opportunities offered to increase their knowledge about books. For teachers to truly feel confident and execute effective reading instruction, proper support and professional development needs to be provided.

Parents/Caregivers

Parents or caregivers are often a child's first teacher in the acquisition of various literacy skills. Understanding the reading practices parents engage in and their perceptions of reading are important to understanding the larger literacy experiences of students.

Parent practices. The literature evidences most parents engage their children in reading activities by either reading to their children or having their children reading aloud to them (Akindele, 2012; Merga & Ledger, 2018). The amount of time parents dedicate

to this practice varies widely, however. Merga and Ledger (2018) report that while 81% of parents report reading aloud to their students at least two times a week, less than half of the parents read with their children daily. Akindele (2012) had similar findings; parents admitted most reading occurred on weekends. Interestingly, parents with higher degrees spent less time reading aloud to their children than parents with less education (Akindele, 2012).

Reading practices differed as well depending on if the books were being read aloud to the child or the child was reading aloud to the parents. Parents who read aloud to their children beyond the early years reported modeling reading with expression and engaging in a shared reading routine (Merga & Ledger, 2018). When children read aloud to parents, parents take on a coaching role by correcting mistakes, supplying words, providing context clues, and offering encouragement (Evans & Hulak, 2020; Tracey & Young, 2002). Parents' reading practices, ones they engage in with their children, may depend on parents' education levels. Tracey and Young (2002) report on the different reading practices high school educated mothers engage in as compared to college educated mothers. They found that mothers with a high school education corrected their children more often and asked more attribute questions. College educated mothers, on the other hand, asked more yes/no questions and inferencing questions (Tracey & Young, 2002).

The findings in these studies are promising in reporting how parents perceive reading and engage in reading practices with their children. Not only are children read to and engaged in shared reading time, but also parents are also supporting both word attack and comprehension strategies. There does need to be a level of caution, however. Tracey

and Young (2002) reported the more error corrections offered by a parent, the child experiences more frustration and feelings of failure. This could indicate that parents, albeit well meaning, may need support in how to help their children in their reading development. One of the benefits of the Reading Together program was that parents received the knowledge and resources to develop a positive reading relationship with their children (Sukhram & Hsu, 2012). They learned how to select age appropriate and engaging books, gauge their children's interests, as well as question and engage their children in discussion about books (Sukhram & Hsu, 2012). This emphasizes the importance schools have on parent practices. When a school environment considers home reading a parental norm, parents can be influenced to emulate the behavior (Colgate & Ginns, 2016). As critical stakeholders, administrators and educators need to bring attention to and emphasize ways that parents can be an integral part of their child's reading development.

Parent perceptions. Parent reading perceptions vary; however, the perception that reading was important to their child to learn to read was shared by many parents. This was illustrated in a study conducted by Fletcher (2018) when parents shared that reading was important for their children to have success in school and future long term career opportunities. Beyond that, parent reading perceptions ranged from feelings of being empowered to enjoying reading with their child to dealing with common problems they encounter (Akindele, 2012; Merga & Ledger, 2018; Sukhram & Hsu, 2012). In a study seeking to understand parents' views on reading aloud to their children, Merga and Ledger (2018) report that 96% of parents enjoyed the shared reading experience with their child. When asked to elaborate, several themes were evident. Parents felt reading

aloud with their child provided valuable learning opportunities, encouraged enjoying reading, and developed interpersonal connections (Merga & Ledger, 2018). They perceived the shared reading time as opportunities to "get all snuggled up, talk about the day we've had and what's happening tomorrow, then read books" (Merga & Ledger, 2018, p. 181). Parents who engaged with the Reading Together program perceived their participation empowered them with the tools and confidence to better read with their child (Sukhram & Hsu, 2012). Despite the reported benefits of reading with their children, parents also identified many barriers regarding reading at home. Common barriers included time to read, lack of books, lack of interest, and lack of involvement (Akindele, 2012; Fletcher, 2018; Merga & Ledger, 2018). Fletcher (2018) reported that many parents, especially those with low socioeconomic status, work long hours and can't take children to the library, read to them, or attend school events. These perceived barriers were often used as reasons for why parents were not more involved with their children's reading development.

The research is clear: families play an active role in supporting the literacy development of their children. By engaging in shared reading activities, parents can model different reading practices, act as a coach in supporting various reading practices, and promote the enjoyment of reading.

Elementary Students

Multiple studies addressed the reading practices and perceptions of students. They took place both at home and/or in the school setting. The studies include children from the age of three up to sixth grade.

Student practices. One of the predominate reading practices observed by students involved selecting books. Scharer (1992) reported changes that occurred within classrooms when there was a shift from teaching from a basal program to using authentic literature in trade books. Students in grades one through six were observed having an increase in self-selection of books. This practice was observed in both the school and home setting. In a study looking at the Reading Together Program for parents, children were reported bringing more books to their parents for them to read (Sukhram & Hsu, 2012). Both studies revealed students engaging in the reading practice of self-selecting books to read. This is an important finding because choosing what to read is an essential component in the larger literary experience that motivates and fosters life-long reading habits (Au, K., 2012; Jones et al., 2012). Students self-selected books by meeting their interests and had preferences around what they enjoyed reading. Numerous researchers have explored the effects of independent reading of self-selected books and have determined that students develop a wide range of preferences and interests in reading material (Au, K., 2012; Davila & Patrick, 2010; Worthy, 1996). There is not a clear preference of what students like to read as there are a myriad of choices and preferences (Davila & Patrick, 2010). Many students preferred reading materials that were not related to school, which limited the access students had to these texts (Worthy, 1996). Interestingly, Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) shared that students engaged in the practice of self-selection of texts; however, they reported that students never told their friends about the books they read. This is disheartening as talking about books is a great way to increase access by exposing others to texts they have never seen (Corcoran &

Mamalakis, 2009). This information is critical as steps need to be made to ensure students have access to the books that interest them.

One study revealed that children were able to talk about specific reading skills and strategies they were working on. In a study investigating how five- and six-year-old learn to read at home, Evans and Hulak (2020) found that the students were able to talk about how they were learning to read. The children talked about reading both by themselves and with their parents. When asked how their parents helped them, it was reported parents asked them to sound out words, told them words, asked them to look at the picture, and told them they were doing a good job (Evans & Hulak, 2020). These practices appear to be shaped by the shared reading practice occurring at home.

Based on these studies, there are numerous reading practices that students engage in. It is interesting to note that some of these studies revealed changes in student because of shifts of reading programs or interventions. Therefore, stakeholders involved in student reader development should understand the implications of reading programs and ensure the practices being instilled are beneficial to lifelong reading habits. It is not only reading programs that influence students; the actions of people around them do, too. When parents, educators, and administrators' model and give importance to certain practices, it can shape the reader. It appears two predominate factors that shape these practices include parental involvement, as well as school reading programs.

Student perceptions. Several studies specifically reported on student perceptions of reading. Students viewed reading as important and purposeful (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Fletcher, 2018). Two studies described students' perceptions of classroom practices that motivated them to read (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009;

Pachtman & Wilson, 2006), while others informed of students' perceptions on why learning to read is important (Evans & Hulak, 2020; Fletcher, 2018).

Using an open-ended response survey, Pachtman and Wilson (2006) found student attributed certain classroom practices as motivating them to read including having lots of books in the classroom library and participating in book counts and celebrations. Students also reported they enjoyed working toward a reading goal and stated that reading for homework was important. Finally, they liked being able to visit the classroom library every day and recording books in their book log because they could recognize their accomplishments (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). Students wanted to have choice of texts and that they viewed that practice as motivating them to read (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). Because motivation is a key component to learning to read (Malloy & Gambrell, 2012), it is important to understand what students perceive as motivating classroom practices in order to implement them in the classroom.

Evans and Hulak (2020) reported on kindergarten student responses on why learning to read is important. The most common reasons students gave for why learning to read is important is to teach/read to children and for utilitarian purposes outside of school like reading stop signs or names of stores. This was mirrored by the findings of Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) and Fletcher (2018). Students reported learning to read as important for academic purposes such as using books for homework when they got older (Evans & Hulak, 2020). Reading for enjoyment was also perceived as why learning to read is important (Evans & Hulak, 2020). These findings are important to note as reading needs to be recognized as a tool used both inside and outside of school.

Conclusion

Teaching a child to read is a complex task, which involves understanding language structures and foundations, using necessary schema and vocabulary to efficiently and effectively integrate socio-cognitive strategies including making predictions and inferences, and having the motivation to engage with texts. Administrators, educators, and parents alike can help foster these strategies in students. Knowing many of the reading practices students and teachers engage in are related to reading programs, it is necessary to ensure the programs promote a diverse literacy experience. Additionally, both parents and teachers need support helping children learn to read; therefore, professional development and trainings need to be provided.

This review of literature sheds light into stakeholders' practices and perceptions. Interestingly, most studies focused on singular stakeholders or occasionally looked at either administrators and educators, parents and children, or educators and students. There was only one empirical study that included a holistic look at the roles of all stakeholders in the relation to the development of student readers. My study provides an inclusive investigation of all stakeholders within the context of one reading program and provides insight on how the practices and perceptions impact developing readers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative methodology best answered the study's research question: What are multiple stakeholders' (administrators, educators, parents, and students) practices and perceptions of reading around the development of the student reader within the context of 100 Book Challenge? Qualitative research is an appropriate research design as it is a form of inquiry that helps to gain understanding and provide explanations of social phenomena with minimal disruption to a natural setting (Merriam, 1998). I conducted a case study exploring the phenomenon of the role of stakeholders in the development of readers within 100 Book Challenge. Case studies are a design of inquiry where the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a bounded phenomenon, which can include an event, program, process, institution, one or more individuals, or a social unit (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). Case study is an appropriate research design for this inquiry as it lends itself to the investigation into the phenomenon when the phenomena cannot be separated from its context (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Yin (2014) clarifies that in a single case study, a case can be some other event or entity other than an individual. Because this study investigated one group of individuals from a particular school using a specific program, a single case study was appropriate. This case is bound by the third-grade implementation of 100 Book Challenge at one school.

Theoretical Framework

Learning is Social

I situate my research through the lens that reading is a social practice that includes relationships between people including child and parent, peer to peer, student and teacher, and author and reader, to name a few. Successful learning is based on social interaction (Cambourne, 2001). This study was grounded in the scholarship surrounding social constructionism and sociocultural perspectives of reading. Social constructionism is concerned about how society defines and shapes knowledge and language meaning (Gergen, 1994). The theory holds a belief that social constructs are generated by knowledge communities. Because this study seeks to explore stakeholders' perceptions and practices of developing the student reader, it is important to recognize that literacy is viewed as a socially constructed phenomenon (Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Gee, 2011; Gergen, 1994).

The goal of 100 Book Challenge is to ensure that every child can demonstrate grade-level reading proficiency through a system of instructional loops, embedded professional development, and parent support framework (American Reading Company, 2020a). The knowledge community that wrote and designed the 100 Book Challenge program created the social constructs that deem what is grade level proficient and how to achieve it. The means are the social processes which will affect the construction of knowledge of the various stakeholders.

Sociocultural perspectives of reading and learning also inform this study. Vygotsky (2012) describes learning as first a process between people and then as an individual process. Learning occurs within a person's zone of proximal development and

can be achieved with the help of a more knowledgeable or capable person (Vygotsky, 2012). Another sociocultural perspective is that reading is situated in a social environment where knowledge construction, motives, values, and cultures interact (Gee, 2011, 2013). Reading involves the linguistic processes of phonemic awareness, letter sound relationships, decoding, and word recognition, and because comprehension is central, reading also needs to be embedded in a sociocultural system that shapes and supports reading emergence in children (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013). These sociocultural perspectives are important to this study as they are integral in how people's perspectives and practices of reading are developed and shaped.

Engagement Theory

Being able to read and comprehend is an essential skill needed to navigate the world and to learn information. An important aspect in this process is being engaged with the text. Engagement theory has its roots in constructivism, which emphasizes the active construction of knowledge and the integration of new knowledge with existing knowledge (Gee, 2011, 2013; Unrau & Alvermann, 2013). Engagement is a condition of learning, which requires students attend to demonstrations, have a perceived need or purpose, and actively participate in their learning (Cambourne, 1995). According to engagement theory, engaged readers are those who are intrinsically motivated to read, mentally active, and discuss what they read and learn (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). These are goals that are sought out by many educators. Engagement theory is built on the premise that individuals are active in the construction of their own knowledge and that it provides direction to educators on how to help students become more engaged (Tracey & Morrow, 2012).

What exactly does engagement mean? Engagement includes time on task, enthusiasm and enjoyment, and the use of metacognitive skills (Guthrie, 2004). Metacognition is the process of thinking about one's own thinking and can be explicitly taught through teacher modeling and gradually releasing the strategies to the students (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Metacognition is an essential skill needed to understand what is read. Educators need to facilitate these strategies, so students are not left in a teacher-dependent state (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Engagement also incorporates an internal motivation for reading, which includes the five dimensions of motivation including: perceived control, interest, self-efficacy, involvement, and social collaboration (Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2013). Engagement theory encompasses instructional processes such as strategy instruction, interesting texts, and autonomy support (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013). The focal outcomes include achievement, which could be in the form of standardized test results, knowledge in the form of student portfolios of work, and practices in the form of independent reading (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013).

Engagement is important to learning. Being an engaged reader is imperative to improving students' reading comprehension, cultivating knowledge, and developing a love of reading. Unrau and Alverman (2013) stated the effects of instructional context depend on levels of student engagement. Research has demonstrated that engaged readers read more frequently (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). An increase in reading can lead to improved proficiency, greater vocabulary, and a broader understanding of the world. Gotfried (1990) showed that reading comprehension positively correlated with intrinsic motivation for reading (as cited in Toboada et al., 2013). Intrinsically motivated readers have a desire to comprehend texts, which energizes reading strategy usage by causing the

reader to be metacognitive, which leads to greater comprehension (Taboada et al., 2013; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Not only does engagement affect reading comprehension and reading frequency, but Tracey and Morrow (2012) also assert engaged readers frequently talk about what they read and learn. There are no standards or accountability tools outlined by state educational mandates that address reader engagement; however, it is evident that reader engagement is crucial in the development of the student reader.

Positionality

In my 20 years of teaching, I have experienced the gamut of instructional programs— from scripted programs that tightly focused on a scope and sequence so much that teachers were evaluated on the timing of their instruction, to programs facilitated full educator autonomy. The vastness of these experiences leads me to be a bit a bit cynical of educational programs and skeptical of how they will fit within my personal beliefs or meet the needs of my students. However, I also have a professional ethos to be open-minded and strive to understand various perspectives and points of view. I am a consumer of research and considerate of all sides of an issue. I don’t set out to be critical of situations, but instead, I have a desire to gain understanding of the what, why, and how of various circumstances. This lays the foundation for flexibility in my position and allows me to follow the evidence versus clinging to previously held beliefs. This position should be seen as an asset as I assume the roles of both researcher and participant within this study. I am in a unique position to not only investigate the practices and perceptions of the different stakeholders, but I am also able to take an introspective look at my own practices and perceptions as well.

As both participant observer, as well as observer as participant (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Yin, 2014), I was aware of the impact these roles had in relation to this study. As a third-grade teacher within the study's context, I was actively involved in literacy meetings as a participant observer (Merriam, 1998). This role had a potential to impact the study. It can be challenging to engage in both the role of the teacher and researcher equally during the meetings. I was aware of how this role affected my participation as principal investigator and made note through researcher memos of any impact it had. Often, I had to revisit the audio recordings or transcriptions with the lens of researcher as during the meetings I was focused as the participant. During times where I observed family interactions, I acted as an observer as participant. My involvement was limited, but I was aware that my presence could possibly influence the participants' behaviors (Merriam, 1998). I took care to be aware of how my role potentially impacted their practices and behaviors.

Research Context

The research for this study centered on third grade stakeholders engaging with the 100 Book Challenge program. These stakeholders are associated with an early elementary school located in a rural town on the Delmarva Peninsula, which consists of Pre-K (3) through 3rd grades. It is a Title 1 school with 46% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Among the certificated staff, there are two administrators, 20 general education teachers, four special area teachers, three special education teachers, one speech and language pathologist, and five support personnel including a curriculum resource teacher (CRT), one literacy coach, one math coach, and one reading resource teacher. There are additional non-certificated staff support teachers and students as well.

As a Professional Development School (PDS), partnering with a local university, there are often several student interns at various stages of their education working in classrooms, as well.

100 Book Challenge is an instructional system that puts individual children's reading lives at the center of the curriculum (American Reading Company, 2016). The program centers around independent reading and a strong home-school connection, using a formative assessment framework designed to determine the highest reading level each student can demonstrate proficiency when reading independently. Additionally, the program focuses on increasing student reading by ensuring 30 minutes of daily reading at school and 30 minutes at home. Students track their time read using a reading log where they record a step for every 15 minutes they read. Every 100 steps are celebrated as reaching a new milestone. Student choice is fostered through students self-selecting what books to read and at what levels. Students can bookshop daily in in the classroom library for books to read at school or home. An important part of 100 Book Challenge is the inclusion of classroom libraires. Each classroom is provided with a set of leveled books with approximately 30-60 books for each level. Teachers, referred to as Expert Coaches, provide mini-lessons, opportunities for accountable talk, and individually conference with students. These conferences include conversation around students' reading interests, followed by the identification of and work around power goals. These power goals can range from skills centered on various aspects of reading including decoding and memorizing sight words, engaging in wide reading of various genres, and/or comprehension. Parents, referred to as Home Coaches, are expected to provide a time where their child can read without interruptions, observe their child reading, think and

talk about the books with their child, sign their child's reading log, and ensure their child returns books to school. Administrators are expected to support teachers, parents, and students by developing professional learning communities to guarantee correct program implementation and to examine evidence of collective student learning. 100 Book Challenge is one component of a literacy block that also includes core reading instruction using grade-level texts and a writing program that employs a writer's workshop model.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Research Context

The original intent of this research was to collect data during spring 2020 between March and June. However, the beginnings of this study directly coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed schools for two weeks then shifted in-person learning to asynchronous virtual learning during spring 2020. This created significant disruptions to both this study, as well as to life that most knew. The program of 100 Book Challenge ceased in implementation, as all learning was through asynchronous instruction with little to no live teacher interaction. This extended my data collection through the fall of 2020 where students engaged in various forms of hybrid learning opportunities. This included some students engaging in virtual synchronous instruction and/or modified in-person schooling.

100 Book Challenge was reintroduced to students who returned to school in-person in September of 2020. At first, this was approximately 10% of the student population, which eventually increased to approximately 80% of the student population. However, all students returned to full virtual instruction in November for the remainder of the calendar year. At that point of the year, 100 Book Challenge was being implemented via Zoom for virtual students as well. For the educators and students who

engaged in in-person learning during those few months, certain routines of 100 Book Challenge were very different. Reading conferences were conducted via Zoom, even with students in the classroom, to maintain social distancing. Students book-shopped once a week and then returned books, which were quarantined for a week before they were put back into regular rotation. No longer were students required to log or count their reading steps but were instead encouraged to keep track of the titles of the books they read in a composition book. This was a drastic change to a routine student previously followed.

Students and educators who engaged in virtual learning experienced more disruptions. Although access to classroom libraries was restricted, efforts were made to provide books to students via digital platforms, as well as offering weekly pickups at the school with bags of various texts. Teachers were eventually coached how to conduct reading conferences via Zoom by either scheduling individual meetings or using breakout rooms. This practice was inconsistent in its effectiveness due to: connectivity issues, background disruptions, and/or students simply leaving the meeting. Despite these challenges, many effective and engaging reading conferences did occur.

There is no question that the pandemic changed the context of this study; however, the pandemic provided a more expansive context in which to explore the research question. Participants provided insight into their practices and perceptions retrospectively to the pandemic, as well as while living through it. This broadens the scope and informativeness of this study.

Participants

Conducting qualitative case study necessitates purposeful selection of participants who will best help the investigator discover, gain insight, and understand the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). The identification of specific inclusion criteria that directly reflects the purpose of the study guides the selection of information-rich informants who can provide insight about the processes or meanings individuals attribute to their given situation (Merriam, 1998; Hesse-Biber, 2017). Additionally, Hesse-Biber (2017) points out an important part of conducting field work is access to individuals who can serve as guides to information concerning the research question. The inclusion criterion for participating in this study required that individuals be involved in the third-grade implementation of 100 Book Challenge within the research context because of their experiences with the program.

