

**CONNECTION OF READING MOTIVATION AND COMPREHENSION:
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS**

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

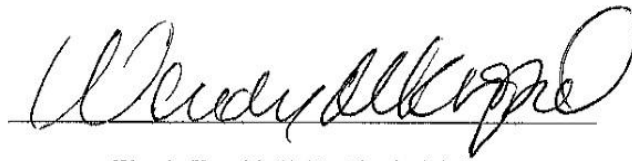
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University of Wisconsin – Superior

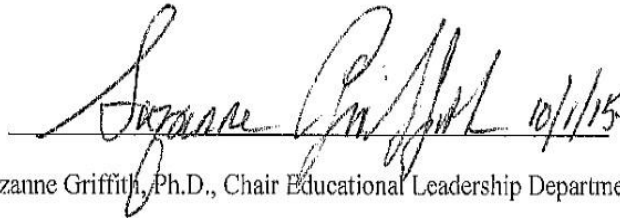
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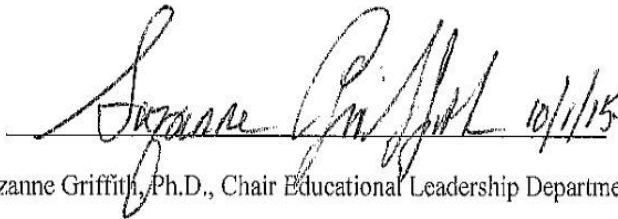
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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to interview elementary classroom teachers to determine to what extent they believe or perceive there is a connection between increased reading motivation and comprehension growth. The researcher conducted a qualitative study, with a phenomenological approach, by interviewing five teachers from a northern Minnesota elementary school (elementary school B). Participants within the study provided real-life experiences and thoughts on the connection between reading motivation and comprehension. The study utilized participants' responses to better support the previous research that shows increased reading motivation has a positive effect on students' comprehension growth. The researcher analyzed the information by finding common themes within participants' responses and depicted the information through descriptive summaries.

Dedication

To my husband, parents, and sister for their continued love and support. I could not have taken on this endeavour without you all. To my little baby boy, I hope you find the love, passion, and adventure reading has to offer.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Teachers have the ability to create supportive literacy environments that foster reading motivation. By establishing an atmosphere that is enriched with a variety of genres, creates opportunities for choice and discussion of texts, and provides students multiple occasions to read, teachers act as reading models and motivators. Increasing the amount of time students spend reading, while providing motivating research-based strategies, has been shown to improve students' reading comprehension (Gambrell, 1996). The intent of this study is to better guide educators by providing a description of the qualitative study and the existing research that links reading motivation with comprehension. Past research has shown a correlation between increased researched-based reading motivation strategies, specifically intrinsic motivation (a desire from within), and the improvement of reading comprehension (Gambrell, 2011; Howell, 2014; McLaughlin, 2012; Taboada & Buehl, 2012). The study examined and supported different strategies and techniques that have already been found to effectively improve comprehension and strove to depict the perceptions, beliefs, and observations elementary teachers in a northern Minnesota school of the influence increased motivation has on the improvement of reading comprehension.

Statement of the Problem

Reading is a key ingredient in students' educations and their success as life-long learners. However, more and more students are seemingly unmotivated to read (Howell, 2014). With less motivation, other important literacy skills can be affected. Motivation can affect the attitudes students bring into the classroom, their relationship with peers,

teachers, and curriculum, and their engagement devoted to activities (Usher, 2012).

Researchers are not as familiar with how elementary teachers perceive reading motivational strategies as they relate to reading comprehension. Taboada and Buehl (2012) found teachers can support students' reading motivation in a variety of ways, but need to be aware of motivational and reading processes in order to implement the techniques within instruction. Motivational techniques for reading are not only dependent on educators' awareness of strategies, but also on their beliefs of how motivation affects comprehension (Taboada and Buehl, 2012). Although there has been exploration of teachers' beliefs within education, Taboada and Buehl (2012) discovered there has not been much research examining educators' beliefs of the connection between reading comprehension and reading motivation. "Exploring conceptions of reading comprehension and motivation to read may offer insight into classroom practices and provide a basis for professional development" (Taboada & Buehl, 2012, p. 102). Therefore, this qualitative study examined the gap in the knowledge of information involving teachers' perceptions, observations, and techniques in utilizing reading motivation to increase reading comprehension. The study's initial intent was to focus on interviewing elementary teachers from two northern Minnesota elementary schools, however the final results came from one northern Minnesota school. The goal was to interview five to ten teachers, at least from each grade level (kindergarten through fifth) from both schools, but a total of five elementary teachers were interviewed. By obtaining teachers' beliefs, the study examined whether prior research of effective reading

motivation improves comprehension was supported and implemented in elementary classrooms.

Purpose of Study

The intent of the study was to examine how elementary teachers view the connection of increased reading motivation and reading comprehension. In addition, the study was developed to understand the types of techniques and strategies classroom teachers used to motivate their students to read. Furthermore, the researcher focused on obtaining personal stories, observations, and beliefs of the types of improvements or downfalls teachers witnessed in their classrooms.

The researcher's original intentions were to specifically interview elementary teachers within two school districts in northern Minnesota. For confidentiality purposes, the first school was called elementary school A. This school had been named a 'priority school' by the Minnesota Department of Education based upon its standardized testing results. The school's focus was to increase its math and reading programs. Also included in the initial planning of the study was elementary school B. Both elementary school A and elementary school B are Title I schools. Title I schools have been recognized due to high numbers or percentages of students who come from low-income families. These schools receive extra funding to support students in their academics. The rationale for including these two schools was due to obtaining a variety of beliefs and views to find commonalities among teachers, and to determine whether schools with different focuses had an effect on the instruction and strategies teachers used in their

classrooms in order to enhance reading motivation and reading comprehension. By using in-depth, personal interviews with elementary teachers in both schools, the study expected to support prior research of the perceived effectiveness increased reading motivation has on comprehension. Furthermore, the intent of the study was to obtain teachers' perspectives, a gap within prior research, of how reading motivational strategies affect reading comprehension. Results were based on observations teachers witnessed within their classrooms of the enhancement of reading comprehension due to heightened reading motivation. The researcher intended to seek if and how elementary educators were specifically utilizing reading motivation to increase comprehension, which would be vital information for the study to support the prior research. If educators are incorporating research-based motivational strategies within students' reading, it was the goal of the researcher to determine what strategies and techniques were being used in the classroom and whether teachers were seeing or observing improvements in students' reading comprehension.

Research Questions

To what extent do elementary teachers at elementary school A and elementary school B experience reading motivational strategies in connection with improving reading comprehension?

- What motivational reading strategies and techniques are teachers utilizing within their instruction?

- What effects on students' reading comprehension are teachers witnessing due to increased reading motivation?

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study strove to draw conclusions based on qualitative methodology, specifically focusing on a phenomenological approach. Leedy and Ormrod describe a phenomenological study as the collection of individuals' thoughts and understandings of a particular phenomenon or topic (2013). The researcher collected verbal and nonverbal data through in-depth, personal interviews that encompassed elementary educators' perceptions of reading motivation linked to comprehension and sought to interpret and explain how teachers were currently utilizing reading motivation within their classrooms. A phenomenological study is driven by the participants within the interviews. Each participant guides the interview with the support of the interviewer; the interviewer provides prompts and scaffolding questions to keep the discussion going, while the interviewee does the majority of the communicating (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013). In the study, the researcher began with a set of semi-structured questions. The questions were open-ended to allow each participating member tell his or her story in relation to the effective nature of reading motivation on reading comprehension. Elementary teachers, grades kindergarten through fifth grade, from both schools were invited to participate in the study. The goal of the researcher was to have at least one teacher from each grade level participate and represent his or her school for the study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was different from past research because the researcher intended to provide educators with actual perceptions and accounts from elementary classroom teachers. Participants were asked to share what they have witnessed on the influence increased reading motivation has on the improvement of reading comprehension. In addition, the participants shared effective instructional strategies and techniques they used in order to increase reading motivation. The researcher's motives are to aid educators by providing information and data of effective reading motivation strategies by describing the authentic techniques and strategies, along with personal accounts of the comprehensive enhancement the participants have witnessed in their classrooms. Information was shared with readers that were obtained from participants for the purpose of supporting fellow educators to engage their students in reading. Furthermore, the study obtained valuable information school districts can use to improve the quality of reading programs for student success.

Definitions

Motivation Forces acting on or within an organism to initiate and direct behavior (Petri & Govern, 2012, p. 4).

Reading Comprehension The construction of meaning of a written or spoken communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message in a particular communicative context (McLaughlin, 2012, p. 432).

Intrinsic Motivation The desire to do or achieve something because one truly wants to and takes pleasure or sees value in doing so (Usher, 2012, p. 3).

Extrinsic Motivation The desire to do or achieve something not for the enjoyment of the thing itself, but because doing so leads to a certain result (Usher, 2012, p. 3).

Assumptions

Within the study, it was assumed all participants would answer the interview questions honestly. Due to positive and honest relationships formed between both the researcher and teachers at each school, the researcher felt each educator would answer honestly and feel comfortable sharing his or her experiences. In addition, the educators were assumed to have prior experiences incorporating reading into their daily schedule, whether reading was read aloud by the teacher, performed independently, as a whole class, within small groups, or by other means of technology (CD, audios, computers, etc.). Furthermore, the study also assumed participants had some prior knowledge of effective reading motivational techniques and have utilized some form of getting to know students on an individual level to better understand their interests, hobbies, fears, and more. This may have been through interest surveys, class discussions, or other ‘getting to know you’ activities.

