MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' READ-ALOUD PRACTICES IN THE CLASSROOM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Christina Marie Durham

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Liberty University
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The possession of strong literacy skills will improve the quality of life for all children. Teacher read-alouds is a well-used practice within the elementary grades because of the intellectual and behavioral benefits for the students. However, there is a lack of research on this practice for middle school students. The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of middle school reading specialists toward read-alouds across the content areas. The participants were five reading specialists from one rural public school system and one suburban/rural public school system in Maryland. The reading specialists were interviewed about their knowledge and experiences with read-alouds in the classrooms. The findings indicated that middle school teachers read aloud to their students, and the reading specialists supported this practice for many intellectual and behavioral reasons. Data were collected, coded, and analyzed through the use of the NVivo 10 program. Two overarching themes were identified, which confirmed the importance of read-alouds across the content areas and the need to implement this practice in the middle school classrooms. Implications for classroom practice as well as for future research are provided.

Keywords: teacher read-alouds, shared story reading, Social Learning Theory, middle school, middle school students, reading specialists, middle school teachers, middle school content areas

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my sons, Brooks Jr. and Tristan whom I have enjoyed reading out loud to. You have shown me that there is so much that we, as researchers and educators, can do to help children with all kinds of abilities. Brooks, although your premature birth at 24 weeks resulted in developmental delays, your love, interest, and involvement in learning demonstrates that you have the desire to grow and progress in all areas of your life. Tristan, you show so much enthusiasm and interest in the stories that we read together. These moments together will always be remembered and cherished. Because of our reading experiences together, I want other children, no matter what age, to experience these read-aloud opportunities. This findings from this dissertation support the belief that all children can and *will* learn, with the support and the methods of teacher modeling. Thank you for opening my eyes and heart.

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List of Abbreviations

AAC	Augmentative & Alternative Communication
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders
EI	Expository/Informational
ELL	English Language Learners
EO	English-Only
IRA	International Reading Association
IS	Inquiry-based Science Only
ISR	Inquiry-based Science Plus Reading
LLD	Language Learning Disability
MSA	Maryland School Assessment
NMSA	National Middle School Association
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development
RSR	Repeated Storybook Reading
RVA	Reading Vocabulary Assessment
SRPMST	Survey of Read-Aloud Practices of Middle School Teachers
STRW	Student Team Reading and Writing

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

An educator's main goal is to teach students to be life-long learners (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009). Part of being a life-long learner is the ability to read**,** the foundation for success in school and in modern society (Corcoran & Mamalakis; Maynard, Pullen, & Coyne, 2010). Specifically, the possession of strong literacy skills increases students' participation in the community (Browder, Mims, Spooner, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Lee, 2008). Also, **t**hese students are able to be more independent and gain new knowledge throughout their life. According to Browder et al., children with strong literacy skills: (a) will be able to discover new ideas, (b) will become active participants in leisure activities, and (c) have the ability to make individual choices about learning. Furthermore, strong literacy skills increase chances for employment.

According to the results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA**:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010), of the 64 countries, which participated in the survey, students who enjoyed reading performed significantly by 103 points (i.e., between the average scores of the top and bottom quarters of students) on the reading portion of the assessment than students who least enjoyed reading. Furthermore, it was reported that 37% of students did not enjoy reading at all**;** this suggests that their motivation and reading engagement may be low. Additionally, the quarter of students who reported they enjoyed reading earned at least proficiency Level 4, with 5 being the highest level. Guthrie, Schafer, and Huang (2001) found that students with high reading engagement and high mother's education resulted in higher achievement than students with moderate or low engagement. Also, students with moderate engagement and low mother's education were associated with high

achievement. However, students**,** whose mother's education was low and who were at least moderately engaged readers**,** scored higher on the assessment than students whose mother's education was high, but who were disengaged readers. Guthrie et al. concluded that reading motivation was more essential than students' family background, in regard to reading achievement. Additionally, Gambrell (2011) concluded that simply teaching students how to decode and comprehend text is not enough to make students become better readers: "If students are not motivated to read, they will never reach their full literacy potential" (p. 172). Therefore, motivation should be the most important factor in the reading curriculum.

Motivation is important in the field of reading because it "makes the difference between learning that is temporary and superficial and learning that is permanent and internalized" (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006, p. 414). It is the teacher's responsibility to establish a classroom climate that promotes reading motivation (Gambrell, 1996; Nichols, Young, & Rickelman, 2007). When students first attend school, they are excited about learning and are motivated. However, throughout the elementary school year, there is decrease the students' motivation to learn in all content areas, including reading (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). The greatest decrease in motivation occurs during Grades 1-4. This is attributed to children becoming more aware of their own performance compared to their peers, as well as to the competition of achievement, and lack of reading instruction that addresses the children's interests (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

Furthermore, elementary and middle school students' responses in a few studies identified sources of motivation which included teachers reading to children and sharing

what they were reading (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Gambrell, 1996; Ivey, 2003; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Participants in the study (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009), which included fifth-grade students, responded that they wanted their teachers to read out loud to them on a daily basis and researchers recommended that teachers read aloud to students on a daily basis (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Gambrell, 1996; Ivey, 2003; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) reported that 96% of the fifth grade students in the study wished that their teachers would discuss books that he or she has read personally.

In addition to the sparse research on reading aloud to older children, a few researchers have reported the benefits of reading aloud to middle school students (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Gambrell, 1996; Ivey, 2003; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, 2010). Ariail and Albright reported the benefits**,** which they found: (a) an increase in students' accessibility to texts, (b) an increase in motivation, (c) students remain engaged in learning, (d) students possess positive attitudes toward reading, (e) have background knowledge in content areas, and (f) demonstrate fluency in reading.

Background

Although the main goal of educators is to create lifelong learners, another goal is to create lifetime readers, that is, graduates who continue to read and educate themselves throughout their adult lives (Trelease, 2006). However, Trelease maintained that many educators are creating "schooltime readers–graduates who know how to read well enough to graduate" (p. 2). The reality of schooltime readers was demonstrated in a study conducted by the staff of the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP; 2005)**,**

titled, The High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE, 2004). The researchers found that a major reason why only 27% of high school students continued beyond freshman year of college was that 78% of HSSSE seniors spent less than 3 hours a week reading anything for school and cannot keep up with the readings required in college (CEEP). The issue is not that students cannot read; it is that they do not continue to read as much as they mature and, as a result, are not strong readers when they need to be (Trelease, 2006).

In 4-5 year increments, researchers of the National Reading Report Card surveyed the reading practices of: (a) 9 year old students (see Table 1), (b) 13 year old students (see Table 2), and (c) 17 year old students (see Table 3) across the United States (NAEP, 2012). By the end of 2012, the 9 year old students increased their reading for pleasure by 2%, while the 13 year old students had a 1% increase in reading for fun almost every day. However, the percentages were still low, and by senior year of high school, the percentage dropped from 27-19% of students reading almost every day for fun.

Table 1

Percentage of 9-Year-Olds in the U.S. Who Read for Fun

Frequency	1984	1999	2004	2008	2012
Never or hardly ever	9	10	8	---	11
Few times a year	3	4	5	---	7
One to two times a month	7	6	7	---	7
One to two times a week	28	26	26	---	23
Almost every day	53	54	54	48	53

Note. --- denotes a percentage was not given (NAEP).

Table 2

Percentages of 13-Year-Olds in the U.S. Who Read for Fun

Frequency	1984	1999	2004	2008	2012
Never or hardly ever	8	9	13	---	22
Few times a year	7	10	9	---	11
One to two times a month	14	17	15	---	14
One to two times a week	35	36	34	---	26
Almost every day	35	28	30	26	27

Note. --- denotes a percentage was not given (NAEP, 2012).

Table 3

Percentage of 17-Year-Olds in the U.S. Who Read for Fun

Frequency	1984	1999	2004	2008	2012
Never or hardly ever	9	16	19	---	27
Few times a year	10	12	14	---	18
One to two times a month	17	19	15	---	16
One to two times a week	33	28	30	---	21
Almost every day	31	25	22	20	19

Note. --- denotes a percentage was not given (NAEP, 2012).

Although the use of tests, penalties, and other tools may help to solve the issue of successful reading, this addresses only a mechanical problem (Trelease, 2006). Trelease stated, "When the 'want-to' is missing, it's not a mechanical malfunction; it's an attitude problem" (pp. 3-4). Therefore, based on the results from the Commission on Reading (NAEP, 2012), there are findings which support that need for teachers to read out loud to students throughout the grades.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1977), in his social learning theory**,** recognized and supported the importance of learning through response consequences and modeling. Response consequences involve learning by reinforcement**,** whereby individuals automatically and unconsciously respond, because of the immediate consequences. Individuals continue to behave in such a way that brings positive results (e.g.**,** good grades in school, approval

from adults and friends, happiness). Likewise, individuals usually decrease and eliminate behaviors that bring negative results (e.g., lower grades in school, disapproval from adults and friends, disappointment in self). Additionally, most human behavior is learned through observation of others' behaviors or modeling.

The three functions of response consequences are: (a) the informative function, (b) the motivational function, and (c) the reinforcing function (Bandura, 1977). The informative function allows individuals to not only perform responses, but also to observe the results of their actions. Then, the individuals determine which responses are most appropriate in specific settings. The new information serves as a guide for future behavior; thus, the behavior continues which results in positive outcomes, while the individual avoids behaviors that result in punishment. However, individuals will not increase the specific behavior if they believe these same actions will not be rewarded on future events. Motivational function allows humans to be inspired or motivated by potential consequences. Individuals anticipate the outcomes and can change future consequences into present motivators of behavior. The reinforcing function allows individuals to increase appropriate behavior when they realize which actions will be rewarded.

Learning through modeling is when an individual observes others and, then, shapes an idea of how new behaviors are performed (Horner, Bhattacharyya, & O'Connor, 2008). Modeling can be observed through the actions of others. For example, parents who read for pleasure at home have children who enjoy reading themselves, and they read more than children whose parents do not read at home. Cognitive modeling is another way to communicate thinking patterns. The knowledgeable individual

"verbalizes his or her own thinking patterns" (p. 222). For example, a teacher may use context clues to determine the meaning of a particular word. The individual uses this coded information as a guide for behavior for future events; Bandura (1997) stated, "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do" (p. 22). Since people can learn from others' modeling of what to do and, consequently, what not to do, they are less likely to make errors, and furthermore, to increase behaviors that could reap potential rewards.

This study is based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory because, through the motivational function, students are motivated to read due to the external rewards in reading (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Additionally, the teacher is a positive model who can inspire students to read. Teacher read-alouds is a practice that can be used to motivate students to read (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009); in addition, it is a model of how to comprehend text with different reading strategies (Press, Henenberg, & Getman, 2011). The use of teacher read-alouds supports Bandura's reinforcing function, in that, it reinforces what good reading looks like, and students may be able to apply those reading strategies and practices to their own reading (Fisher et al., 2011).

Since shared story reading and read-alouds are natural and common activities in the classroom, support for oral language and literacy is provided. The students observe the adult use different methods to understand the text and to read it fluently and with meaning. This type of support was termed, scaffolding, by Vygotsky (1978) in his sociohistorical theory. The teacher provides the support in order for the student to extend his or her current skills and knowledge (Hausfather, 1996). The teacher engages the

student, simplifies a task so it is practicable, and motivates the child to continue reaching the goal. Through encouragement, the child takes more control over the learning, and the teacher gradually fades away from the task. Once scaffolding is established, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) can begin. Vygotsky did not view learning as development, "but as a process that results in development" (Hausfather, p. 3). There are two levels within each child: (a) the child's ability to solve problems independently and (b) the level of potential development to problem solve under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky).

In Vygotsky's (1978) sociohistorical theory**,** there is recognition and support for the important relationship between human mental processes and their cultural, historical, and instructional settings. This theory consists of three basic themes: (a) genetic analysis is the way to understand the origin and the transitions of mental functioning**,** (b) higher mental functioning has its origin in social life**,** and (c) human action is mediated by tools and signs. Higher mental functions include**:** (a) analysis of processes, not objects; (b) provide explanations, not just descriptions**;** and (c) the importance of understanding the process and not just the product of development. This is when Vygotsky's ZPD comes into place to support higher mental functioning in the individual and allow educators to assess the intelligence of the individual and also for teachers to organize their instruction. The sociohistorical theory is supported in Wiseman's (2010) study. The teacher read and shared a picture book with the kindergarten class and fostered involvement through discussion, modeling, and questioning. When the students became more familiar with the teacher's organized structure of how she introduced a book, the students were able to take more control of the classroom discussion without her prompts.

Human action and higher mental functioning are mediated by tools and signs (Oguz, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Tools are technical tools such as language, mathematics, writing, technology**,** or art. The role of these tools is to serve as the leader of human influence on the activity. The signs are items that are used to change the inner psychological state of humans. In this sociohistorical theory, Oguz (2007) stated that "children acquire the knowledge, skill, dispositions, competencies and values of their cultural community through joint activity" (p. 6). In addition, this learning occurs in social events where the child can interact with people, objects, and events in the environment. These interactions "mediate the development of children's higher mental functions, such as thinking, reasoning, problem solving, memory, and language" (pp. 2-3).

Since researchers (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Ivey & Broaddus, 2011; Press et al., 2011) have found that the use of teacher read-alouds are beneficial to students in the elementary school years and for students with disabilities, this researcher sought to find reasons why the read-aloud practice is not encouraged in the middle school years. This researcher's goal is to provide insight on the lack of read-alouds in the middle schools by interviewing middle school reading specialists on their perceptions of teacher read-alouds.