Stakeholder sampling, a form of purposive sampling, was applied in order to identify the major stakeholders involved in giving, receiving, or administering a program, and who might otherwise be affected by it (Palys, 2008). The major stakeholders for this study were administrators, educators, parents, and students. All 80 third grade students and their respective families, eight educators who work with third grade students, and four administrators were invited to participate in the study. Stakeholder sampling allowed for the selection of information rich participants from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998). Of those invited, initially two administrators, six educators (including myself), 11 students, and ten family members consented to participate in the study. All administrators and educators were selected to participate. One student was excluded because his family did not consent to participate but only consented for their

child, and I wanted to keep the family unit intact. Additionally, one family was excluded because legal guardianship of the student was in a transitional state. Thus, a total of nine initial families (parents and their respective students) participated in this study. Because

Table 2

Participants

Participants	Spring 2020	Fall 2020
Administrator 1	X	X
Administrator 2	X	X
Educator 1	X	X
Educator 2	X	X
Educator 3	X	X
Educator 4	X	X
Educator 5	X	X
Educator 6	X	X
Parent 1 and Student 1		X
Parent 2 and Student 2		X
Parent 3 and Student 3		X
Parent 4 and Student 4	X	X
Parent 5 and Student 5	X	
Parent 6 and Student 6		X
Parent 7 and Student 7	X	
Parent 8 and Student 8	X	
Parent 9 and Student 9	X	X

data collection extended beyond the initial intent of spring 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, four families declined to continue participating or were unable to be reached at the beginning of fall 2020. Therefore, I recruited 4 additional student and family participants from the 2020-2021 third grade population who consented to participate. Participants will be referred throughout the study by the stakeholder group and number. Related parent and student participants will be referred to by the same number (see Table 2).

Qualitative studies often employ small sample sizes. A small sample is commonly used because the aim of qualitative case study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Each stakeholder participant provided a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of the practices and perceptions regarding the development of student readers. Yin (2014) argues one way to avoid a nonexamplary case study is to establish boundaries that allow for analytic periphery to be reached. Selected participants covered the spectrum of positions and perspectives vis-à-vis implementing the 100 Book Challenge and included both extreme and typical cases plus any other positions that fall in between (Palys, 2008). By including multiple stakeholders in this inquiry, various perspectives were explored, ranging from the highest-level decision makers to the students and their parents who experienced the effects of those decisions.

Timeline

Data collection began in March 2020 and continued through December 2020. During this time, classroom environment observations, literacy meetings, and family interactions occurred. Initial interviews and follow up interviews were conducted.

Documents and artifacts related to 100 Book Challenge were collected, too. Finally, a focus group interview occurred during the fall 2020. Transcription and analysis were recursive and occurred throughout the data collection and continued after the data collection had been completed. Though analysis occurred throughout the length of the study, I dedicated the months of January-August 2021 to formal analysis and the fall of 2021 to write up my findings.

Data Collection Procedures & Instruments

Data collection began in May 2020 and continued through December 2020. Hesse-Biber (2017) asserts case studies require multiple data collection strategies and

Table 3

Data collection

	Total Observations	Total Documents and Artifacts	Total Interviews
Administrators	3	4	2 initial semi-structured 2 follow up semi-structured
Educators	4	47	6 initial semi-structure 4 follow up semi structured
Parents	5	5	6 initial semi-structured 6 follow up semi-structured
Students	8	27	6 initial semi-structured 6 follow up semi structured 1 focus group

multiple data sources to establish validity. Three types of data sources are used in this study: observations, documents and artifacts, and interviews, all of which were used to triangulate emerging findings (Merriam, 1998). See Table 2 summarizing the data collected.

Observations

I collected observational data throughout the study. Observations provide a researcher with first-hand experience of the topic under study and provide an opportunity for data to be recorded as it occurs (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). Observation is the best technique to use when an activity or event can be observed first-hand (Merriam, 1998). Observations allow for researchers to notice routine things that can help build an understanding of the study's context (Merriam, 1998). It is a useful research tool when it serves a research purpose, is planned deliberately, is recorded systematically, and is subjected to check and controls on validity and reliability (Merriam, 1998). I was able to observe literacy meetings, classroom environments and interactions, reading conferences, and parent/student interactions. Each observation was planned, and systematic field notes were taken.

The pandemic created challenges for collecting observational data. Yin (2014) states a case study should take place in the real-world settings of the case and that it provides the ideal opportunity for observations. This real-world setting was disrupted as the school site was shut down due the pandemic and instruction and personal interactions became confined primarily via Zoom. I, along with other stakeholders, had to navigate this digital platform and establish a level of comfort interacting with others while also implementing 100 Book Challenge in new ways. Because of virtual learning, as well as

social distancing restrictions, in-classroom instructional observations were not possible. Additionally, all formal 100 Book Challenge PLC meetings and implementation meetings around 100 Book Challenge were cancelled. Despite these disruptions, observational data was collected via classroom environments and family interactions, literacy meetings, and reading conferences, all over Zoom.

Prior to school closures, I was able to observe classroom environments. Field notes and photographic evidence were taken of classroom walls, libraries, and conferencing areas. Additionally, I observed three general literacy meetings via Zoom containing information related to 100 Book Challenge; they were audio recorded and transcribed. In my role as participant observer, I took an active role in the meetings by participating in the meeting; however, my role as a researcher was known to the members of the group (Meriam, 1998; Yin, 2014; Hesse-Biber, 2017). The benefits of being a participant observer included easy access to literacy meetings, the ability to perceive the reality of the implementation of 100 Book Challenge as opposed to an outsider, and an increased ability to provide an accurate portrayal of the case. Yin (2014) cautions there may be insufficient time to take notes or raise questions about the events from different perspectives, and the virtual setting augmented this concern. The structure of the Zoom meetings limited participant interactions as compared to previous experiences of in-person meetings. As participant observer, I was conscience of maximizing the benefits and minimizing the challenges associated with this role. Not only that, but observations were conducted of virtual reading conferences, social distanced book shopping routines, and interactions between family members before, during, and after Zoom interviews.

In an effort to capture important information, I used field notes to document each observation. Yin (2014) points out that these notes can be a result of interview, observations or document analysis and can take many forms. Ultimately, they need to be organized, categorized, complete and available for later access (Yin, 2014). Field notes were written during or immediately after any observation to maintain accuracy. Merriam (1998) explains good observations include data related to the physical settings, the participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and the researcher behaviors, which were all part of the observations in this study. Specifically, data associated to participants' reading practices and perceptions expressed through their discourse, body language, or other informative events were noted. The field note template (Appendix A) provides a structure to organize that information. In addition to field notes, observations were documented with photographic evidence (when applicable), audio recordings, transcriptions, and analytic memos to capture an accurate portrayal of the observations.

Observations can provide additional information about the topic being studied which is valuable in understanding the actual use of the curriculum and potentially any problems being encountered (Yin, 2014). The observations conducted during this study provided data that was immediate and contextual (Yin, 2014). I was able to document behaviors, interactions, and contextual information which aided in answering the research question.

Documents and Artifacts

I gathered data from documents and artifacts. Documents are a good source of data because they are free, easily accessible, and contain information that would

otherwise take a researcher more time and effort to gather (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). Artifacts are some sort of physical evidence that are collected during case study (Yin, 2014). These data sources allow for researchers to obtain language and words of the phenomenon being studied, as well as furnish descriptive information (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). Documents and artifacts, which are stable, unobtrusive, and specific were collected throughout the study (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2017). Documents and artifacts related to 100 Book Challenge including curricular materials, lesson materials, conference notes, and reading logs were collected. Additionally, documents and instructional materials provided by administration were collected, which encompassed implementation checklists, info graphics, and instructional supports. Educators supplied conference schedules and notes, training notes, and instructional materials. Finally, parents furnished photographic artifacts documenting home reading environments and routines.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Finally, targeted semi-structured interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insight into the implementation of 100 Book Challenge (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2014) asserts that interviews are one of the most important data sources for case studies because they can provide insight into human perceptions and actions. Interviews can provide a structured conversation between the researcher and the interviewee that required active listening and asking (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). These in-depth or intensive interviews can yield a large amount of topic specific exploratory and descriptive data (Hesse-Biber, 2017). They get at the feelings, thoughts, and intentions of the interviewee and allow for varying

perspectives (Merriam, 1998). Because the research question focuses on different stakeholders' perceptions and practices of reading, interviews are an essential tool for collecting data.

Interview guides or protocols are essential in conducting interviews (Creswell, 2014; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Merriam, 1998;). To optimize the interview, attention needs to be given to the interview guides and asking "good questions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). Merriam (1998) recommends ensuring questions are clear for participants, use familiar language, avoid technical jargon, and are open-ended. Questions should not include multiple questions or leading questions (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) recommends starting with relatively neutral and descriptive questions about the topic and then allowing the questions to build to be more specific. To illustrate this, I began the initial interviews by asking the adult participants to share their experience with 100 Book Challenge, and I asked students to share with me what they are reading. This set the stage for the rest of the interview where I was able to build off their answer and ask subsequent questions.

An initial interview protocol was developed for each group of stakeholders (see Appendices B-F) with a subsequent protocol developed for follow up interviews (see Appendices G-I). Each participant engaged in semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews rely on a set of questions to guide the conversation but allow for the participants to have some latitude and freedom to talk about what is important to them (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Initial interviews were conducted in spring and summer 2020 with follow up interviews occurring fall 2020. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each educator and administrator. Initial interviews were conducted with

all students and parent participants. Only families that participated in both spring and fall took part in follow up interviews. Student interviews took place as reading conferences as that was a normal part of 100 Book Challenge routines and structures. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were conducted via Zoom except for one, which occurred in the backyard of one educator's home.

To collect data about students' perceptions and practices of reading in a more informal setting, one focus group interview was conducted during one Zoom lunch bunch gathering. Lunch bunch gatherings were common occurrences within our school, and I continued to conduct them when schools went virtual. Because of this established routine, this practice should not be viewed as uncommon or out of the ordinary. A protocol (see Appendix J) was created and applied. Virtual focus groups can be tricky to facilitate. Stewart and Shamdasani (2017) explain that virtual focus groups may limit the interaction between the participants and the researcher; however, the students were eager to talk with one another and share their ideas. Students in the focus group candidly answered questions and responded in ways that may not have occurred if they were in a one-on-one interview setting. The conversation often went in directions driven by the students, which provided for more authentic ideas to emerge. Students eagerly responded to each other and built upon each other ideas. This focus group allowed for a moderated discussion about 100 Book Challenge, which allowed the views of each person in the group to surface.

To ensure the accuracy of data, all reading conferences, interviews, and the focus group were recorded and transcribed. Audiotaping protects everything being said and ensures is it is preserved for analysis (Merriam, 1998). A verbatim transcription of the

recordings provides the best database for analysis (Merriam, 1998). Each audio recording was transcribed using an online transcription service which I then reviewed for accuracy. Additionally, post interview notes and analytic memos were written, which allowed me to monitor the process of data collection, as well as provided a starting point for the analysis itself. These notes included insights suggested by the interview, descriptive notes of behaviors, and any other pertinent information that could help to answer the research question.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making meaning through the consolidation, reduction, and interpretation of what people have said and what the researcher has observed and collected (Merriam, 1998). Due to the large amount of data and the nature of qualitative research, Yin (2014) asserts an analytic plan is necessary to avoid stalling after data is collected. There is no one right way to analyze data for qualitative case studies, but it is best to develop a general analytic strategy, link the case study data to a concept of interest, and allow the concepts to give the analysis direction (Yin, 2014). For this study, data was analyzed using qualitative approaches that included "playing" with the data (Yin, 2014, p. 135), taking a step-by-step approach to construct categories (Merriam, 1998), and using multicycle coding techniques (Saldaña, 2016). Notably, analytic memos were not only applied during the data collection but continued throughout the analytic process. They allowed for researcher reflection on the coding process and code choices, as well as provided a space for personal musings and question raising, connection making, strategy building, and problem solving (Saldaña, 2016).

Merriam (1998) cautions about the challenges of managing the large amount of

data collected in case study. Due to the abundant amount of data that was collected during this study, the use of the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (COQDAS) NVivo was used to house, organize, and analyze the large amounts of data (Yin, 2014). I was able to sort data by stakeholder and data source. I then was able to attach each data collection event with a researcher's memo. Not only that, but it provided a platform in which I could code data, condense codes, and explore patterns and relationships that were emerging from the data.

Despite the various approaches to qualitative data analysis, one common rule is data analysis must begin as soon as data collection starts as it needs to be analyzed simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2014). Without ongoing data analysis, the data can be unfocused and overwhelming due to the volume of material (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, I began analysis after the first data collection event. I first took the opportunity to observe classroom environments. I recorded my thoughts and reactions to what I saw and what I thought it could mean to my study in analytic memos. Memo writing provides hints, clues, and suggestions to preliminary interpretations of the data (Yin, 2014). Prior to first cycle coding, I "played" with the data searching for patterns, insights, or concepts that provided insight into the perceptions and practices of reading shaped by 100 Book Challenge (Yin, 2014, p. 135). After each data collection event I would write an analytic memo, while also revisiting previous memos to see how my thoughts and analysis was changing and evolving. This process allowed me to become familiar with the data and provided a place for my thoughts and ideas to be explored.

The next step of the data analysis plan was engaging in a step-by-step analysis working towards categorizing the data through iterative and multicycle coding processes. As data was collected and uploaded to NVivo, first cycle (Merriam, 1998; Saldaña, 2016) coding took place. Elemental methods, including initial coding, in vivo coding, and descriptive coding, were used during first cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016). These various techniques allowed for me to reflect deeply on the content to take ownership of it (Saldaña, 2016). Initial coding allowed me to assign words and short phrases that captured the essence of pieces of data which was necessary to begin to condense and make sense of the information (Merriam, 1998; Saldaña, 2016). For example, the interview line "I like animal books and dinosaur books" was coded with the word "genre."

Additionally, in vivo coding allowed me to capture precise experiences and ideas drawing on the words of the participants themselves (Saldaña, 2016). An example of this is when I used the phrase "know my reader" to code a line from an educator interview. I loved the way this participant referred to her student, "And in that, I would get to know my reader." I felt that it was important to capture her view of the child as more than a student, but as a reader.

Finally, descriptive coding permitted me to extract summaries of a data's content. An example of when I used descriptive coding was when I coded the following line of an educator interview with the phrase "conflict in implementation":

> Well then just this year they were "no, they don't need accuracy at all. They just need comprehension." So now students don't need to know the power words. So

basically, then it becomes a read aloud with comprehension and you can enter into the level.

Although the noun-based approach is not recommended for case study (Saldaña, 2016), it was useful in this study to synthesize information in documents. The collective results of applying these first cycle coding methods provided preliminary understandings of emerging patterns, categories, and themes.

The final phase of the analytic plan was to conduct second cycle coding. I applied both pattern coding and focus coding methods. Saldana (2016) explains that pattern coding allows a researcher to create more meaningful units of analysis. I employed pattern coding, which helped me pull together and group material into common categories. Additionally, focused coding provided for the development of major categories from the data (Saldaña, 2016). Figure 1 demonstrates one example of how the initial codes were combined to reflect the condensed code of reading habits.

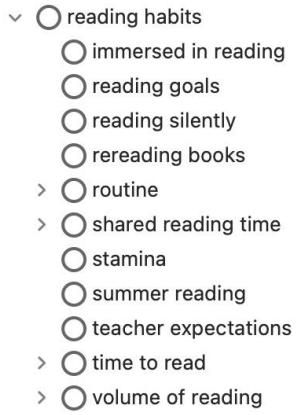

Figure 1: Illustration of how child nodes were combined under the parent node of reading habits through second cycle coding.

By applying these two methods of second cycle coding, I was able to reanalyze, reorganize, and condense the first cycle codes to merge them into conceptually similar

parent codes (Saldaña, 2016). Second cycle coding allowed for the further development of categories, themes, and concepts evidenced by the data that provide answers and insight into the research question (Saldaña, 2016). As second cycle continued, the following categories were finalized (see Figure 2).

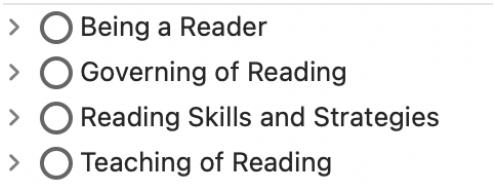

Figure 2: Final categories created during second cycle coding.

When finalizing categories, Merriam (1998) cautions they must reflect the purpose of the research, be exhaustive so all important data is categorized, be mutually exclusive so data does not overlap, be exact in describing the data, and be conceptually congruent. All data what was grouped as "Being a Reader" included any data that specifically references the identity of reader, where they read, what they read, when they read, why they read, and how they access text. The category of "Governing of Reading" included any data that refers to the management, control, or manipulation of reading and reading practices. "Reading Skills and Strategies" included data the referred to isolated skills or specific reading strategies. And finally, the category of "Teaching of Reading" consisted of data that spoke of specific instructional practices that included modeling, coaching, repeated readings, etc.

Despite the results of second cycle coding, further analysis was necessary in determining and writing about the study's findings. Many of the categories which emerged were concrete in nature and not descriptive of the richness the data provided. Saldaña (2016) recommends doing the "touch test" (p. 276) to move from literal to

conceptual ideas. I reworked the categories to reflect more conceptual themes which more accurately answered the research question. For example, when reviewing the data related to being a reader and governance of reading, it appeared there were potential contradictions between carving out time to read and the counting of reading steps and the effects on developing a student reader. This led to looking for other potential conflicts which led me to see how the access and self-selection of books was potentially being undermined by the leveling of texts. To verify the themes that emerged, a visual display mapping the findings with a significant piece of data that supports the category or theme which contributes to the study's conclusion was created (Saldaña, 2016). This was done by sketching T-charts on my office white board ensuring the data fit within the themes. Finally, Saldaña (2016) emphasizes the necessity to get assistance from others when writing the final report. He elaborates that a second set of eyes can find the "buried treasure" that often gets embedded in the text instead of highlighted and emphasized (Saldaña, 2016, p. 289). The findings of this study were shared and discussed with my dissertation chair as well as some participants of the study. This debriefing helped to provide clarification and validation of the findings of this study.

Approaches to Validity and/or Trustworthiness

Due to the recursive, reiterative, and fluid nature of qualitative research, particular attention was made to ensure the data collected and the analysis were valid and trustworthy. There are several things a researcher can do to make the data and analysis more valid and trustworthy. To establish internal reliability, Gee (2011) asserts there should be agreement among the "native speakers" of the Discourse (p. 123). This is often referred to as dialogic engagement (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). I worked with my advisor

throughout the analytic process to ensure there was agreement on how data was coded and to gain additional insight which aids in establishing internal reliability.

Hesse-Biber (2017) emphasizes establishing trustworthiness throughout the research process. The most important part of establishing trustworthiness is to develop a strong research design. A research project should demonstrate confirmability by using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence, and the use of member checking (Hesse-Biber, 2017). In this study, multiple forms of evidence were used. By using observations, document and artifacts, and interviews, triangulation of data was possible, which aids in the trustworthiness of this study. Chain of evidence, which clearly demonstrates how findings were developed, was done by supporting conclusions with specific examples from the data.

Additionally, it is necessary to practice reflexivity throughout the entire process. The analytic process was documented through research memos. Ideas were revised and refined as a clearer picture emerged from the data. Finally, I shared my thoughts and potential findings with participants in the study and my committee chair, which also added to the validity of the study through member checking (Yin, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research must ensure study participants are protected vis-à-vis anonymity and by ensuring the study is well designed. Patton's Checklist of Questions for Conducting an Ethical Research Project (Appendix K) was used as a guide to conduct an ethical research project (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 96). The research design has already been described, so I will now focus on efforts to protect the participants of the study. After obtaining IRB and committee approval, I provided participants with an informed

letter of consent. This letter let participants know about the project and their role it in (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The letter disclosed potential risks and outlined how participation would contribute to the goals of the study (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Participants were informed that they could ask follow up questions or clarification at any point in the study. They were also informed their participation was strictly voluntary, and they could opt out at any time sans penalty.

Several measures were taken to protect the anonymity of the participants of this study. Participant references were used for the participants, school, and any other proper nouns on all data sources. Because the research site is a small, rural, community, I disclosed it may be difficult to assure complete anonymity; however, all precautions were taken to protect confidentiality.

For this study, care was taken for child participants. Phelan and Kinsella (2013) report on ethical considerations in conducting research with children. They identified areas of ethical concerns including willingness to participate, power imbalances, and representations of the child. It is not enough to just have the signed consent from a parent. Efforts were made so that the study was explained in kid friendly terms and they understood their role in the process (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013). Consent alone does not mean a child would be willing to participate. As part of the reflexive practice, I was aware of a child's body language and expression and continually monitored a child's willingness to participate. The student-teacher relationship can be problematic because the child may feel pressure to perform or answer in certain ways. Power imbalances were addressed through ensuring the child's agency is respected. There were times that interviews were cut short due to a perceived discomfort being observed. While the

ethical considerations emphasized by Phelan and Kinsella (2013) are appropriate for adult participants, extra consideration was given for child participants.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this study, I explored the reading practices and perceptions of administrators, educators, parents, and students regarding the development of the student reader within the context of 100 Book Challenge. The guiding question for this study was:

> What are multiple stakeholders' (administrators, educators, parents, and students) practices and perceptions of reading around the development of the student reader within the context of 100 Book?