Limitations

There are some factors that may have limited or skewed the collected information. Participants in the study may have had little background knowledge on reading motivational techniques, depending on how many years they have been teaching or based on their own motivation to learn effective research-based reading motivation strategies. In addition, educators may not have answered honestly when interviewed, decreasing the support for the intended results. Furthermore, different grade levels may have provided insufficient information, due to the frequency of reading.

Student and family data was not collected within this study, which limited additional opinions and perceptions. In addition, the personal biases, unconscious and conscious, of the researcher could have played a factor in the resulting analysis. To avoid personal biases, the researcher intended to elude any discussion that may have projected personal opinions. However, if personal biases did come about, the researcher incorporated the bracketing technique. Within bracketing, the researcher depicted any personal biases in the analysis section of the study (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013). The researcher kept strictly to asking questions and listening to participants' responses. The only instance where questions other than what was listed on the interview script were discussed was for further clarification or to go deeper in the discussion. Lastly, when using the participants' thoughts or comments, the researcher either paraphrased or directly quoted the participant to avoid incorporating any personal projections or biases.

Delimitations

This study's main focus concentrated on the perceptions and beliefs elementary educators have on the connection between increased reading motivation and reading comprehension. The study did not seek to obtain authentic assessment data or scores (Running Records, NWEA scores, etc.) based on students' comprehension achievement.

Conclusion

A significant amount of research has supported the effective nature that increased research-based reading motivational strategies has on comprehension (Gambrell, 2011; Howell, 2014; McLaughlin, 2012; Taboada & Buehl, 2012). The study intended to support the prior research with the perceptions and beliefs elementary school teachers have on connectedness. The researcher utilized qualitative research, with an emphasis on a phenomenological approach by using in-depth, personal interviews. Specific techniques and strategies were identified, including a collection of how classroom teachers better understand their students in order for motivation to occur, and teachers' personal voices were heard. Through the collection of this information, the study was steered to better support elementary teachers within their classroom to intensify the motivation of reading. Increasing time spent reading and modeling what it means to have intrinsic motivation and a positive reading attitude can effectively approve reading comprehension. An important piece that much of the prior research is missing is the personal beliefs and perceptions of actual elementary classroom teachers of the use of motivation strategies and the effects reading motivation has on reading comprehension.

This is the gap in the knowledge the study expected to fill. The following chapter will provide past research that illustrates the effectiveness between reading motivation and reading comprehension.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter will attempt to connect previously conducted research on the effectiveness increased reading motivation has on the improvement of students' reading comprehension, with the study of investigating teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and knowledge on whether reading motivation plays an integral factor within comprehension. Chapter two will begin by explaining the importance of teacher belief research in relation to why the views and opinions of teachers are critical to the effects of a student's learning environment. Next, the chapter will set the foundation among the relationships between reading motivation and comprehension. Furthermore, the meaning of motivation, both intrinsic, extrinsic, and reading attitudes will be described. Finally, the chapter will emphasize the research-based strategies applied by teachers in the classroom to motivate disengaged students in order to raise reading stamina and comprehension.

Teacher Belief Research

Taboada & Buehl (2012) found that educators' personal beliefs on reading motivation can influence their instruction. If a teacher views reading motivation as a process that is only a attribute specific to each individual student, he or she may make different instructional choices compared to a teacher who believes reading motivation can be fostered through a variety of instructional strategies and techniques (Taboada & Buehl, 2012). This finding is key to the study due to the crucial nature of elementary educators valuing and utilizing reading motivation to support effective reading comprehension. If a

teacher sees motivation as a trait that can be fostered within influential practices, he or she may incorporate more strategies than a teacher who views reading motivation as a separate category and non-related to comprehension. Subsequently to teachers' beliefs about how motivation is connected to comprehension, every educator of literacy should include best practices and research-based strategies within their instruction in order to best support students (Gambrell, 1996; Gambrell, 2011; Taboada & Buehl, 2012).

Motivation and Comprehension

Connections among Reading Motivation and Comprehension

Previous research has indicated there are a variety of reading motivational techniques and strategies educators can utilize within their instruction and curriculum to highly inspire students to read (Gambrell, 2011; Howell, 2014; & Taboada & Buehl, 2012). With an increased volume of reading, data has shown comprehension significantly improves (Taboada & Buehl, 2012). Motivation has been found to be a key factor for students to reach their full literacy potential. Taboada & Buehl (2012) concluded educators cannot overlook the contributions reading motivation has on reading comprehension. They found when research-based strategies are used, students' motivation to read is best supported. Gambrell (2011) found explicit instruction of comprehension strategies, decoding skills, and vocabulary knowledge are not enough. The Program for International Student Assessment examined 64 counties and concluded when comparing students who enjoyed reading to students who lacked motivation to

read, the former performed better academically (Gambrell, 2011). Reading motivation tends to be a strong predictor of students' capability and performance in reading comprehension. Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011) found students who effectively comprehend read more than those that struggle with comprehension.

Due to the active and participatory nature a student must exhibit in his or her reading (in order to comprehend or construct meaning), the task of establishing a positive and motivating reading environment in the classroom is crucial (Taboada & Buehl, 2010). Motivation and a desire to read creates thought-provoking, problem-solving students who question texts and the world around them, while tapping into their prior knowledge. This is important to understand for the proposed study because of the effect increased reading motivation can have on reading comprehension. If teachers develop and incorporate a strong emphasis on reading motivation, and value its effective nature, they can foster a comprehensive-oriented reading environment.

As educators of literacy, teachers play an important role to provide the effective tools and atmosphere where students develop a value, passion, and love for reading. McLaughlin (2012) discussed the influential nature teachers have on students' motivation to read and comprehend. These educators understand the process of reading comprehension and the vitality of student success within reading for comprehension. The International Reading Association (2000) stated teachers are key contributors to students' achievement in reading (McLaughlin, 2012). Teachers create opportunities within the classroom that students may not otherwise receive at home. By engaging students in

reading, educators have established an essential foundation for reading comprehension and other reading strategies (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

When students are motivated to activate their prior knowledge and make connections to texts, they establish a purpose and meaning for reading. The beliefs and perceptions teachers have on the connection between increased reading motivation and comprehension may determine how they utilize reading motivational techniques within their instruction. Past research has supported reading motivation in relation to the improvement of comprehension because reading comprehension allows students to process and synthesize information that supplements knowledge, and that later can enhance comprehension (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011). Explicit instruction of comprehension strategies, along with reading motivational strategies, creates life-long learners and intrinsically motivated readers (McLaughlin, 2012).

Reading Motivation: Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Reading Attitudes

Students enter a classroom with different experiences, backgrounds, prior knowledge, and skills. It is important that teachers develop an understanding of each of their students, inside and out to obtain information that will be instrumental in aiding each student in reading (Howell, 2014). Questions such as: Does the student have access to texts at home? What set of comprehension skills does the student possess? What are the student's likes and dislikes? Are there specific genres the student is more motivated to read? What prior knowledge does the student bring to the classroom? Does the student already possess a desire to read? If not, how could the student be motivated? If so, how

can we further challenge the student to choose a wider variety of texts and difficulty levels? Because every student is unique, motivational strategies must be personal to each individual student and attempt to motivate students from within (Howell, 2014). When a student is unmotivated, it can be due to a variety of reasons. These may include a lack of interest, fear of failing, viewing material as irrelevant to their own lives, difficulty of text, limited background knowledge, lack of clear instruction and direction, or feeling overwhelmed or bored (Howell, 2014; Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011; Gambrell, 2011). It is the responsibility of the educator to surpass those boundaries and discover methods to motivate the unmotivated. This is why it was crucial for the study to obtain the perceptions educators have on reading motivation in relation to reading comprehension to understand how reading motivation is valued and utilized in the classroom.

There is a distinct difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the role each plays in the breadth of students' reading engagement. Intrinsic motivation refers to an individual who is internally wired to be motivated. Students have a desire, will, or find personal pleasure and enjoyment in doing something. Research has shown that intrinsic motivation is most influential upon reading motivation for students (Howell, 2014). Ho and Guthrie (2013) proposed an alignment of intrinsic motivation in relation to comprehending texts. When a student is intrinsically motivated to read, he or she reads for enjoyment, pleasure, to discover new knowledge, or for some other positive outcome (Schiefele, Schaffner, Moller, & Wigfield, 2012). A student may be motivated to read due to a deep interest in the content or theme of a text (object-specific), or

because the text absorbs the student within the story (activity-specific). Because students who are intrinsically motivated find pleasure in reading, they tend to read more in their spare time. Due to an increased amount of reading time, it is assumed that intrinsic motivation increases reading comprehension. Gambrell (2011) noted,

In keeping with this perspective, engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read for a variety of personal goals strategic in their reading behaviors, knowledgeable in their construction of new understandings from text, and socially interactive about the reading of text. Therefore, promoting intrinsic motivation to read should be given a high priority in the reading curriculum (p. 173).

Marinak and Gambrell (2008) stated students would not be able to reach their full reading potential without intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation has been found to heighten curiosity, involvement, and a desire for challenge within students (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). When a child is curious, he or she possesses a desire to better understand and learn about the world (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Finally, the desire for challenge increases a student's longing to figure out complex or complicated ideas (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Teachers who use too many external factors to motivate students to read can actually hinder students' intrinsic motivation (Fawson & Moore, 1999). The proposed study will seek and highlight the methods and observations elementary classroom teachers have on intrinsically motivating students. Gambrell (2011) stated teachers should model and support students to be intrinsically motivated.

The study's intentions were to gain insight into how teachers are creating and supporting students to be motivated from within.