Situation to Self

I was motivated to conduct this study because read-alouds have played an important role in my life. Through read-alouds in the elementary level, I was able to learn English and read-alouds promoted my passion for reading. If positive support and benefits of read-alouds in the elementary school exist, then why is this practice not

continued beyond those years? This study was supported with the epistemological theory that, if teachers model what effective reading looks like, then the students may gain the knowledge and understanding of reading and can apply those strategies to their own reading. The paradigm that supported this study is Bandura's (1977) social learning theory because the students observed the teacher utilize effective reading strategies, and they retained the new information in order to apply those strategies themselves.

Problem Statement

Although teacher read-alouds are used in the elementary grades and with students of varying disabilities, few recent studies of teacher read-alouds with students in the intermediate grades are present (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Ariail & Albright, 2006; Fisher et al., 2008). Little empirical support is available on whether teachers from the social studies, science, and mathematics content areas read aloud to their students. If teacher read-alouds are a positive influence on students, why is it not a common practice in the middle schools?

Purpose Statement

There is a lack of current studies from the past 5 years, which have centered on content area teachers reading aloud in their classrooms. Older studies have revealed that read-alouds motivate students to read (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Ivey, 2003; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the read-aloud experiences of five middle school reading specialists in rural and suburban Maryland school districts. Although read-alouds are used in the elementary grades and are beneficial (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Stetter & Hughes, 2010; Wiseman, 2011), read-alouds in the middle school are not common.

Furthermore, a clear understanding of the lack of read-alouds in the middle school is absent in the current literature. Therefore, in this phenomenological study, the researcher attempted to fill the gap in the literature regarding the perspectives of middle school reading specialists through comparison and contrast of their perspectives on read-alouds.

Significance of the Study

Teacher read-alouds are beneficial in the elementary grades (Coyne et al., 2007; Stetter & Hughes, 2010; Wiseman, 2011) and to students with disabilities (Antoniou & Souvignier, 2007; Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Hudson & Test, 2011; Jitendra, Burgess, & Gajria, 2011; Sencibaugh, 2007). However, the significance of this study is that the researcher has not found any current studies on the practice and effectiveness of teacher read-alouds in middle schools. Therefore, the findings from this study could help educators understand the role of read-alouds in the middle school classroom and the benefits read-alouds bring to the students. Although read-alouds may be commonly used in the language arts and reading classes, educators can use this study to assist them in implementation of read-louds in other content areas such as mathematics, social studies, English, and science.

In addition, this research study has empirical significance. The results from this study will contribute to the literature on teachers' read-aloud practices in middle schools and an in-depth understanding of why teachers choose or choose not to read aloud to their students. Ariail and Albright (2006) surveyed only middle school teachers on their read-aloud practices. However, the findings from this current study support those of Ariail and Albright, since reading specialists were interviewed for an in-depth understanding of their perceptions toward the use of read-aloud and the practices they saw in the middle

school classrooms. Additionally, the reading specialists supported Ivey and Broaddus' (2001) recommendation for the use of teacher read-alouds to play a more central role in the curriculum, specifically in content area learning, where meaning making and learning new ideas are essential to the content. Finally, Ivey and Broaddus suggested more research should be conducted to examine the place and purpose of teacher read-alouds and its connections to instructional and curriculum goals. This researcher interviewed the reading specialists about their views in regard to the purpose of read-alouds and its influences on instructional and curriculum goals.

This study had theoretical implications. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory supports the concept that teachers can model effective reading skills. Students can learn successful reading strategies from teacher modeling and utilize those reading skills to comprehend content material. Furthermore, students may become motivated to read if it brings desirable results such as: (a) recognition from teachers, students, and parents; (b) good grades; and (c) a better understanding of content material. During the interviews, the reading specialists shared how the read-alouds impacted the student learning and motivation to read independently.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe middle school reading specialists' experiences with read-alouds in the middle schools in Anderson County and Christian County, both pseudonyms. Although the researcher discussed teacher read-alouds, read-alouds can be delivered by content area teachers and reading specialists. The research questions which guided this study were:

RQ1: How do middle school reading specialists describe their experiences with read-alouds in the classroom?

RQ2: What reasons do participants give to support read-alouds in the middle schools?

RQ3: How do participants describe the impact the read-aloud program has across the curriculum?

RQ4: How do participants' perceptions of read-alouds compare/contrast?

Research Plan

In this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study, the researcher interviewed five reading specialists about their perceptions and experience with read-alouds in the middle school grades. This study was qualitative because the researcher studied "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Also, qualitative studies are used to investigate the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of the participants (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005).

This was a transcendental study because it was not focused on the researcher's interpretations, but instead focused on the description of the experiences of the reading specialists (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher's goal was to describe and speculate on the phenomenon of read-alouds in the middle school across the content areas through the use of focus groups and interviews with the participating reading specialists in the two school systems in Maryland. Additionally, through the collected data, the researcher was able to create a description of the reading specialists' experiences with

read-alouds that all the specialists have in common, that is, the *essence* of the meaning of read-alouds (Creswell).

Purposeful sampling was used because the researcher was selecting "individuals [who were] likely to be 'information-rich' with respect to the purposes of a qualitative research study" (Gall et al., 2007, p. 650). Reading specialists fit this description because they are professionally prepared and experienced to lead teachers to research-based curricula and strategies**,** and they provide professional and classroom support to ensure quality reading instruction (Helf & Cooke, 2011). Also, reading specialists have the responsibility to support and collaborat**e** with other specialists who focus on reading needs**,** such as students in special education and English Language Learners (Helf & Cooke, 2011).

Other qualitative designs were considered but were not found appropriate for this study. The study was not a narrative study, because the researcher did not study the life of one individual (Creswell, 2007). The study was not ethnographic, because the researcher was not studying a culture and its patterns (Gall et al., 2007). Grounded theory was not utilized, because the researcher was not seeking to develop a theory based on the findings from the study (Gall et al.). The case study approach was not chosen, because this study was not focused on the lived experiences of the participants, and multiple forms of information were not used such as documents, observation, and physical artifacts (Creswell). Additionally, this study was not bounded by a system (Creswell).

Definition of Terms

Bibliotherapy refers to "a key strategy for promoting children's emotional intelligence within the classroom environment" (Verden, 2012, p. 620).

Content areas refer to the subject areas of English/language arts/reading, mathematics, history/social studies, and science (Ariail & Albright, 2006).

English Language Learners (ELL) refer to a national-origin-minority student who is limited in English proficiency and is one of the largest groups of students who have difficulty with literacy in general, specifically in vocabulary and comprehension (Hickman, Pollar-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004).

English-Only (EO) refers to students who only speak English (Silverman, 2007b).

Middle school grades refer to Grades 5-8 (National Middle School Association, 2001). However, the focus of this study was on Grades 6-8.

Motivation is referred to "as the fuel that drives all humans in the quest for learning and knowledge" (Corcoran & Mamalakes, 2009, p. 137).

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) is a test of reading and mathematics achievement that meets the testing requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The test is given each year in early March in reading and mathematics for Grades 3-8. The science test is given in April or early May (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003).

Primary grades are Grades 1-3 (Kraemer et al., 2012).

Reading comprehension is the "acquiring knowledge from text" (Jitendra et al., 2011, p. 135).

Reading specialists refer to "experts in the instruction, assessment, and leadership for the reading program. With their advanced preparation and experience in reading, they are responsible for the literacy performance of all readers, in particular those who struggle" (IRA, 2013, "Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist," para. 1). *Reading coaches, literacy coaches, and reading instructional resource teachers* are synonymous with *reading specialists.* The term, *reading specialists,* will be used throughout the study. *Reading specialists* can also lead read-alouds. Therefore, the term, *read-alouds,* will be used throughout the study instead of *teacher read-alouds*.

Shared story reading is the "practice used to access age-appropriate literature through reader-listener interaction with the reader and the story is supported" (Hudson & Test, 2011, p. 34).

Teacher read-alouds are "planned oral readings of a book or story in which the teacher builds background knowledge, explicitly teaches vocabulary, reviews text structure, and models comprehension strategies in text that is above their students' reading skill level" (Fien et al., 2011, p. 308). *Teacher read-alouds* refers to "the teacher reading aloud texts such as fictional and nonfictional literature, poetry, magazines, newspapers, etc. to students" (Ariail & Albright, 2006, p. 73). This does not include "reading aloud selections from textbooks, with the exception of literature anthologies. Reading aloud also does not include "reading aloud items such as directions or announcement" (Ariail & Albright, p. 73).

Delimitations

Delimitations were made for this study. Only reading specialists in the middle schools participated in the study. These specialists were employed by two public school systems in Maryland: (a) Anderson County Public Schools and (b) Christian County Public Schools. These specialists at the middle school level were chosen because the practice of reading aloud to students in the middle school grades is less well-researched (Ariail & Albright, 2006).

Assumptions

Due to the nature of the study, several assumptions were made. It was assumed the specialists answered the interview questions honestly. Additionally, it was assumed the researcher would not be biased and would not ask leading questions. The researcher created open-ended questions**,** and the members of the dissertation committee reviewed the questions to ensure the absence of leading questions. Audiotaping is considered the "most accurate method of recording interview information" (Gall et al., 2005). Use of this method ensured that the researcher did not overlook important information or take biased notes.

In the next chapter, a review of the literature on read-alouds in the middle schools is provided. Two theories were described and utilized to frame this study. Additionally, the use of read-alouds in the elementary schools and how the practice is used for different student populations were examined. The researcher also reviewed current studies on how reading may be integrated in the middle school classrooms across the content areas, although not necessarily read-alouds. Finally, arguments against read-alouds were found in the literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to examine whether read-alouds were used in the middle schools and the purposes for this practice. Additionally, the participants shared their perspectives on read-alouds across the content areas.

Teacher read-alouds are used as valuable practices in the elementary schools to model reading strategies. However, there is little research on whether read-alouds are used in the middle schools. Furthermore, few studies focus on how and why read-alouds are used across the content areas in the middle schools.

The goal of middle school education is to meet the distinctive needs and abilities of young adolescents (Stevens, 2006). This goal can be met by encouraging educators in schools to be proactive in meeting the needs of students (Stevens). It is the responsibility of educators to: (a) establish and facilitate a personalized learning environment, (b) generate meaningful curricula, and (c) encourage students to reflect and solve problems (Stevens). The main goal inside these personalized classrooms is to help students become life-long learners (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009). Additionally, "teachers of secondary students have two related instructional goals: to improve students' content knowledge and to improve their reading comprehension" (Vaughn, Swanson, Roberts, Wanzek, Stillman-Spisak, Solis, & Simmons, 2013). In order to be successful in any content area, reading is the foundational factor (Corcoran & Mamalakis). Assumptions can be made that middle school students are known for "negative attitudes and resistance toward reading" (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 350). However, when Ivey and Broaddus

conducted a survey of 1,700 sixth-grade students to respond to what made them want to read, the students revealed a different reaction toward reading: many student responses indicated that they have a desire to read. Some of the students' reasons for wanting to read were: (a) learning about different topics and allowing their imagination to run wild, (b) reading good and interesting books, (c) reading interesting books at the library, (d) dreaming of being a writer and director, and (e) having the choice of what to read.

Several factors contribute to middle school students' reluctance to become engaged skillful readers: (a) teachers do not differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs, (b) teachers do not take the time to show students how to be strategic readers, and (c) students are limited to teacher-selected class novels. Additionally, students are not given opportunities to have conversations about the literature (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Students have limited choices to: (a) explore their own interests in reading, (b) read at their own rate, and (c) make their own choices of books to read**.**

Listening to teachers read is an enjoyable activity for students and leads to positive attitudes toward reading (Ariail & Albright, 2006). When students respond to texts with positive attitudes, they are "informed by their own lives and experiences, drawing from their own ideas to build and create knowledge within the classroom" (Wiseman, 2011, p. 432). Although students express a desire to read, they still lack the motivation to read. Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) found that children are motivated to read when other people read to them. Additionally, family members, teachers, and the students themselves are sources of motivation.

Current literature in regard to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is outlined in the next section. Additionally, read-alouds are described, and current studies on read-

alouds are reviewed and analyzed. Furthermore, reasons supported by the literature are presented on the importance and benefits of all content area middle school teachers to read out loud. Current studies on the use of read-alouds across the content areas, along with the factors of student reading motivation are discussed, as well as the results from the studies. Finally, an overview of the gap in the literature and the need for further research is given.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

In Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, it is proposed that learners acquire a certain type of behavior from the: (a) modeling, (b) attitudes, and (c) emotional reactions of others. Specific to this study, social learning theory supports that students will learn from the teachers (Bandura; Kim, Jain, Westhoff, & Rezabek, 2008). Therefore, in this study, the students may observe teacher modeling and attitudes of read-alouds as motivation to use effective reading strategies. By the use of effective reading strategies, students may become strong readers.

Individuals can learn new behaviors through direct experience or observation (Bandura, 1977). Most human behavior is learned through the observation of modeled behaviors, whereby individuals can then perform that specific behavior with few errors (Bandura). Four types of processes occur in observational learning: (a) attentional, (b) retention, (c) motor reproduction, and (d) motivational.

Attentional processes. The simple observation of a behavior is not sufficient to copy the modeled behavior**;** an individual must attend to, and identify accurately, the notable characteristics of the modeled behavior (Bandura, 1977). The functional value of

the behavior is highly influential in the choice of which models the individuals decide to observe and which they will dismiss. Specifically, children learn from watching and learning from live models and, then, imitate that desired behavior (Zambo, 2006).

In the *Survey of Read-Aloud Practices of Middle School Teachers* (Ariail & Albright, 2006), teachers ($N = 476$) identified the most important reason why they read aloud to their students. Some of the choices were: (a) to increase/improve vocabulary**,** (b) to model fluent reading or to model word/vocabulary pronunciation**,** and (c) to promote a love of literature and/or reading. Ariail and Albright reported that one of the purposes for read-alouds is to model fluent reading and to model word/vocabulary pronunciation. When teachers model fluent reading and word/vocabulary pronunciation, students will observe these activities and may understand how to practice the strategy.