The answers to this question are intended to provide insight into these stakeholders' thoughts and experiences.

The findings here represent a systematic analysis of participants' practices and perceptions with their engagement with 100 Book Challenge. Notably, this study was conducted during a global pandemic where participants were dealing with school and government closures, as well as COVID-19 restrictions and protocols. The findings of this study reflect participants' experiences both pre-pandemic and during the pandemic, which clearly impacted the stakeholders. The findings presented here are not exhaustive and caution should be given not to assume they are reflective of different contexts. Even with the unforeseen challenges the pandemic created, including the impact it had on the implementation of 100 Book Challenge, the work in this study expands the current body of knowledge because of its insight into educational community members' perceptions and their practices around the development of the student reader.

The stakeholders' have practices and perceptions around reading that can simultaneously complement and conflict with one another. The discords often involve

both the desire to establish a reading lifestyle in the developing reader and influencing and controlling the reader through specific practices. Two overarching findings emerged in answering the research question. Stakeholders engage in specific practices and have perceptions around the development of the student reader involving (a) having time to read and accounting for daily reading time and (b) having access to texts and self-selected books while also regulating and restricting reading materials.

The first finding titled "Time to Read and Reading Time" explores the routines and habits each group of participants put in place ensuring developing student readers have time to read. The following section reports how each stakeholder group measures that reading time, which tends to stimulate the incentivization of reading. This section concludes with exploring how the measurement of time spent reading could potentially undermine the routines and habits of reading.

The second finding titled "Read What You Want, But…" explores the practices and perceptions of each stakeholder group around providing access and accessing those texts. Subsequently, an exploration of how regulation and restriction of texts is revealed. This section concludes with a look at how regulating and restricting texts impacts student access and consumption of texts. The practices and perceptions of all participants are presented in each section in the following order: administrators, educators, parents, students.

Time to Read and Reading Time

One of the tenets of 100 Book Challenge is to increase students' daily reading volume (American Reading Company, 2020). Students engaged in the expected daily reading both at school and home which was evident through the routines and habits

demonstrated by the participants. Jones, Reutzel, and Smith (2012) maintain increasing volume of reading relies on teachers, parents, and administrators providing adequate time for students to read both in and out of school. Increasing reading volume is important for many reasons. Daily reading volume is associated with accelerated growth in reading, vocabulary, and interest in reading (Fisher & Frey, 2018; Jones et al., 2012; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), which are necessary to develop a reading lifestyle.

Additionally, the 100 Book Challenge keeps track of reading time by having students maintaining a reading log of the number of steps completed (1 step = 15 minutes read) to encourage time spent reading. The reading log reveals a ritual that controls and influences the independent reading time. Stakeholders revealed that counting steps often motivated students to read. Students were eager to read, they explained, because each step milestone offered promise of recognition and a reward. Although students were reading more, the motivation to read may be based on external influences, not the building of lasting habits of reading.

Time to Read: Reading Habits and Routines

This study revealed all stakeholders foster reading habits and routines—ones foundational for building a lifelong relationship with reading. Daily reading occurred both at school and home. Reading researchers argue it is important to emphasize multiple reading experiences, provide frequent opportunities to read and ensure purposeful reading (Campbell, 2012; Flippo, 2012a). Thus, the habits and routines around reading are important in the development of a life-long readers.

Administrators. Administrators revealed a desire for students to conduct daily, independent reading and to develop habits that support the developing reader. One

of the reasons district leaders adopted the 100 Book Challenge to supplement core reading instruction (CenterPointe UB Read Units) in this district was because of the built-in time for independent reading both at school and home. They thought securing time to read would improve students' reading stamina and develop their sense of purpose as a reader. Administrator 2 discussed the importance of students engaging in daily reading: "[…] building that stamina to attend to a piece of text for a sustained period of time is critical for students […]" Additionally, the implementation Checklist (see Figure 3) illustrates the emphasis on building reading stamina.

7. **Stamina:** Students are engaged in "eye-on-the-page" Independent Reading for the full 15-30 minutes in class every day.			In Place

Figure 3. Excerpt from the District 100 Book Challenge Implementation Checklist. This figure shows the expectation that daily independent reading should be in place.

Administrators also shared their observations of students engaging in routines and habits during independent reading. Administrator 1 recalled seeing students "getting Post It notes, stopping, and jotting or marking passages or whatever, reading for a purpose that is clear to them[...]" during independent reading. The administrator's observations suggest students are engaging in strategies to purposely annotate and record thoughts about what they are reading. Students need to engage in routines that include purposeful reading, as well as have multiple and frequent opportunities to read (Campbell, 2012). This demonstrates that administrators recognize the need for students to engage in reading beyond school assignments and develop habits that are transferrable to the broader context of reading.

Educators. One of the study's participants described her students' independent reading: "My students were great with independently reading on their own and self-motivated when it came to reading, which was really cool" (Educator 4). This quote illustrated how teachers viewed independent reading time as an invaluable part of the day. Many teachers reflected that the students took enjoyment from reading during 100 Book Challenge as opposed to just viewing it as something that they had to do.

Two teachers specifically mentioned the daily independent reading time benefited their students by exposing them to more books and allowed them control over what to read. Students were perceived as enjoying reading because: "They wanted to have the opportunity to read and would ask how much longer until independent reading time" (Educator 1). This desire and appreciation of independent reading was echoed across classes: I heard groans from students when teachers announced the end of independent reading. Speaking as a practitioner, I always felt that independent, student-centered reading was missing from our literacy curriculum. There was a feeling of excitement when 100 Book Challenge was implemented because now independent reading was built into the day, and it was considered "sacred" time, which could not be disrupted. Finally, students can start to engage with books they choose!

The testaments of these educators, as well as my personal observations, demonstrated the importance of how time to read in school through independent reading helps foster a desire to read. I loved seeing kids seek out copies of *Dog Man* (Pilkey, 2016) and *Junie B. Jones* (Park, Brunkus, & Park, 1993) by visiting other classrooms or making requests from the librarian. Researchers agree that time spent on reading not only affects reading motivation but also has the potential to increase reading achievement

(Guice et al., n.d.; Jones et al., 2012; Schiefele et al., n.d.; Worthy, 1996). Educators revealed how students' daily independent reading engenders self-motivated readers. Hopefully, this leads to improved lifelong reading habits.

Parents. Many parents in the study created and supported routines for daily reading. These differed from family-to-family due to family schedule, number of family members, and the children themselves. One routine many parents shared was how their children read before bed. "Everybody had to read before [children] went to bed," noted one parent. "You certainly are welcome to read any other time, but you had to do it then" (Parent 9). This daily literacy practice not only encouraged routine reading, but also benefited children in other ways. One parent felt that reading before bed was beneficial for her son as it was a good way to help him "wind down." Other parents had unique customs in that their children could stay up as late as they wanted if they were actively reading (Parent 8; Parent 9). Reading upon waking was another routine employed by some families. Parent 4 shared how their early riser read until 6:00 a.m. before they could come out of their bedroom. Not all parents used bedtimes or wake times to build in reading routines, however. Parent 5 made a habit of reading for 30 minutes when her children got home from school. Daily home reading practices help lay the foundation for lifelong routines and encourage reading habits that can bolster a reading lifestyle for developing readers. While it was unclear if these routines existed prior to 100 Book, all families in this study had practices involving daily reading, which highlights parent support as an important contributor to reading behaviors and motivation.

It was revealed that many parents also created time to read through shared reading experiences. Some families made reading a "family affair." Parent 1 described her

family: “We read at bedtime, rainy days, we read together as a family, we enjoy reading period.” Parent 8 takes turns reading with her daughter sharing cookbooks, magazine articles, and chapter books. She shared how these routines expose her daughter to a wide range of texts. In another example of shared reading, Parent 5 had a novel her family reads aloud every day: “As a family, we’ll read whatever book it is.” Having read *Sammy Keyes* (Van Draanen & Sands, 2000), *Charlotte’s Web* (White, 1985), and others, her whole family is exposed to a shared literature experience. Working to establish reading routines for all her children, Parent 5 explained how she established more shared reading experiences by having her children partner read with each other while she cooks dinner and listens to them read. It is encouraging to see how parents created opportunities to guarantee their children time to read at home. By ensuring time to read, parents are helping their children develop a reading lifestyle, as well as grow as readers. Researchers have found that when students can consistently read at home as well as in school, the volume of reading increases, which can help with reading achievement and motivation (Fisher & Frey, 2018; Jones et al., 2012; Schiefele et al., n.d.)

While it was evident parents expected daily reading from their children, they admitted school closures, along with summer break, disrupted many of those routines. When asked about summer and current reading (schools were virtual and just starting to have students in person), some families felt that their routines were interrupted. Parent 3 admitted that her child read three to four nights a week, while others (Parent 9, Parent 6) said their children rarely read because they were sleeping in late, staying up late at night, and “just totally forget about it” (Parent 6). These disruptions were often resolved when the students went back to school in

person. Disruptions to the daily reading routines could indicate that the practice of independent reading, and ensuring time to read at home, is not an innate routine for some families. It appears that the influence of school and the expectation of 100 Book Challenge's home reading is critical for many families. The 100 Book Challenge helps to make sure there is time to read and helps guarantee the developing student reader reads every day.

Students. Like parents, the students also spoke of having time to read as an important aspect of 100 Book Challenge. All students spoke of having time to read during 100 Book Challenge in school and reported regular home reading while school was in session. Students revealed habits and routines involving who they read with, where they read, how much they read, and what goals they wanted to accomplish which all reveal a development of a reading lifestyle. However, many students admitted to a drastic change of routines when schools were closed.

Data from Student 7 and Student 8's reading logs (see Figure 4), Student 9's School Pace data (see Figure 5), and interviews revealed that all students read five to seven days a week when school was in session. In Figure 4, the dates on both reading logs show how the students read almost every day. Additionally, the data provide in Figure 5 shows how the students' step count increased daily, suggesting the child engaged in regular daily reading.

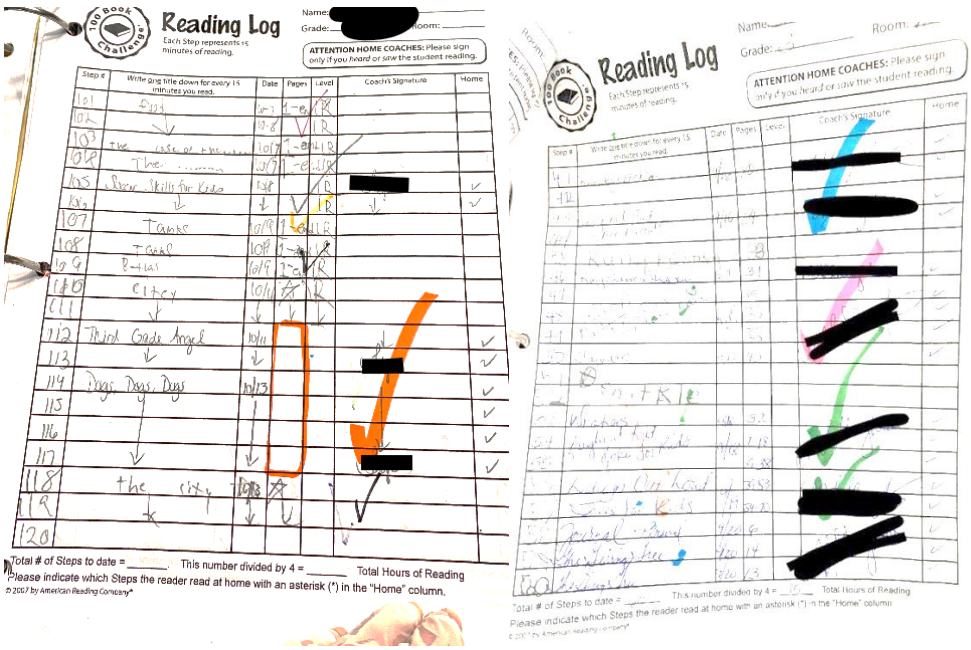

Figure 4. The dates on these reading logs evidence that daily reading was taking place by Student 7 and Student 8.

Reporting Date	Student Data	Target
February 21st, 2020	**692 Steps**	**360 Steps**
February 25th, 2020	**705 Steps**	**368 Steps**
February 26th, 2020	**714 Steps**	**372 Steps**
February 27th, 2020	**719 Steps**	**376 Steps**
February 28th, 2020	**721 Steps**	**380 Steps**
March 2nd, 2020	**729 Steps**	**384 Steps**
March 3rd, 2020	**737 Steps**	**388 Steps**
March 4th, 2020	**741 Steps**	**392 Steps**
March 5th, 2020	**743 Steps**	**396 Steps**
March 6th, 2020	**745 Steps**	**400 Steps**
March 10th, 2020	**756 Steps**	**408 Steps**
March 11th, 2020	**762 Steps**	**412 Steps**

Figure 5. Data from School Pace evidencing Student 9's daily reading.

In addition to daily reading, almost all student participants shared that their parents read aloud to them regularly. Student 1 described his mom reading to him: "Yeah, she's been reading *Tom Sawyer* (Twain, 2018). After we finish the book she's already reading, we're going to read *Moby Dick*" (Melville, 1993). Student 4's father reads to her from a poetry book, and Student 6 reported that her mom reads to her before bed. These interactions benefit the student reader because the continual demonstration of habitual reading by the parents can form a long-lasting impression for the children to imitate as they progress in their lives (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018). Having time to read and engaging in routines of reading with caregivers reinforces positive habits of reading that will support the student reader in forming lasting reading behaviors.

In addition to reading with parents, students also read with their siblings. One parent shared a photograph (see Figure 6) of Student 2 and his sibling reading together. Another parent provided a picture of a reading fort her child, Student 1, and his sister made under their kitchen table. The siblings were reading a book together. These photographs showed older siblings reading to younger siblings and younger siblings reading to older siblings. In one video conference, when Student 5 eagerly read Pokémon: Grand Trial Showdown (Whitehall, 2019) to me while showing me the pictures, I observed all his brothers and sisters gathering around to listen to him. This was an endearing observation and one that told a story of a family who often read together. The students may not be aware, but by carving out time to read, these interactions can foster a reading lifestyle for their siblings and their family, as well.

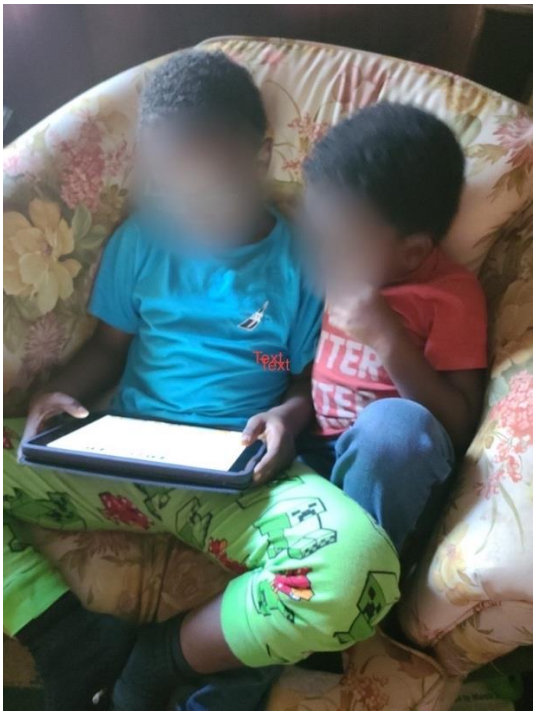

Figure 6: Photograph showing Student 2 reading an online book to his younger sibling.

In addition to reading with family, students also shared habits and routines: how much they read, when they read, and where they read. These practices reveal how a student reader develops through personal choices and reading preferences. Student 4 revealed she has a habit of reading a chapter book a week. Another student reads whenever she is waiting for her sister to finish her sports practice. Many students shared they have a particular place or area in their home where they enjoy reading. Student 6 and Student 9 each shared they had a comfortable chair where then often read (see Figures 7 and 8). Student 6 had a pink unicorn sleeping bag she would snuggle in on the couch and Student 9 read on an oversized chair tucked away in the family room. Other students preferred to read in their beds. Having a favorite place to read and engage in daily reading are practices consistent with building lasing reading habits. Regular reading can contribute to improved vocabulary knowledge and comprehension (Fisher & Frey,

2018), as well as build empathy and other prosocial behaviors (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018). These literacy practices are promising that students are developing lasting habits of reading that they will be able to draw upon as they mature.

Figure 7: Student 6 shared that she likes to read snuggled in her unicorn sleeping bag.

Figure 8: Favorite reading chair of Student 9

Students, like some parent participants, described a lack of routine around reading when schools were not in session, suggesting these practices are not solidly in place. In follow up interviews, Student 3 admitted to only reading three to four days over the summer while Student 2 shared, “So, I’m training to start reading on every Tuesday.” Whether these statements are true or an exaggeration, it highlights how a daily reading routine was significantly disrupted for some student when the school expectation was removed.

Time to read: Reading habits and routines-takeaways. It is evident that having routines and habits around time to read is central in the development of the elementary reader. Opportunities to read were afforded at both school through daily independent reading and at home. Home reading routines included reading at certain times of days, with others, and/or in specific locations. These routines suggest regularly reading can increase reading volume. However, when the expectations from school were removed, as in the case of summer vacation or remote learning, some participants had difficulty maintaining the habits of daily reading. This suggests that lasting practices around daily reading are not an innate part of the student reader.

Reading Time: Step Counting and the Incentivization of Reading

Establishing and engaging in time to read was revealed as central in the development of the reader within this case study; however, participants revealed the amount of time spent reading was crucial, as well. The 100 Book Challenge emphasizes increasing the amount of reading a student participates in with the time spent reading being measured, counted, and tracked by recording on a reading log. Experts agree that children who spend more time reading are more proficient readers (Guthrie et al., 2007;

Malloy & Gambrell, 2012). As a part of 100 Book Challenge, students are expected to read 60 minutes each day. Reading is measured in steps; 15 minutes equals one step. Students are expected to get two steps in school and two steps at home daily. Figure 9 shows the reading log where steps are recorded daily.

100 Book Challenge

Reading Log

Each Step represents 15 minutes of reading.

Name: _____

Grade: _____ Room: _____

ATTENTION HOME COACHES: Please sign only if you *heard* or *saw* the student reading.

Step #	Write one title down for every 15 minutes you read.	Date	Pages	Level	Coach's Signature	Home

Total # of Steps to date = _____. This number divided by 4 = _____ Total Hours of Reading

Please indicate which Steps the reader read at home with an asterisk (*) in the "Home" column.

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Figure 9: 100 Book Challenge Reading Log used by students to record their daily reading time. The time read should be verified by either the school Expert Coach (teacher) or Home Coach (parent or responsible adult).

The data revealed that counting steps led to the incentivization of reading. A component of 100 Book Challenge is to provide rewards and incentives for reaching different reading step milestones. As a part of the program, students are recognized every time they reach the next 100 steps by getting a new folder (see Figure 8) and receiving a

prize or medal (see Figure 9). Incentivizing reading has long been a common, and often debated, practice to encourage and motivate students to read. While some students benefit from this incentivization and read more, some students, specifically students who are already self-motivated do not benefit from incentives (Guryan et al., 2016). From national campaigns like the Pizza Hut Book It! Program to more localized school-based reward programs, incentivizing reading is not a new phenomenon. This study revealed all participants engaged in practices and/or had perceptions around the counting of steps and how it incentivized reading.

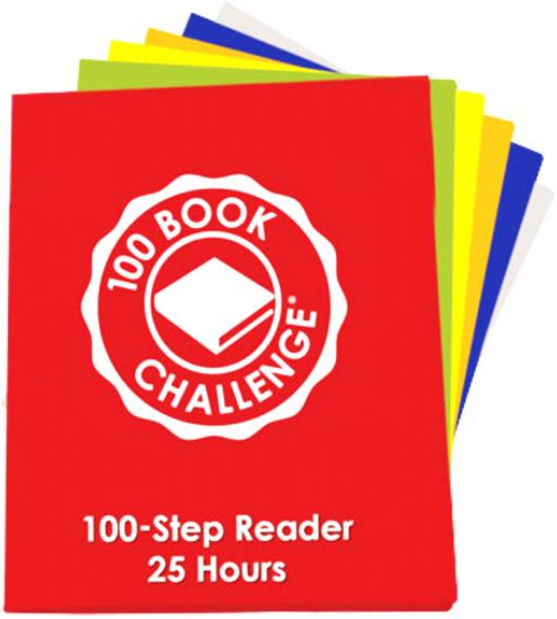

Figure 10: 100 Book Challenge Incentive Reading Folders. Students get a different colored folder every time they reach the next 100 step milestone.