Conversely, extrinsic motivation refers to the external factors that may attribute to students' desire to read. These factors may include: grades, prizes, awards, seeking praise, or a desire to perform better than others (Schiefele et. al, 2012; McGeown, Norgate, & Warhurst, 2012). Schiefele et. al (2012) found that researchers have discovered no significant outcomes that indicate extrinsic motivation will improve comprehension or drives an interest in reading. McGeown et. al (2012) supports this investigation through their own study after they found prior research done by Wang and Guthrie (2004), which investigated a negative correlation between extrinsic motivation and reading achievement. Students who are extrinsically motivated typically try to avoid negative outcomes and only expect specific, *positive* outcomes (Schiefele et. al, 2012).

A student's prior experience with reading may affect the way he or she approaches reading. The feelings an individual has towards reading is known as his or her *reading attitude*, which differs from reading motivation (Schiefele et. al, 2012). It is important for both teachers and students to have a positive attitude about reading. For students, a positive reading attitude contributes to a strong or high level of reading ability, which in turn, positively affects comprehension (Schiefele et. al, 2012). In addition, teachers must model an encouraging and positive reading attitude to establish a supportive and valued reading environment (Schiefele et. al, 2012). This may be by the classroom teacher reading during independent reading, discussing their enjoyment in a particular book or recommending books to students, displaying books around the

classroom, or reading aloud every day. To discover students' attitudes towards reading, teachers can utilize many tools such as surveys, questionnaires, and classroom discussions (Schiefele et. al, 2012). The study investigated the types of tools classroom teachers incorporate to better motivate students to read and reflected how teachers perceived those reading motivational tools improving reading comprehension.

Strategies

Creating an Intrinsically Motivating Reading Environment

Defining motivation can be dependent on the individual. Taboada and Buehl (2014) performed a study that investigated how teachers in the United States defined motivation. The choices consisted of: “(1) a general drive or desire, (2) an intrinsic drive, and (3) external encouragement” (p. 109). Of the US teachers, 81% defined motivation as a general drive or desire, while two teachers thought motivation was an intrinsic desire, and two teachers described motivation as an external force (Taboada & Buehl, 2014). Due to the majority of teachers viewing motivation as a drive or desire, neither intrinsic nor extrinsic, how are students supported in the classroom to both flourish and excel in reading comprehension? How do educators place an emphasis on establishing motivation, specifically intrinsic motivation? In what ways can and are teachers utilizing motivational strategies to motivate the unmotivated in hopes to increase comprehension? These questions were applied in the study in order to acquire a better understanding of

the perceptions teachers have on reading motivation in connection to reading comprehension.

Establishing a Reading Environment

As a student begins each day in the classroom, he or she should feel supported with a sense of welcome and limitless possibilities (De Naeghel, Van Keer, & Vanderlinde, 2014). Teachers should feel compelled to transform those possibilities into realities. Establishing a positive reading environment requires an individual that is passionate about reading, models the value of reading, and shares a love for reading (De Naeghel, Van Keer, & Vanderlinde, 2014). Motivating students to be readers is a crucial task because research has shown motivation happens well before frequent reading occurs (Howell, 2014). Therefore, teachers must keep in mind the importance of getting to know each student on a personal level to better support reading motivation in terms of increasing comprehension.

By understanding students' interests, values, background knowledge, likes and dislikes, and personalities, educators will be more effective in providing the appropriate tools and strategies to motivate students and establishing an atmosphere where youth are engaged in reading and learning is treasured. Howell (2014) found students who are engaged and motivated to read described reading as an activity they were deeply analyzing, while comprehending the text.

Fostering an environment that is enriched with books in multiple forms and genres is a chief component to motivation (Gambrell, 2011; Howell, 2014; &

McLaughlin, 2012). With a range of books for teachers to utilize and students to choose from, the teacher is ensuring a rich reading environment for students to explore vast possibilities within literacy. When teachers actively select texts for students, it is important to understand whether the text is appropriate and appealing so students stay motivated to read and not become frustrated and give up or lessen their desire to read (Gambrell, 1996). In addition, educators must be readers themselves to have a genuine familiarity with texts. Familiarity with books ensures teachers are a reliable support system for students when questions or concerns arise, or when providing recommendations of texts (Gambrell, 1996).

Create Multiple Opportunities for Reading

Teachers must provide students with a variety of opportunities for reading. Miller (2012) found there has been abundant research which supports the notion that the volume of reading matters in terms of reading comprehension. However, Miller further noted, many of our schools are not providing enough reading opportunities, and struggling or poor readers are reading the very least. Because of this, the gap between strong and weak readers continues to grow (2012). “No matter what instructional methods we employ, students must spend substantial time applying the reading skills and strategies we teach before they develop reading proficiency. This means students must read and read and read to become good readers” (Miller, 2012, p. 89). A variety of research has found students need ample opportunities to interact with texts for reading achievement (Gambrell, 2011; Miller, 2012; & Schiefele et. al, 2012). However, the challenge is

inspiring students to read and supporting each individual to gain the confidence, stamina, and ability to read, specifically for comprehension (Miller, 2012). Gambrell (2011) supported this theory by saying teachers who allow devoted time for students to read will see significant gains and improvement in comprehension.

McDonald's (2008) study found independent reading time not only provides an allotted time for students to engage in reading during the school day, but also offers choice, independence, and confidence in text selection. The report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, suggested students partake in two hours of silent reading each week, which would be about 30 minutes each day (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). However, many classrooms are consumed with preparing for standardized testing, expectations from Common Core State Standards, and demands within each district's curriculum such that the recommended amount of silent reading time can be hard to come by (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Introducing authors through a teacher read aloud, book talks, and shared reading can help students become more familiar with similar themes or books within a series. Dedicating time to introduce new stories and authors enhances reading motivation and growth in comprehension (Gambrell, 1996). From the findings of Gambrell (1996), teachers are an explicit reading model and the proposed study will analyze how elementary teachers perceive their personal role in the classroom to increase reading motivation to improve comprehension.

Provide Choice

Researchers and teachers have determined providing students with choices about what they read is a significant strategy to utilize in the classroom (Gambrell, 2011). Choice ignites increased motivation when students have the chance to have control in decision-making. Cambourne (1995) found students who are not given the freedom for choice may feel powerless and become unmotivated to learn or participate in activities (Miller, 2012). Providing youth options and modeling the skills to choose appropriate materials creates a ‘buy-in’ atmosphere. Creating dialogue with students about particular books that may be of interest to them can establish a motivating reading environment. This may be through discussions, surveys, or questionnaires (Schiefele et. al, 2012). When providing students choice, we should not criticize the texts students do choose. Teachers should celebrate student reading, whether it is a magazine, blog, novel, or newspaper article. When students start to value and engage in many forms of reading, teachers can then scaffold and support students in their choices, directing them in a more challenging and meatier avenue (Gambrell, 2011).

A study by Howell (2014) found many teachers are hesitant to give up control within their classroom. Furthermore, the study discovered other factors consisted of the high demand and pressure of Common Core State Standards and other core content deterred less focus on releasing control to students to make choices within their reading. However, if teachers were to focus on the research-based studies, they might feel less hesitant due to the overwhelming relevance choice has in connection to reading motivation and increased comprehension skills (Howell, 2014). Howell (2014)

challenges that teachers should weigh whether giving student choice and losing control within curriculum is worth the lack of student reading engagement and growth in comprehension. Providing students with choice has been proven multiple times through teacher observation, research, and student discussions to be an influential factor for reading motivation (Howell, 2014).

Incorporate Multiple Forms of Texts, Genres, and Literature Discussions

Motivation and comprehension skills are enhanced when teachers expose students to a wide range of texts and genres (McLaughlin, 2012). “Providing a rich variety of reading materials communicates to students that reading is a worthwhile and valuable activity and sets the stage for students to develop the reading habit” (Gambrell, 2011, p. 173). Gambrell (2011) described a weekly ‘teacher book-selling session’ to raise curiosity and interest of an array of books. The process begins by the teacher providing a brief summary of 10 to 12 books. By doing so, students obtain a wider awareness of books to choose from based on their interests. This method scaffolds student learning and experiences with a variety of texts. The same can be said when teachers level texts. Providing a student a lower-leveled text or ‘easy’ text provides the student the opportunity to read the text without any support from the teacher. Texts at the student’s level, or ‘just right’ texts, require some or minimal support from the teacher. More challenging books give the teacher the opportunity to work in small groups or individually with the students to monitor comprehension and provide increased individualized instruction. “We certainly want readers to have opportunities to read texts

that are not difficult for them, but we also want readers to have access to texts that challenge them” (Duke et. al, 2011). Other methods research has found to be effective when sharing more challenging texts with students are teacher read-alouds, books on CD or tape, and cross-aged reading experiences (McLaughlin, 2012).

The use of technology has proven to be an effective tool for increasing student reading motivation and enhancing comprehension. When a student is deeply engaged in a text of his or her interest, comprehension takes flight (Howell, 2014). New technologies such as the iPad, Kindle, and Chrome Books provide students the ability to connect and engage in texts in a different, interesting way. There are a variety of Internet services, apps, reading programs, and other downloadable systems teachers can utilize to heighten the interest of reading. Students who may struggle with written or printed texts now have access to digital forms of literature and thrive in motivation and comprehension due to the interactive nature (Howell, 2014). Because literature has become multimodal, teachers need to expose students to a variety of means to both access and read texts. If a student does not understand how to use or access a text because he has never been shown or had a prior experience of using the resource , he may become frustrated and less motivated to read. On the other hand, if a student is provided a new experience within a text, he may become more motivated to read because the method is engaging and desirable to him (Howell, 2014). This was important to the study to understand whether teachers were providing and valuing multimodal experiences for students to increase reading motivation.