Retention processes. People must remember the modeled behavior they observe in order to be influenced by that behavior (Bandura, 1977). The observer gains the most from the observed modeled behavior when he or she can imitate that behavior from memory and the person who modeled the behavior is no longer present to provide assistance. With read-alouds, the students must remember how teachers read, and the strategies teachers used to monitor their comprehension. With this information in their permanent memory, students can copy the same reading behaviors.

Observational learning depends on two representational systems: (a) imaginal and (b) verbal. Some behaviors, such as repeated exposures of read-alouds, allow students to produce lasting, retrievable images of this modeled behavior (Bandura, 1977). Verbal coding of the modeled behavior regulates behavior. While a teacher reads aloud

from a text, verbal cues may be given as to what strategies are being used, questions the teacher may ask the students, or comments about the text.

Motor reproduction processes. When individuals are able to observe and retain the activities of a modeled behavior, they are able to convert these symbolic representations into suitable actions (Bandura, 1977). It is typical for individuals to err on first attempts to reproduce the modeled behavior. Therefore, to completely match the desired actions, feedback and self-corrective adjustments are necessary. In the classroom, middle school teachers should allow students to read and become engaged in reading (Gambrell, 2011). Teachers can then provide positive and constructive feedback and allow students to make self-corrective adjustments.

Motivational processes. Bandura (1977) maintained that people will imitate modeled behavior, if it results in outcomes they find important, rather than if it has unrewarding or punishing consequences. Individuals will "express what they find self-satisfying and reject what they personally disapprove" (Bandura, p. 29). For example, Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) found that fourth-grade students liked to read because of the characteristics of books and the knowledge they gained while they read a specific book. In the classroom, observing a teacher reading a book aloud can motivate students to read independently in the same manner with the use of reading strategies, and the students enjoy their reading time.

Coleman and McTigue (2013) studied how a teacher employed read-alouds to help her second-grade students understand science diagrams and other visual information. The teacher used trade books to read aloud to her students and then used the graphic features of the books to decode or *unpack* the visual information on tornadoes. The

students' attention was drawn to the graphics**,** and the teacher modeled how to "navigate [the] text with multiple graphics" (p. 74). The teacher asked questions, modeled how to study the visual information, and summarized the information from the drawing to establish how an individual can come to a conclusion about the topic. Also, the teacher modeled how an effective reader uses strategies to comprehend the text and graphics by "summarizing the diagram and the text, linking the diagram to the text, and then checking for understanding" (p. 75). Lastly, many informational texts like science books may show a diagram with three or more sequential parts. The teacher can model how a proficient reader can switch between the diagram and the words**,** a vital skill which is imperative to unpacking or decoding a multi-part sequential diagram.

If teachers model their learning and comprehension skills, students can become engaged and motivated to read and learn (Coleman & McTigue, 2013). Students need the coaching on how to approach complex information and the formats of fiction and non-fiction texts. Teachers scaffold children's literacy strategies through their use of explicit modeling of think-alouds. Teachers use the think-alouds to demonstrate problem-solving strategies and interpretive skills specific to the content area they teach.

Vygotsky's Sociohistorical Theory

In Vygotsky's (1978) sociohistorical theory, he held that children learn through social events as the child "interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment" (Oguz, 2007, p. 2). The human mind understands that new meanings and processes are linked to the: (a) cultural, (b) historical, and (c) instructional settings. There are three themes that Vygotsky identified: (a) the human mind can be understood by looking at how it changes, (b) participation in social activity promotes higher mental functions, and

(c) these higher mental functions are facilitated by the use of tools and signs (Hausfather, 1996; Oguz, 2007).

The genetic analysis of the human mind involves the analysis of processes, not objects. Vygotsky (1978) studied many children**,** and he concluded that child development was a two way relationship between the child and the social environment. The child's development is supported by the environment. Therefore, whatever the child can do at the present time, he or she will be able to do independently later.

Vygotsky's (1978) first theme is closely tied to the second theme of social activity in the promotion of higher mental functions. These "actual relations between humans" (p. 57) can help support each other and promote mental processes. These mental processes first occur on the social level, between people, and then on the individual level, inside the child. This external operation causes an internal reconstruction or internalization (Hausfather, 1996).

The third theme is also tied to human activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Higher mental functions are mediated by tools and signs. These tools are technical tools such as language, mathematics, writing, technology, or art. The tools serve as the executor of human influence on the type of activity to which it is oriented. In other words, the use of cultural artifacts, tools, and signs shape who someone is and how he/she views the world, while he/she recreates and changes the cultural artifacts which they inherited.

Scaffolding and zone of proximal development. Because of Vygotsky's (1978) sociohistorical theory, students learn under the guidance of teachers who support their progress through changes in task difficulty and provision of support to find a solution to the problem. This zone of proximal development (ZPD) allows the teachers to gradually

withdraw from the scaffolding so that the learners can perform independently (Oguz, 2007). It is critical that the scaffolding keeps students in the ZPD. In order for ZPD to effect cognitive change, each individual must take active roles in sharing understandings (Hausfather, 1996). Each individual must share a purpose and a focus and be interpersonally engaged.

Review of the Related Literature

Th**is** researcher reviewed the professional literature in order to examine the practices of teacher read-alouds in the elementary grades and the results of the read-alouds. Also, the members of different elementary school student populations, who benefited from the read-alouds, as noted within the literature, were examined. Current studies of reading instruction across the middle school content areas were presented. Additionally, opposing views of read-alouds in the classroom and the reasons behind those views were explored.

Reading Instruction in the Elementary Grades

The National Reading Panel (2000, as cited in Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001), which consists of leading scientists in reading research, as well as representatives of colleges of education, teachers, educational administrators, and parents, identified the five areas or subskills of reading instruction. The five subskills are: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) text comprehension. The possession of these skills and literacy knowledge has been shown to contribute to academic achievement (Lovelace & Stewart, 2007; Maynard, Pullen, & Coyne, 2010). Also, these researchers recommended that the study of literacy should not be limited to emergent readers (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008). Emergent readers are those students in

kindergarten through second grade and possess the following characteristics, according to Tompkins (2005):

> Learning the functions of literacy through observing and participating in real-life settings in which reading and writing are used, developing reading and writing abilities concurrently and interrelatedly through experiences in reading and writing, and constructing their understanding of reading and writing through active involvement with literacy materials. (p. 160)

Emergent readers are active readers, who create their own knowledge of reading and writing, with the assistance of parents and other literate people (Tompkins). Children experience reading and writing in different ways by their observation of other individuals, such as teachers, who participate in literacy activities (Bandura, 1977; Tompkins)

Comprehension is of utmost importance in reading because it is the main purpose: to construct meaning from text (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011; Gunning, 2005). According to the members of the National Reading Panel (2000, as cited in Armbruster et al., 2001), without comprehension, reading does not and cannot occur. One key component of reading comprehension is reasoning (Gunning, 2005). During reading, students may have "to infer character traits, judge a solution, analyze a situation, compare settings, draw conclusions, form concepts, apply a principle, or evaluate the credibility of information" (Gunning, p. 278). Reasoning and background knowledge are interrelated. Therefore, students must use their prior knowledge in order to make inferences, or other types of reasoning, correctly.

It is essential for teachers to teach and model comprehension strategies in whole group and small group reading so that students can use these strategies whenever they read (Stetter & Hughes, 2010). Some comprehension strategies for reading, which are supported by research are:

1. Introduce the Strategy
2. Activate Prior Knowledge and Teach Specific Vocabulary
3. Engage Students in the Purpose
4. Help Students Self-Monitor During Reading
5. Follow Up the Purpose
6. Elicit Additional Responses
7. Extend the Comprehension Strategy. (Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, & Moore, 2000, p. 186)

Students can be taught comprehension with the use of the reading strategies through: (a) direct explanation, (b) modeling, (c) guided practice, and (d) application (Armbruster et al., 2001).

Through direct explanation, the teacher gives an explanation of the importance of the comprehension strategies as well as the importance of each one (Armbruster et al., 2001). The teacher can model or demonstrate the use of the reading strategies so students can visually and auditorally understand each strategy. A common practice used to demonstrate each strategy is teacher read-alouds. Also, the teacher can use guided practice to guide and assist students about how and when to apply these strategies. Finally, the teacher guides and assists the students in application of these strategies until the student is able to apply the practices on his/her own.

Other components of effective reading comprehension are attention and engagement (Gunning, 2005; Wiseman, 2011). The student must read actively and purposefully (Armbruster et al., 2001). Teachers must identify the interest of students as they consider how to develop students' comprehension (Cunningham et al., 2000) and to increase attention and engagement. Children will engage in reading when they participate in effective read-alouds that model fluency and comprehension, and when the children have access to different genres of books (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). When children engage in literacy-based activities, positive results occur from increased participation in the classroom (Sanacore & Palumbo). Sanacore and Palumbo emphasized the importance and necessity for teachers to believe that all students can learn challenging reading material and create learning opportunities responsive to students' learning strengths and needs. When students are given the instructional support they need, such as read-alouds, to "achieve satisfactory comprehension with a reasonable effort, we are protecting them from experiences that undermine self-confidence in their ability to comprehend and to learn to comprehend better" (Cunningham et al., p. 178). Students will be apt to work harder and do their best when teachers are proactive in narrowing the achievement gap in reading.

Teacher Read-Alouds in the Elementary Grades

Read-alouds are also commonly known as: (a) shared story reading, (b) repeated storybook reading, (c) story-based lessons, and (d) literacy-based lessons (Hudson & Test, 2011). Utilizing read-alouds encourages nonreaders to participate in age-appropriate literature (Hudson & Test). An adult reads the story out loud and provides support, or scaffolding, for the student to interact with the reader about the story. During

this scaffolding, the adult "builds background knowledge, explicitly teaches vocabulary, reviews text structure, and models comprehension strategies" (Fien, Santoro, Baker, Park, Chard, Williams, & Haria, 2011, p. 308). Some features of read-alouds are "repeated story lines, attention getters (e.g., a seashell for a story about the beach), picture symbols paired with words, summarized text with controlled vocabulary, and repeated readings" (Hudson & Test, p. 34). Typically, shared story reading is used with early readers such as: (a) preschool students (Pentimonti & Justice, 2010); (b) kindergarten students (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Silverman, 2007a); and (c) first grade students (Kraemer, McCabe, & Sinatra, 2012; Maynard et al., 2010). However, read-alouds are not commonly found in the middle school years of Grades 6-8 (Ariail & Albright, 2006).

Teachers have used read-alouds as a scaffolding strategy to build vocabulary and comprehension skills (Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Browder, Mims, Spooner, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Lee, 2008; Coyne et al., 2007). Teacher read-alouds "are planned oral readings of a book or story in which the teacher builds background knowledge, explicitly teaches vocabulary, reviews text structure, and models comprehension strategies in text that is typically above their students' reading skill level" (Fien et al., 2011, p. 308). In addition, Kraemer et al. (2012) stated that:

> previous research has reported that young children who are exposed to text through read-alouds have demonstrated improvements in general language ability, comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition. By increasing young children's listening vocabulary, two benefits occur: (a) children will understand words when they are encountered during reading, and (b) building on a strong vocabulary base, they will learn more words at a faster pace. (p. 172)

Students learn the skills of comprehending text and increasing reading abilities through teacher reading instruction (Wiseman, 2011). Reading instruction not only helps the students learn when and how to apply specific strategies, but this method of instruction "should extend the reader's own experiences as language users" (Wiseman, p. 432). As a result, the skilled reader is able to recognize words and to comprehend text (Jitendra, Burgess, & Gajria, 2011).

Vocabulary gap. Although read-alouds may be a positive approach to teaching vocabulary and comprehension skills, the intensity necessary to close the vocabulary gap is missing during those critical sessions (Fien et al., 2011). In order for teachers to close the vocabulary gap, they must incorporate three components in the read-aloud: (a) definitional and instructional information of words must be present, (b) deep processing of words is encouraged, and (c) multiple exposures to words are provided.

Teacher scaffolding and modeling. As students become more exposed to read-alouds, the more familiar the students become with the components of a read-aloud. For instance, Wiseman (2011) found that, as the kindergarten students became familiar with the structure of the teacher's introduction to the read-aloud, the more they led conversations without prompting. The teacher asked open-ended questions and scaffolded students' comments throughout discussions. Students were also encouraged to share in ways beyond their own ways of thinking about the story. Wiseman observed the teacher encourage students to "question events of the text, make connections between their knowledge and the storyline, and interact together to make meaning" (p. 434). The teachers scaffolded the students so they could make meaning from the text.

Another important aspect of read-alouds is that it allows teachers to model cognitive instruction strategies (Jitendra et al., 2011; Sencibaugh, 2007), which can be used to teach students how to interact with the subject matter so learning can occur in a purposeful, self-directed, and self-governed environment. These strategies include:

1. Activating background
2. Inferencing
3. Summarizing
4. Predicting
5. Clarifying meanings
6. Questioning
7. Visualizing
8. Monitoring
9. Synthesizing
10. Evaluating, and
11. Connecting. (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 551)

If these cognitive instruction strategies are not employed while reading, students with a "very limited knowledge of language and word meanings" (Coyne et al., 2007, p. 74) will risk facing serious reading and learning difficulties. As a result of these difficulties, the students will be identified as having a language or reading disability (Coyne et al., 2007; Coyne et al., 2010; Fien et al., 2011). This vocabulary gap will grow larger in the early grades, particularly before second grade (Coyne et al., 2007). Further reading comprehension from the third grade and on will be based on the vocabulary knowledge in the early grades.