Figure 11: The incentive kit that is included in the 100 Book Challenge Grade 2-3 Module.

Administrators. Administrators revealed how the reading log was a beneficial practice to ensure an accountability of reading. They felt the step count was critical for students to track the volume of daily reading and felt certain actions should be put into place to ensure no student falls behind in steps. Administrator 1 shared her thoughts about the reading log:

> And I do believe that there's really valuable data that you can get from a reading log, especially when kids see the purpose of a reading log and the data that it can show, and they can connect the log to their identity as a reader and keeping track of that identity and growth.

This administrator felt documenting students' reading and their steps on the reading log helped students begin to define themselves as readers and appreciate their development as readers; however, she did not explicitly describe how a simple reading log can reflect a

student's readerly identity or how/why a student would be interested in his or her growth as a reader.

Maintaining reading volume amongst all students was also emphasized. Administrator 2 shared, "My mission in life is going to be that we get to a place where we don't let kids have gaps in their steps. It's that important to us that we find creative times to catch up steps." Despite the passion behind that perception, it is interesting to note the current district policy did not require steps to be counted or a reading log to be filled out when students returned to in-person learning noting there were concerned about equity issues among students. Although there was a perception the steps were invaluable to maintaining an increased volume of reading, there were no practices put into place to ensure students did not fall behind in steps. Additionally, steps were not required to be counted or documented when students were returning to in person learning. If steps were as important as administrators suggest they are, there would be practices in place to ensure students read their daily steps as well as encouraging and promoting tracking their reading minutes. The lack of action by administrators around ensuring students read their steps sends mixed messages to all stakeholders about the value and purpose of counting reading steps.

A significant component of the 100 Book Challenge program involves the incentivization of reading. Thus, it was surprising to note such an absence of data around incentivization via administrators' perceptions and practices. There were some perceptions around the potential need for extrinsic rewards; however, in conversations with the administrators, there was a lack of recognition in using specific incentives to motivate student readers.

During this study, the school-based administration provided very few rewards or incentives for students. The only incentives supplied were the 100 Book Challenge folders (specifically to third grade) and brag tags (an incentive provided by school leadership, not as a component of 100 Book Challenge). When 100 Book Challenge was first implemented in each grade (kindergarten & first grade 2018-2019, second grade 2019-2020, third grade 2019-2020) the entire package was provided and implemented by the administration. This included passing out colored folders, awarding medals, and providing prizes. After the first year of implementation at each level, these components were not repurchased for those grades. In fact, the boxes of prizes provide in the incentive packages for third grade were not even given out to teachers to use as rewards and were observed stored in the school unused. The reason behind the decision to forgo the prizes was unclear; it could be due to, in part, budgetary concerns, as well as the administration's view on the effects of prizes as incentives. If administrators do not view the incentive (i.e., prizes) as one that would have a positive impact on the reader, they may choose to not include such extrinsic incentives. This line of thought reflects research about the use of extrinsic rewards not producing desired behaviors (Fawson & Moore, 1999; Gambrell, 1996, 2011; Malloy & Gambrell, 2012). Fawson and Moore (1999) caution that external rewards can undermine a child's ability to develop an intrinsic motivation to read as they "may begin to question whether they should really enjoy reading for its own sake" (p. 335). Even though prizes and rewards were not offered at the school level or provided for the teachers, one administrator perceived them as potentially valuable: "[…] motivation, especially for young readers, a lot of the time is extrinsic motivation."

Another administrator was concerned about what was motivating students to read and viewed the book log as a more appropriate tool for incentivization. Administrator 2 expressed concern that students trying to "level up" was acting as an incentive to read. She thought the book log should be more of a focus to incentivize students. Instead of students just focusing on what they are reading, she was concerned that their only motivation was to get to the next level. Administrator 2 discussed the levels:

> Many of the students I've talked to talk about like, 'My goal is just to get to that next level, next level, next level.' And while it's nice to see that they're motivated, my personal opinion is, potentially, it's for the wrong reasons.

She viewed the book log as a potential remedy for this:

> But there is value in that log. And one of the ways in which I see the log helping with preventing this whole idea of, I just get rewarded for leveling up, is the volume, the consumption, the way to track and reward student volume because that should be just as honored and just as celebrated as, I'm at this level or I'm practicing at this level.

By focusing on the book log as a catalyst for incentivizing students, she thought the focus would be more on what students read instead of what level they are on. Administrator 2 concluded, "We can celebrate your number of steps. We can celebrate your number of books […]" This administrator felt that students should care more about the authentic act of reading and view how many minutes they read as the real accomplishment. Still, it is still counting something rather than celebrating engagement.

It may be what the administrator really wants for students: to develop a more intrinsic satisfaction for their reading. This perception provides more clarity as to why there was little evidence of the use of prizes and other incentives at the administration level. They want to develop the student reader by motivating them in ways that connects to the reading process, not to factors outside the practice of reading.

Educators. Educators revealed the reading log was a source of accountability for students' reading time and acted as a catalyst for incentivization. Teachers noted the practice of keeping a reading log and counting steps encouraged students to read and provided them opportunities for celebration. Educator 5 noted the pride many students felt with how many steps they had: "I've had children come up to me in the hallway and celebrate the number of steps they're on or tell me that they've gotten to a certain number of steps, which is really cool." As a participant researcher, I, too, reflected on how the recording of steps and filling out the log was an incentive for my students, as well. It was common occurrence for students to actively acknowledge what step they were on and knew how many more steps they needed to get to the next milestone. Often, they would read additional minutes to reach those milestones sooner. These accomplishments were a source of pride for many students. Educators observed how having students keep track of their reading time allowed for personal celebration, as well as motivated some students to read for extended periods of time.

Educators acknowledged how incentivizing reading increased reading time and motivated student readers. Observational data, documents, and artifacts such as tracking posters and rewards, revealed how reading was incentivized. Before schools closed due to the pandemic, classrooms were adorned with student recognition of reading

accomplishments. Classroom teachers had posters tracking student step counts (see Figure 12), Brag Tags (see Figure 13) hung from the wall with dog tags awarded to students for every step milestone, and cheers could be heard when a student reached the next 100 steps.

Figure 12: Brag tags. Dog tag style rewards celebrating each step milestone.

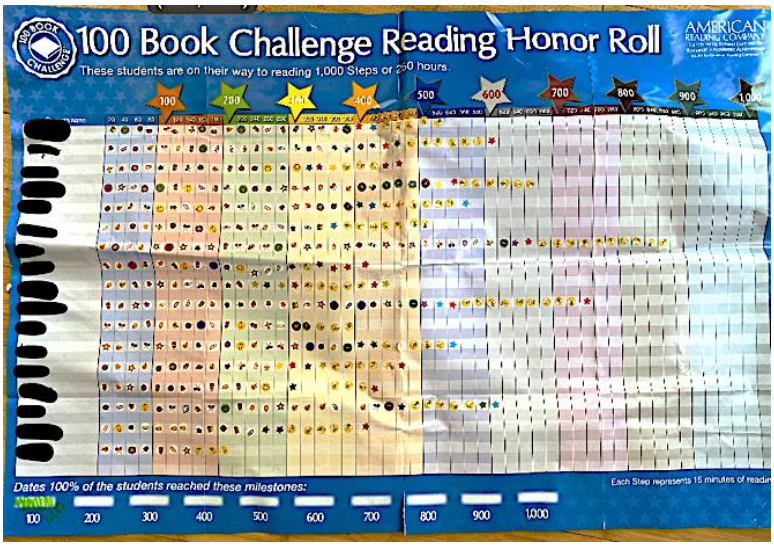

Figure 13: 100 Book Challenge Reading Honor Roll. Classroom display of students' reading steps.

Gambrell (2011) argues constructive and reflective teacher praise can lead to student motivation to learn. When students report their reading steps to their teachers, arguably teachers will respond. Reporting of steps provides ample opportunities for teacher feedback pertaining to a child's reading, which also acts as an incentive. In my experience, I often would let students know how proud I was of them for reading, asked them questions about what they read, and asked them how they felt about their accomplishments. This feedback, tied directly to the students practice of reading, has the potential to be more motivating than a prize incentive. In referencing a study by Lepper and Cordova (1992), Gambrell shared, "specific, elaborated, and embellished teacher praise was more motivational than tangible incentives such as prizes" (p. 176). The feedback provided by teachers when students reached certain milestones or shared how many steps they had read reinforced student reading and motivated students to read more.

The incentivization of reading was prevalent in the viewpoints of educators. Educator 2 shared her feelings about the incentivization of reading and how many students learn they like to read:

> So [100 Book] kind of lures them in by doing that, by giving them an incentive. Some kids are actually, when they're doing it, are like, 'Oh, wow. I actually really do like to read. I'm going to continue to read. This is something that I actually really do like and they don't need to make me do it.

Counting steps influenced the incentivization of reading and was most evident when students no longer had to keep track of reading time. This occurred when they returned to in person learning after school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In place of counting steps, students were encouraged to write down the titles of books they read in a

reading journal. Students did not have to keep track of how long they read; instead, they just had to write down the title of the book they read in a blank composition book. Educators observed students were confused and demonstrated a decrease in reading motivation when the reading log was no longer being used. Educator 4 noted that the students she had in the fall of 2020 demonstrated less motivation and love of reading than the students she had the prior year. She mentioned that students were almost "obsessed about [the reading log]" prior to school closures; however, after returning to in person learning, she shared, "I think it's confusing to the kids, because it's a total shift. I mean now, you're asking them, before it was a step was every 15 minutes, but now you're asking them just to write the titles."

Educator 1 had found that the reading log and counting steps worked to inspire students to read, and now she was finding difficulty in motivating students without it:

> I think now it's more about encouragement…kids don't necessarily have the reading logs right there anymore, and I do think the reading log was such a big part because they could see it grow. Now, that that's not the norm anymore, I think it's very hard now [to motivate students to read].

With my own students, I observed a similar impact the lack of recording steps had on them. When I was teaching virtually and asked if students had read after school, many of them said, "sometimes" or "hardly ever." This data suggests that the counting of steps acted as an incentive for students to read more, and when it was removed, appeared to negatively influence some students' reading time.

Despite the practice of logging of steps being perceived as incentivizing students to read, participants acknowledged how counting steps could put unnecessary pressure on some kids. Educator 4 noted the following:

> I guess as a teacher, I always was conflicted with the reading logs, especially when the steps started becoming so disproportionate among students. Do you know what I mean? Some kids are being celebrated for 500 steps when another kid is still at 68. That always hurt me a little bit.

Educator 4 observed the potential harmful effects of celebrating step milestones. These concerns are aligned with the research that suggests public displays of accomplishment can act as a continual reminder of risk of failure (Fawson & Moore, 1999). During this study, teachers displayed student step accomplishments on a tracking chart displayed in the class. This visual tracking system placed continual attention on the reward, and students who were behind in steps were reminded daily how far behind they are of their peers. Public tracking has potential to cause students to give up trying to improve (Fawson & Moore, 1999). Students who are far behind on steps may feel shame or feelings of inadequacy as compared to their peers, especially when given a daily visual reminder of this on public display.

If the purpose of counting steps is to ensure students read a certain amount of time, but the constant accountability hinders the motivation for some students, it may be necessary to assess if this is the appropriate tool for those students to ensure they are getting their daily reading time.

Parents. Parent participants disclosed that counting reading steps influenced behaviors and attitudes of student readers and parents themselves by incentivizing

reading and holding them accountable for their reading time. Data revealed some parents use the practice of counting steps as an accountability tool to leverage their children to complete their at-home reading. Parent 8 reflected how it helps her motivate her daughter: “That’s just been a really positive thing, is being able to remind her, hey, don’t you want to get this page filled out, don’t you want to get up to this step, and that’s been really encouraging.” It seems that the proverbial carrot of reaching the next step is necessary for some students to engage in at-home reading, as the simple request of a parent is not enough. Not only that, but it points to the fact that some students are not reading at home by choice, but out of compliance.

Parents shared receiving recognition and rewards for achieving step milestones, as well as year-end prizes, were significant motivators for their children. Parent 1 and Parent 3 reflected smaller prizes also motivated their children to complete their daily reading while also instilling a sense of pride. “With the 100 book Challenge, they received awards for each 100 steps they hit and earned special prizes. It made my child excited about reading and proud when he hit a new goal,” Parent 1 said. Parent 8 had recognized the encouraging impact prizes had on her daughter and even created her own set of rewards for her daughter when students were not in school due to pandemic closures. Parent 8 created a Friday system where her daughter was allowed to choose a prize out of a grab bag if she completed her reading for the week.

Many parents reflected on an end-of-year prize provided by a previous administration recognizing students’ reading times. The previous administration provided an incentive promising any student who reached 1000 steps by the end of the school year would be taken out to lunch at the Olive Garden and allowed to buy a book

from Barnes and Noble. “My kids loved that,” said Parent 5, “that was their goal the whole year. And so, we got to a thousand steps like a few weeks before.” Parent 4 also said the reward of going to Olive Garden and Barnes and Noble for reading 1000 steps was a huge motivator for her entire family. She lamented on how the lack of incentives in more recent years has been challenging:

> I just think that for parents having some type of incentive would be good in the future because it is tiring to be asked to write down a log from September to June […] It’s a very long year that is being asked of parents. Very long that if there’s some type of incentive, I don’t even care if it’s like a […] if your kid reaches such and such, there’s funding, that we’ll give your kids $10 to [a local pizza place] or something. Even it’s a 1000-step party at the school, you know what I’m saying?

Parent 4 brings up an interesting point. Most incentives are designed to encourage students to read; however, incentives could, and potentially should, include parents as well.

Even without the promise of a year-end prize, one parent recognized the reading log as an incentive for her to ensure her child completed their reading. Parent 9 reported that the log helps to remind them of their shared responsibility, noting, “It holds my feet to the fire.” The responsibility expected of parents as Home Coaches should be recognized and strategies to keep families engaged should be considered. No one would argue that time is unlimited for most families. Parent involvement is critical for student reader development. Families who engage with their children in literacy activities have children who demonstrate overall higher reading achievement (Burgess, 2002; Cooter, Jr. et al., 1999). The 100 Book Challenge writes parents into the program as a key

component and integral part in the development of the student reader, and while many parents carried out their roles, participants expressed that the scarcity of time makes it challenging.

Many parents shared how counting steps created a sense of competition that motivated their children to increase reading time, yet others felt the competition adversely affected some students. Counting steps acted as an incentive for her child, recalled Parent 9, "[My child] is competitive. He likes to have the most [steps] in the class when he can," noting that after he returned to in person learning in the fall of 2020, her son would ask his teacher what the highest step his classmates were on, and he would read more to catch up. Parent 7 recognized how counting steps motivated her son, "it provides healthy competition.... [My son] felt challenged to keep up with his school mates." The step count being a motivational force were common sentiments among most parents. However, many parents also revealed certain downsides to counting steps.

Some parents found that the competitive nature of counting steps was not a positive element. "It's competition, yes, but at that age, it's not good for the minds," Parent 6 shared. Parent 2 talked about how her son was disheartened with the competitive nature of the program. The student entered school in November and started with a step count of 0, nearly 200 steps behind his peers. Her son was never able to catch up with the other students, and she remembered him coming home and saying, "I'm so far behind. I can't get there" when talking about the end of the year reward. A problem that needs to be addressed is if students view step counting as a competition. Additionally, if a reader starts to fall far behind their peers, could this have a negative effect on student reader motivation and esteem? This parent noticed her son was

experiencing feelings of frustration. It appeared she accepted this as just something to deal with and was maybe unsure how she could address the situation. The concerns of these parents may be warranted. Just because a student has a strong competitive orientation does not guarantee a strong involvement in reading. In fact, the opposite may be true. Less proficient students often have a weaker involvement in reading despite their competitive nature (Schiefele et al., 2016). This can cause a decrease in reading competency, which could possibly be perpetuated by feelings of inadequacy. If the competitive nature of incentivizing reading through counting steps results in a weaker involvement in reading, then the reading time declines. This counters the aspiration to ensure students engage in a certain amount of reading time daily and works directly against authentic engagement.

Students. Students revealed that counting reading steps influenced their reading time and incentivized many to read.

"I'm on 103."

"I'm at 980 steps."

These were just two statements made by students during the study that illustrated the awareness they had of the steps they were on. Not only were students aware of their own steps, but they were also cognizant of where other students were, as well. One student said, "Some students are over 500!" These were common phrases and observations, often overheard in the classrooms and walking down the halls. Students' acute awareness was also evident in their reading logs. After looking at hundreds of pages of student reading logs, which are part of the data set for this study, there were only two consistent entries across almost all logs. Despite the opportunity to fill in other data:

date, level, signature, the only data that was consistent across all students was the inclusion of book titles and step number (see Figure 14). This suggests students valued what they read and what step they were on.

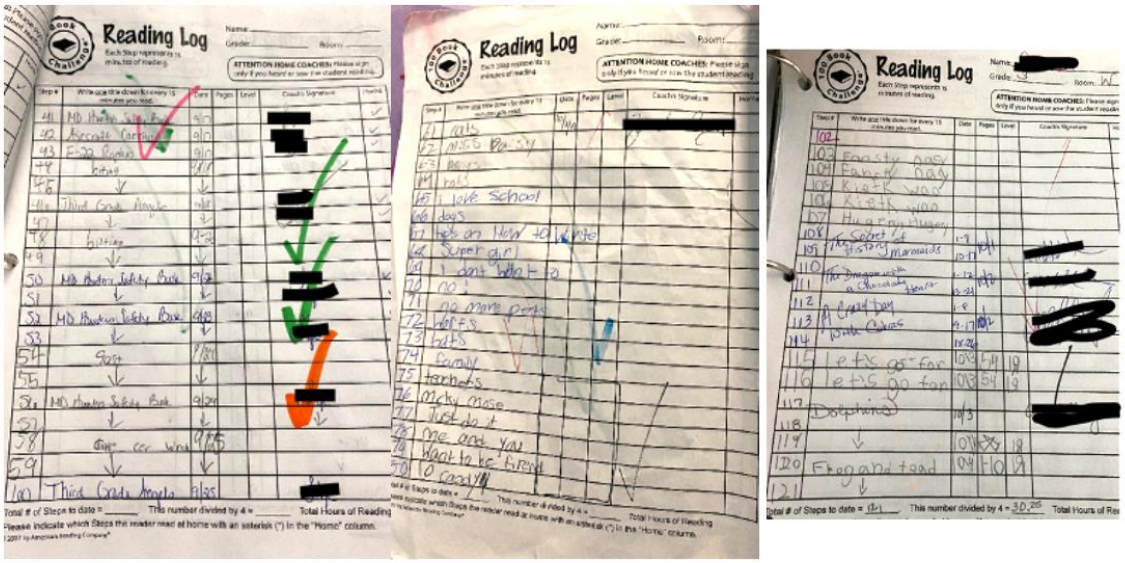

Figure 14: These student reading logs illustrate how the only consistent data entries across student participants were the step number and title of book.

Student participants also revealed incentivized reading played an important role in their reading perceptions and practices. Some students' perceptions and reading practices demonstrated step counting and achieving step milestones were motivators for them to read. The prizes and rewards associated with reaching those milestones also helped encourage students.

Counting steps and achieving step milestones influenced some student participants to read more. Student 8 found these practices to be motivating. In reference to achieving step milestones she replied, "It's a fun way to push people to do their reading, and I love it." Student 9 echoed sentiments his mother shared when he said that counting steps was one of the most motivating things for him to get him to read

more. This again, speaks to students being compliant or possibly even competitive readers, not reading for the sake of reading.

The motivating influence of incentives and achieving milestones was also supported by Student 1 when discussing his reading on Epic!, which was a popular option during virtual and hybrid instruction. Epic! is a collection of digital texts, videos, and audiobooks that many students choose to read outside of the ARC leveled library books. In this online reading platform, students receive badges for accomplishing certain milestones like number of books read, reading on weekends, or reading for a certain number of days in a row. Like counting steps and achieving milestones with the 100 Book Challenge, the badges embedded within Epic! represent reaching certain milestones, as well. Based on my student participants' experiences and perceptions, both encourage and reward reading.