Not only is providing students with a variety of outlets to read texts important, motivating and engaging students in diverse forms of literary discussions is imperative, as well. Social interaction, or communicating ideas through written or oral words, not only gives youth a means of communicating learned information from texts, but it also provides the classroom teacher a wealth of information about student comprehension (Gambrell, 2011). Gambrell (2011) found many studies have recognized social interaction between peers increased not only their reading motivation, but also achievement in comprehension.

Discussions are a quick, effective way to check for understanding and determine what the student is ‘not quite getting,’ needs support with, or how the teacher should modify his or her instruction to better meet the student’s needs. Discussions can be performed in whole-class, large group, small group, or partners. A technique Gambrell (2011) expressed in her article, described the ‘quick share.’ This is a procedure that incorporates partners to take turns sharing information about what they have just read for about three to four minutes. The first person gets about a minute and a half to share before the next person shares. This activity not only sets a precedent to increase comprehension, but it allows students the opportunity to discuss the meaning of content within texts.

Besides the typical oral and written responses for literature, it is recommended that teachers incorporate other varieties of comprehension activities. Approaches such as illustrations, dramatizations, commercials, book trailers, radio announcements, brochures,

PowerPoint presentations, and more can all be beneficial means for students to discuss texts and teachers to observe comprehension. As McLaughlin (2012) stated,

Because we do not all learn in the same way, the same instructional environment, methods, and resources are effective for some learners and ineffective for others. Offering students opportunities to express their thoughts through multiple modes of representation allows them to choose their strength modalities when expressing their ideas (p. 437).

The activities and texts used within curriculum or instruction often have no relevance or reliability to students and their lives. Searching and utilizing texts that students can form a connection to or access their prior knowledge are meaningful within the classroom (Gambrell, 2011). Students become more involved in their reading, and comprehend better, when they have opportunities to make connections because the material has relevance to their lives (Gambrell, 2011). An effective activity utilized in classrooms is a reading diary or journal. Students reflect on what they have read by writing (for about three to five minutes) in their diary or journal, making connections between their own lives (text-self), other written material (text-text), or other people, cultures, or events (text-world). Studies show students who read or write about content related to their lives, tend to be more motivated and have better comprehension skills (Gambrell, 2011).

Taboada & Buehl (2012) found that educators' personal beliefs on reading motivation can influence their instruction. If a teacher views reading motivation as a process that is only a attribute specific to each individual student, he or she may make

different instructional choices compared to a teacher who believes reading motivation can be fostered through a variety of instructional strategies and techniques (Taboada & Buehl, 2012). This finding was key to the study due to the crucial nature of elementary educators valuing and utilizing reading motivation to support effective reading comprehension. If a teacher sees motivation as a trait that can be fostered within influential practices, he or she may incorporate more strategies than a teacher who views reading motivation as a separate category and non-related to comprehension. Subsequently to teachers' beliefs about how motivation is connected to comprehension, every educator of literacy should include best practices and research-based strategies within their instruction in order to best support students (Gambrell, 1996; Gambrell, 2011; Taboada & Buehl, 2012).

Summary

Focusing on better motivating students can play a crucial role in improving reading comprehension, and the study determined the perceptions and beliefs teachers have on the effectiveness increased reading motivation has on reading comprehension growth. Teachers must share a value, love, and commitment for reading to model and ignite a desire in students' engagement with texts (De Naeghel et. al, 2014). Not only should students be provided ample opportunities for reading, but youth must also experience a variety of texts, technologies, and literary discussions (De Naeghel et. al, 2014). Furthermore, it is essential to give students the freedom of choice and incorporate

texts and activities that are relevant to their lives (Gambrell, 2011; Howell, 2014; McLaughlin, 2012; Taboada & Buehl, & Schiefele et. al, 2012).

The challenge for teachers is to understand each student on a personal level and to have a better grasp on what every individual needs to succeed (Howell, 2014). If educators can inspire youth intrinsically and aide in creating positive reading attitudes, students can make gains in both their reading and comprehension skills (reading for enjoyment, knowledge, and academic success) and in becoming life-long learners (Taboada & Buehl; & Schiefele et. al, 2012). The following chapter will describe the methodology that will be used to conduct the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Past research has studied the implications increased reading motivation has on the improvement of reading comprehension and found a strong connection between the two (Gambrell, 2011; Howell, 2014; McLaughlin, 2012; Taboada & Buehl, 2012). However, it appears little research has been conducted on the perceptions and beliefs teachers have on the effectiveness increased reading motivation has on the growth of students' reading comprehension (Taboada & Buehl, 2012). If research supports the effective nature that reading motivation has on the improvement of reading comprehension, it is assumed within the proposed study that educators should be using research-based motivation strategies for reading to enhance students' comprehension.

The study investigated the beliefs and perceptions elementary teachers in a northern Minnesota elementary school had on the connection between reading motivation and comprehension. In addition, the researcher interviewed five participants to determine the value teachers experience and observe within reading motivation, and collected a sampling of reading motivational techniques and strategies used in instruction to better reading comprehension. Furthermore, the researcher gathered information by listening to each teacher's story to collect information that supported previous research on the effectiveness reading motivation has on improving comprehension. This chapter outlines the methodology that was utilized in the study.

Design

The study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach. As explained in Leedy and Ormrod (2013) a phenomenological study gathers information by interviewing individuals to better comprehend their perceptions or perspectives of a specific subject. This approach was chosen to gain insight and a better understanding of the perceptions and beliefs elementary educators in the northern Minnesota elementary schools had on the connection between increased reading motivation and the improvement of reading comprehension. The researcher collected information from personal, in-depth interviews (see Appendix D). Responses from the interviews supported previous research on the effectiveness increased reading motivation has on students' comprehension growth. The qualitative study analyzed and interpreted the information by sorting the gathered responses into a variety of categories to find common themes in support of previous research.

Participants

The study used a sample of convenience with elementary educators from the northern Minnesota schools, grades kindergarten through fifth. All teachers, from both schools, were invited to participate in the study, however only five teachers from one of the elementary schools participated. It was the goal of the researcher to have at least one teacher from each grade level agree to be a participant. The research conducted the interviews during the 2014-2015 school year. The participating schools were to be given a pseudonym for confidentiality (elementary school A and elementary school B),

however only elementary school B was used for the study. Data from the 2013-2014 school year indicated that elementary school A serves 522 students, the majority being white, Caucasian with a population of approximately 2% Hispanic. Twenty-nine teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth, special education teachers, and other support staff are employed within the school. Elementary school A had been determined a 'priority school' by the Minnesota Department of Education because of the low percentage of students passing Minnesota's standardized tests. Due to this, elementary school A has an increased focus on math and reading achievement to raise test scores. Furthermore, elementary school A has been recognized as a Title I school, which means the school receives funds from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide additional support for students to meet academic standards. Schools receiving funds from Title I have been recognized due to high percentages or numbers of students who come from low-income families. Elementary school B serves 447 students with a range of white, African American, Asian, and Hispanic kindergarten through fifth graders and 15 classroom teachers, plus additional special education and support staff. Elementary school B incorporates 90 minutes of reading. Over the years, elementary school B has experienced an increased number of students on free or reduced lunch due to the socio-economic status of their families. Furthermore, elementary school B is also a Title I school. Invitations will be sent to each teacher in both schools with a goal of having five to ten teachers agreeing to participate (see Appendix A). The rationale for inviting teachers from two schools was to have a broader range of perceptions and beliefs and to see if those perceptions and beliefs differ based on different school districts. Those who

agreed to participate in the study were presented the plan of study personally from the researcher in an individual meeting that was most convenient for the teacher. The participants signed a consent form, which indicated they understood the guidelines of their participation within the study (see Appendix B). The participants received information explaining the procedure and expectations of the study (including time element), then signed an agreement which indicated they agreed to their commitment as a participant (see Appendix C).

Instrumentation

The tools that were used for the study were a collection of in-depth, personal interview scripts. Within the phenomenological study, the researcher developed semi-structured, open-ended questions to begin the interview process (see Appendix D). The focus of the interview was to give participants questions that allowed the interviewee to tell his or her story. Open-ended questions were utilized so the interviewee drove the interview, while the interviewer used prompts and other scaffolding questions to go deeper into the responses. Questions were focused, and were not intended to lead the participant to a specific or premeditated answer (Chen, Fung, & Chien, 2013). This ensured any personal biases from the researcher was not present. The questions within the personal interview were based and developed from previous research that supported the effectiveness reading motivation has on comprehension growth (Duke, Pearson, Stachan, & Billman, 2011; Gambrell, 2011; Howell, 2014; McLaughlin, 2012; & Taboada & Buehl, 2012). Since prior research has shown motivated readers excel in reading comprehension, the

researcher formed questions that were geared to determine the types of strategies and procedures teachers were incorporating in their classrooms to increase student motivation and to get a clear understanding of whether teachers were observing improvements in reading comprehension. Other questions were intended to recognize specific struggles non-motivated readers were facing within their reading, and specifically what educators were doing to aid those students.

During the interview, participants' responses were recorded through a recording device for the researcher to refer back to. The goal of the interviews was to have a more in-depth conversation about the beliefs and perceptions elementary teachers have about the connection increased reading motivation has on reading comprehension. Other questions were generated to determine what types, if any, of reading motivation techniques and strategies teachers utilize within their classrooms, and whether they have observed or believe increased reading motivation has a positive effect on students' reading comprehension to connect what prior research has shown to be effective.