Student behavior during reading. Children, who are not read to, may find reading routines confusing and boring. While reading, the children may: (a) be off task, (b) respond to stories in unfamiliar ways, (c) find it unimportant to answer literal questions, and (d) be unable to discuss answers in a more fully, developed manner (Press, Henenberg, & Getman, 2011). Not only do read-alouds build the knowledge required for reading success (Trelease, 2006) but, also, reading aloud helps children understand and acquire school related behaviors (Press et al.). These behaviors include: (a) listen quietly, (b) understand story structure, (c) take turns speaking, (d) answer obvious questions, and (e) raise one's hand (Press et al.).

Students with Disabilities

Although literacy is one of the most important educational goals, it can be challenging to find a model for literacy for students with disabilities (Mims, Browder, & Baker 2009). In Durando's (2008) survey, 92% of teachers**,** who taught children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities, responded that they were interested in participating in a local training on teaching literacy skills for this population. However, less than one-half of the teachers believed that all students did not have to have reading skills**,** especially for those who do not meet the criteria for: (a) cognitive ability, (b) communication skills, and/or (c) functional vision.

Teacher read-alouds are conducted in the general education classroom with students of different cognitive and physical abilities (Wiseman, 2011). Read-alouds can build on the students' literacy strengths and expand their knowledge (Wiseman). Researchers have conducted studies on the following categories of students with disabilities and students' participation in read-alouds:

1. Learning disabilities (Jitendra et al., 2011)**;**
2. Speech and language impairments (Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Liboiron, & Soto, 2006; Lovelace & Stewart, 2007; Steele & Watkins, 2010)**;**
3. Multiple disabilities (Browder et al., 2008; Durando, 2008)**;**
4. Students with low vocabulary (Fien et al., 2011);
5. Intellectual disabilities (Mims et al., 2009);
6. Visual impairments (Mims et al., 2009); and
7. Down Syndrome (van Bysterveldt, Gillon, & Moran, 2006).

The results from each of these researchers' studies are discussed in this chapter. For example, Browder et al. (2008) strongly advocated that "every student should have access to literature throughout their lives with adaptations as necessary, such as text read aloud" (pp. 3-4).

Unfortunately, some students with disabilities lack the metacognitive skills necessary in order to understand the text. Swanson and De La Paz (1998) reported that researchers have "consistently demonstrated that poor readers, unlike good readers, do not acquire strategic reading behaviors by themselves, and that poor readers need to be taught *how, where,* and *when* to consistently carry out such procedures" (p. 209). Also, it may be difficult for students with disabilities to use the strategies simultaneously (Mason, Meadan, Hedin, & Corso, 2006; Swanson & De La Paz). Some of the established meta-cognitive skills are: (a) plan (pre-reading); (b) activate prior knowledge, (c) preview text, set the purpose for reading; (d) monitor (during reading): comprehending vocabulary, self-questioning, summarizing, inferring main idea of each passage, identifying key

information or key words; and (e) evaluating (after reading): applying knowledge to own life, identifying with author/characters, gaining a new perspective (Iwai, 2011).

Students with disabilities may have poor spoken vocabulary and impaired word learning ability (Steele & Watkins, 2010). Specifically, students with language impairments score "significantly lower than children with typical language on tasks of word recognition and reading comprehension, the two main components of reading ability" (p. 522). In first grade, students must have word recognition skills in order to possess effective reading comprehension (Maynard et al., 2010). When students come across a word unfamiliar to them, they will utilize words they have previously heard before in order to understand the word in the text. Therefore, strong vocabulary decoders are able to comprehend what they read and support the view that vocabulary knowledge is more important than word recognition skills.

Although reading comprehension is a major concern in the schools (Antoniou & Souvignier, 2007; Sencibaugh, 2007), qualitative researchers have found a lack of focus on reading programs and interventions for children with disabilities (Browder et al., 2000). Some members of society have concluded that students with disabilities cannot improve from the provision of reading instruction and are regarded as incompetent readers (Browder et al., 2009; Hollenbeck, 2011). Furthermore, Hudson and Test (2011) found that students with disabilities were taught only functional sight words and picture identification; thus, they received only limited reading instruction. This limited reading instruction supports the Browder et al. (2009) and Hollenbeck (2011) view that students with disabilities may be seen as individuals who will never become efficient readers.

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Repeated storybook reading (RSR) is a type of read-aloud because its use: (a) enhances vocabulary and comprehension, (b) facilitates language development, and (c) increases interest in literacy (Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Trivette, Simkus, Dunst, & Hamby, 2012). However, the only difference between RSR and a read-aloud is that the use of RSR requires repeated exposures of the text to the students (Trivette et al.). In a study conducted by Bellon-Harn and Harn, scaffolding strategies were incorporated during the RSR, while the participant used an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Additionally, "AAC is typically prescribed when children are struggling with learning to communicate with speech or if they are at risk for having delayed speech development because of a diagnosed condition such as Down Syndrome or autism" (Brady, Thiemann-Bourque, Fleming, & Matthews, 2013, p. 1595).

The AAC systems can come in different forms and appear different depending on the skills and needs of a specific communicator (King & Fahsl, 2012). The AAC systems can rely on**:** (a) unaided (e.g., manual signs or gestures); or (b) aided (e.g., pictures of words) symbols included within electronic or non-electronic devices used to deliver and receive messages (King & Fahsl, 2012). Examples of electronic devices are: (a) the iPad (Mcnaughton & Light, 2013); (b) the iPod (van der Meer et al., 2012); and other mobile devices. These electronic assistive devices are known as speech-generating devices (van der Meer et al.).

The types of non-electronic devices are picture exchange and manual signing (van der Meer et al., 2012). The picture exchange requires students to request preferred items or needs with the use of symbols affixed with Velcro to a card. One card can hold a

drawing showing two hands reaching out with the words "I want" written underneath it and then another card can hold a drawing of a specific action (e.g., "to play," "something to eat," "go to the bathroom"). Manual signing requires children to communicate with the use of sign language in their language.

In Bellon-Harn and Harn's study (2008), a child participant had severe impairments and the researchers wanted to observe if the provision of AAC would have an effect on speech production. The researchers stated**,** "children with developmental disabilities are less responsive and less reciprocal in their interactions, which leads to fewer opportunities to participate in scaffolded interactions that support language development" (p. 112). The researchers used repeated storybook reading (RSR) in order to support oral language and literacy.

In Bellon-Harn and Harn's (2008) study, modeling was the most frequently used strategy, and prompts were the second most used strategy during RSR. Positive changes occurred in the two treatment conditions. The student provided a large number of utterances to answer the comprehension questions during the AAC condition, due to the researchers' modeling and prompts (Bellon-Harn & Harn). Bellon-Harn and Harn concluded that, through the use of AAC, more opportunities are present to scaffold interactions and may assist the quantity and quality of the student's communicative interactions.

Liboiron and Soto (2006) found that, with the use of AAC, the practitioner and student made an almost equal number of contributions during the shared storybook reading session. The instructional time provided a joint-attentional framework where the student and practitioner had extended and complex conversations. Comprehension

questions were mostly used, followed by cueing, pointing and gesturing, print references, expansions, yes/no questions, and constituent questions.

Although it has been found that the use of AAC is important for students with disabilities during storybook reading interactions (Da Fonte et al., 2010; Liboiron & Soto, 2006), often, these systems are omitted during the storybook reading. This absence limits the child's opportunity to: (a) ask questions, (b) predict outcomes, (c) repeat storylines, (d) tell the story, or (e) comment on a particular character. Furthermore, Browder et al. (2008) suggested these studies with AAC use should be conducted in an inclusive grade-appropriate classroom to determine whether the results would be different.

Limitations have been noted in the previously discussed studies. Some of the limitations are: (a) the physical settings of the studies**,** small group instruction or one-on-one format (Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Browder et al., 2008; Liboiron & Soto, 2006; Lovelace & Stewart, 2007; Mims et al., 2009; van Bysterveldt et al., 2006)**;** (b) the duration of the study was short (Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008)**;** and (c) the study was conducted by someone other than the classroom teacher (e.g., clinician, member of the research team; Bellon-Harn & Harn; Browder et al.). Additionally, (a) only two ethnic groups were represented in the population (Coyne et al., 2007); and (b) the standardized tests were developed by the research teams (Coyne et al., 2007; 2009). This small group instruction or one-on-one format means the student(s) with disabilities are outside the general education classroom. Students with disabilities may perform better in a small-group setting rather than a whole-group setting in the general education classroom. However, students with disabilities are not the only population who may benefit from read-alouds.

Students with Behavioral Challenges

The use of read-alouds can help students with behavioral challenges (Verden, 2012). Literature can be a valuable resource and strategy for helping children form resiliency with childhood difficulties. It may difficult for some adolescents to communicate their thoughts and feelings, such as those with emotional/behavioral disorders, and they may find beneficial models in books. When adolescents with behavioral challenges read about others**,** who are similar to themselves, they may not feel as detached, different, or alone with their problems. These youths lack the capability to cope with their emotions appropriately and often display aggressive classroom behavior.

However, bibliotherapy has been found to be an important strategy to foster children's emotional intelligence within the classroom environment (Hickman & Verden, 2009). In order for bibliotherapy to be successful, a trusting bond between the student and teacher is vital (Verden, 2012). Therefore, "reading aloud provides an opportunity for a trusting relationship to develop between the child and the teacher" (p. 620). In addition, while students listen to the read-aloud, bibliotherapy can be employed to provide a channel for increased academic achievement and emotional development for students with emotional concerns.

Students with Low Vocabulary

Fien et al. (2011) studied the students in a small-group vocabulary instruction to supplement the Read Aloud Curriculum for students with low vocabulary. The researchers hypothesized this small-group vocabulary instruction would help this population close the vocabulary and comprehension gap. The intervention and control groups had whole-group instruction, but the intervention students also received small-

group booster instruction. The results from the assessments revealed small-group instruction enhanced vocabulary knowledge and expository retellings of students with low vocabulary and language skills. The small-group instruction was seen as an added value to the whole-group instruction. The intervention showed significant effects ($\gamma 010 = 5.98$, $t = 3.44$, $p < .01$) on vocabulary knowledge and expository retell, and it helped to close the vocabulary gap with the non-risk peers in the control group. However, the intervention did not have any statistically significant effect on narrative retell ($\gamma 010 = -0.26$, $t = 2.87$, $p < .01$). This small effect may be due to the fact that the researchers' primary goal was for students to transfer the expository vocabulary and knowledge to their understanding of expository content. Additionally, the narrative retell was measured by the Strong Narrative Assessment Procedure (Strong, 1998), and the researchers developed the expository retells and vocabulary knowledge measurement. The researchers identified the measurements as a limitation to the study and acknowledged the fact that the measures were created to be more related to the content taught in the small-group intervention. Therefore, it may be that the inclusion of a wider selection of standardized tests would have increased the external validity of the research findings.

Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary plays an important role in the English language, and it is vital to the reading process (Coyne et al., 2007; Coyne et al., 2010; Fien et al., 2011; Maynard et al., 2010; Silverman, 2007a; Steele & Watkins, 2010). Beginning readers use words they have heard to make sense of the words they see in the text (Armbruster et al., 2001).

Also, vocabulary plays a part in reading comprehension. Children cannot understand what they read, if they cannot decode the words.

Maynard et al. (2010) studied which types of vocabulary instruction helped first-grade students understand the meaning of the story words during storybook readings. The first grade students were placed in three different groups; each group were assigned to a condition: (a) rich, (b) basic, or (c) incidental. The rich instruction condition was created to provide direct teacher instruction on the meanings of the vocabulary words in the story reading. Also, the condition provided extension activities for students to develop word meanings at a deeper and more advanced level. Furthermore, the students were given opportunities to interact and discuss the words outside of the story. The basic condition was created to provide the same direct teacher instruction on the meanings of the target words as the rich instruction group. However, the students in the basic condition group did not receive extension activities. Lastly, the incidental instruction condition was created to facilitate discussion of the story and asking questions. Although the target words appeared in the story, the teachers did not teach or discuss the terms. The researchers found that the students in the rich and basic groups performed better than the incidental group on all taught measures. Additionally, the researchers concluded that the use of direct vocabulary instruction, with multiple opportunities for practice and exposure in different contexts, was an efficient intervention for the study of new target words and to improve vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, repeated storybook readings may have influenced the significant differences between the treatment conditions ($p < .05$).

Although Maynard et al. (2010) were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of direct and rich instructional methods to teach students vocabulary skills, teachers must

determine which approach is the most practical and valuable for their students. The two types of instructional methods depend on the goal of instruction: to enhance vocabulary development or to simply introduce students to new word meanings. Additionally, Maynard et al. concluded that educators need to take into consideration those students with disabilities, who struggle with decoding word meanings.

Earlier, Coyne et al. (2007) compared different types of vocabulary instruction and found results, which were supported in the Maynard et al. (2010) study. Coyne et al. compared extended instruction to embedded instruction and incidental exposure. The researchers found that students, who received vocabulary instruction, performed better on the posttest than the control group. Furthermore, the extended instruction group performed much higher than the incidental and embedded instruction. Additionally, the extended instruction group was able to retain the word meanings 6-8 weeks after the treatment without review or practice. Unfortunately, the researchers did not report how long the other groups retained the word meanings after the condition (Coyne et al.).

In a later study, Coyne et al. (2010) found that students scored higher on a vocabulary assessment due to the provision of an extended session after the teacher read-aloud session. As hypothesized, the kindergarten students who were only given incidental exposure to the words without extended session scored lower on the measures. The results of the Fien et al. (2011) study showed, through small-group instruction, students' vocabulary can improve through explicit comprehension and vocabulary instruction given before, during, and after reading.