With Student 1, much of our discussion around his reading involved how he achieved certain badges and what he was currently working on. During one of our virtual reading conferences, while sharing his screen, he was more interested in showing me his accomplishments than reading to me. Pointing to one badge he said, "It took me forever to get this Book for Breakfast badge. You have to read a book before 8:00 a.m." At the time, the student was working on closing the last 3 badges (read for 30 days in a row, reading 100 books, then 200 books). Clearly, Student 1 was engaged and eager in achieving new rewards and recognitions. His desire for achievements increased his reading time as he was often caught "reading" during our Zoom lessons. It is evident that counting reading steps and achieving certain milestones acted as an incentive to encourage many students to read more. This type of incentive, recognizing time read,

which is closely aligned to the desired task of increasing volume of reading, has the potential to motivate the student reader. However, it appears that the motivation stems from compliance, not the intrinsic desire to read.

Receiving rewards and prizes as incentives also affected many student participants, however it was most candidly expressed by Student 1: “There’s so much rewards, I just have to get them!” was a statement made in reference to rewards (in the form of electronic badges) he gets on Epic! Such a comment clearly demonstrates that rewards are a strong motivator for some students to read more. This perception carried over to reading within the 100 Book Challenge. When the student was asked what he wished teachers would do more of to help him read, the student replied, “Give us more than just medals, like, give us prizes.” He then went on to describe how he had one teacher who let him visit her treasure box every time he reached the next step milestone. This teacher went beyond the incentives provided by the school and implemented her own reward system. Thus, Student 1 was extremely motivated by these extrinsic rewards.

Student 8 and Student 6 were also motivated by rewards. Student 6 enjoyed getting a point from her teacher every time she recorded her steps, and Student 8 liked that “you get to do something fun” when achieving the 1000 steps milestone. Despite this, however, Student 8 expressed concern over students who work hard towards the end of the year goal but don’t make it: “I don’t think it’s fair.” She was concerned that even though students put in the effort to read and record their steps, they will unfairly (in her view) be excluded from the reward. This is a real concern worth consideration if certain prizes are being offered. Although the promise of the prizes can be motivating, the lack

of achieving the reward could have adverse effects on the efforts of students. Offering prizes as a practice should be reviewed to ensure young readers do not disengage.

Reading time: step counting and the incentivization of reading-takeaway. Participants ensured students read a specific amount each day. Overwhelmingly, stakeholders perceived the reading log and step count as motivating for student readers. Students' reading time was quantified and celebrated as specific step milestones were met. This led to incentivizing many students to read to achieve the next milestone or outperform a peer. These incentives closely align with the desired act of reading, which is supportive of building lasting reading habits. Some students related more to extrinsic rewards for reinforcement in the forms of tangible prizes. While immediately motivating, extrinsic motivation may inhibit lasting habits of reading from forming.

Despite the seemingly positive effects of step count on motivation, counting steps has the potential to negatively affect readers. Fawson and Moore (1999) caution that reading incentives can countermand positive attitude for reading since students are being motivated by an outside force. Additionally, the public acknowledgement of minutes read (or in the case of this study-reading steps) can be a constant reminder to some students of their risk of failing (Fawson & Moore, 1999). If students who fall behind in steps are routinely compared to their peers, this could amount to feelings of inadequacy, which may decrease motivation to read.

A unique takeaway from this research was the impact incentives had on parents. Many parent participants reported recording steps and ensuring their children read each day was challenging. Having an end-of-year goal seemed to motivate many families to ensure at-home reading was completed. Because parents are a critical part of developing

the student reader, understanding how to keep families and specifically parent stakeholders involved and engaged is essential and something often overlooked.

Conclusion: Time to Read vs Reading Time

Clearly, having time to read and accounting for daily reading time, were present in across all stakeholders' reading practices and perceptions. They adopted daily reading habits and routines—both at school and at home. Adult stakeholders need to provide adequate reading time, both in and out of school, to increase the volume of reading (Jones et al., 2012). This partnership between home and school is essential in the development of student readers since students benefit from the encouragement and reinforcement received at school and home. Support from parents and friends relate to children's reading motivation and frequency (Klauda & Wigfield, 2012). With both school and home embracing routines around reading, the developing elementary reader may adopt lifelong reading habits

Additionally, participants were very focused on accounting for daily reading time. Time read was measured by counting steps and working towards reading milestones, incentivizing the reading process. Counting steps, as well as extrinsic rewards, motivated both the student reader and parent participants. Considering how critical the home connection is to support the developing reader, steps should be taken to keep parent stakeholders motivated and engaged.

Few would argue that providing time for students to read and motiving students to increase their volume of reading is detrimental to developing readers. However, there may be certain practices discouraging student readers or undermining positive practices. Stakeholders, such as educators and administrators, need to be sympathetic regarding

public displays of progress and achievement may affect some readers. While some students are motivated to outperform others or are driven to meet their next goal, others may struggle completing daily steps or enter late in the year, knowing they will never catch up. This could foster unpleasant feelings about reading and will make the time to read unproductive. If a practice is found to be unfavorable for some students, adjustments need to be made as to not alienate those students and engage them with practices that are authentic and meaningful.

Additionally, the practice of counting steps should be scrutinized in how it can devalue the student's time to read. There is little doubt about how counting steps, and working for step milestones, motivated both student and parent participants with the promise of recognition and rewards spurring them on to complete their daily reading. When considering the development of the student reader, motivation to read is important; however, care needs to be taken that the incentives do not undermine the time students spend reading. To build lifelong habits, readers need to be intrinsically motivated to read. If the students don't maintain habits of reading when the influence of school is taken away, I am compelled to ask: Are we making the best use of students' reading time?

Having time to read and engage adequate reading time each day are both essential elements in the development of the student readers. Without careful implementation and evaluation, these practices can create discord with one another and negatively affect elementary readers.

Read What You Want, But...

A practice emphasized as part of 100 Book Challenge is for students to "consider, select, and reconsider the books they read" (American Reading Company, 2016). The second finding "Read What You Want, But…" illustrates this by exploring the practices and perceptions around the access and consumption of texts and allowing students to self-select reading material. Additionally, it investigates how the leveling and screening of books can lead to the restriction and regulation of choice which can be an issue of equity. In the first section, "Providing Access and Accessing Books," participants revealed efforts taken to ensure student readers had access to books, as well as the developing preferences of student readers. Despite the deliberate efforts guaranteeing access of books for students, the section "Regulation and the Restriction of Access" reveals how student access and choice of books can be constrained through leveling and screening.

Providing Access and Accessing Books

Providing access to books and accessing those books was prominent across that data which is noteworthy as research demonstrates that access to books is essential to promote and develop reading behaviors (Bright, 2020; Guice, Allington, & Johnston, n.d.; Guryan et al., 2016; Neuman, 1999). Overall, the data evidenced how participants felt accessing books was important to the development of the student reader, and they participated in the practice of obtaining and providing a variety of texts. Administrator, educator, parent, and student participants all referenced the classroom library as a source of books for students. Additionally, parents and students referred to sharing and swapping books with friends and family, as well utilizing the public library. All student readers

had a personal collection of books, too. Evidently, book access played a significant part in the development of the student reader.

Student readers were also developing preferences for certain types and genres of books; this was evident across all stakeholder groups. Both administrators spoke widely to the variety of texts students could choose from, while also reflecting on their personal preferences for reading. Educators, parents, and students were more specific on the types of books students are developing preferences for. The access to books and the ability for students to "book shop" self-selected books appear to have contributed to students developing personal preferences of texts to consume. Forming reading preferences is a positive sign towards instilling intrinsic motivation in student readers (Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield, n.d.). Self-selecting books is a practice recognized as a motivating factor in encouraging students to read more, which can contribute to increases in student achievement (Bright, 2020; Fisher & Frey, 2018; Gambrell, 2011; Jones, Reutzel, & Smith, 2012). Not only that, but students can have more agency and ownership of their own meaning making processes as readers and learners (Goodman et al., 2016).

Administrators. At both the district and school-based administration levels, administrators acknowledge the 100 Book Challenge has brought to the forefront the need for, and the responsibility of, schools to provide access to books for students to read independently. This study revealed administrators held perceptions and engaged in practices that provided access to texts for students by doing the following: supplying diverse classroom libraries, figuring out ways to get books into students' hands,

encouraging access to books in different formats, and recognizing and promoting the sharing of books.

Administrators' perceptions evidence classroom libraries are a way for students to access diverse and engaging books. Administrator 2 admitted the 100 Book Challenge opened her eyes to the idea that "we need to have a better variety, a stronger variety, more books available to kids." This administrator recognized a need to improved book access for students. She understood it wasn't enough to simply increase the number of books available to students; she wanted a focus on diverse selections, too. Having a diverse selection of books, made up of different genres, lengths, complexity, helps to motivate student readers (Guice et al., n.d.; Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, & Mendelsohn, 2020; Neuman, 1999). It is also important for students to see themselves reflected in the books they have access to. A diverse and rich classroom library, that includes characters and authors representative of students, can engage developing readers, which will likely motivate them to read more. Additionally, administrators noted the strength in providing a variety of books for students to choose from. "One of the things we know that's best for kids is that they be well-rounded readers and read from a variety of genres," stated Administrator 1.

Purchasing and providing the classroom libraries included in the 100 Book Challenge kits ensured classrooms had libraries where students had access to multi-leveled, high interest, diverse classroom libraries, including a variety of genres and topics. One administrator explained, "We have to sustain our investment in the replenishment [of books] because getting nasty books could have an opposite effect on kids" and disengage them as readers. She saw the value in clean, new-looking books,

often hard to maintain when books are frequently read. This is a problem with many books in ARC's libraries as they are all almost exclusively paper back. However, sustaining an engaging library is expensive. Administrator 2 noted, "[classroom libraries] are a necessary tool for making learning visible in a classroom. It's worth every penny." Still, the responsible party for maintaining the classroom libraries was brought into question. It was mentioned that keeping leaders invested at the school level is critical as their budgets are more flexible than budgets at the district level, and they have an allocation of money for textbooks. It costs $240 for a 30-book collection when purchasing books from American Reading Company. Each third classroom is furnished with approximately 10 bins each of the 30-book collections. This is approximately $2,400 spent on each classroom library. Thus, one administrator looks for creative ways to supplement classroom libraries while maximizing investment in books by buying books at the right time and working with different publishers to create collections of books that can be purchased at more affordable prices.

Student access to books was drastically disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures, virtual learning, and strict protocols to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 all interrupted the act of putting books in students' hands. Nonetheless, administrators implemented procedures to ensure continued access to books for students. First, schools arranged for students to access electronic books through Epic! or ARC Bookshelf using their district-issued iPads. Both are online platforms where students accessed digital texts. ARC Bookshelf is a collection of leveled ARC books. This collection offers digital copies of ARC published texts. It did, however, lack popular, mainstream titles most appealing to student readers, which were

available has hard copies in ARC classroom libraries. Epic! is an independent platform for electronic texts and is not associated with ARC. In contrast to ARC Bookshelf, Epic! offered a larger variety of texts including popular titles, Read to Me books that include a real aloud feature, and a collection of videos that cover a variety of topics. District administrators secured students' access to books by equipping all district iPads with these platforms.

Additionally, administrators directed educators to put together bags of books that could be picked up from school for students receiving virtual instruction. Administrators used books from the school's book closet, collection of novels and other texts collected over the years from previous reading programs, for students to take home during school closures. Administrators viewed these books as "consumable," and there was little concern over having the books returned. Administration believed it was more important for students to have books in hand. Finally, administrators created protocols to safeguard the practice of book shopping and accessing texts. Figure 15 outlines the COVID-19 considerations for students to book shop. While educators and students appreciated the COVID-19 safety protocols, it admittedly dampened the overall experience of book shopping by restricting social interactions and opportunities to access books.

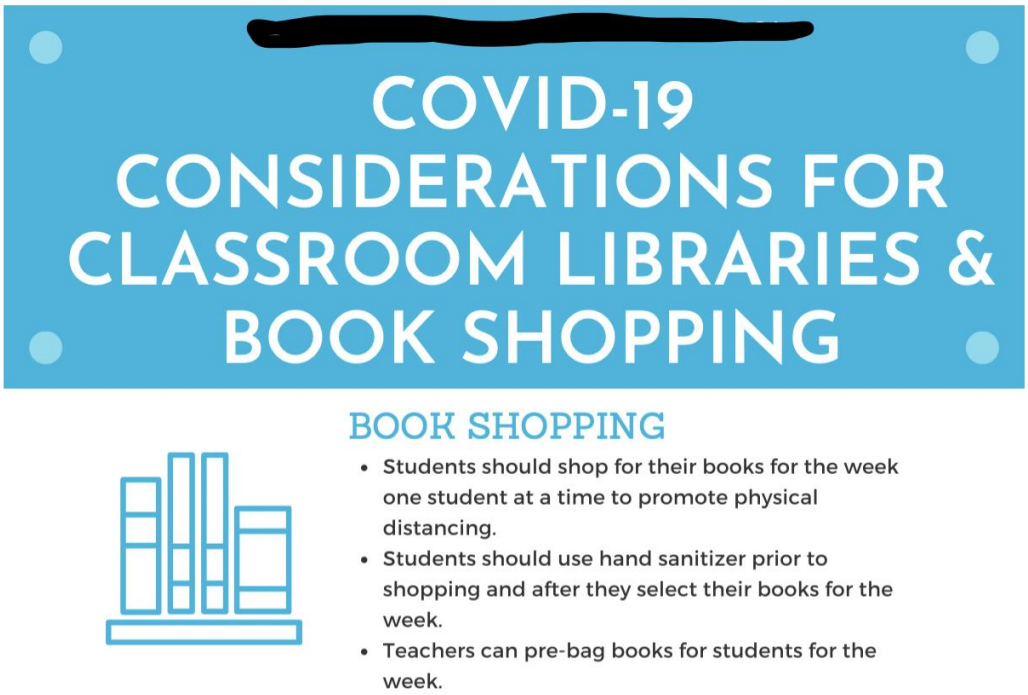

Figure 15: Covid-19 Book Shopping. Administrators created this info graphic to promote safe book shopping and guarantee students have access to classroom texts.

In addition to providing texts, Administrator 2 found power in allowing students to select their own books. She felt strongly about students having a choice in what they read:

> I think that empowering students with choice and encouraging their choice and voice, I think you need to give kids the ability to choose what matters to them. What's relevant to them…. That's where choice is so important, because you can give students that freedom to pick what they want to read that represents them.

This perception is supported by current research. Choosing what they read motivates and engages the developing student reader (Bright & Loman, 2020; Fisher & Frey, 2018; Gambrell, 1996, 2011; Malloy & Gambrell, 2012; Worthy, 1996). Self-selection helps readers get to know what they like to read and explore topics of interest. Administrator 1

observed growth in students as their preferences refined and grew, sharing, “And then just the interest and the way that kids are independently choosing. They just choose to read, they love it and they're into series or whatever they're into, there's enough variety around it.”

Book talks, opportunities for students to share books they were reading, were also perceived as a powerful way for students to access and be exposed to a variety of books. Prior to the pandemic, daily book shopping was a routine practiced by students in the classroom. While discussing students book shopping, Administrator 1 pointed out how this leads to students naturally talking and recommending books: “I have seen organically where kids are picking out of their bin when they do book shopping and they say, ‘Hey, I really like this book. You should try this one. This is really, really good.’” Book talking amongst peers exposes students to books they may not otherwise have tried. This is important because people are more likely to read books they have heard about or have been recommended.

Book talks became more important once students went virtual. Administrator 2 felt that more book talks should be happening, especially once the access to physical books was limited due to the pandemic and students were reading primarily online through Epic! and ARC’s online library Bookshelf: “I wish I saw [teachers] selling books, using Bookshelf. Like, ‘Oh my gosh, I was conferencing with such and such and they were reading book on Bookshelf. It’s in the one in the white library and it was hilarious.’” She provided an example of what she would like to see teachers post as a Schoology (online learning management system) discussion: “Sell the book you read off Bookshelf last night.” This practice, she felt, would continue to promote students’

reading as well as honoring their reading identity. This administrator is suggesting a new framing of the idea of book talk because she is describing a digital conversation. Book talks could benefit the student reader. When trusted others make recommendations about texts, students are more likely to read it (Fisher & Frey, 2018). Book talks, then, are supported both by research and the results here as a strategy to increase student reading.

Educators. Educators revealed that one of the primary ways in which students accessed books was through classroom libraries. They perceived their 100 Book Challenge libraries as one of the most positive aspects of the program.

Prior to 100 Book Challenge, educators were responsible for curating and providing their own classroom libraries if they wanted one. Subsequently, some classrooms did not have a class library, while others had a collection of books acquired over time using a teacher's own resources. Thus, an inequity between classroom libraries existed. This situation is not unique to this research site. Research shows this is not an isolated inequity. Equity in number of classroom library texts is lacking with a wide range across states and local education systems (Hodges, Wright, Roberts, Norman, & Coleman, 2019; Neuman, 1999). "The teacher shouldn't have to find their own library. That should be something that's a given. That the money goes to build a classroom library," reflected Educator 3. It's almost shocking to think that provided classroom libraries are not the norm given the importance access to books has on students. The 100 Book Challenge libraries offers a significant step in mitigating the inequities between classrooms.

With 100 Book Challenge, collections of books were provided to every classroom teacher. The brightly colored bins highlighted the newly found equity across

classrooms. Each classroom received 240 (plus or minus) books in various levels. This provided approximately 12-15 books per students at a time. This is well above the International Reading Association's (2000) recommended number of 7 books per child in classroom libraries (as cited in Jones et al., 2012). One teacher happily shared, "I couldn't believe all the books we were given." This statement, made by Educator 4, demonstrates the excitement and magnitude many educators felt when they received their 100 Book Challenge libraries. Three of the educators noted the classroom libraries were the biggest strength of the program. Educator 5 noted, "I think classroom libraries are important. This program ensures that books go home with kids. Beautiful, high quality, brand new, and often times, high interest [books]." Teachers' gratitude for their classroom libraries was unmistakable because they could offer a selection of new and diverse books to their students.

Even with an established classroom library, the 100 Book Challenge collection included books that appealed to more of my students. These were an essential supplement to my library, offering more engaging books that my students eagerly consumed. These books are notable since students often lament having little reading interest; however, it is often due to the lack of access to books of popular interest (Worthy, 1996). The provided classroom libraries ensured students had access to books and that they were books of interest by including both current and lasting titles encompassing different genres and varied topics. This was illustrated by Educator 4: "I just think it's so amazing with all the different kinds of books and all of the levels you are given it and the kids like are really into them. So, I think by giving them choice was giving them good choices has really helped to kind of broaden what they like, but also figure out what they like as a reader."

Educators felt that the classroom libraries brought a set of diverse, high interest texts that both motivated students to read and helped them learn about what they liked to read the most.

Despite educators' gratitude, concerns about limited access to texts were expressed. Even though classrooms received many books, each level only consisted of 30-60 books. During a conversation with my colleagues, they noted that students were getting bored choosing from the same books. Educators noted this was an issue mostly restricted to students reading at grade level, and it stemmed from infrequently trading bins with other classrooms, which limited students' book choices. According to 100 Book Challenge, bins should be rotated every couple of weeks. We traded quarterly, however. The International Reading Association (2000) recommends at least 7 books per person in classroom libraries to be sufficient, and Reutzel and Fawson (2002) assert students must have access to well stocked and well-organized libraries (as cited in Jones, Reutzel, & Smith, 2012) Both conditions were met or exceeded by the 100 Book Challenge libraries. Still, educators reported it was not sufficient to keep all students motivated and engaged.

Another perception that was revealed around students accessing the classroom libraries was how that access was instantly shut off when schools closed due to the pandemic. Two teachers emphasized the trouble students had at home with 100 Book Challenge. Educator 1 cited the lack of resources her students had at home: "They really don't have those books to keep up the stamina of what I was expecting in class versus what they have at home virtually." Third grade students who were reading at grade level were expected to read a chapter book a week, and all students were to practice power

goals (specific reading goals targeted in each level) within their level of books. Educator 2 found this challenging when students were virtual due to the lack of access to books. As noted earlier, although there were books on ARC's digital book platform Bookshelf, the selection was limited compared to the classroom libraries. While the classroom libraries were an invaluable resource when students were in person learning prior to the pandemic, the lack of access to them when schools went virtual appeared to hurt the positive effects. To combat this, teachers sent home bags of books for students, but when checking in with her class, Educator 4 discovered something unfortunate: "Maybe two of them have read some of them." Thus, sending home bags of books did not fully remedy the concern.

Educators revealed access to a variety of text and the ability for students to self-select books appeared to be influencing student preferences and motivation. Educator 1 explained why diverse options were critical:

> I see kids broadening their horizons with what they are reading. Children from different backgrounds looking for books of different backgrounds that I feel like, in my opinion, I don't think that they would be interested in reading unless they had a love of reading. There's one thing between picking up a book and being made to read it and picking up a book because you want to read it. I feel like kids are definitely wanting to read more than ever with 100 Book.