Procedure

The first step in the procedure of the study was to obtain approval from the University of Wisconsin-Superior Institutional Review Board (IRB). The study obtained an expedited approval from the IRB within the submission form, and the Informed Consent Documentation (see Appendix B) was also submitted. The submission form validated the confidentiality of the participants within the study, as no names were disclosed and no students were utilized. Each participant was designated a code to identify both the school

and teacher. For example, ES-A-1 for elementary school A, teacher one, and ES-B-1 for elementary school B, teacher one. In addition, both districts of elementary school A and elementary school B, along with the principals at each school, were asked to grant permission in written form for the participation of their employees within the study. After approval from both the Institutional Review Board, the districts, and principals, teachers at elementary school A and elementary school B were sent an invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix A). Educators were presented with the intended plan of the study and an explanation of how participation in the study could be beneficial within their classrooms by learning new information from past research (see Appendix B). Teachers were then given a deadline to decide whether they would like to decline or accept the invitation to participate. If teachers had additional questions about the study, the documentation provided the contact information of the researcher. It was expressed to the participants that any questions were asked prior to the deadline. The desired number of participants for validity and reliability were between five to ten teachers. If more than ten teachers responded, the researcher would have include all willing participants. Upon consent from participating members, a document that outlines the expectations was provided to each participant (see Appendix C). Furthermore, a time and date was mutually agreed upon by each participant for an in depth, personal interview. A deadline of having all interviews completed by the end of January 2015 was implemented so the researcher had time to analyze data. The deadline was important because in the nature that other questions arose, the researcher had until the end of March 2015 to ask any further questions of the participants, whether to clarify responses or gather further

information. When the interviews were completed, the researcher listened to the recorded interviews and took further notes of the responses to analyze and identify common themes. If further information was needed, participants were notified via e-mail or a personal phone call to have additional dialogue, which was noted within the documentation of the expectations of the participants (see Appendix C).

Analysis and Presentation of Data

As suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2013) the findings from the interviews were summarized and analyzed by the researcher and interpreted through a collection of descriptive summaries, graphs, and charts. The researcher envisioned using the summaries, graphs, and charts to interpret information from the responses based on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, roadblocks for struggling readers, and portraying years of teaching experience for each participant. All participants were notified that their responses may be directly quoted or paraphrased by the researcher, but names would not be noted due to the confidentiality agreement (see Appendix C). The information collected from the study was analyzed by close inspection of the commonalities and inferences based on teachers' responses and categorized in similar themes. The researcher compared the responses from the interviews to previous research collected, and determine whether elementary teachers' perceptions and beliefs of the connection between increased reading motivation and the improvement of reading comprehension supported prior research. In addition, the researcher assumed all participants would be honest within their replies and any information they provided would be credible based on actual experiences within classrooms. Once the information from the interviews was

translated into common themes and interpretations, the researcher interpreted the information through graphs, descriptive summaries, and charts in support of previous research. In addition, the researcher utilized and incorporated the information within future classroom instruction and shared the results with the participating teachers and districts. The study anticipated obtaining significant results that could be incorporated within district policies for the improvement of reading programs in elementary classrooms to better motivate and engage all students in reading.

Summary

Duke, Pearson, Stachan, and Billman (2011) found reading motivation tends to be a strong predictor of students' capability and performance in reading comprehension. The goal of the study was to seek additional data that supports this research by obtaining information of the beliefs and perceptions elementary teachers at elementary school A and elementary school B have of the effectiveness reading motivation has on reading comprehension growth. Elementary educators, grades kindergarten through fifth, who agreed upon the participation of the study partook in a personal, in-depth interview. Responses were analyzed and interpreted by the researcher by determining common themes and understandings within the responses, and comparing those results to the data from previous research. Past research has shown teachers play a vital role in modeling intrinsic reading motivation, and establish an effective reading environment by providing effective motivational tools and strategies (McLaughlin, 2011). The study was intended to better understand if and how teachers are fostering an engaging, motivating, and

comprehensive reading environment and the effects teachers are witnessing on students' reading comprehension.

Chapter 4: Results

The researcher's original goal was to interview teachers, grades kindergarten through fifth grades, in two schools. However, with the lack of response and interest from school A, the researcher decided to only interview the teachers at elementary school B due to heightened interest to participate in the interviews. Five elementary teachers, ranging from kindergarten through fifth grades, were interviewed with an addition of a reading teacher.

Table 1- Years of Teaching Experience

	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20 years +
ES-B-1	X				
ES-B-2					X
ES-B-3					X
ES-B-4				X	
ES-B-5					X

The educators from elementary school B that were interviewed came from a variety of backgrounds of teaching experiences. Teacher number one (ES-B-1) was currently working on a PhD and has both an elementary education background and has grown up within the Ojibwe culture. At the time of the interview, ES-B-1 was teaching Kindergarten Ojibwe immersion (during the 2014-2015 school year). It was his first year teaching in an Ojibwe immersion setting within the public school district. He noted that

Ojibwe, being an oral tradition and language, holds its challenges because there is not a formal curriculum to use as a guideline. It was the responsibility of ES-B-1 to build and form the curriculum for the students, including all reading materials. He took English written texts and translated them into Ojibwe for his students to utilize. “Teacher one” said his students interact with texts through guided reading, read alouds, and learning the skills and tools to decipher Ojibwe words through sounds and blends.

“Teacher Two” (ES-B-2) had been an educator for over twenty years. This individual taught first, second, third, and fourth grades, including working in Indian Education. ES-B-2 was teaching second grade and it was her last year of teaching. Teacher two recalled the instruction of reading changing over the years from teachers carrying the responsibility to develop a reading curriculum to working with basals, which provided a foundation and a guide for educators to follow. In the interview, “Teacher Two” informed the researcher that her students interact with texts through centers, tape recorders, guided reading groups, read alouds, and whole group lessons.

A Master’s in Special Education and an undergrad in first through sixth grade elementary education (minor in psychology) were the qualifications “Teacher Three” (ES-B-3) described of her educational background. ES-B-3 had been teaching for over twenty years in a variety of grade levels, including special education EBD grades kindergarten through eighth grades. She began her reading instruction and learning strategies as a ‘whole language’ teacher. Basals were not used in her classroom and she, like ES-B-2, remembered when reading instruction shifted from whole language to the use of basals. “Teacher Three” emphasized a great importance for teachers of reading to

incorporate both instruction from basals and alternate resources to provide students with the best learning opportunities. At the time of the interview, her current position within School B was a fourth grade teacher, focusing on reading instruction, while her fourth grade partner's focus was math. ES-B-3 explained in the interview that her students interact with texts through partner readings to practice fluency, whole group lessons that emphasize reading skills, read alouds, silent reading, and small guided reading groups.

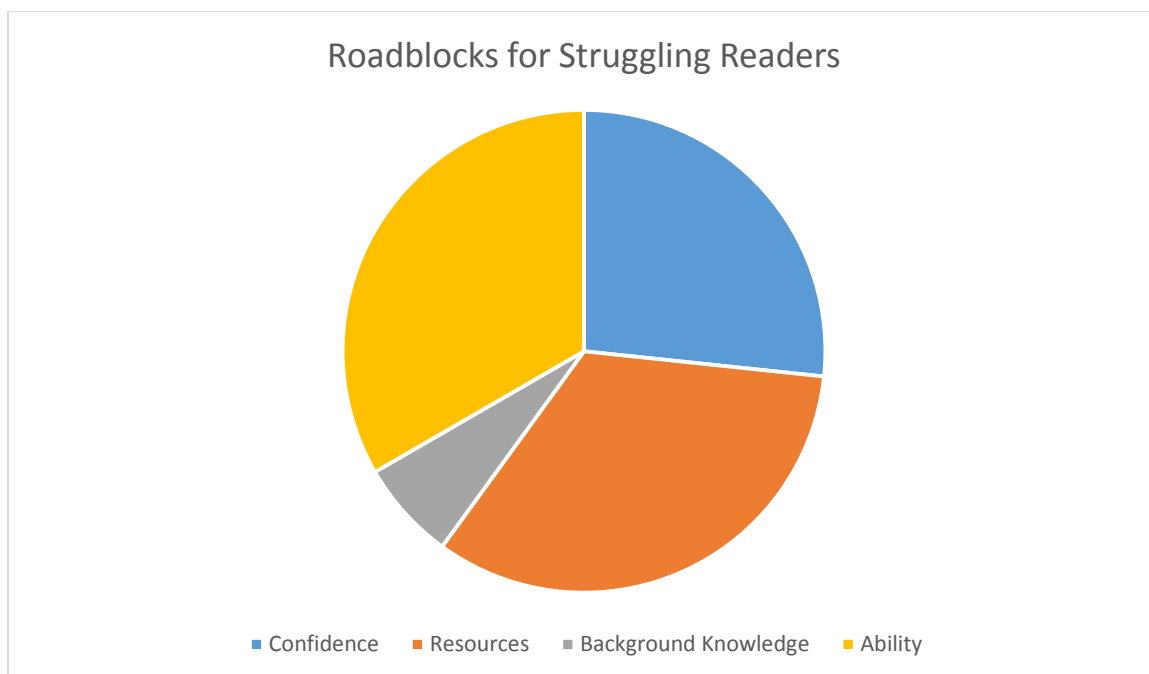
The next educator interviewed had taught in split classrooms for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. During the 2014-2015 school year, he was the fourth and fifth grade split teacher. "Teacher Four" (ES-B-4) had taught for sixteen years in first, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms and had both an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education and a Master's in Education. He worked in the same district for all sixteen years in two different schools. ES-B-4 stated his greatest learning experience within reading was when he taught first grade. He said he truly learned the instructional building blocks for beginning readers and witnessed the transformation students encountered from 'beginning readers' to 'readers.' He noted his students use texts through reader's theater, whole group lessons, small guided reading groups, silent reading every day, and read alouds.