Comprehension Instruction

Comprehension is defined as "making sense of what is read" (Armbruster et al., 2001, p. 41). Specifically, Armbruster et al. identified a vital trait of good readers, the ability to monitor their comprehension. In instruction for comprehension monitoring, students are taught to "be aware of what they do understand, identify what they do not understand, and use appropriate 'fix-up' strategies to resolve problems in comprehension" (p. 42). Good readers: (a) have a purpose for reading, (b) are active in their reading, and (c) make sense of what they read. Effective readers use their knowledge of reading strategies in order to resolve any comprehension problems they may encounter.

In Grades 1-3, reading comprehension and vocabulary skills are strong, but when they enter fourth grade, many students' reading scores drop (Kraemer et al., 2012). Specifically, vocabulary is the first skill to decline (Kraemer et al.; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). As a result, reading is difficult for many fourth grade students, and their comprehension is poor (Kraemer et al.). This is referred to as the *fourth-grade slump* (Kraemer et al.; Sanacore & Palumbo).

Kraemer et al. (2012) reported that "one explanation for this decline in reading achievement is a shift from a known genre to one that is less familiar" (p. 165). During Grades K-3, students primarily read narrative texts and have a strong understanding of this type of genre. In comparison, during Grade 4 and above, students are required to read expository/informational (EI) texts and related vocabulary. The use of academic vocabulary and the increased complexity of expository texts can cause the students in Grade 4 to be poor readers (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). One way to prevent this decline

in reading achievement is to expose students to more EI text in the earlier grades (Kraemer et al.; Sanacore & Palumbo,). However, a simple and cost-effective way to introduce EI text is through teacher read-alouds.

Kraemer et al. (2012) studied the likelihood of first graders to choose EI text or narrative text for independent readings as a result of exposure to these texts through read-alouds. Before the read-alouds, 59 of the 77 participants chose EI text compared to the narrative text. Before the intervention, the students' mean scores on the comprehension of narrative materials were much higher than that of EI material ($t(76) = 9.129$, $p = .000$). The mean score on the narrative pretest was significantly higher than on the EI pretest (4.45 [$SD = .787$]). After the read-aloud intervention, only 58 participants chose EI text, and 19 students chose the narrative texts. The researchers concluded primary grade teachers needed to create the necessary schema for understanding the EI style. Young children can be successful with exposition and teachers providing the exposure to EI text can build children's background and vocabulary knowledge (Kraemer et al., 2012).

Students with visual impairments and intellectual disabilities. Mims et al. (2009) maintained that, although some students may not be able to become fully literate, all students should be given the opportunity for literacy learning. As a result, the researchers evaluated a strategy to engage students, with visual impairments and severe intellectual disabilities, in literacy instruction through the use of a shared story. Also, the researchers evaluated whether a least-to-most prompting system would increase the number of independent comprehension responses during the lesson. Mims et al. found that the students with significant intellectual disabilities and visual impairment showed increases in comprehension across all three shared storybooks due to the use of prompts

during intervention. Although the students showed improvement in literacy, some limitations were noted in this study. For this study, the instruction was provided in a one-to-one format. In comparison, shared stories are usually provided to students' literacy in a group format, whether in the general education or self-contained classroom, not in a one-to-one format. However, it was acknowledged that students, who are visually impaired and with intellectual disabilities, might not be able to give responses in the general education classroom or even in a small group format.

Students with language learning disability (LDD). Steele and Watkins (2010) found that Grades 4 and 5 students with Language Learning Disability (LDD) and their same-aged peers did differ in their ability to define and identify basic word meanings encountered during self-reading assessments. In comparison to their peer, **s**tudents with LLD performed poorly on oral definitions and multiple-choice tasks. However, neither group of students was able to achieve notable scores on the position of informative context**.** That is, the students did not understand the vocabulary word "whether the informative context was positioned directly following the target word's initial occurrence or was separated from the target word's initial occurrence by one sentence" (p. 534). Also, the number of exposures and parts of speech did not impact word-learning performances. Lastly, the use of context clues helped the groups, although the students identified as typically-developing scored higher. Through teacher read-alouds, students, with or without disabilities, can learn how to use decoding skills in order to understand the text.

A number of researchers have found and discussed the importance of the use of teacher read-alouds in the general education classrooms and for students with disabilities

in the areas of language growth and reading achievement (Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Browder et al., 2008; Coyne et al., 2007; Coyne et al., 2010; Fien et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2008; Kraemer et al., 2012; Liboiron & Soto, 2006; Lovelace & Stewart, 2007; Maynard et al., 2010; Mims et al., 2009; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010; Silverman, 2007; Steele & Watkins, 2010; van Bysterveldt et al., 2006). However, few of the findings from these studies detailed how teacher read-alouds can motivate and engage student learning, and build positive attitudes toward reading (Albright, 2002; Ariail & Albright, 2006; Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Ivey & Broaddus, 2000, 2001; Wiseman, 2011).

English language learners (ELL). The use of teacher read-alouds provides frequent opportunities for ELLs to enhance their literacy. When teachers read aloud, they are modeling the process of reading to this student population (Bolos, 2012). Typically, ELL students struggle with reading comprehension and vocabulary due to the differences in: (a) prior knowledge, (b) home literacy practices, (c) language skill, (d) language flexibility, and (e) language proficiency (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004). Therefore, ELLs need opportunities to actively participate in literacy activities and to learn and practice reading skills (Anderson, 2012; Hickman et al.; Ranker, 2007).

Silverman (2007b) developed a Multidimensional Vocabulary Program to determine whether English-Only (EO) and ELL kindergarten students learned vocabulary words taught in the intervention at a similar rate and whether the students in these groups across the classrooms grew in overall vocabulary knowledge at similar rates. The sample consisted of 94 students, and the intervention was delivered in six classrooms. Each intervention was randomly assigned to one classroom from each of the two schools. One

book was read to the students for 1 week, and then 2 weeks were used for review of the vocabulary words. The Researcher Vocabulary Assessment (RVA) was used to assess students' knowledge of target words before and immediately after the instruction intervention. The RVA consisted of two subtests: a picture, or receptive, measure and an oral, or expressive, vocabulary measure. The picture measure required students to choose one of four pictures that symbolized the vocabulary word. The oral measure required students to define the word orally.

Silverman (2007b) found differences across the five classrooms. On the initial vocabulary measures, the EO students scored about 10 points higher than the ELL students, and the differences between groups on the measures were statistically significant at the .05 level. At posttest and follow-up, the difference between EOs and ELLS on the RVA picture vocabulary subtest was smaller and not statistically significant. However, the EOs and ELLs showed significant improvement at the .05 level in knowledge of target words from pretest to posttest. Neither groups showed substantial gains or losses from posttest to follow-up. The ELLs seemed to be catching up to the EOs in knowledge of target words. Also, the EOs and ELLs improved on the oral vocabulary subtest at similar rates, and both groups EOs and ELLs improved notably from pretest to posttest. Silverman concluded that the ELL students could learn words from instruction as fast or faster than EOs, and intervention in vocabulary can be equally effective for EOs and ELLs when given the proper instruction.

Coyne et al. (2010) researched the efficacy of an 18 week program of direct and extended vocabulary instruction with kindergarten students on proximal measures of target word knowledge and transfer measures of generalized language and literacy. The

kindergarten students were considered at risk for literacy and language difficulties due to the demographic data and performance of state reading assessments.

During the Coyne et al. (2010) study, the students took a pretest, and the researchers noted little differences between the control group and the treatment group on the target word measure. After the intervention, the groups were administered the posttests, and the treatment group outperformed the control group, especially in the target word learning. The study was troubling to the researchers because the vocabulary instruction had benefitted some students more than others. The vocabulary instruction widened the gap rather than decreased it. Therefore, Coyne et al. recommended that vocabulary researchers design and evaluate "interventions that significantly increase the intensity of vocabulary support for students at risk of experiencing language and learning difficulties within a comprehensive and coordinated system of multitier supports" (p. 116). Although closure of the vocabulary gap continues to be an intense challenge, it also continues to be an urgent problem for schools and researchers.

Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD). Students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) are another population who may benefit from teacher read-alouds. It is difficult for many students, who are diagnosed with ADHD, to: (a) be organized, (b) stay focused, (c) make realistic plans, and (d) think before acting. Also, they may be: (a) fidgety, (b) noisy, and (c) unable to adapt to changes in situations**.** In addition, they may be: (a) defiant, (b) socially incompetent, or (c) aggressive (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Zambo (2006) used read-alouds in order to help her preschool students with ADHD achieve academic, social, and emotional goals. Zambo chose to use picture books

because they had intellectual and behavioral value. When the students heard the stories, there was improvement in their: (a) vocabulary, (b) understanding of the story structure, and (c) listening skills. However, she used the books for the additional purpose to help her students understand themselves and their behaviors.

Zambo's (2006) read-alouds were a regular part of her class schedule and occurred in the same physical space in her classroom. She stated**,** "I tried to make connections between the challenges that a picture book character was facing and the challenges that my students faced (p. 2). Also, throughout the day, Zambo referred to the ideas discussed during the read-aloud. Read-alouds can be an important part of a student's day because these books can help children: (a) face real-world problems and challenges, (b) understand themselves, and (c) cope with tragedies.

Nonfiction Read-Alouds

Press et al. (2011) reported that both fiction and nonfiction read-alouds have been studied in order to document the success of read-alouds. However, Press claimed much reading is nonfiction for various reasons. For example, boys often like facts presented in nonfiction more than they enjoy a story**.** Although nonfiction structure is less familiar to the students, it "capitalizes on children's interests and leads them to be engaged readers" (p. 37). Nonfiction is often built around a main idea, which must be identified in order to understand the information. Typically, the text is organized into: (a) description, (b) explanation, (c) cause/effect, (d) problem/solution, (e) sequence, and (f) compare and contrast. The use of nonfiction read-alouds can build this knowledge (Albright & Ariail, 2005) and contain different features of text in order for readers to be aware of important

information such as: (a) fonts, (b) text structures, (c) clue words, (d) graphics, and (e) text organizers (Press et al.).

Press et al. (2011) observed Grade 3-6 students in two Brooklyn, New York schools**,** where teachers read nonfiction books as part of the literacy instruction. Two teaching techniques were observed in addition to the read alouds: think alouds and turn and talk. Think alouds are "used to show the thought processes the [readers] use as they attempt to construct meaning" (Gunning, 2005, p. 49). The reader explains his or her thought processes while reading the text. Turn and talk occurs when "teachers stop, ask a question and have students share ideas with each other by turning and talking to the student next to them" (Press et al., p. 38).

In the classrooms in the two schools, Press et al. (2011) observed the teachers' objectives were to help children: (a) use text features, (b) develop vocabulary, (c) connect with the text, and (d) understand text structure. The teachers modeled questioning and used think alouds to demonstrate strategies. Also, the students turned and talked within small groups to stimulate prior knowledge and make predictions along with reading and discussion of the text. Read-alouds in a sixth grade social studies class was used as a summative activity on a unit on the Holocaust. The teacher used the read-aloud to discuss important aspects of the text and help students with their own moral choices. Although Press et al. claimed that much reading is nonfiction, Trelease (2006) maintained that much reading is fiction.

Fiction Read-Alouds

In the 2009 survey, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010) reported that 15 year old youth in 64 nations**,** who read the

widest variety of material**,** had the highest literacy scores. Also, the researchers found that most of the variety consisted of fiction books. According to Trelease (2006)**,** fiction is the literature that "brings us closest and presents the meaning of life most clearly to the child" (p. 18). Although reading helps individuals become better readers, fiction can force "us to concentrate the most in order to find meaning, and therefore deepens our 'engagement' and helps comprehension" (p. 19).

Press et al. (2011) concluded that students of all ability levels can gain from read-alouds of different genres. Through read-alouds, students can understand the importance of reading comprehension. Additionally, students can understand they need to work hard to develop the reading strategies required of them to learn more in the content areas. According to Press et al., effective classroom practices are:

1. Identify the goals, objectives, strategies, and skills to be taught.
2. Read many genres. In nonfiction, explanations and the uses of print features, graphics, organization, and font need to be demonstrated.
3. Read the beginning of a long text and have students finish it. This develops interest, background knowledge and connections between the text and the student.
4. Introduce new vocabulary words and explain how to pronounce them. This is important for students with limited decoding skills and ELLs.
5. Use open-ended questions to help students to determine how they would act or feel during important events. What moral choices would they make?
6. Let students read to other students.
7. Teach listening skills and note taking.

8. Help students create graphic organizers to determine the main points and structure of the text.
9. Have written copies and audio versions of the text available as a follow-up to the read-aloud**.** (p. 41)

Reading Instruction and Student Attitudes in Middle School

There are mixed messages and inconsistency in middle school reading instruction across the U.S. (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Although there is an emphasis on students being valued as individuals, teachers do not always differentiate instruction to meet each student's needs. Students are required to read complex texts, but the majority of teachers do not take the time to show them how to be strategic readers (Ivey & Broaddus). Furthermore, due to state testing, teachers are pressured to teach commercial reading programs and to prepare students for the tests (Enriquez, 2013).

Many middle school students adopt a negative attitude and display resistance toward reading (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). However, when these researchers surveyed 1,700 sixth grade students to determine what motivates them to read, the students gave responses, which demonstrate a hidden desire to read. The students liked to read good books, liked to read books from the library, and enjoyed having the freedom to read texts of their choice. Additionally, students enjoyed interesting books and preferred books that allowed their imagination to run wild.