This educator saw her students expanding their reading interests and seeking out diverse texts. Her students' motivations were driven by curiosity as they sought out books that offering differing perspectives. The exploration and refinement of student preferences was also noted with my own students. When conferencing with students, I noticed them

learning what they liked and didn't like, whether that would be a series or specific genre. They would ask if there were any other *Ricky Ricotta* (Pilkey & Santat, 2015) books or graphic novels. By developing preferences for what they like to read, students may continue to seek out and read books they prefer and may, perhaps, be open to experience new books as well. Not only that, but they learn to self-select books reflectively.

Many teachers felt that student choice led to increased motivation. Educator 4 explained why: "I think it helps them to look through books and choose books that they like. I feel a lot of my kids are excited about the books that they're reading." Educator 3 also recognized the benefit of students self-selecting books, noting:

> What I see a lot of kids really enjoying and liking is the opportunity to look for the books that they want to read. Instead of always being told, "These are the books that you will read," I think that has really built the culture of our building to say that "Yes. You have a voice and a choice in what you read," and I see that excitement in the kids.

Clearly, educators viewed accessing books was important to the developing reader. Access to books and learning how to self-select motivated and engaged student readers.

Parents. Parent participants revealed an emphasis on ensuring developing student readers had access to books and had insight on their children's reading preferences.

The data revealed all student participants had access to books at home. As seen in Figure 16, numerous parents shared pictures of bookshelves filled with books throughout their homes. Bookshelves were found in children's bedrooms, as well as in more public areas of the home like the dining room and living room. Some bookshelves

revealed a variety of books including children's books, adult chapter books, and textbooks. During Zoom sessions, other bookshelves were observed in the background methodically set up and organized. This contrasts administrators' and teachers' perceptions that families lacked access to books.

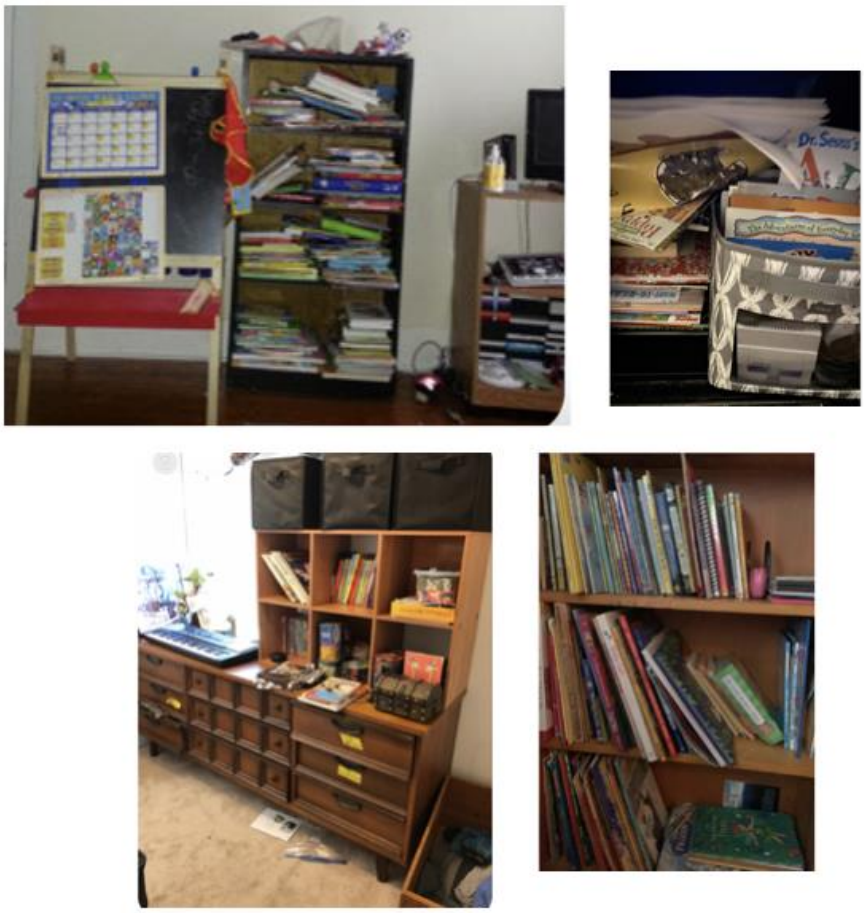

Figure 16: Photographs of bookshelves shared by parents (top left-Parent 2, top right-Parent 3, bottom left-Parent 9, bottom right-Parent 6) illustrating the access to books their developing student read has at home.

Additionally, all parent participants recognized the public library as a source to access books. Parent 5 shared her experience of how the library provided her access to books she perceived were at an appropriate level for her child. She said, "So I was like

going to the library and pulling all the number one level books from the shelves I could possibly find to have him read." Parents also shared that going to the library was a motivator for their children. "The only thing that really encouraged her before was us walking into town and going to the library," stated Parent 8. This practice, however, was disrupted during this study due to the pandemic closures. Parent 4 had her mom take them take them to the library the day the students were sent home from school due to the pandemic. "And then we found out at 5:00, the library was closed," she replied. This closure impacted some students' motivation to read. Parent 2 disclosed how "not going to the library kind of hurt us" because her child was bored of re-reading the books they had in the house. Library closures cut off access to books for some, but schools stepped in and provided concierge book checkout services. Parent 8 shared, "I think it's been terrific that the school has offered books. That's been helpful, because with the library being closed, that was a little bit difficult." It was evident that the library was a source of books for many families and the closure disrupted this access.

Family and friends are also important sources of books according to parent participants. Parents shared how many books were acquired as gifts. Grandparents seemed to be the most prevalent book gift givers. Parent 9 shared how she was given her mother's collection of kindergarten books when her mother retired from teaching and that books are the primary gifts given in her family. Parent 6 expressed how lucky she was that her mom sends her grandchildren books sporadically throughout the year. The swapping and sharing of books were also a practice that was revealed by parents. Families routinely shared and swapped books with family members. "My sister and I have kids that are different ages, so we can swap books back and forth," Parent 9

shared. Additionally, Parent 8 shared how the "people in town" leave books on their porches for the kids to swap out. This effort to provide access to books speaks to the value the community has towards reading. Family, friends, and neighbors work together to provide books which support the development of the student reader.

Despite all the ways that parents acquire and provide access of books for their children, two parents revealed frustrations with the limited access to books their children experienced. While they expressed gratitude that classrooms offered such a variety of books as part of the 100 Book program, they felt there were not enough books in the collections. Parent 4 noted how her child felt like they were reading the same books repeatedly and getting bored. She felt that teachers did not switch bins often enough and that classrooms should have a larger selection of level books to read from. Educators echoed this parent's frustration: the number of books the students have access to seems to be insufficient for some readers.

Notably, parents were very much in tune with what their children preferred to read and what they were currently reading. Parental support can influence student reading behaviors (Klauda & Wigfield, 2012). Parent 3 shared that her child was reading "mostly his comic books or he has manuals that'll tell him tips and tricks for the games he plays…he interested in book about how-to." Parent 9 revealed her child gravitates towards series: "And [he] has found a few series that he really likes, *The Magic Tree House* (Osborne,1992) series and the *Dog Man* (Pilkey, 2016) books." The preference for series was revealed by other parents, as well: "She loves *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1993*)*" (Parent 6), and "My child loves to read *The Hardy Boy* (Dixon & Dixon, 2017*)* books" (Parent 1). Parents also reported their children's preferences for fiction or non-

fiction. "So, he's really a fiction reader. He likes fiction," reported Parent 9. Parent 2 shared her child prefers non-fiction books: "I think [his favorites] will forever be dinosaurs." The fact that parents were so attuned to what their children were reading and had preferences for, suggests that many student readers were developing an intrinsic motivation to read. As Schiefele et al (2012) noted that intrinsic motivation turned out to be more closely associated with students' reading preferences than extrinsic motivation was.

Students. While the other stakeholder groups' ensured access to books for students, students accessed and consumed books in a variety of ways. Prior to the pandemic, most students said they primarily accessed books via classroom book shopping. Despite access to classroom libraries, some students did not feel they had enough book shopping opportunities. Student 9 shared a frustration: "I kept reading them over and over again, the same books, because I never got time to book shop in the morning." It was unclear if the student's teacher didn't allow time to bookshop or if the student was busy doing something else, but according to Pachtman and Wilson (2006), students felt that they should be able to visit the classroom library daily. The lack of access to a variety of books in a timely manner, can be discouraging and decrease motivation and engagement in readers (Guice et al., 1994; Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). In addition to accessing books from classroom libraries, some students accessed books by borrowing them through the public library and little free libraries around their neighborhood as noted earlier by parent participants. Student 4 shared, "There's books in a little box…a little free library. I picked it up and was like, 'I like this.'" It's refreshing

to see that students access books in a variety of way, but it's important that they have enough variety of books to develop and maintain interest.

Some students, as also mentioned by their parents, received books from family members. Student 9 likes to get books from his sister, and Student 4's aunt sends her books a few times a year. Most students say they find books from their bedroom bookshelf, and two of the students expressed ideas about having a lot of books. "I have a million books in my room," exclaimed Student 7 when he described where he gets most of his books. Student 9 shared a similar sentiment: "I have, like, 400 books in my bedroom. Most of them are under my bed." One student used book lists to find new books to read. She used the "Black- Eyed Susan" lists from the library and the recommended summer reading list provided by the middle school to identify books to read. Black-Eyed Susan books are books recommended by the Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL) in various categories including picture books, fiction/nonfiction books, and graphic novels. While most students referred to physical books they have access to, some students shared that they get reading material though electronic means including Epic! and ARC Bookshelf. Student 1 shared how his mom would send him books to read: "She likes sending them [books] to me on Epic!" Students are being exposed to books and accessing them in a variety of ways. From book lists, to gifts, to parents sending digital recommendations, students have multiple methods for accessing texts.

Clearly, students have had a wide range of accessing books. More importantly, however, was what was revealed about the types of books students consumed and preferred. Student interviews and their books logs revealed the variety and preferences of

books they had. Figure 17 illustrates the diversity of books one student read. Interviews revealed that students had preferences for a variety of genres including fantasy adventure books (Student 5), humorous books (Student 9), action books (Student 4 and Student 1), and informational books (Student 2).

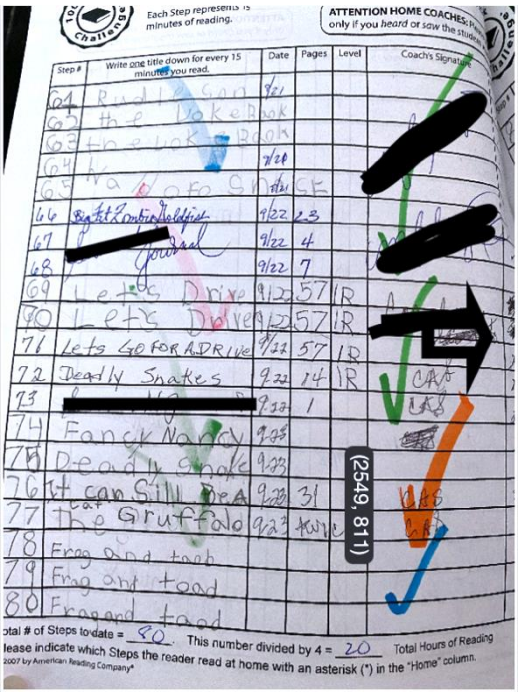

Figure 17: Reading log. This example of a student book log demonstrates the variety of genres and types of books including fiction and non-fiction as well as picture books as chapter books.

Many students also revealed preferences for series. Student 9 shared he loved the *Dog Man (Pilkey, 2016)*, *Weird School (Gutman, Paillot, & Gutman, 2004)*, and *Captain Underpants (Pilkey, 2019)* books. Student 5 also expressed a preference for *Captain Underpants (Pilkey, 2019)* books while Student 6 stated she loved the *Junie B. Jones* (Park, Brunkus, & Park, 1993) series. This affirms what parents revealed: they do know what their kids like to read. This preference of a variety of books is supported by research conducted by Davila and Patrick (2010) when they found that there is not a clear

preference for the types of books children select. This demonstrates students are developing personal preferences unique to their own interests as readers, which suggests an intrinsic motivation to read. Thus, providing

Providing access and accessing books-takeaway. Book access was important to all participants. Administrators, educators, and parents provided access whereas students accessed and consumed those books. Classrooms were equipped with leveled libraries, and parents ensured their children had books at home by having books gifted, buying them, borrowing them, and sharing them with friends and family members. These efforts ensured students had adequate access to reading materials, and in turn, students were developing personal preferences for different genres and series of books.

Regulation and the Restriction of Access

Despite the efforts to provide student readers access to books while encouraging them to self-select reading material, stakeholders revealed that full access to books was often restricted and regulated. The leveling of books and the perceptions around what is deemed appropriate for the developing student reader limited student choice of reading material. This restriction of access has been found to be a consequence of leveled texts. Kontovourki (2012) found that books organized in a classroom library were leveled and only reserved for students of particular reading levels. This practice contradicts the expectation of 100 Book Challenge where they suggest the color levels "may help students find books that fit" (p. 49). In their framework it states, "Students are encouraged to read whatever they want.[…] They are not required to read at any one color level" ((American Reading Company, 2016, p. 49). Despite the recommendation of ARC, teachers and parents use reading levels to restrict access to texts.

Administration. Administrators contributed to the regulation and restriction of texts available to the student reader. According to the study's participants, administrators thought that students should be reading books that matched their independent level. These perceptions were revealed through the interviews as well as in training sessions for teachers. Administrator 2 explained, "[…]we want [students] to practice their independent reading and consume books at that level […]" Administrator 1's comments also reinforced the idea students should be reading in their independent level: "And no matter what level you're reading in, whatever that blue goal is, that is going to be something that kids who are in the white can still benefit of it." By saying "no matter what level you're reading in" this administrator is portraying the expectation that students read within a certain level. Not only that but it reflects the findings of Kontovourki (2012) in that students become defined by their level. The implicit language around level colors sends a message that student readers should be focused on reading in their independent level. ARC identifies levels of books by a color and letter/number designation. For example, second grade equivalent books are labeled with red stickers and housed in red bins. The grade level and ARC color and number/letter correlations are shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18: ARC book leveling system and corresponding grade levels.

These perceptions were also present in the documents administrators provided during 100 Book training sessions. For one training session, administrators supplied teachers with a

checklist to take notes, highlighting key aspects of the formative assessment protocol. As evidenced in Figure 19, there is an emphasis placed on ensuring students are reading at the "correct" independent level. First the teacher is asked to check if the level is easy enough for the student to read the words and ideas fluently and problem solve almost all of the challenges independently. If not, teachers need to stop and identify the student's correct level.

Formative Assessment Protocol Note Catcher

				Strengths/Questions
1	**Is this level easy enough for the student?**	Can the student trad the words and ideas fluently and problem-solve 99% of the challenges without teacher help of any kind?	_____ No. Stop and re-focus the conference on identifying the student's correct level. _____ Yes. Continue to work on identifying the student's Power Goal.	

Figure 19: Training document provided to teachers. There is a focus on ensuring a student is reading on their independent level.

In an email sent to all literacy teachers addressing 100 Book implementation during the return to in-person learning, a checklist was attached referencing school and home reading. Figure 20 illustrates the tacit suggestion that students should be reading books at their independent level by using language, such as "the right books" and emphasizing that at-home students can read "anything they choose, leveled or not." These implicit and explicit expectations contradict ARC's expectations: "Students are not required to read only from leveled libraries, only from certain color levels, or only know one language" (American Reading Company, 2016, p. 159).

2. **Books/Classroom Library: School Reading -** There are enough of the right books for every student between classroom libraries and Bookshelf. Safe book shopping and circulation practices are used for physical books. Basket rotation between teachers is scheduled.

   Home Reading - Enough books go home every night (or students know how to access digital libraries) to sustain 30 minutes of Independent Reading (or Read-Aloud for RTM–3Y readers). Students are allowed to read anything they choose, leveled or not.

Remote Learners: Consider organizing pick-up/drop-off days for students to have physical books to read at home.

Figure 20: Implementation document emphasizing having "the right" books for students to read, whereas students can read whatever they want at home.

Administrators providing documents suggesting students read within their independent levels may be contributing to the restriction of a developing readers' book access and is contrary to ARC's intent (American Reading Company, 2016).

Educators. Educators also restricted books that students had access to. Many of these perceptions are the result of the trainings being provided by district and school literacy leaders; however, it was apparent that, despite the language around students reading at their independent level used by administrators, there was not a clear understanding by educators on what students should be reading. Conversations with teachers who taught 100 Book Challenge evidenced inconsistent expectations of what their students were reading. Casual conversations I had with fellow educators revealed they did not even worry about levels and allowed their students to read whatever they wanted, while others were very specific about what students should read. As evidenced by Figure 21, Educator 1 allowed their students to choose 5 books: 3 of them at the student's independent level, one book above, and one book of their choice.

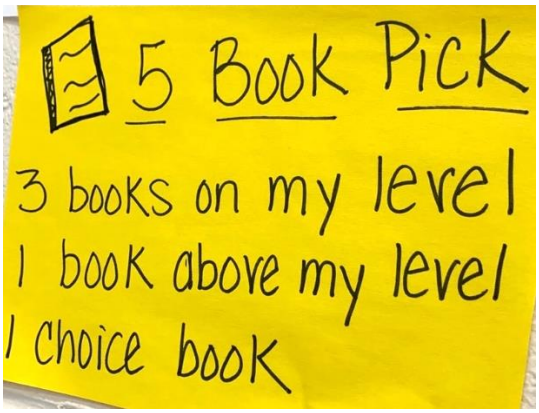

Figure 21: Book shopping guidelines displayed by one teacher. Students are restricted to 5 books and only two outside of their intendent reading level.

In my classroom, students could generally read what they wanted; however, I would try to coach them to "just right", or more appropriate, books if what they were reading appeared too easy or too challenging.

Many educators agreed that it is important for student to read books that are just right; however, some educators found the colors of the leveled books were problematic. Figure 22 illustrates how books are sorted into their corresponding levels.

Figure 22: 100 Book Challenge classroom library. Each level of book is housed in color coded and labeled bins.

One of my personal interview responses reflected this concern as I compared it to when I was learning to read:

> I think sometimes the blatant colors of the books are a weakness. We are told that kids shouldn't be so hung up on the levels, but when the bins are red and white and blue and green, it's very hard to, like, not make that a focus, you know, so I wish there was a way that students were able to choose books that were just right for them independently without it being so obvious of where [the books] are coming from because I think that definitely is one of the, you know, goes back to when I was in kindergarten: I was in the Bluebird group. It's just, like, for all [the 100 Book Challenge] strengths, I think that falls really short. I think it is contradictory to the mission of 100 Book Challenge.

Being a “blue bird” defined me as an emergent reader, which I still remember to this day. I knew I was in the top reading group, and I knew others were not. I can still see the color birds hanging above our kindergarten ures. This memory is emblazoned in my memory. Not what I was reading or what I did as a reader, just that I was “one of the good readers.” It saddens me to think of how students in the other colors may have defined themselves. In 100 Book Challenge, the colored levels of the books would perhaps define developing readers too, thus limiting what they feel they can read or more importantly who they are as readers.

Leveling books leads to restrictive practice, limiting access of books to students by defining what a student should or should not be reading. Educator 5 shared, “I feel whenever you start leveling books, then certain books become out of your league, whether we like it or not. And you miss a lot of great stories in the process.” This is a

disheartening thought. Students should be able to explore and read books despite what level they are, so not to restrict their curiosity and desire to read.

Parents. The perceptions and practices of parents revealed that students' choices were limited due book leveling and what books were deemed appropriate.

Parents revealed leveled books limited their children's reading efforts by limiting access to books that were challenging and engaging. As also noted by educators, Parent 4 shared how her child felt like they were reading the same books repeatedly and getting bored. She felt that teachers did not switch bins often enough and that classrooms should have a larger selection of level books to read from. Parent 9 had a similar concern when she discussed her son reading the leveled books provided in school: "He's just in the top reading color tags on the books, and he's like, 'And they're boring, I already read them'." These parents both had students reading in the top level of books provided in the classroom libraries. Because there were no more books offered at the student independent level or above their level, parents' perceptions were that their children were bored.

Parents also engaged in practices that limited the self-selection of books. There was a perception around ensuring their children read books that were appropriate. Parent 9 shared how she went through her son's bookshelves and made sure that he had "mostly chapter book type books in his room now" so he can meet grade level expectations. Similarly, Parent 8 engages in steps to make sure her daughter has grade appropriate books accessible at home:

> Yeah, at home I find that it's easier if I take her bookshelf that she has downstairs, and we just go through it probably once or twice a month. We go through the

> bookshelf, and we change out books, and make sure that there are just appropriate grade level books on there.