When "Teacher Five" (ES-B-5) first started her career, she taught in the elementary grades. Throughout her thirty-one years of teaching experience, ES-B-5 had taught in second, third, and fourth grades and later became School B's data and literacy coach. "Teacher Five" had an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree. In the 2014-2015 school year, she was a reading instructor for students

in kindergaten through fifth grades. ES-B-5 said in the interview that reading was her passion. She stated she truly enjoys researching best practices for reading, and has loved being able to work with students again by teaching struggling readers the core components of reading through intervention. She worked with a team of about four to five other reading tutors and helped students who were ‘low achievers of reading’ (yellow and red groups) learn and utilize foundational reading skills (comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, writing, and grammar) through a variety of small group and one-on-one interventions. Some of the interventions she utilized was guided reading groups, closed reading techniques, choral reading, running records, and ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ reads.

Table 2- Roadblocks for Struggling Readers

This pie chart provides a visual to the responses teachers provided when asked the question, “What challenges do you see when it comes to students’ reading motivation and how do you address those challenges?” After the researcher listened to each teacher’s response and story, a list was compiled of four common factors that the teachers witnessed for students who struggle with reading. Below the researcher has gone into further detail of each challenge.



Three of the teachers interviewed (ES-B-1, ES-B-2, and ES-B-4) all expressed confidence as being a common roadblock for struggling readers. “Teacher Four” stated, “When a student knows they (sic) don’t understand what they are reading, they are less motivated to read and will continue to struggle within their reading.” He added a student may have a lack of confidence within their understanding of not just what is happening in the text, but lack knowledge in the meaning of words or using foundational reading strategies to figure out what they may not understand. This statement was supported in “Teacher One’s” interpretation of building students’ confidence. ES-B-1 discussed the role educators play in a struggling reader’s life. “It is the educator’s responsibility to provide readers with first time success.”

In the interviews, ES-B-2 talked about confidence in a different light. She considered students who lack confidence as not “wanting to appear as though they can’t read” or wanting to “appear to be better readers than they actually are.” She described a non-confident student as an individual who would choose a book based on how thick it was, because all their friends were reading it, or the text had an appearance of a book that a *good* reader would read. “Teacher Two” commented that she had observed students who do not want to appear to struggle with reading. She said these boys and girls choose a book to ‘read’ but may truly not be comprehending or completely engaged in the text. Furthermore, ES-B-2 mentioned a student who is not confident in their own reading ability typically misbehaves or acts out in order to get out of reading. “These students feel that if they are misbehaving, there is no need to read.”

Another component one of the teachers noted that struggling readers face is their prior background knowledge. “Teacher Two” mentioned every student comes into a classroom with previous experiences, talents, skills, interests, and different cultures. It was described by ES-B-2 that students who come to the classroom with a prior set of skills and knowledges of reading excel greater than those with less understanding of literacy skills. “These students know what good readers know.” “Teacher Two” acknowledged the challenge teachers face when working to help struggling readers that have limited background knowledge of skills good readers have. “We need to be persistent as educators and continue to push our students.” She continued by discussing how teachers should begin to instruct reading skills at the level each student is most familiar with based on their background knowledge. From there, she explained, teachers

will work up the ladder and provide students with new and more developed reading skills. ES-B-2 said she believes students will feel more motivated and have a greater sense of success if they are able to learn at their level and slowly increase the amount of information they are learning, instead of beginning with too difficult of materials and resources.

The teachers interviewed discussed struggling readers' lack of resources in both school and homelife situations. In the classroom, these teachers felt they must provide enough resources for students to utilize. Their suggestions included having a variety of genres to meet students' interests, providing a range of difficult and easier texts, and the educator doing enough of his or her own reading in order to make recommendations to students who may have a hard time choosing a text. "You have to have enough resources to keep feeding struggling readers," commented ES-B-3. She emphasized that if teachers continue to provide a student with books or other reading materials at his or her frustration level, that student will not have a desire or the motivation to read. "If we teach them to hate reading, how will they ever become better readers?" she continued.

The teachers also described options to help in a student's homelife. "Teacher Five" explained that students who do not have a variety of reading resources or access to reading at home, tend to struggle with reading in the classroom. She recommended finding out which students do not have books at home by having private discussions, reading surveys, or group discussions. From these discoveries, she explained the value in sending reading materials home with students. "If the books do not come back to school, it doesn't matter to me because I know they are being used somewhere they typically

wouldn't be used." ES-B-4 commented on using reading logs and reward systems to encourage reading at home. He said if students do not have access to reading materials, he will send a book home with a student. "Teacher Two" also discussed teaching her students how to access a library card and that she promotes different reading events that are free within the community.

"Teacher Three" believed that building a diverse classroom library is a powerful tool to hook students to reading and unlock their interests and abilities. "Teacher Five" talked about the classroom teacher having the responsibility to discover what each student needs within their reading to be successful. Understanding what skills students are struggling with, what interests them, and what background knowledge each child brings to the group were a set of compiled beliefs the educators interviewed believed are the beginning platform to pull students into reading, building confidence, and helping aid in the development of sincere motivation. "Students need to feel that they don't necessarily have to be *good* readers, but they understand reading is what they can turn to to get information, entertainment, and indulge in all their senses," ES-B-5 said.

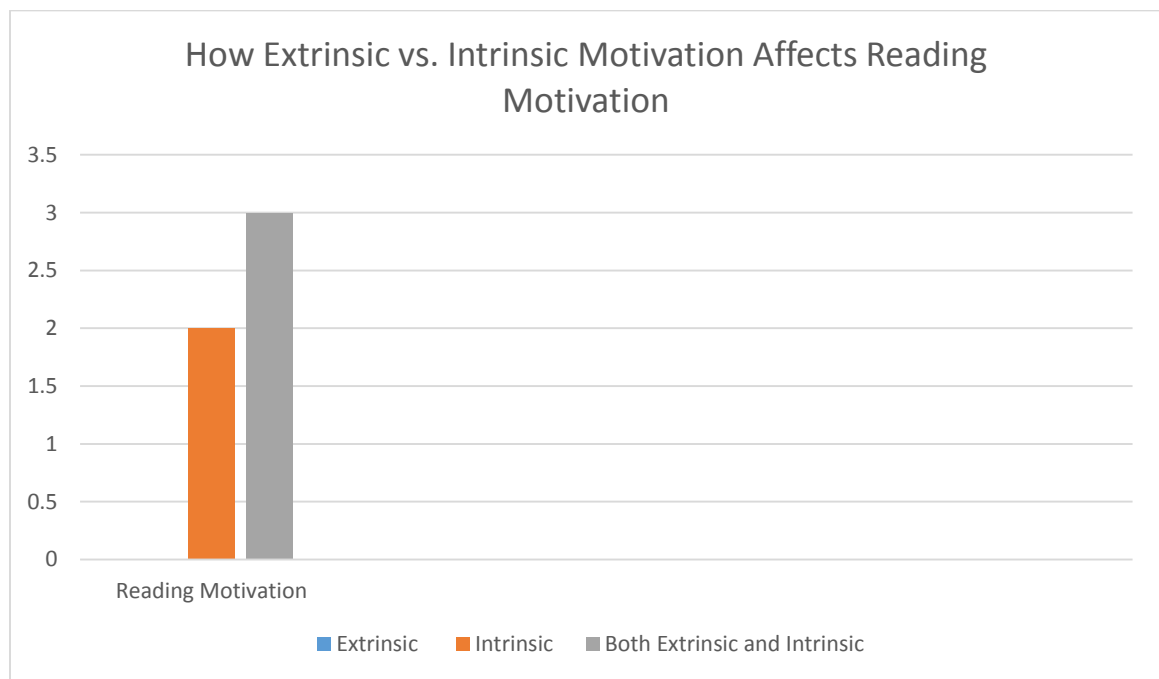
Most of the educators interviewed talked about how reading at home is an important resource that many struggling readers do not have access to. Some of the teachers commented that a majority of the students who face challenges, when it comes to reading, do not have opportunities to read at home. "Teacher Two" talked about how the kids who do not have books at home or their homelife does not have a "reading emphasis" tend to struggle in the classroom. She noted students who are not brought to public libraries, school or community reading functions, or even take family vacations to

museums have a tendency to continue to struggle in their reading throughout their lives. “Those students that make the best gains are those that are always reading. Both at school *and* at home,” stated ES-B-4. He further commented these roadblocks in a student’s homelife makes it even more relevant that educators have discussions with students about their reading habits both in the classroom and at home. “Teacher Three” and “Teacher Five” backed up ES-B-4’s suggestions for reading discussions in stating that educators need to build students’ reading stamina, provide reading choice and multiple opportunities to read, teach students how to choose appropriate texts, and provide the tools and strategies to tackle reading. Furthermore, ES-B-4 explained that getting kids excited about reading can create life-long learners and life-long readers.