Integrating Reading in Secondary Content Areas

The members of International Reading Association and the National Middle School Association (IRA & NMSA, 2001) argued,

> young children must get off to a good start in reading; however, it is a serious mistake to assume that a good start is sufficient for producing confident readers. The ability to comprehend a variety of texts, to use sophisticated comprehension and study strategies, to read critically, and to develop a lifelong desire to read is not acquired entirely during the early years. A good start is critical, but not sufficient. Middle school students deserve continued and systematic instruction in reading. (p. 1)

Also, the members of IRA and NMSA (2001) were aware that the middle school years are a critical time for students in regard to literacy. During middle school, students should: (a) enhance their reading preferences; (b) become mature readers of informational texts; and (c) lay the foundation for the lifelong reading habits they will use in their personal, professional, and civic lives. Middle school students can be successful readers in and out of the classroom when they are exposed to: (a) good instruction, (b) sufficient time, and (c) opportunity to read across the different types of texts.

Additionally, in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), implemented in the United States in 2012, literacy instruction is required in the topics of: (a) English language arts (ELA), (b) history/social studies, (c) science, and (d) technical subjects (National Governors Association Center for Best Practice and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). According to the authors of the CCSS**,** it is "a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA)" (para. 2). In 43 states**,** including Maryland, the setting of this study, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have voluntarily adopted the CCSS. In the CCSS, it is specified that students must learn to read, write,

speak, listen, and use language successfully across the content areas in order to prepare students for college and career fields. Therefore, there are clear descriptions of the necessary literacy skills and knowledge required for college and career preparation in various subjects from Grades K-12.

Although teaching reading in the content areas is important, researchers and teacher educators have struggled to help content area teachers understand the benefits when they implement reading in their classrooms (Hall, 2005). Teacher educators may treat reading as a general task and not address the specific ways of how reading can be helpful in their content course. Additionally, teachers are not given the opportunities to reflect on how and why reading strategies can help their students better understand the subject matter.

Santaro, Chard, Howard, and Baker (2008) examined how teacher read-alouds can be used to address standards in science and social studies in a first grade classroom. Santero et al. described a first grade teacher, who was frustrated that she was not able to fully cover reading, mathematics, and other content areas such as science and social studies, because she wanted extra time to teach students how to apply comprehension strategies. Santaro et al. found that teachers could help students learn to read and apply comprehension strategies through the use of teacher read-alouds and discussion about the text. Additionally, the students in the read-aloud classrooms had more to retell than the control groups. Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke (2008) maintained that every teacher possesses the knowledge and skills to incorporate reading instruction across the curriculum, and every content area teacher can provide reading instruction within their specific area.

Social studies and literacy. An essential practice for citizens in a democratic, multicultural society is to learn how to locate, comprehend, evaluate, and use written and visual information (Reidel & Draper, 2011). A strong democracy is "one rooted in action and engagement, [and] depends on the ability of the people to not only comprehend what they read but to also question and challenge it" (p. 124). Although it has long been argued that literacy plays a critical part in society, literacy instruction has not been included in social studies or citizenship education (Levstik, 2008; Parker, 2008). In addition, literacy instruction has not been fully or explicitly explored in social studies. This gap is primarily due to the reluctance of many social studies teachers to incorporate reading instruction into their teaching methods (D'Arcangelo, 2002; Hall, 2005). Hall held that, often, teachers feel it is not their responsibility to teach reading strategies, and they consider themselves as experts of a particular content area, not as an expert that includes interdisciplinary studies. Furthermore, middle school teachers may not feel they have the time to teach reading as well as their subject area (Reidel & Draper; Vaughn et al., 2013), especially since "the standards and testing movement is strongly connected to the increased attention to literacy and mathematics at the expense of the social sciences and arts" (Guidry, Cuthrell, O'Connor, & Good, 2010, p. 23).

Unfortunately, it is not enough for students to simply comprehend what they read in the social studies classroom (Reidel & Draper, 2011). Hall and Piazza (2008) argued it could be challenging for teachers to promote and apply critical literacy practices with their students, if they have not been guided into this practice. It is important for teachers to model reading and to provide students with access to a wide range and variety of texts in order to help students create their own literacy skills (Hall & Piazza). Teachers'

attitudes and beliefs about reading can have a meaningful effect on the motivations and engagement levels of their students (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

Vaughn et al. (2013) studied the effects of an intervention designed to improve reading comprehension and content knowledge in a social studies class with eighth grade students. The treatment classes were given social studies content instruction that emphasized text-based reading and used the text as a tool to focus on key ideas and issues. Additionally, these classes participated in team-based learning (TBL), which required that students work together to complete tasks and to participate in meaningful discussions. The control classes did not participate in social studies content instruction in which text-based reading was emphasized nor the TBL. The researchers found that students in the treatment groups outperformed the control groups on all outcome measures: (a) content knowledge, (b) content reading comprehension, and (c) standardized reading comprehension. Therefore, the researchers recommended that reading comprehension instruction should be implemented across the content areas**.** Also, classroom teachers should develop and implement techniques that improve content learning and reading comprehension.

Science and literacy. Members of the National Research Council (2000) argued that inquiry is the cornerstone of the science curriculum. An inquiry-based curriculum "recognizes science as a process for producing knowledge that depends on careful observations and grounded interpretation" (Fang & Wei, 2010, p. 263). In an inquiry-based curriculum, students can actively and collaboratively engage in the problem-solving process:

1. Identify a problem
2. Propose a hypothesis
3. Design an experiment
4. Collect data
5. Analyze data, and
6. Draw a conclusion. (p. 263)

In this inquiry-based curriculum, students are required to develop specific skills: (a) gain science knowledge, (b) use high-level reasoning, (c) apply existing understanding of scientific ideas, and (d) communicate scientific information. Fang and Wei believed "in this new conception, reading is inextricably tied to the very nature and fabric of science" (p. 263). Reading is the strong force to: (a) engage students' minds, (b) promote the construction of conceptual understanding, (c) support inquiry, and (d) nurture scientific habits of mind. The absence of text and reading makes it impossible for individuals to engage in science and, in order to know big ideas in science, general reading ability is necessary (Fang & Wei; Romance & Vitale, 2012a). Additionally, many elementary students are not engaged in content-area reading, which allows them to understand the natural connection between everyday language and the practices of science. Furthermore, numerous elementary and middle school educators approach reading comprehension as the main focus in the curriculum due to the high-stakes testings. Therefore, reading comprehension and writing are treated as separate subjects from the other content areas across Grades 3-12 (Romance & Vitale). Consequently, elementary and middle school students are not able to integrate reading comprehension and writing in the content areas. Specifically in the sciences, students seldom have

opportunity to develop background knowledge and inquiry/reasoning skills connected with a deep level of understanding in science and proficiency in reading comprehension (Romance & Vitale). Since the foundation in reading comprehension for the science content area is not strong, the lack of student success in high school science courses is apparent.

Radcliffe et al. (2008) suggested that, although reading is important in the science class, weaknesses in textbook subject matter and ineffective approaches to teaching with text may prevent textbook reading from being valuable. Members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2002) reported that many science textbooks are inadequate and do not align with the standards-based principles for concept learning. Certainly, this could be a reason for science teachers to avoid the assignment of textbook reading. Additionally, matching students' reading levels and the reading levels of their assigned textbooks is a concern (Wallace, 2005). Furthermore, the content of science textbooks: (a) can confuse students, (b) contain unfamiliar vocabulary, and (c) present challenging text structures (Fleming & Billman, 2005).

Morgan (2012), noted that, at present, many primary school teachers are concerned that they are inadequate and inefficient as science teachers**,** and they feel they are not sufficiently literate in the field of science. Also, many **t**eachers have low levels of self-efficacy as science teachers, and this is due to the lack of time, which is reserved for science teaching. Morgan surveyed 20 teachers, and the most highly rated items were "teachers enjoying their students' engagement with science, getting a buzz out of seeing them discover things in science, and being excited about teaching the science of a current event" (p. 84). Although, the rankings implied that the teachers cared about their

students' education, the number of responses was identical for each question, when teachers were asked if they dreaded a science lesson or looked forward to one.

Although an ample amount of research on the effects of reading instruction on science learning and teaching a single reading strategy are present, only a few current researchers have examined the effect of systematic incorporation of reading instruction with science on students' learning outcomes (Fang & Wei, 2010; Morgan, 2013). Fang and Wei examined sixth grade students and compared the scores of two groups based on their posttest scores of a standardized reading test and a curriculum-referenced science test. The students in the experimental group used an Inquiry-based Science Plus Reading (ISR) program, and those in the control group participated in the Inquiry-based Science Only (IS) program. In the ISR program, the science teachers and reading educators selected one reading strategy, based on the science topic to be included and the science texts to be read. The experimental group also had access to a home science reading program (HSRP). The program had a two-fold purpose: (a) to develop students' science content and vocabulary knowledge and (b) to practice the reading strategies taught in the classroom.

The students in the ISR experimental group outperformed those in the IS control group in the fundamental aspect of science literacy. Fang and Wei (2010) concluded that the ISR students became more strategic in their reading, which allowed them to better manage the demands of secondary texts.

Fang and Wei (2010) emphasized the need for more integration studies in the content area classrooms at the secondary level. The researchers recommended that future studies should be focused on the composition of reading infusion in the science

classroom. The composition of reading infusion includes: (a) teach comprehension strategies; (b) read and respond to science trade books; and (c) teach strategies to *unpack* the language of science, writing, or different combinations of these three. Also, they recommended future studies on the duration and intensity of implementation of reading in the context of the inquiry-based science.

Morgan (2013) used a Design-Based Research approach to explicitly teach her students how to use scientific technical language through science writing. The teacher in the study used several lessons to discuss the terms on the unit about bridges. The students labeled the bridges, used the words in spellings lists, participated in classroom discussions**,** and used the technical language of bridges. The students also researched the terms and wrote about bridges. The teacher modeled how to make the writing more efficient and accurate, so that it would be considered scientific writing. At the end of the experiment, the researcher found that the various strategies, which involved discussion, manipulation with the vocabulary, different types of exposures to words, and writing about the bridges, improved the students' technical language and better understanding of textbook language. Through this experiment, the teacher reported that she noticed: (a) increased student engagement, (b) increased student satisfaction in their writing, and (c) improved literacy outcomes for the students. Additionally, the teacher felt the students would remember the knowledge gained and be better prepared to respond positively to the requirements of secondary science literacy. Lastly, the teacher felt more confident about herself as a science teacher.

Another evidence-based practice, which has taken place in educational reform, is Science IDEAS (Romance & Vitale, 2012b). Science IDEAS was developed to support

the integration of literacy, such as reading comprehension, within science instruction. This instruction consists of "in-depth daily science instruction (e.g., multiple conceptually focused, inquiry-based instructional learning experiences) incorporating reading and writing [which] replaces traditional reading/language arts instruction in grades 3-5" (p. 506). The Science IDEAS model consists of six main conceptually linked instructional components:

1. empirical inquiry/hands-on activities,
2. content-area reading comprehension,
3. propositional concept-mapping,
4. journaling and writing,
5. projects, and
6. prior knowledge/cumulative review. (p. 509)

The major multi-year research findings from the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) showed significant effects on the science and reading scores (MAT Science +.93 Grade Equivalent [GE] adjusted mean difference; ITBS reading, +.33 GE adjusted mean difference; Romance & Vitale, 2012). From 1992-1998, 51 classrooms from Grades 4-5 participated in the Science IDEAS model for 1 year, and the students showed significant improvements in the MAT science and ITBS reading assessments, respectively (+1.11 GE adj. mean diff.; +.37 GE adj. mean diff.). However, the students in 15 of the fourth and fifth grade classrooms participated only for 5 months, and there were no significant effects for the fourth grade students. In 2002-2007, Grade 3-5 students from 12 schools participated in a multi-year study, and significant main effects in the ITBS science and reading portions were found

(ITBS science, +.38 GE adj. mean diff.; reading, +.32 GE adj. mean diff.). From 2005-2007, Grade 1-2 students from 4 schools showed significant main effects in ITBS science and reading (science, +.16 GE adj. mean diff.; reading, +.58 GE adj. mean diff.).

Based on the findings, Romance and Vitale (2012a) concluded that an increase in instructional time for science in Grades K-5 should include increased time for integrated science instruction to prepare for secondary science instruction and to improve student proficiency in reading comprehension. In addition, science in Grades K-5 should include content-area**,** reading comprehension across Grades 3-8. The researchers strongly advocated for educators to replace traditional reading/language arts instruction with a comprehensive science instruction that integrates reading and writing.

English/language arts and literacy. Stevens (2006) focused on the improvement in reading and writing performance of students in two urban middle schools on the East Coast of the U.S. The goals for these programs were to: (a) integrate reading and English classes, (b) use good literature as a foundation for reading instruction, and (c) engage students in meaningful instructional tasks. Additional goals were to: (a) provide explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, (b) use writing as a focus for language arts instruction, and (c) use cooperative learning to promote learning and positive peer relations. A Student Team Reading and Writing (STRW) program was created to develop a model for middle school literacy instruction focused on the goals. The results indicated that the STRW classes had statistically significant ($p < .05$, $p <. 01$) higher student achievement on measures of vocabulary, comprehension, and written expression.

Although comprehension strategies are taught in the schools in order for students to apply the strategies to text, Pomerantz and Pierce (2013) reported that teachers find it

difficult to teach strategy. Additionally, it was found that students with lower comprehension skills in reading made greater gains when they were in classrooms where more explicit reading comprehension activities were provided. Similarly, it has been found that students with higher reading comprehension skills have made greater gains**,** when they were in classrooms with time spent in individualized reading activitie**,** such as silent reading (Pomerantz & Pierce).

Due to the increased concern about the difficulty of teaching reading comprehension strategies, Pomerantz and Pierce (2013) examined how professional development, based on knowledge building, co-teaching, and coaching, effected teachers' application of explicit comprehension instruction. The explicit instruction consisted of: (a) explicit teaching, (b) teacher demonstration of the skill or strategy, (c) guided practice, and (d) independent practice of the skill or strategy. The researchers acted as coaches and evaluators of the participating teachers and used checklists to observe the teachers before and after the professional development. During the professional development sessions, the researchers: (a) reviewed principles of effective vocabulary instruction with the teachers, (b) modeled a comprehension and vocabulary instruction in the classrooms, and (c) co-taught with the teachers in the classrooms.