Those parents perceived their children needed to read books considered to be on grade level. Additionally, one parent participant was concerned about the types of books her child was reading. Parent 7 explained how her idea of certain genres changed:

> I also previously had the perception of graphic novels as not actual reading material. One of my son's teachers shared that any printed words helpful, so I have relaxed my stance and let him choose his reading material. He is now eager to read on his own.

Parents' perceptions and misconceptions of appropriate reading material for their children can impede student choice. They may be, then, limiting students' book selections, and they could restrict and demotivate the developing student readers.

Students. Perhaps most significantly, the students revealed how they perceived their access to books was restricted by the leveling of 100 Book Challenge books. In two consecutive interviews, Student 4 shared how she felt her reading was limited based on her identified reading level. In her first interview she shared that she disliked that she didn't have access to enough books at her independent level: "The least I like about [100 Book Challenge] is because they don't have many books. Again, I've read all the white books already." In her follow up interview, Student 4 revealed the following:

> Because, well, two years ago, I was barely not wanting to read at all. But then in the same year, closer to the end of the year, I was more interested in reading. Then last year, I was kind of interested in reading and I was in whitish, blackish.

> And then this year, I would normally be able to go black, but [my teacher] wanted to put me back a little bit. So, then I could just go through white again**.**

Her response is concerning because Student 4 was already bored; she had read "all the white books already." Even if there were different books at her independent level available to her, the idea of moving students back a level would contribute to the limited access of books and perhaps demotivate the student reader.

There are, perhaps, even more serious consequences of how this perception of only reading within a student's level is being perceived by students. Student 9 shared, "I read an orange book once by accident because it was in the black bin because I'm allowed to read two blacks, and it was in the black bin, and I didn't even know it." This statement stood out to me: there was an underlying feeling he did something wrong by reading a book outside his independent reading level. A developing student reader should not view certain books as ones they are not allowed to read just because they are not on their level. This limits students' access to books and their ability to self-select what they may want to read.

Regulation and the restriction of access-takeaway. Despite the efforts to ensure the developing student reader has access to texts they can select to read, participants held numerous perceptions and practices that limited those opportunities. One of the core components of 100 Book Challenge is their leveled book system. They level books based on the skills they perceive as needing to be taught. While it may be beneficial for students to receive reading instruction based on those levels, the leveling system has influenced more than instruction. It has also created a sense of that is what the developing reader should be reading. This pervasive perception has engendered

educators who limit student selection of books, regulating what they choose during book shopping. Perhaps even more significant is when students feel that they are doing something wrong by reading outside of their level.

Conclusion: Read What You Want, But…

Clearly, adult stakeholders made sure that the developing student readers had access to books they can choose from to read. At the school level, 100 Book Challenge libraries were purchased for all classroom teachers. The libraries were full of diverse books of various genres. At home, students accessed books from the local library, little free libraries, sharing, swapping, and being gifted books. All homes had bookshelves filled with books for their children to read.

Despite this access, there is a perception from participants that the developing elementary reader should be reading a certain kind of book. One contributing factor to this is the labeling of books to correspond with a students' independent reading levels. This told students they should only be reading within their instructional level. This has the potential to be problematic for the developing student reader. For one, the focus on reading at the student's independent level conflicts with the research stating that students are more engaged with more challenging texts. According to Jones et al. (2012), students exhibit more time on task when reading at their instructional level as opposed to reading at the independent level. With this line of thought, the restriction of students to just reading at their independent level could disengage them as readers and they may spend less time on the task of reading. This, too, is problematic for the most proficient readers: they have limited access to classroom texts that could challenge and engage them. Students who are intrinsically motivated to read often choose to read challenging texts

(Wigfield & McCann, 1996). Because the supply of 100 Book Challenge books provided to each teacher extends only one grade level above, students are limited in the challenging texts they have access to, if their teacher even allows them to read outside of their independent level.

Summary of Findings

The course of the study evidenced, to me, that the love and importance of reading was a common thread across all adult stakeholder groups: “You want your kids to love reading. I mean, read, read, read, and just love it because it's going to be something that's going to be pivotal for them in life” (Administrator 1), and Educator 1 said, “I think that having a love of reading now and just learning it now and appreciating it now will pay off so much in the future that they don't even know yet.” “It's just that I believe that certain passions such as reading, they got to start early,” said Parent 2. The desire to instill passion for reading in students resulted in the following findings: (a) having time to read and accounting for daily reading time and (b) having access to texts and self-selected books while also regulating and restricting reading materials.

The practices and perceptions that sought to increase the amount of time students spent reading and to provide access to a wide range of diverse and engaging texts benefited student readers by developing routines of daily reading while choosing self-selected texts. Participants also revealed practices and perceptions around reading in which reading time was measured and the self-selection of books was regulated. Students had to log their reading time by recording the number of steps read daily which led to the incentivization of reading. Additionally, the leveling of texts and determining students’ independent reading levels acted to restrict access to books. These practices

and perceptions of reading could potentially undermine the routines of daily reading and the benefits of being able to self-select texts.

Fostering life-long reading habits is important to the developing student reader. This study revealed despite evidence of many habits and routines around reading, daily reading was not really held secure without the influence of school. This aligns with research conducted by Pachtman and Wilson (2006), when reading is expected, more students read and enjoy doing so. When there were disruptions to the school structure either from the pandemic or summer vacation, the habits and routines around reading waned for many students. It appears many readers lacked the intrinsic motivation to read without the oversight of school. Schiefele, et al. (n.d.) argue that to build the intrinsic motivation to read, a reader needs to have an interest in the text and the activity of reading itself needs to be pleasing. Perhaps the emphasis on counting steps and being rewarded for step milestones is a contributing factor to the lack of intrinsic motivation. If students (and parents) are primarily motivated by the necessity to keep track of reading, to outperform others, or achieve certain goals, when that accountability is taken away, the practice of daily reading appeared to suffer. Outside rewards may undermine the development of intrinsic motivation (Fawson & Moore, 1999). This begs the question: is the intention to build lifelong practices around reading or to increase reading volume? If it is the latter, that is not necessarily a bad thing. For students to become more proficient readers, it is important for them to practice reading. The practice of counting steps encourages this practice. When student increase their volume of reading, it can contribute to better oral language skills, spelling, reading comprehension, and general knowledge (Fisher & Frey, 2018; Wigfield et al., 1996). Once these skills mature; the

intrinsic motivation may improve and then students may develop a passion for lifelong reading practices.

Having access to high quality, diverse literature is important to the developing student reader. Guice, Allington, and Johnston (n.d) argue that children need a variety of books where they can see themselves and others, are about differing topics, and at varying difficulty levels. Having an assortment of books to choose from encourages student involvement and enjoyment of reading (Worthy, 1996). It was revealed, however, that participants viewed there was an inadequate supply of books. Children need to have a plentiful supply of books to sustain engagement (Guice et al., 1994). This was especially apparent within the leveled books. Most students were required to read books at their independent level. This restriction limited student access to a wider variety of books and resulted in students getting bored from rereading the same books and not having access to more challenging materials. Students are motivated when they have access to a wide range of materials and have success at challenging tasks (Gambrell, 2011). With the limitations created by having students read at their independent level, the developing student reader could be inadvertently discouraged from reading.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Significance of this Study

With the education mandates established the past few decades including NCLB and ESSA, there has been an intense focus on student achievement, and as a result, schools feel compelled to adopt and implement educational programs that promise to increase academic success. This age of accountability has put student achievement data on standardized tests front and center, which is often the primary source of educational decision making (Nordgren, 2015). This is especially true when it comes to reading. By nature, standardized tests aim to capture students' reading aptitude through a mix of selected passages, coupled with selected response questions, and /or connected text followed by prompts which require students to efficiently produce writing which reflect comprehension. The results are then tallied to make a student's readership into a quantifiable score, and then these scores are compared against their peers within their classroom, school, state, and country. While many policy-makers feel the key to increasing reading achievement is by increasing accountability measures through the use of high-stakes testing, which is often tied to funding, researchers continue to raise concerns about this perception (Mraz & Vacca, 2012; Nordgren, 2015). There is so much focus on outcomes, the processes in which a reader develops often becomes overshadowed by failing to acknowledge critical aspects of developing readers. (Hollingworth & Drake, 2011). This is especially true for third graders who have who have just developed the ability to read, and who are now expected to demonstrate achievement on high stakes assessment. There is an opportunity to foster the lifelong

love of reading but jumping into high stakes testing potentially deters that love to develop. Such a focus is placed on discrete reading skills and strategies, that students may not learn the value, joy, and reward of reading.

Although the hype around reading achievement seems to be focused on schools, there are numerous people responsible for developing student readers. They include school leaders, educators, parents, and students themselves: collectively I refer to these stakeholders as the village. To spur conversations beyond student achievement and to gain an understanding into the broader circumstances surrounding the development of student readers, I investigated the thoughts and behaviors of administrators, educators, parents, and students situated within their experiences with 100 Book Challenge. The research question that guided this research was:

- What are multiple stakeholders' (administrators, educators, parents, and students) practices and perceptions around the development of the student reader within the context of 100 Book Challenge?

My findings demonstrated that the participants engaged in practices and had perceptions around the development of the student reader involving (a) having time to read and accounting for daily reading time and (b) having access to texts and self-selected books while also regulating and restricting reading materials.

As highlighted by this inquiry, the collective efforts of the village demonstrated they fostered and participated in practices that promoted reader habits, engagement, and motivation which all acted to promote a lasting reading lifestyle. Students were learning and developing the value and joy of reading. However, the incentivization of reading and the restriction of access to books has the potential to threaten these benefits. Students

may not be reading for pure joy or satisfaction, instead they may be acting out of compliance or for some sort of external reward.

Implications and Recommendations

Regular, Independent Reading Grows Readers in More Ways Than One

As this study showed, regular independent reading was evidenced by various stakeholders. Students practiced daily reading both at school and at home when school was in session. This is notable as consistent engagement and practice with reading can be a critical component in the development of the student reader. Merga and Roni (2018) argue that regular reading can play a valuable role in helping students meet the ever-increasing literacy demands of contemporary society. The development and maintaining of reading habits can prepare students to navigate literacy tasks as they appear in life situations, as well as develop qualities that can impact the reader's personality. Mar and Oatley (2008) found that regular recreational reading of fiction to be associated with an enhanced capacity for empathy and prosocial behaviors (as cited in Merga & Mat Roni, 2018). Understanding other people's feelings and knowing how to engage in society is a benefit to communities. This, perhaps, is more important than demonstrating proficiency on standardized assessments and is a strong argument for nurturing habits of reading that invoke joy and purpose.

There are additional benefits from regular, independent reading that support the efforts of educational policy makers and the push for reading achievement without the need for teaching reading skills and strategies in isolation. These benefits include better oral language skills, spelling, reading comprehension, and general knowledge (Anderson et al., 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Fisher & Frey, 2018). Jones, Reutzel, and

Smith (2012) argue that teachers, parents, and administrators need to be sure there is adequate time allocated for students to read daily both in and out of school. This is evidenced in this study with 30 minutes of independent reading occurring during 100 Book time at school and parents setting aside time for students to read at home.

This time spent reading at home and school increases the overall volume of reading students engaged in each day. There is myriad literature that affirms that increasing reading volume increases reading development (Au, K., 2012; Fisher & Frey, 2018; Jones et al., 2012; Mol & Bus, 2011; Schiefele et al., 2012). One benefit of increased reading is a more significant vocabulary growth (Anderson et al., 1988; Mol & Bus, 2011) as children are exposed to exponentially more words when they increase their reading (Fisher & Frey, 2018). Additionally, students who read more demonstrate improved reading comprehension (Anderson et al., 1988; Au, K., 2012; Mol & Bus, 2011). Increased volume of reading is also attributed to accelerated reading progress when reading appropriately challenging books (Anderson et al., 1988; Campbell, 2012; Jones et al., 2012). These are all markers of reading achievement. My findings highlight that the independent reading routines in place increase the volume of reading being done by students. Instead of investing untold amounts of money in curriculums developed by for-profit companies, maybe an investment in books and the fostering of reading in meaningful, purposeful, and joyful ways would be better suited to furthering reading achievement.

These gains in reading growth can be attributed to the Matthew Effect which builds on the premise that the “rich get richer” (Stanovich, 1986). When students read, they develop and build upon their reading skills, which will exponentially improve the

more they read. While there are many positive results that can occur from this, this could also create some problems. Although often a proponent of skills-based literacy, Stanovich (1986) provides insight on the importance of vocabulary that can transcend the tensions of cognitive and social perspectives. He states:

> The very children who are reading well and who have good vocabularies will read more, learn more word meanings, and hence read even better. Children with inadequate vocabularies who read slowly and without enjoyment—read less, and as a result have slower development of vocabulary knowledge, which inhibits further growth in reading ability (p. 37).

Because of this, schools and parents need to be aware to not perpetuate the gap between developing readers who lack readiness skills as compared to their peers. There needs to a recognition of the rich literacy practices that occur at home. Children need to engage in experiences that foster and value both home literacies and school literacies. Students should not be denied access to independent reading in favor of specific interventions. American Reading Company and the implementation of 100 Book Challenge aims to remedy this disparity by providing access to independent reading time no matter what a reader's ability. As revealed by this study, independent reading time was not just a privilege provided to those who demonstrated competencies in reading, but instead it was a sacred time where all readers could read and explore a variety of rich and diverse books. Because 100 Book Challenge begins with students in pre-K, more students are being exposed to rich texts at an earlier age which could potentially limit the negative effects of the Matthew Effect.

Families Nurture the Developing Reader

It was refreshing to gain insight into the habits and routines families have established around reading. As highlighted in this study, in some families, students independently read before they went to bed and after they woke up, as well during free or down time throughout the day. Students also engaged in shared reading experiences with families reading together and participating in read-alouds. This is significant because families are a critical component of a balanced literacy program (Padak & Rasinski, 2012). These cozy encounters among families send a message that reading is more than something to be good at. More importantly, it is also an opportunity for family bonding and embracing calm moments. Jordan, Snow, and Porche (2000) assert that literacy-rich homes are more impactful to children's successful early literacy development than top level preschool and kindergarten classrooms (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2012). By building in natural and authentic experiences around reading, families also support their child in ways that benefit them academically as well. Family involvement in the development of the student reader helps to cultivate a culture of reading where family members integrated literacy into their daily lives (Compton-Lilly, Caloia, Quast, & McCann, 2016). This can contribute to children's growth in vocabulary, comprehension, and general knowledge which all lead to improved academic achievement (Rasinski, 2012). The regular routines of reading at home work in unison with the routines of reading at school in cultivating positive behaviors and nurturing the skills and strategies valued by educational institutions.

How can family be a more productive part of the village? Family involvement in a child's reading development is essential. It necessary for school

leaders, educators, and families themselves to understand and recognize this importance. While this study demonstrated parent stakeholders ensured students read each day and signed students' reading logs which helped to hold students accountable for their daily reading, parents are more effective the more interactive they are with their children. This deeper interaction occurs when families engage in shared reading experiences. As this study showed, many families read together, parents read aloud to their children, as well as discussed texts with each other. This is important because when students are engaged with shared reading experiences, they develop more literary language and concept development (Green et al., 2002). Additionally, these shared experiences act as models for students demonstrating that reading is more than just an academic activity. When families participate in shared reading opportunities including having students read to parents or siblings, as highlighted in this study, it encourages students to read for enjoyment and a shared social purpose instead of just focusing on academic attainment (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018).

To capitalize on the benefits of shared reading, policy makers, school leaders, and educators need to do better at informing families how shared reading experiences advance their children's reading development. While families are widely encouraged to support their child in their reading development before they enter school, the onus shifts to schools once they enroll. However, the role of families is equally important to school aged students as well. Families can be more involved with their children's reading development by continuing to read aloud to them even as the child's reading proficiency improves. Reading aloud to children has significant benefits to the developing student reader including motivating them to read, developing awareness of print, promoting the

enjoyment of reading, and encouraging discussion around texts (Au, K., 2012; Fletcher, Grimley, Greenwood, & Parkhill, 2012; Green et al., 2002). Green, Lilly, and Barrett (2002) report that once students learn to read, family read-alouds often decline or stop. This is disappointing as children desire to be read aloud to and can yearn for it when it stops (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018).

Because family involvement is so critical in the development of the student reader, school leaders and educators need to educate parents on how to support their children beyond ensuring students just read. In many cases, parents want information on how to best support their children (Padak & Rasinski, 2012). One way to do this is to communicate with families the ways that they can be more involved with their student's reading so as to not create a myth that reading means sitting silently with a book for extended periods of time. Many parents may be unaware of the benefits of reading aloud to their children and engaging in shared reading experiences (Brown, Schell, Denton, & Knode, 2019). Parents should be encouraged not only to make sure students read 30 minutes a day at home, but they should also be reminded to read aloud with their children, be models of readers by making their own reading visible and talk with their children about what everyone is reading. Without these interpersonal connections between families and children, students may associate reading with stress and assessment rather than for enjoyment and engagement (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018). The family needs to be an integral part of the village. They need to be aware of how they can support their child throughout their schooling, so they feel their efforts are supported and valued as they grow as readers. Families can do so much to supplement this development by

creating safe spaces to develop bonds around reading, model the importance and joy of reading, and promote lifelong reading habits.

Daily Home Reading Seems Tied to School for Some Families

Many families in this study admitted to having inconsistent reading routines during summer vacation and virtual learning. This was, in part, due to less consistent schedules and a lack of accountability. It also, perhaps, points to a lack of regular reading routine rooted in homes. The routines are superficial or happen only during school business hours. Without the presence of school expectations and holding students accountable for daily reading, many families didn't prioritize reading and students admitted to significantly less reading. The lack of regular reading is of concern because this dramatically reduces the print exposure and authentic reading experiences these students have as compared to others.

Research has shown that summer regression is a concern in the reading development of some readers. Padak and Rasinski (2012) found that more affluent students did not demonstrate summer regression, but instead increased in reading proficiency over the summer. This differed from their economically disadvantaged peers, who regressed in proficiency. These findings are significant to my research site being a Title 1 school. The lack of daily reading when school routines are disrupted, due to summer vacation or other external factors, could be contributing to this regression. To maintain a balanced literacy program, and to combat this issue, a home school connection needs to be retained over the summer to promote and encourage daily reading. Teachers have important influence on how much time children spend reading outside of school (Anderson et al., 1988). Solutions needs to be sought to involve educators, parents, and

the community to keep up summer reading (Anderson et al., 1988; Blanton, 2015; Padak & Rasinski, 2012). In the past, I have seen attempts to keep students and families engaged in reading by offering summer book logs, implementing a summer One School One Book initiative ("Read to Them," n.d.), or inviting students to a summer reading academy. While these strategies may entice a few families to read more, they could compound the issue that reading at home is a response to a school expectation.

A way to combat this summer regression, or inconsistent reading routine, would be to encourage and support the authentic development of reading habits. Ensuring families have regular access to books is a crucial part of doing so. That could mean offering a summer book concierge service or a weekly book swap. In addition, families need to be educated on the importance of maintaining routines around reading. With education and expectations, year-round routines could be developed. Whatever the final solution, keeping families engaged while school is not in session should be a priority to policy makers, school leaders, and educators alike.

Counting Steps Motivated Readers but Failed to Foster Lasting Reading Habits

The student stakeholders in this study logged their reading by recording how much time they read by counting steps, where every step was equal to 15 minutes of reading. The counting of minutes read is viewed by some researchers as an appropriate measure for independent reading as there is equal opportunity to achieve rewards across abilities (Fawson & Moore, 1999). Students were recognized every time they reached the next 100 steps with getting a new color reading folder, teacher recognition, and often being rewarded with a medal or brag tag. The logging of reading is a common

educational practice that not only holds developing readers accountable for their reading, but it also incentivizes students to read more.

Counting steps contributes to the incentivization of reading. As highlighted by this investigation, in many cases, the counting of steps motivated students to read more to achieve the next step milestone. This incentivization of reading is consistent with previous literature (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006; Schiefele et al., 2012; Wigfield & McCann, 2006). In a study that investigated what students viewed as important, researchers found that participating in book counts and celebrations as measured with a book log was highly ranked by students (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). The documentation of minutes read encourages competition to outperform others which can act as a motivator for many students (Schiefele et al., 2012; Wigfield & McCann, 1996). Additionally, students were motivated to achieve personal goals (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006; Schiefele et al., 2012) such as reading certain step benchmarks. The student reading practices revealed in this study were significantly tied to the reading log and counting steps. Students knew exactly what step they were on and how many steps they needed to get to the next milestone. Unfortunately, when steps were not being counted during virtual learning, the at-home reading declined significantly. This supports the notion that true habits of reading are not always intrinsic in nature but for some are tied to an external influence such as school or incentivization.