The last piece a majority of the teachers interviewed commented on during the discussions of struggling readers was students’ ability levels. The word ‘ability’ compiled of a range of meanings. Some teachers described ability as a student’s capability of learning. The teachers mentioned those who have learning disabilities, attention deficits, or other aspects that constrain a student from learning, can be a cause for a child to struggle with reading. “Teacher One” talked about his kindergarteners lacking in attention skills. He stated when a student is not focused, he or she will miss the important pieces of instruction and information. He described the possibility that if educators can hone in on creating an environment where students are excited, passionate, and care about reading, their focus might become zoned in on the task instead of distractions. “Attention skills in relation to comprehension in the Ojibwe culture is a huge part. Because Ojibwe is an oral tradition (storytelling) it is critical that students are

motivated and focused in order to comprehend,” he (ES-B-1) stated. In addition, one teacher (ES-B-3) mentioned struggling readers that come into the classroom having low reading ability, meaning they are reading at a lower level from where they *should* be reading. “For example,” she stated, “a fourth grader that is reading at a pre-primer level has definitely gotten through the cracks of the educational system. With these students, we have to come up with ways for remedial reading opportunities that will not be embarrassing for the student,” she said.

Table 3- Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Motivation



All five teachers expressed the belief that motivation plays a vital role in reading comprehension. “Teacher Three said, “If students are motivated, they are going to read and discuss and share their reading.” She continued to say, “Finding motivation to read

leads those who have struggled to read more and has definitely affected the improvement of their comprehension.” She believed and had observed that if a student is motivated, he or she will work hard to understand the text. ES-B-4 also commented that he can see a high correlation between students who read more with higher literacy and comprehension skills. “Teacher Five” had the same opinions between the correlation of reading motivation and reading comprehension. She said, “If they [students] don’t love to read yet, why would they want to answer questions?” Therefore, she believed teachers need to teach kids to love to read and feel confident in their reading. She continued, “Comprehension will *not* happen if you are not invested in reading.” ES-B-2 discussed the investment in reading as a “self-motivated need.” She talked about when people have a self-motivated need, they have a desire and a want to know something. When that ‘something’ is information an individual finds interesting, important, or relates to their own lives, “Teacher Two” believed they tend to remember it.

The teachers expressed differing opinions when it came to intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation. Each teacher was asked, “What are your thoughts when it comes to reading motivation as more of an intrinsic or extrinsic factor?” Three of the five teachers (ES-B-1, ES-B-2, and ES-B-4) believed that the biggest affect on increased reading motivation is a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Meaning students are more motivated to read if they have both a desire from within and external forces (rewards, grade, points, etc.) promoting or causing a reading desire. The other two teachers (ES-B-3 and ES-B-5) believed the best way to get increased reading motivation is simply intrinsic motivation (students reading because they want to for their own joy

and pleasure). However, all five teachers discussed within the conversations that ultimately for life-long reading, all students must inherit an intrinsic love and motivation for reading.

ES-B-2 said she had used external motivation to get students excited about reading, such as ‘Book It,’ class rewards, pizza parties, etc. but that she believed “Good readers continue to be intrinsically motivated.” ES-B-4 supported the use of external forces to motivate students to read. “External motivation may be the key to *start* reading motivation, and eventually an intrinsic desire will develop.” He continued by saying how his biggest challenge was getting students to read and external rewards and motivators have been a powerful starting point for him in his classroom. “Teacher Three” believed that the only hope to get students to be passionate about reading was to help them form an intrinsic motivation for reading. “That’s the only shot we have is to build intrinsic motivation in order to truly become a reader... We have to get kids hooked, excited, passionate, and inspired to read.” ES-B-3 provided an example of her own opinion of hating soccer. “If I hate soccer, I can be there everyday, but I will never be truly good at it because I don’t like it.”

Summary

The interviews provided positive results to the researcher’s original questions between the connectedness of reading motivation and reading comprehension. The beliefs and perceptions of the five educators provided a clear connection of the affects reading motivation has on reading comprehension. All five teachers felt the more a student reads and has the desire to read, the better he or she comprehends.

Five of the five participants had observed and witnessed students comprehending texts better if they were motivated to read and read every day compared to those students who were less motivated or non-motivated to read. The comments among all of the teachers provided a clear understanding that motivated readers read frequently. Within the interviews teachers noted that students motivated to read are able to obtain more information, use effective reading strategies and skills to tackle texts, and build an increased intrinsic motivation to read. “Teacher Four” explained intrinsic motivation is what educators ultimately want to instill in their students. “The more motivated students are, the more they read. The more students read, the more they comprehend,” she said.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Discussion

The researcher's previous literary research indicated a strong correlation between high reading motivation and reading comprehension (Duke, Pearson, Stachan, & Billman, 2011; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; & Taboada & Buehl, 2012). The interviews conducted with the five participants provided strong answers to the original research questions and supported prior research. The researcher wanted to know what kind of methods teachers used in their classrooms to get students motivated, especially those students who struggle with reading and may not be as motivated. In addition, it was the hope of the researcher to discover what teachers previously witnessed in their classrooms between the connection of high reading motivation and proficient reading comprehension.

Furthermore, the goal of the interviews was to determine the affects reading motivation had on students' reading comprehension. Throughout each interview, every participant shed some light on each question and supported the research that had been previously found.

It was concluded from the interviews with all five teachers that to get kids motivated to read, educators cannot take away the enjoyment and gratification of reading, but instill many satisfying opportunities to read for every student. The International Reading Association (2000) commented that teachers are key contributors to students' achievement in reading (McLaughlin, 2012). A classroom of motivated readers creates an atmosphere of comprehensive learners. All participants believed that students who were highly motivated to read performed better within reading comprehension. Duke,

Pearson, Strachan, & Billman (2011) stated reading comprehension allows students to process and synthesize information that supplements knowledge, and that later can enhance comprehension. Each interview shared a common theme that students who read the most excel in comprehension. It was emphasized in the interviews that good readers all share a love and an excitement for reading. Modeling, building, and continuing a reading environment that fosters a passion for reading is a key component for successful comprehensive readers. All teachers believed that for students to be life-long readers, they need to establish an intrinsic motivation for reading, whether it begins with external factors or initially comes from within. Research by Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) found intrinsic motivation heightens curiosity, involvement, and a desire for challenge within students. As the educators in the interviews mentioned, when students have a desire from within (self-efficacy), feels the information pertains to their own life, or find the topic to be interesting, they are more likely to read because they *want* to read not because they *have* to read. Intrinsic motivation is the ultimate goal for classroom teachers to foster within their classrooms to have effective comprehensive readers.

Each teacher commented if students are not truly motivated to read, getting them to read is a huge challenge. Teachers, for many students, are the cheerleaders for reading. McLaughlin (2012) described teachers as playing an influential role on students' motivation to read and comprehend. Students need to know they can turn to their teacher for text suggestions and tools to tackle reading. Therefore, the teachers interviewed discussed different methods and strategies they used in their classrooms to get their students motivated to read, and the strategies the participants discussed have all

been supported by prior research to be effective motivational reading tools. All participants shared their role of modeling how students should choose appropriate texts (based on reading levels or ‘just right books’) and emphasized the importance of providing students many opportunities to read. Miller (2012) found the volume of reading students partake in matters in terms of reading comprehension. “No matter what instructional methods we employ, students must spend substantial time applying the reading skills and strategies we teach before they develop reading proficiency. This means students must read and read and read to become good readers” (Miller, 2012, p. 89). The five classroom teachers used a variety of reading practices including small guided reading groups (comprehension is embedded within this strategy), whole group reading discussions, partner readings, silent reading time, reader’s theater, reading centers, and read alouds.

Providing students choice was also a common practice shared by each participant. Howell (2014) noted there has been multiple proven research, teacher observations, and student discussions about the positive effects and influential nature providing choice has on students’ reading motivation. The teachers believed giving students the choice to choose their own reading materials got students more motivated to read because the students were able to decide on a book based on their own personal preferences. However, the teachers did mention giving specific guidelines (genres, reading levels, etc.) and students choosing a book title based within the guidelines. Cambourne (1995) determined students who are not provided choice within the classroom, tend to feel powerless, become unmotivated, or participate less in the classroom. Another strategy

used by many of the participants was having a variety of texts available to students in the classroom. Gambrell (2011), Howell (2014), and McLaughlin (2012) discussed that fostering an environment that is enriched with books in multiple forms and genres is a chief component to motivation. Providing a plethora of texts gives students options based on their personal interests, needs, and reading abilities.

Not only should educators provide their students choice and multiple options of texts, but modeling positive reading behaviors and providing explicit instruction of reading and comprehension strategies. To determine students' prior reading attitudes and behaviors, teachers have an important role to develop an understanding of each of their students' reading backgrounds (Howell, 2014). A *reading attitude* is the feeling an individual has towards reading (Schiefele et. al, 2012). By understanding each student and his or her reading attitude, helps teachers build and develop instruction that is personal to each child (Howell, 2014). Positive reading attitudes highly affect students' reading abilities, which improves reading comprehension (Schiefele et. al, 2012).

Building the foundation of reading and comprehensive strategies is critical to develop skilled readers. Non-struggling readers possess a strong understanding of important reading foundations such as being able to decode words, use contextual clues to figure out difficult vocabulary words, recognizes vital story elements, and can depict a variety of genres. Without these foundational skills, students may become unmotivated to read and continue to struggle with reading throughout their lives.

Establishing a classroom environment that emphasizes a passion for reading is also a key strategy in a successful comprehensive reading classroom. Howell (2014)

discussed research has shown motivation happens well before frequent reading occurs. Therefore, instilling an internal motivation to read must be established in the classroom right away. The interviews suggested all teachers begin the year, and continue throughout the year, with discussions about reading. It was the belief of both ES-B-4 and ES-B-1 that starting the school year with conversations about reading (why it is important, what it means to be a reader, what good readers do, how good readers solve problems, what reading looks like in the classroom and at home) is key to hook students into reading, get students excited about reading, and hopefully begin to build a love for reading. Not only did both teachers recommend the importance of having conversations about reading, but also to get students reading as much as possible. “Students who are motivated read A LOT!” stated ES-B-4. He continued to say that he could observe students in his classroom who were not motivated to read lacking effort and ‘just going through the motions.’