After 2 years of professional development, Pomerantz and Pierce (2013) found improvements in the teachers' ability to deliver effective comprehension instruction. However, after the professional development sessions, there were still different challenges the teachers faced in order to implement specific components of comprehension instruction. Several teachers did not model the strategy and, therefore, the students were not able to complete the independent task. Although other teachers

were able to explain and model the strategy, it was difficult for them to allow the students to use the strategy and think on their own. Instead, teachers began to share their own numerous answers, known as *over-modeling*, and did not allow students to develop their own answers. The last challenge that the researchers found was that the students did not have any opportunities to read and the amount of texts available was sparse. The researchers recommended an in-depth model of successful coaching, which would shape knowledge and help teachers to deliver what they know about comprehension strategy instruction and other effective practices in the language arts.

Teacher Read-Alouds in the Middle School

Just as reading aloud to elementary students and students with disabilities is beneficial, also, there are many benefits to reading aloud to students in the middle grades (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Ivey, 2003). Reading aloud increases the accessibility of texts to students, who are unable to read the texts themselves (Ariail & Albright; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Also, when teachers read interesting texts out loud, aliterate students (i.e., able to read but choose not to) become more motivated to read themselves (Ariail & Albright). Additionally, students find read-alouds an enjoyable activity and adopt positive attitudes toward reading (Ariail & Albright; Cunningham, 2005; Gambrell, 2011). Furthermore, reading aloud to middle school students: (a) improves background knowledge in content areas (Ariail & Albright; Fisher et al., 2011; Press et al., 2011); (b) increases reading fluency (Ariail & Albright); and (c) increases aptness to make decisions (Ariail & Albright). However, in comparison to elementary students, fewer empirical studies have been conducted with middle school

students (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Ariail & Albright, 2006; Braun, 2010; Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Press et al., 2009).

Many educators recommend reading aloud to students, but there is little awareness of the nature of the read-aloud practices beyond elementary school (Albright & Ariail, 2005). Several researchers promote reading aloud to older students (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Fisher et al., 2011; Hickman & Verden, 2009), and middle school students have reported they enjoy and respect teacher read-alouds (Albright, 2002; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Additionally, teacher read-alouds are highly valued by the members of National Commission on Reading (NCR, 1985). The NCR staff described read-alouds as "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (as cited in Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). Also, the members of NCR advised teachers to continue reading to students in Grades K-12.

Additionally, middle school teachers can use different texts and sources besides the classroom textbook to engage and motivate students to increase their understanding of a specific content (Albright, 2002; Albright & Ariail, 2005; Zehr, 2010). Short read-alouds can be used to: (a) introduce a new topic, (b) demonstrate practical applications of content area concepts, and (c) insert humor into the classroom (Albright & Ariail). Specifically, picture book read-alouds are utilized in the content areas, such as social studies, to: (a) engage students, (b) motivate higher order thinking, and (c) strengthen content-area knowledge (Albright). Also, teachers have reported that they use reading aloud: (a) to make the lesson interesting, (b) to make literature come alive, (c) to model good reading by asking comprehension questions, or (d) because the students love the

read-alouds (Zehr, 2010).

Reading aloud "help[s to] unclutter students' minds and also introduces them to genres they might not be familiar with" (McQuillan, 2011, p. 30). Students learn that reading has a specific purpose but, also, that it is enjoyable. Students are able to listen at a higher level than they can read independently, so complex ideas are more accessible. In addition, vocabulary and language patterns are used, which are not part of everyday speech (McQuillan). The skill of imagination in many children is underdeveloped; therefore**,** listening to a novel improves children's ability to be creative and engage in imaginative thinking. Read-alouds help students process information and document that information for future reference, such as character mapping. Students can learn more in a content area**,** when teachers read texts outside of the textbook.

Read-alouds allow students to listen to how the author writes (McQuillan, 2011). Writer's craft allows students to understand what descriptive language sounds like and provides the teacher with opportunities to discuss descriptive language. Teachers can also think a-loud the process of writing so that students can improve their writing skills (McQuillan). Again, the strong benefits of read-alouds in the middle school classroom are present; even though, there is a lack of empirical research on the practices of read-alouds.

Positive feedback from middle school students. Middle school students have provided positive feedback in regard to the use of teacher read-alouds (Albright, 2002; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Albright found read-alouds were used in a seventh grade social studies class, in order to promote engagement and learning. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) surveyed 1,700 sixth grade students. The results indicated that teacher read-alouds were

one of the two most preferred reading activities in school. Students viewed the read-alouds as a support to understanding**,** because the teacher made the text more understandable or more interesting to them (Ivey & Broaddus). Additionally, Pflaum and Bishop (2004) found that the students in their study favored teacher read-alouds over silent reading

Although previous researchers have concluded that the use of teacher read-alouds in the elementary grades can have positive results for motivation and learning, there is little research about continuous teacher read-aloud practices beyond those grades. This lack of research is troubling because middle grade students need effective instructional practices in reading (Albright & Ariail, 2005). The youth have shown their desire for teacher read-alouds in order to make connections between their schooling and their lives (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Verden, 2012). Therefore, middle school teachers' lack of knowledge about read-aloud practices motivated this researcher to explore whether teachers read-aloud to their students and how they use the practice in their content areas.

Reading Specialists/Literacy Coaches

The staff of the IRA (2013) upholds the value of teaching reading to all children and recommended that every school should have a reading specialist. Reading specialists provide "expert instruction, assessment, and leadership for the reading program. With their advanced preparation and experience in reading, they are responsible for the literacy performance of all readers, in particular those who struggle" (IRA, para. 1). The reading specialist supports classroom teaching and collaborates with teachers to create a quality reading program. Also, the specialist assesses the reading strengths and needs of students and shares this information with classroom teachers, parents, and specialized personnel**,**

such as special educators, speech teachers, or psychologists. Lastly, the reading specialist shows leadership in the school and is a resource to other educators, parents, and the community (Helf & Cooke, 2011; IRA).

McCombs and Marsh (2009) found that the presence of middle school reading coaches or specialists had positive effects on the teachers, principals, and the schools. The content area teachers claimed the reading coaches "influenced them to change their instruction during the year. In addition, most principals reported their coach had a positive effect on their own knowledge, on the sense of community among teachers, and on students' motivation to read" (McCombs & Marsh, p. 503). Also, the teachers and principals reported positive effects when the coach strongly encouraged the integration of reading across the content areas.

Negative Correlations Between Teacher Read-Alouds and Reading Achievement

Although many positive aspects of read-alouds are present in the literature, Lane and Wright (2007) identified negative correlations between the time teachers spent reading aloud and their students' reading achievement. When teachers spend more time reading aloud to students, students' reading skills tended to be lower than in classrooms where there was less time spent on read-alouds (Meyer, Wardrop, Linn, & Hastings, 1993). In the Meyer et al. study, few students interacted with the text**,** and students had less time to read independently in classrooms, where read-alouds were utilized. Pflaum and Bishop (2004) found that older middle school students enjoyed silent reading**,** because it allowed time and quiet for personal pleasure along with more practice in reading.

Ferger (2010) provided another negative perception of read-alouds in the secondary school classrooms. Frager viewed reading as "an act of reconstructing the writer's ideas, feelings, mood, and sensory impressions" (p. 33). Students, who listen to a story read aloud**,** will not be able to use the same meaningful construction activities as they would in silent reading. The construction activities are: (a) predict, (b) visualize, (c) ask clarifying questions, and (d) summariz**e**. A teacher reconstructs the author's ideas and feelings and**,** therefore, the listener's (i.e., or student's) engagement with the text is more passive than in silent reading. The student may create a mental image or ask a comprehension question while listening, but may find it unnecessary to do so because the teacher will use cues to signal to the students when to engage their feelings or to pay attention to a detail.

Frager (2010) found silent reading was a more effective way to engage students in reading and to improve student comprehension than teacher read-alouds. He suggested that teachers should allow students to read silently in class. If students' reading skills are low, and the class text is above their reading level, then teachers must find more appropriate instructional level texts for them.

However, Frager (2010) noted that simply changing from oral reading to silent reading would not increase student learning. Instead, teachers should emphasize students' increased attention during silent reading and then their comprehension and responsiveness to text through discussion. Additionally, "teachers need to hold students accountable for what they read; they need to encourage students to read carefully, reduce their motivation to skim through text, and minimize opportunities for distraction while they wait for their peers to finish reading" (p. 37).

Zehr (2010) found teacher read-alouds can be overused and can do grave injustice to the students. One teacher reported that the use of read-alouds was appropriate to motivate students and to get the students started into the daily lesson, but not to read them too much. The teacher felt students needed to learn to read by themselves. Another teacher believed teacher read-alouds did not address poor reading skills and poor content knowledge, which should have been addressed in elementary school. Due to some of the negative perspectives toward read-alouds, a closer examination of read-alouds is necessary in order to find other perspectives about this activity. This researcher examined teachers' practices and students' attitudes towards read-alouds through the perspectives of reading specialists.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the literature on how read-alouds were used in the elementary grades, students with special needs, and the perspectives students had about read-alouds. Furthermore, integration of reading across the content areas in the middle schools were examined. Finally, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Vygotsky's (1978) sociohistorical theory were presented as the framework for the study.

In Chapter Three, this researcher presents the methodology, which was used in this study. The design, research questions, and description of the participants are presented. Additionally, the setting of the study, the data collection, data analysis and the role of the researcher are described. Finally, the trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations are discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the read-aloud experiences of five middle school reading specialists in rural and suburban Maryland school districts. In addition, the researcher examined: (a) the reasons teachers do or do not read aloud to their students; (b) the type of text teachers most frequently read aloud to their students; and (c) the type of opportunities they provided their students for responding to the text before, during, and/or after the read-aloud. Data about these factors were collected during the interviews.

Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson (2005) listed and described the quality indicators within qualitative research in order to meet high standards. These indicators are: (a) interview studies, (b) observation studies, (c) document analysis, and (d) data analysis. This researcher used the collected interview data and subsequent analyses to meet high standards for qualitative research. Presented in this chapter is the methodology of the study. The design, research questions, participants, setting, instrument, and procedures are explained. Data collection and analysis procedures are presented. Finally, trustworthiness and ethical considerations are addressed.

Design

There are two different approaches to phenomenological studies: hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental or psychological phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). Hermeneutic phenomenology is research that describes the lived experiences of an individual and describing these "texts" (p. 59) of life. The researcher interprets the

different meanings of the lived experiences. The focus of transcendental phenomenology is not to interpret the different meanings of the experiences but, rather, to describe the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, use of the transcendental design requires the researcher to set aside any prior experiences of the phenomenon in a transcendental manner: "everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, p. 34). In order to perceive everything freshly, the researcher must *bracket out* her views before proceeding with the experiences of others. This personal bracketing is also called an *epoché*, and the researcher wrote her views and prior experiences with read-alouds as an epoché (see Appendix A).

A qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was employed. The researcher focused on exploration and description of the reading specialists' experiences with read-alouds in the middle schools. Arail and Albright (2006) reported that there is a gap in the literature in regard to the use of read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools; therefore, it was imperative to interview the reading specialists who collaborated with the teachers across the grades levels and content areas to describe and explain how read-alouds are used across the content areas in the middle schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

RQ1: How do middle school reading specialists describe their experiences with read-alouds in the classroom?

RQ 2: What reasons do participants give to support read-alouds in the middle schools?

RQ3: How do participants describe the impact the read-aloud program has across the curriculum?

RQ4: How do participants' perceptions of read-alouds compare/contrast?

Participants

A criterion and convenience sampling were utilized for this study because the reading specialists were accessible to the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Reading specialists were asked to participate, because they are considered "professionals whose goal is to improve reading achievement in their assigned school or district positions" (International Reading Association [IRA], "Standards 2010: Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach," 2013, para. 1). To be certified as a reading specialist, one must: (a) possess a valid teaching certificate, (b) have previous teaching experience, (c) hold a master's degree with a concentration in reading and writing, and (d) participate in program experiences that develop the knowledge and skills needed to work with students. Additionally, reading specialists support teachers and lead the reading program at the school. Also, they serve the role of advocates for children with reading difficulties and needs.

A snowball sample was used since a sufficient number of reading specialists could not be identified (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). This type of sampling allowed the participants to recommend other individuals who were likely to provide "relevant, information-rich data" (Gall et al., p. 311). Possible participants for the snowball sample were: (a) reading interventionists, (b) reading teachers, (c) reading resource teachers, and (d) reading remedial teachers. The researcher worked with four reading resource teachers

and one reading specialist for her study. Thus, a total of five participants were contacted to gain permission for focus groups and one-on-one interviews.

Setting

The study took place in two public school systems in Maryland. Maryland educators voluntarily adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; 2012) and, therefore, alignment of curriculum to meet the CCSSwas a key factor in the use of teacher read-alouds. The reading specialists provided support in two public school systems: Anderson County and Christian County, both names are pseudonyms. Anderson County is located in a rural setting of Maryland. The school system consists of 15 schools: (a) 8 elementary schools, (b) 4 middle schools, (c) 2 high schools, and (d) 1 alternative education school. Anderson County has approximately 7,752 students and 373 professional teachers. Approximately 98% of the teachers hold a standard or advanced teacher certificate. The school system has four middle school reading specialists, but only one specialist agreed to participate in the study.

Christian County Public Schools is located in a rural/suburban area in Maryland. The school system consists of 27 schools: (a) 17 elementary schools, (b) 4 middle schools, (c) 3 high schools, (d) 1 charter school, (e) 1 career and tech center, and (f) 1 academy. The county has approximately 17,840 students and 1,420 teachers. Approximately 95% of the teachers are highly qualified, and 39 teachers are nationally board certified. The school system has four middle school reading resource teachers and all four participated in the study.