Students were not the only ones that were influenced by the promise of reward. Parent stakeholders were also motivated by an end of year incentive offered for any student who met the end of the year reading goals. While an end of the year goal was not presented during this study, many parents reminisced about how much it helped them

maintain their own involvement in their children's daily reading and wished a similar incentive was in place. Despite how critical family involvement is in the development of a student reader, schools need to recognize the burden it puts on families who are often faced with scarcity of time. Often, the socioeconomic status of families determines the amount of available time they have to engage in home literacy activities, with low SES families often having less time due to working multiple jobs or extended hours (Brown et al., 2019). The promise of an incentive may be just what some families need to stay involved with their children's at-home reading.

Conversely, however, in some cases the incentivization created by reading logs can be demotivating for some students (Fisher & Frey, 2018). There is a risk that if students fall behind in steps or enter the school later in the year, the log serves as a constant reminder of their shortcomings, which can decrease student motivation to read (Fawson & Moore, 1999). This was recognized by stakeholders in this study. Because this is a real threat to student motivation, schools and educators need to have a plan to address the needs of these students. They may need a different incentive system, or a way to level the playing field.

Counting steps increases volume but does not solidify habits. As this study showed, the counting of steps and the incentivization that results from the practice, clearly motivated many students to read and often read more. This increased volume of reading has many benefits that were previously mentioned; however, it was clear that it was not facilitating the intrinsic desire to read regularly. Many researchers agree that to build the intrinsic motivation to read, rewards need to closely match the desired behavior, with outside rewards having an undermining effect on building those motivations

(Gambrell, 1996, 2011; Malloy & Gambrell, 2012; Schiefele et al., 2012). During this study, there were few to no rewards (i.e., toys, food, etc.) that were far removed from the act of reading. Instead, rewards included recognition of accomplishments or tokens of achievement like new folders or brag tags. While these were mostly tied to reading, they did not seem to foster the intrinsic motivation to read for many students. It appears that students' reasons to read were external to the act of reading and were not because the activity of reading is satisfying or rewarding in its own right (Schiefele et al., 2012). This was evident as the routines and habits of reading decreased during the summer and when in-person learning was not in session. If students had the intrinsic motivation to read, they would have read even when the structure and oversight of school was disrupted.

This lack of reading habit may or may not be directly attributed to the counting of steps, but it is evident the practice of counting steps is not building the intrinsic motivation to read necessary to read freely and on one's own accord for some students. This is important for stakeholders to be aware of and should be acknowledged when discussing the purpose of counting steps and logging their reading. If the purpose of counting steps is to increase volume and engagement with reading when school is in session, then this is of little concern. However, if the purpose is to create lifelong readers who read freely, then the practice may need to be revisited or supplemented.

Access to Books is Critical in the Development of a Student Reader

Students need regular access to rich, diverse texts to grow as readers. This inquiry also revealed that students had regular access to books both at home and at school. Access to books is critical in the development of the student reader as it promotes and encourages reading (Anderson et al., 1988; Fisher & Frey, 2018; Guryan et

al., 2016; Malloy & Gambrell, 2012). Neuman (1999) found that close proximety to books had a coersive effect on students, and Pachtman and Wilson (2006) revealed that students viewed having a large selection of books in the classroom as the most important thing for them as readers.

As highlighted in this study, the primary source of books at school while students were engaged in in-person learning, was the classroom libraries. There was immense gratitude shown by educators for the classroom libraries provided as part of 100 Book Challenge. This is unsurprising as educators were previously responsible for their own classroom libraries, which was costly, and resulted in drastic differences from classroom to classroom. A number of studies have observed the inadequacies of classroom libraries. In one such study, it was observed that very few classrooms had libraries (Neuman, 1999) while others highlighted incongruities between the libraries among classrooms and schools (Hodges et al., 2019; Worthy, 1996).

The importance of having access to books in the classroom needs to be a priorty for school leaders. It should not fall solely on the shoulders of educators. Amassing their own personal library not only puts a financial burden on teachers, but it creates disequity among classrooms. School leaders need to make it a priorty and establish a plan to ensure students have equitable access to books in classrooms by budgeting to provide and replace books on a regular basis while also ensuring a diversity of genres, topics, characters, and levels to read all readers' interests and abilitites.

Self-selection of books motivates and shapes reading preferences. The students in this study were able to self-select texts to read. This practice promotes independent reading and has a significant impact on reading motivation (Bright &

Loman, 2020; Gambrell, 1996, 2011; Guice et al., 1994; Mctague & Abrams, 2011). According to Mctague & Abrams (n.d.) student's ability to self-select books was the most important aspect of a scaffolded reading program. When students are able to self select reading material, students are more likely to read and the enjoy the books they are reading (Guice et al., 1994; Worthy, 1996). Giving students opportunities for choice and allowing students to choose what they read increases the motivation to read (Gambrell, 1996, 2011). Student enjoyment of reading, having the motivation to read, and reading more all work to postively impact their overall reading achievment and the intrinsic motivation to read.

The practice of self-selecting texts promoted reading, and helped the students in this study develop personal preferences for the types of books they like to read. Not only were students able to articulate the types of books they liked, but their parents and teachers were also aware of student interests. Students had preferences for genres, series, and/or authors. A number of studies have suggested that student choice of what they read helps to shape their own tastes and preference (Au, K., 2012; Davila & Patrick, 2010; Worthy, 1996). This may seem trivial, but intrinsic motivation is closely associated with students' reading preferences (Schiefele et al., 2012) and is necessary to for students to want to read for the sake of reading. The fact that students are defining their choice and preference for books signals that lasting reading habits are forming.

While it is true that students reap many benefits from the opportunity to read self-selected texts, some reseachers suggest controlling choice for the optimal level of challenge and chance for success (Guryan et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2012). Jones, Reutzel, and Smith (2012) agree that student choice is a motivating factor that increases

student acheivement; however, they caution that unguided choice can become a negative force as less proficient readers choose books that are too hard or too easy. Guryan, Kim, and Park (2016) agree that student choice can lead to students choosing books that are too high or too low for their proficiences, but contend that readers who are reading well matched books, have higher levels of reading. Researchers agree that providing student choice is beneficial to the developing reader; however, there may need to be guidance on how to self-select boooks that are a good fit. Teachers should teach students how to choose books by genre, topic, or style. They can model how to determine if books are too challenging by using the five finger, or Goldilocks, test ("The Five-Finger Test," n.d.). If there are too many unknown words a book may be too challenging. This can be supported by families as well. When students are reading books that they can read with ease and understanding, they are more apt to continue the practice of reading.

The leveling of books and perceptions of what is appropriate limits and restricts access to texts. As revealed in this inquiry, access and choice of books was often restricted by quantity and level. Many educators put restrictions on what books students were able to choose with most bound to the students' independent reading level. This concurrs with other research that found students were only allowed to read withing their level of books when reading from a leveled library (Kontovourki, 2012). The restriction of students' independent reading choices to leveled books has been criticized for jeopardizing the motivation that comes from self-selection of reading material (Rog & Burton, 2001). Parents and students felt that there were not enough books available at the students' reading level to maintain engagement. Often, it was the more proficient readers who felt the restriction the most. Classroom libraries consisted of books that only went

above one grade level so above grade level readers suffered the most restrictions of choice material. As cited earlier with regard to student self-selecting texts, there are concerns about students choosing books that are too high or too low; however, if this restriction suppresses student motivation, the practice of limiting access needs to be revisited. Teachers need to avoid putting strict limits on what a child can choose or not choose to read. Instead, they should provide them guidance on how make sure the book is a good-fit for them. In addition, limits on how "high" the levels of books students have access to should also be revisited. As long as the content of the books is age-appropriate, students should not be restricted in choosing books that are well above their grade level. Not only that, but adminstrators need to ensure classrooms are well equipped with enough texts that can appeal to all readers.

Far too often, as this study showed, books were not only restricted at school, but parents tended to restrict and regulate books as well. What parents considered appropriate reading material varied among families with some recognizing recipes as reading material while others felt that only pictureless chapter books were appropriate. This varied perpception on what is considered appropriate reading, aids in restricting and limiting access of books. If one family only allows novels, their child is being exposed to a much narrower selection of text as compared to other students, who may be allowed access to many different genres of texts.

My research study shed light on ways in which access and student choice were limited. It is clear that students benefits from having a diverse library and the ability to choose their own reading material to motivate and engage them as readers; however, by limiting access and choice it threatens those benefits. Firstly, adminstrators need to make

sure there are adequate books that accommodate all readers in a classroom. This may mean that there needs to be more books at each level as well as higher levels of books added to classroom libraries. District and school budgets should allow for regular addtions and replacement of library items to keep them as engaging as possible. Administrators may want to think about the consequence of some practices around book shopping and create guidelines to ensure students have access to texts that keep them engaged and motivated as readers. Additionally, they could provide more educational supports to families on what constitutes appropriate reading at home. Educators may want to rethink the strict limits on what students can select from class libraries and maybe coach students in choosing books that are both of interest to the reader and at a complexity that is just right for them. Finally, parents need to be informed about what constitutes appropriate reading material and broaden their perspectives so access and choice are not arbitrarily limited.

Limitations

Despite a careful research design, qualitative case study presents potential limitations. One limitation is that the findings will be hard to generalize to larger populations (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Because it is an in depth look at one case, what may be true in this study, may not be true in other situations. There is the potential for readers to oversimply the findings and think they reflect the whole (Merriam, 1998). To address this limitation, recommendations of further research follow this section.

Another limitation of qualitative case study is the potential for both researcher and reader bias (Merriam, 1998). To address this limitation, Yin (2014) suggests keeping up with related research, ensuring accuracy, striving for credibility, and divulging

limitations as ways to avoid researcher bias. Additionally, researchers should be open to contrary evidence which may contradict the study's findings and address those contradictions (Yin, 2014). In following Yin's (2014) advice, I sought out scholarly literature that offered various perspectives on key topics of this study. I also continually consulted with my advisor to ensure this research project was completed with credibility and integrity. Finally, I maintained an open mind to the data so that findings could be developed that reflected the actual experiences and thoughts of the participants.

The most significant limitation to this study was that the start of this research coincided directly with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, which essentially shut down life as we knew it overnight. This research was approved in February of 2020, and the school site shut its doors a month later. Not only did schools close, but virtually every other non-essential business or organization closed as well. It's difficult to quantify the impact the pandemic had on this study, but it would be irresponsible to suggest that it occurred in a "business as usual" situation which as a result changed the course of my data collection. Observations of classrooms and in-person interviews were conducted via Zoom. This was a new and unfamiliar platform to most participants which may have produced responses that would have been different if in a more natural and familiar setting.

Despite the obvious limitations created by the pandemic, it also created for a more unique research context. Because much of the data collection occurred when students were attending both asynchronous and synchronous virtual school, it allowed an opportunity to gain a different perspective on the practices and perceptions of the

stakeholder groups. It gave a more complete view of the practices of reading when the oversight of school is removed or disrupted.

Further Research

Despite the insight shed on various stakeholder's and their involvement with the development of the student reader during this study, future research is needed. One recommendation is to expand upon this study by revisiting this research question and expanding it to other grades, other schools, and other school systems. My study was conducted at a Title One school, in a rural setting, with third grade students in the first year of third grade implementation of 100 Book Challenge. The findings of my study could be expanded by including more grades, which could provide insight into how the actions of stakeholders and their views change based on the age level of students. For example, it would be interesting to see how parent engagement levels change compared to the age and grade of students. Varying the contexts of the research to include schools in more urban or suburban areas where there are more diverse opportunities for students to experience would be interesting or to more affluent areas would be important to see how stakeholders differ. These potential studies would provide a more detailed view of the practices and perceptions of stakeholders and allow for similarities and differences to be identified based on differing grade levels or school sites.

Because this study was markedly impacted by the pandemic, another recommendation for further research would be to revisit this research question when have resumed normal operations to provide more clarity. Covid-19 pandemic protocols changed and restricted many of the normal operations of schools and classrooms.

Student to student, and student to teacher, interactions were limited as social distancing was enforced. This disrupted many of the social interactions which are an important component of reading such as conferencing, partner reading, and gathering on the rug to share what was read. It is impossible to say exactly how the pandemic effected the findings of this study, so it would be beneficial to explore the practices and perceptions of stakeholders when Covid restrictions are removed.

With so much attention given to student achievement in policy and instruction, the bigger picture of developing a reader often gets overlooked. This study is not just a glimpse at the role administrators, educators, parents, and students have, but also shows how all stakeholders are involved. More research is needed to understand the holistic efforts being made to develop student readers and increase achievement. This combined effort is what is going to grow strong and lifelong readers. Perhaps we as stakeholders must ask ourselves, what do we want for our readers? Are we ok focusing on high achievement on standardized tests, or do we desire something more? When given the chance, how might we redefine what it means to be a reader? If we want more, than it might be essential to put more value on the roles of all stakeholders and ensure the village is working towards a common goal more intentionally.

Finally, the role of home coach was embraced by many parent participants; however, it was clear that families had to adjust schedules and routines to provide adequate support to their children. More research is needed to fully understand the burden that is being felt by parents when they are asked and expected to support their child in their reading development. Research has demonstrated the critical role parents play in the growth of their children. With an increased understanding of the perceptions

of parents and how their role of home coach fits into their already busy lives, decisions can be made that can both address the burden while also providing ways families can support their children in efficient ways.

Conclusion

This study is unique in its holistic view of all the stakeholders and their perceptions and practices of the development of the elementary reader and has shown students need the support, guidance, and leadership from administrators, educators, parents, and fellow students. This village has a responsibility to help and support children grow to become proficient, life-long readers who are contributing members to society. To achieve this goal, it is necessary that we look beyond quantitative measures of student achievement and dig deeper into the actions of each villager. This means being intentional around creating the village, bringing importance to the various roles each villager has, and ensuring the actions and beliefs don't impede the development of our readers. It is my hope that this research adds to the manner families, educators, administrators, and policy makers reflect on the importance of everyone's stake in students' reading development. Additionally, I hope that it empowers others to engage in conversations about how to build lasting positive behaviors around reading. This may come from reflecting on current practices that hinder life-long habits being formed, as well as shifting the focus from immediate results to building long-term, lasting practices.

The hurdles that the Covid-19 pandemic created were unthinkable at the time of my research proposal, but with patience, support, and encouragement, I feel those obstacles were addressed and overcome, and the integrity of this research was maintained throughout. It is with sincere gratitude that I have had the opportunity to gain a more in-

depth perspective of the practices and perceptions of administrators, educators, parents, and students and they help to develop the elementary student reader. It takes a village.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Field Notes Template

Date: Activity: Participants: Length of Observation:
Summary-one paragraph summary or abstract of the events, including analytic description
Narrative-detailed narrative of what was observed (Use OC:___ for observer comments)
Questions/Thoughts/Ideas-What questions, thoughts, or ideas are going through your mind?

Appendix B: Educator Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your experience with 100 Book Challenge?
2. What are 100 Book Challenge's strengths? What are its weaknesses?
3. How has 100 Book Challenge changed your perspective of reading or teaching of reading?
4. How has it changed your reading instruction?
5. How do you think 100 Book Challenge has impacted your students?
6. What reading practices do you think it instills?
7. What do you feel is important in reading instruction?
8. What reading practices do you engage in?
9. What reading practices do your students engage in?

Appendix C: Administrator Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your experience with 100 Book Challenge?
2. What do you see as 100 Book Challenge's strengths? What are its weaknesses?
3. How has 100 Book Challenge changed your perspective of reading or teaching of reading?
4. How have you seen it change reading practices in the classroom?
5. How do you think 100 Book Challenge has impacted students?
6. What reading practices do you think 100 Book Challenge instills?
7. What do you feel is important in reading instruction?
8. What reading practices do you engage in?

Appendix D: Parent/Caregiver Interview

1. Tell me about your experience with 100 Book Challenge?
2. How has it changed reading at home?
3. What do you think are100 Book Challenge's strengths? What are its weaknesses?
4. How has 100 Book Challenge changed your perspective of reading or how you read at home, if any?
5. Do you do anything different in regard to reading since we have been doing 100 Book Challenge?
6. How do you think 100 Book Challenge has impacted your child?
7. What reading practices do you think it teaches your child?
8. What do you feel is important in reading instruction?
9. What do you feel is important in reading?
10. What reading practices do you engage in?
11. What reading practices does your child engage in?

Appendix E: Reading Conference Guide

1. Tell me about the book you are reading?

2. What have you read recently? What has been your favorite book?

3. Are you still keeping track of your steps?

4. What skills are you working on now?

5. Read to me from your book.

6. What do you think about reading?

7. When do you read?

8. Where do you read at home?

Appendix F: Administrator Follow Up Interview

1. Can you describe what Hundred Book Challenge looks like now that we are educating students primarily virtually, but also when they were in-person?

2. What do you feel the focus is going to be, moving forward this year with Hundred Book Challenge?

3. How do you think we can promote a culture of reading or how has it been promoted so far?

4. So, because there are so many new challenges this year, besides just the normal implementation of Hundred Book Challenge, what ways can the district administration and school administration support teachers in the implementation of Hundred Book Challenge with the kind of new constraints that we're facing?

5. If you could have a magic wand, knowing what you know about literacy development, the teachers at our school, our students, our families, the challenges that you've seen everybody facing with the pandemic, whether it be virtual instruction or even in-person with social distancing, what would Hundred Book Challenge ideally look like for teachers and students and at home, now that we're teaching in the midst of this pandemic? What would be the ideal situation?

6. A common thread among all the educators I've talked to, especially in my research and just professionally, is that need for professional learning. We feel sometimes PLCs get devoted to just, "This is what you have to do next. Make sure it's done by this date," when we just want to know how to teach. How do you see teachers being supported and what more do you think can be done?

7. Any other thoughts or comments?

Appendix G: Follow Up Educator Interview

1. Can you start by describing your professional experience, years, grade, subjects and your education level?

2. Please describe what a typical reading conference looks like? How has it changed because of the pandemic?

3. What do you think was the main focus for us, third grade teachers last year, before school closures, in implementing 100 Book Challenge?

4. What is the focus now?

5. What are your thoughts on the decision to not use the reading logs?

6. With so many changed in the implementation of 100 Book Challenge, how do you see it affecting the motivation of students to read?

7. What would do you really want third graders to know, love, and think about reading?

Appendix H: Follow Up Parent Interview

1. Please describe your education.
2. Do you work or are you a stay at home parent?
3. Please describe your family makeup.
4. Is your child currently in-person, virtual, or hybrid?
5. How has the school communicated with you and your child's reading development?
6. How has the school supported you in helping you with your child's reading development?
7. Describe your normal reading routines?
8. How were they the same or different during the summer?
9. How has the pandemic changed school and reading for your child?
10. What does your child enjoy reading?
11. How do you support your child in their reading development?
12. Please describe your experience with 100 Book Challenge over the years?
13. What would you change about how the school supports your family in your child's reading development?
14. How do you want school to support your child in their reading development?

Appendix I: Follow Up Student Reading Conference Guide

1. Tell me about the book you are reading?

2. What have you read recently? What do you enjoy reading?

3. Are you recording the books you read in the book log?

4. What skills are you working on now?

5. Read to me from your book.

6. What do you think about reading?

7. When do you read?

8. Where do you read at home?

9. Have your reading habits changed since schools shut down?

10. Tell me about what you liked about 100 Book Challenge when schools were still in person?

11. What do you miss about 100 Book Challenge now?

12. Are there any other thoughts you'd like share about 100 Book Challenge?

Appendix J: Focus Group Lunch Bunch Interview

1. What do you like about 100 Book Challenge?
2. What don't you like about 100 Book Challenge?
3. How has 100 Book Challenge changed you as a reader?
4. What types of books do you like to read?
5. Do you like to read? Why or why not?

Appendix K: Patton's Checklist of Questions for Conducting an Ethical Research Project

- How will you explain the purpose of the inquiry and methods to be used in ways that are accurate and understandable to those you are researching?
- Why should the researched participate in your project?
- In what ways, if any, will conducting this research put people at risk? (Psychological, legal, political, becoming ostracized by others?)
- What are reasonable promises of confidentiality that can be fully honored?
- What kind of informed consent, if any, is necessary for mutual protection?
- Who will have access to the data? For what purposes?
- How will you and your respondent/s likely be affected by conducting this research?
- Who will be the researcher's confidant and counselor on matters of ethics during a study?
- How hard will you push for data?
- What ethical framework and philosophy informs your work and ensures respect and sensitivity for those you study, beyond whatever may be required by law?