Educators of reading must make it known to students the importance and significance reading has in our every day lives. Get students excited about reading, passionate about reading, and motivated to read. Excitement, passion, and motivation build an intrinsic desire. Intrinsic motivation enhances curiosity, involvement, and desire for challenge and to better understand the world (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). If teachers never provide their students with successful reading opportunities, students will never develop the motivation, love, or excitement for reading. Howell (2014) and Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman (2011) found when a student is unmotivated, he or she may see reading as irrelevant to his or her own life, feel the text is too difficult, has a fear of

failing, has limited prior background knowledge, or is bored or overwhelmed. This is why it is ever more important for teachers to motivate the unmotivated by highlighting the significance of reading.

Recommendations

From the literary research to the discussions within the interviews, reading motivation has shown to be an important factor to successful reading comprehension. Therefore, the researcher would recommend to colleagues and any future educators of reading to immediately build a foundation in the classroom that fosters a passion and a love for reading. It will be important to start early discussions about reading, share your own exciting reading experiences with students, and get to know what motivates each child in the classroom to read. The more educators know about their students and the more young readers know about the pleasure of reading, the more motivated students may become. Model positive reading behavior early on and emphasize reading every day. Confidence can play a vital role in the amount of effort and participation students put into their reading. Give students the opportunities to feel and be successful, feel confident within their reading, and feel safe to read.

It will also be extremely imperative to incorporate a variety reading strategies and techniques within the classroom to get students intrinsically motivated to read. Give students the choice when selecting texts along with some guidelines that are deemed important. Providing enough materials and resources for students to be successful readers begins with the teacher in the classroom. Incorporate a variety of genres, texts, and tools to give students the best reading support. Model appropriate methods for

students to choose books that are at their reading level. If a text is too difficult for a student, he or she may get frustrated and give up or become unmotivated to read.

Furthermore, give students multiple opportunities to read. Students who read every day are those that make the best gains. Students are more willing to discover, figure out solutions to problems, and learn when they know what good readers know (ES-B-2).

Our schools, districts, and communities could also improve on the aid and support provided to students within reading. The money allocated to reading could be used in more beneficial ways. Our schools could host more reading nights or reading discussions to help instruct parents on successful and motivating reading techniques and effective reading strategies. This way, parents would know how to help their struggling reader at home and students would be supported both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. In addition, more money could go towards helping students get transported to after school functions for learning to continue after the school day has ended.

Furthermore, for those students who do not have access to reading materials at home or within their community, funds could help those families to obtain resources to get texts and other reading materials into their homes. Hopefully the more we can do to help families have access, knowledge, and support for reading, the more life-long readers and motivated readers we can create.

Summary

The prior research and interviews performed in this study have supported the link between reading motivation and reading comprehension. Previous research has shown that students who are highly motivated comprehend more than those students who are

less motivated to read. The teachers interviewed also backed up this research with their observations of reading they have witnessed within their classrooms. Research also suggested individuals who were intrinsically motivated to read were better readers. The participants also commented on the goal for students to be more intrinsically motivated for enhanced reading success. Furthermore, students who read every single day were better readers than those who read periodically, and the students who read every day were better comprehensive readers. Additionally, the teachers interviewed also commented on the strong correlation between the effectiveness reading every day had on reading comprehension. These students were more willing to learn, discover, problem-solve, discuss, and comprehend due to the strategies and techniques each teacher utilized in his or her classroom to engage students in positive reading behaviors. This included creating an intrinsically motivating reading environment, establishing and building positive reading attitudes, incorporating a variety of texts, genres, and literature discussions, providing choice and multiple opportunities to read, and teaching the foundations of reading and comprehension skills. Overall, both prior research and the personal in-depth interviews supported the questions of reading motivation having a positive influence on reading comprehension.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Thesis Study

Invitation to Participate in the Thesis Study Reading Motivation and Comprehension: Elementary teachers' beliefs and perceptions of connectedness

Dear Perspective Participant,

You are invited to participate in the study of the connection between reading motivation and reading comprehension growth. The study is designed to investigate the personal perceptions and beliefs elementary classroom teachers have of the impact increased reading motivation has on the improvement of reading comprehension.

Data will be collected through in-depth, personal interviews between the participant and the researcher. Identities of both school and participants will not be disclosed within the study. A code will be assigned to each participant to identify when paraphrasing or directly quoting specific participating individuals.

Participants who agree to be a part of the study, will set up a date and time (that is convenient for the participant) for a personal interview that will take approximately one hour. If more time is needed for further discussion or clarification, the researcher will set up another time to meet that is mutually acceptable.

It is the expectation of the study to collect information and data that is suitable for elementary educators to utilize within their classrooms to increase students' reading engagement. Furthermore, the study seeks to better understand the beliefs and perceptions the participants have within their own classrooms on the connections they observe of the correlation between reading motivation and reading comprehension. The personal input participants have will better support previous research, which shows a strong relationship between reading motivation and reading comprehension, and better aid fellow elementary teachers and districts to effectively incorporate and utilize beneficial reading motivational strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension.

It is with high hopes that you feel compelled to participate in this study. Participants will sign an informed consent, receive a documentation of the guidelines of the study, and make arrangements for an interview time. Please respond by phone or e-mail by November 1, 2014 to accept or decline the invitation. Do not hesitate to call or e-mail with any addition questions before committing. Thank you for considering, and I hope we will be able to work together on this study.

Respectfully,

Kelsey Holt
(218) 310-6888 (cell), (218) 336-8895 X2947 (work)

Appendix B: Informed Consent Documentation

1. Purpose:

The purpose of the proposed study is to collect the perceptions and beliefs elementary teachers have on the connection between increased reading motivation and the growth of reading comprehension.

2. Procedure:

All participants will receive a documentation of the guidelines of the research study. After reviewing and signing the guidelines documentation in agreement to take part in the study, participants will set up a date and time with the researcher for an in-depth, personal interview. The interview time will be chosen by the participant for the convenience of the participant. Interviews will consist of open-ended questions, which allow the participants to share their personal stories, beliefs, and perceptions about reading motivation in connection to reading comprehension. All participants' identities, along with the school, will be kept confidential. The researcher intends to use quotes from participants' responses, unless noted otherwise by the participant, and responses to support prior research on the effective nature increased reading motivation has on comprehension growth.

3. Time required:

Participation will involve a personal, in-depth interview session, lasting approximately 1 hour.

4. Risks:

It is not anticipated that this study will present any risk to you other than the inconvenience of the time taken to participate.

5. Your rights as a subject:

- (i)** The information gathered will be recorded in confidential form. Data or summarized results will not be released in any way that could identify you.
- (ii)** If you want to withdraw from the study at any time, you may do so without penalty. The information collected from you up to that point would be destroyed if you so desire.
- (iii)** At the end of the session, you have the right to a complete explanation (debriefing) of what this research study was all about. If you have questions afterward, please ask your researcher (Kelsey Holt) or contact:

Dr. Wendy Kropid

Dept. of Education, UW-SUPERIOR, (715) 394-8240

Also, once the study is completed, you may request a summary of the results.

6. If you have any concerns about your treatment as a subject in this study, please call or write:

Eleni Pinnow, IRB Chair

Telephone: (715) 394-8312

Email: epinnow@uwsuper.edu

This research project has been approved by the UW-Superior Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, protocol # 1108

I have read the above information and willingly consent to participate in this research study.

Print name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Guidelines of Participation for Participants

Participants,

You have agreed to participate in the research study conducted by Kelsey Holt. Please read the following procedures and expectations, and sign showing you understand and will continue to remain in the role as a participant.

Procedure

Participants will...

- Sign the Informed Consent Form
- Sign the guidelines documentation form
- Determine a mutually agreed upon date for an interview with the researcher
 - Interviews should take place between the months of November 2014 and January 2015
- Participate in an interview that will consist of one session and will last approximately 1 hour. If further discussion is needed, the participant and researcher will determine a second meeting time that is most convenient for the participant.
- Agree to have the interview recorded by the researcher. Recording will only be shared between the researcher and the thesis advisor.
- Agree to allow the researcher to use personal quotes from the interviews within the study. All names of participants and schools will be kept confidential.
 - Example: Elementary school A, teacher 1 will be coded ES-A-1

Expectations

- If the participant decides to drop from the study, he or she will inform the researcher as soon as possible. If an interview has already been conducted, information will be disposed according to the policies of the IRB.
- Participants will sign all consent forms.
- The interview day and time will be completed by January 31st.
- During the interview, participants will answer openly and honestly by sharing their personal experiences and thoughts.

- Participants understand any discussion recorded during the interview can be used by the researcher in support of the study (including personal quotes).
- The researcher may contact the participant after the January 31st deadline to set up another meeting time (or other form of communication: phone conversation, e-mail, etc.) to discuss any other concerns or questions that arise.

Participant's contact information

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please sign to consent you understand the procedure and expectations as the role of a participant in the study.

Print Name _____

Sign Name _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions (Semi-Structured)

Teacher code: _____

Grade Level: _____

Date: _____

1. Can you please tell me about yourself and any best practices you use, if you do, for reading?

2. In what ways do you utilize motivation in your classroom for reading and how have you seen motivation affect students' literacy skills?

3. What role do you feel reading motivation plays on reading comprehension?

4. Can you describe how students' interact with texts in your classroom?

5. What challenges do you see when it comes to students' reading motivation and how do you address those challenges?

6. Can you illustrate how you, the school, the district, or the community aids in the support of student reading or could better support student reading?