Date, time, and location were set as agreed upon between the participants and researcher for focus groups. The use of focus groups are "advantageous when the

interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information" (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). The participants from Anderson County and Christian County did not meet together for focus groups. The researcher met with the participant in Anderson County at the specialist's school of employment. The researcher met with two participants in Christian County one day and then met with the other two participants another day. After the focus groups, dates and times were established with each participant for one-on-one interviews at her school placement (Creswell, 2007) or through Face Time.

Procedures

A letter was emailed to the superintendent for each county for approval to conduct the study (see Appendix B and Appendix C). In the letter, the significance and purpose of the study were presented. In addition, the researcher submitted the Liberty University Internal Review Board **(**IRB) application after the successful completion of the proposal defense. After IRB approval (see Appendix D) was received, a recruitment letter was sent to the participants (see Appendix E) regarding the significance and purpose of the study along with the criteria for participant selection. Consent forms were sent via email (see Appendix F) and the date, time, and exact location were scheduled for the focus group interviews. One focus group was created. Since Anderson County only had one participant, the focus group questions were included in the individual interview. In Christian County, the focus group was conducted first, and then individual interviews took place afterward. Due to the participants' time constraints, further interview sessions

took place via Face Time with the one participant in Christian County. Additionally, emails were sent to each participant, which included a follow-up question. The participants were informed the focus group interview would take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. The consent forms included the significance, purpose, and benefits of the study. Additionally, the participants were informed that they could withdraw themselves and their responses from the study at any time. The interviews were audiotaped and verbatim notes were taken. The participants were reassured that pseudonyms would be used, and the audiotapes and notes would be destroyed 3 years after the study was published per IRB regulations.

The Researcher's Role

Growing up, I enjoyed being read to and listening to books on tape. Although I grew up learning Korean first, much devoted time was spent in reading and being read to by family members. Although I was born and raised in the United States and went to public school since preschool, my mother spoke to me in Korean because it was easier for her to communicate with me. However, by fourth grade, I was able to speak English fluently. Wanting to give back to the students, I strive to find how read-alouds can help all students across the grades, not just the elementary years.

I remember vividly being read to in fifth grade. My teacher read out loud every day near the end of the day. The teacher read from the *Paddington Bear* series that helped me strengthen my listening comprehension and an increased pleasure toward read-alouds. I enjoy reading and preferred reading independently over being read to, but through personal experience and the review of the literature, it has increased my

motivation to read aloud to my own young children on a daily basis and to other children when opportunities arise.

I read out loud to my fifth grade students when I was in the teaching field for 2 years. However, I felt read-alouds took too much time out of instructional time and, therefore, I did it only when there was extra time in the day. Again, due to personal experience of being read to and reviewing the existing studies on teacher read-alouds, I will make sure I read to my future students when I return to the school setting.

I had no relationship to the participants in any of the middle schools. I did teach for one of the school systems, but when I contacted the reading specialists, their participation was completely voluntary. One participant was a STEM teacher at the school I was employed at, but her participation was voluntary. The reading specialist requested a copy of the focus group and individual interview questions in order to help her understand the purpose of the study and to become more comfortable with the interviews. My role in the setting was to be an interviewer and recorder of the experiences, opinions, and thoughts of professional experts in the area of reading. Additionally, I had no bias toward the participants due to an interview protocol created and checked for any possible bias or leading the questions.

Data Collection

After approval was obtained from the members of the Liberty University IRB and the superintendent, the researcher emailed the participants about the study and for permission for their participation. Once the participants signed the consent form, the date, time, and specific location was established for the focus groups from each county.

Focus Group

A focus group interview protocol was used to guide the session (see Appendix G). After the focus groups had met, individual interviews were set up at the location of the school of employment. The focus of the group questions were on the background of the reading specialists and their knowledge of read-alouds. Additionally, these questions were the building blocks for the individual interviews.

The members of the groups were informed that the interview would be audiotaped, and they were reassured that confidentiality would be maintained. During the conduct of a focus group, participants are allowed to engage in conversation and to build upon each other's lived experiences. With the one participant in Anderson County, this researcher was able to have more of a conversation with her since there were no other participants present. Meeting with the group face-to-face made it possible to note facial expressions, body language, and the interaction among all five participants. The following questions were used during the interview.

1. Please introduce yourself (alias that the participants chose or I assigned, years of employment at current school system, years as reading specialist, role as reading specialist).
2. What is your definition of teacher read-alouds?
3. Are you aware of any teachers reading aloud to their students?
4. If so, which content area teachers? What grades? Describe.
5. If not, which content area teachers? What grades? Describe.
6. Does your school provide professional development opportunities for integrating read-alouds across the content areas?

7. If so, please describe.
8. Have you asked for training teachers on read-alouds as part of a future professional development? Why or why not?
9. Do you wish to see teacher read-alouds in the classrooms?
10. Why or why not?

Interviews

The data, which were collected for this transcendental phenomenological study, came from the informal, conversational, audio-taped interviews. An interview protocol was used to direct the session (see Appendix H**??**), but flexibility was maintained by modification and adjustment of the questions as the interview developed. The purpose of the questions was to elicit and understand in depth the participants' personal experiences with teacher read-alouds. As Creswell (2007) stated, the "important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it" (p. 131). Creswell recommended a sample of 5-25 people to participate in a phenomenological study. Five reading specialists were recruited for the study.

Focus group interviews and individual interviews were transcribed and analyzed by this researcher. The data are stored on her laptop as files and protected with a password. Additionally, the data are saved on a flash drive as backup (Creswell, 2007). The thumb drive is password protected and kept in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher has the key. The written data (e.g., interview notes) and audiotape USB are stored in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher has the key. The teachers' names, which were used on written and typed data and on the audiotapes, are pseudonyms (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005).

Data Analysis

The analyses of a phenomenological study can result in many pages of field notes (Gall et al., 2005). NVivo 10, a qualitative data analysis software, was utilized in order to collect, organize, and analyze the data from the interviews. The researcher entered the data from the Word documents and audio files into NVivo 10. The audio recorder had a USB that could be plugged into the computer and transferred all the conversations into the NVivo 10 program. In order to analyze all the words and conversations from the interviews, an interpretational analysis was used in order to identify important and profound findings.

Epoché

Interpretational analysis was appropriate for this study because it "involves a systematic set of procedures to code and classify qualitative data to ensure that the important constructs, themes, and patterns emerge" (Gall et al., 2005, p. 315). The first step in data analysis was to bracket or creat**e** an epoché of statements of any presumptions the researcher had about teacher read-alouds (Moustakas, 1994). Creating an epoché allowed the researcher to set aside all preconceived experiences in order to best understand the experiences of the reading specialists in the study (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 2004). The researcher used a researcher's journal to bracket her thoughts throughout the study (e.g., before each interview, during each interview, and after each interview) so that she could focus on the participants (see Appendix A**??**).

Horizonalization

Next, the researcher prepared a database, which contained all the data (e.g., interview transcripts) collected during the study. She separated "the process of data

preparation and analysis by transcribing interviews verbatim" (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 181), and she listed "every significant statement relevant to" (Creswell, 2007, p. 235) the topic of teacher read-alouds (Moustakas, 1994). This analysis is known as horizonalization. Each statement had equal worth, and the list contained nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements. The exact words of the participants were recorded, along with nonverbal communication such as "pauses, laughter, interruptions, changes in vocal tone or emotion" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 181).

Meaningful Units

Next, the researcher sorted and coded results in meaningful categories also called *meaning units* (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Creswell, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010). For example, the reading specialists may report that mathematics teachers may not read out loud to their students because they do not have a background in teaching reading. Each segment of the observation notes was coded into one or more applicable categories. The meaning units were grouped according to the research questions.

Textural and Structural Description

Thick descriptions were used to further analyze the data using textural descriptions and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2007). Textural descriptions described what the reading specialists experienced with read-alouds, and the structural descriptions described how these read-alouds happened. The structural description provided insight about the setting and context of the read-alouds. The aim was to "provide rich, in-depth descriptions of the experiences, perspectives, and physical settings represented in the data" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 185). The thick descriptions can make readers feel like they can experience the events described (Creswell).

Essence

Lastly, the essence of the read-alouds was described (Creswell, 2007). The essence is a "composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions" (p. 159). The essence explained what the reading specialists experienced with the read-alouds and how they experienced it.

Trustworthiness

In order to construct compelling findings, trustworthiness was necessary to evaluate this research (Kline, 2008). The components of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility. Disconfirming evidence was examined (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Gall et al., 2005). After creating the categories, the researcher searched for evidence, which was inconsistent with these themes, also known as *outliers* (Brantlinger et al.; Gall et al.). These outliers are notably different from other comments or answers, which the participants may give.

Member checks (Creswell, 2007) were necessary by having "participants review and confirm the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of interview transcriptions" (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201). The researcher may have missed some part of the discussion between herself and the participants or parts of the discussion were not audible through the audiotape. After analysis and interpretion of the data, an outlier may be found, and the researcher can ask the specialists to validate this outlier and/or validate the researcher's conclusions. All of the participants approved the final transcriptions for accuracy and to be published in the final manuscript.

Peer review or debriefing requires a person "familiar with the phenomena being studied review and provide critical feedback on descriptions, analyses, and interpretations or a study's results" (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201). The peer reviewer for this study was an elementary school instructional resource teacher, who holds a Ph.D in education. The peer debriefer asked challenging questions about the methods, meanings, and interpretations of the study and ensured honest analysis throughout the study (Creswell, 2007).

Dependability and confirmability. An audit trail was kept in order to analyze and support that sufficient time was spent with the participants. Specific times and dates were recorded for each focus group and interview in order to provide dependable and confirmable results (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Gall et al., 2005).

Validity and transferability. Validity is necessary to support the concept that the phenomenon is justified and well supported (Creswell, 2007). Several methods to verify validity of the study are thick, detailed descriptions and peer debriefing. Thick, detailed descriptions are characteristics of adequate "quotes and field note descriptions to provide evidence for researchers' interpretations and conclusions" (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201). This thick description helped the researcher with particularizability. Particularizability requires "documenting cases with thick description so that readers can determine the degree of transferability to their own situations" (p. 201). Lastly, peer debriefing was used. The researcher asked the dissertation committee to review and provide feedback on the descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of the study and its results.

Ethical Considerations

Every qualitative researcher will face ethical issues during the data collection and analysis of the reports (Creswell, 2007). In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to the participants and documented the pseudonyms on the interview transcriptions and audiotapes. Letters of consent were provided to the participants for permission to interview and audiotape the sessions. In the letter, the researcher emphasized the importance of anonymity in the study. General information was presented about the study in order to gain support from the participants and to not deceive the participants.

Data are stored on the researcher's electronic files that require a password, and all handwritten field notes and audio USB are locked in filing cabinets. All audio records and field notes will be destroyed 3 years after the completion of the study per IRB regulations.

Presented in the next chapter are the findings from the study. A background of each participant is provided. The participants shared their experiences and perceptions of read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools. The researcher took notes verbatim and after analyzing the data, meaningful units or themes emerged to provide the overall essence of the phenomenon of read-alouds in the middle schools.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to describe the reading specialists' thoughts in regard to their experiences with and perceptions about the use of teacher read-alouds in the middle school classrooms, and the perceived impact, which these read-alouds have across the curriculum. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was conducted in order to understand the essence of the experiences and opinions of five reading specialists who have participated in read-alouds in the middle schools (Creswell, 2007). Two focus groups and five individual interviews were conducted. The analysis of the data is provided.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of middle school reading specialists towards read-alouds across the content areas. This research study was guided by four research questions:

RQ1: How do middle school reading specialists' describe their experiences with read-alouds in the classroom?

RQ2: What reasons do participants give to support read-alouds in the middle schools?

RQ3: How do participants describe the impact the read-aloud program has across the curriculum?

RQ4: How do participants' perceptions of read-alouds compare/contrast?

Data Collection

After sending out letters of approval (see copy in Appendix A) to eight school systems in Maryland, five participants agreed to participate. Focus groups were

conducted, based on location of the school systems: Anderson County and Christian County (i.e., names of counties are pseudonyms). Since only one reading specialist agreed to participate, a focus group was not conducted in Anderson County. The Anderson County reading specialist answered both sets of questions during the individual interview. Two focus groups were conducted in Christian County.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were arranged, in order to gather background information about the reading specialists and their views on read-alouds in a discussion-based format. This type of interaction among the reading specialists allowed cooperation and each interviewee shared information about their experiences of the similar phenomenon of teacher read-alouds (Creswell, 2007).

In Christian County, each of the two focus groups consisted of two reading specialists. The focus group interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and took place in the classroom of one of the reading specialists. Interview protocols were distributed to each participant, the voice recorder was turned on, and the introduction and instructions were read aloud to the participants. The interview protocol contained five questions with prompts**,** and the questioning became flexible as the discussion developed into further detail (see Appendix G). The audiotapes and notes were coded, and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. The written notes and audiotape are secure in a locked filing cabinet for the next 3 years.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were the second type of data collected for this study. Creswell (2007) emphasized that participants must have the opportunity to discuss their

experiences in order for the researcher to describe the meaning of the phenomenon. The interviews were semi structured and informal. The interview was audiotaped, while notes were taken during the individual interview protocol (see Appendix H); the protocol contained prompts to guide the discussion about teacher read-alouds. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Three types of individual interviews were used: (a) face-to-face, (b) Face Time, and (c) e-mail. The audiotapes and notes were coded, and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality

In Christian county, individual interviews took place immediately after each focus group. All individual interviews took place face-to-face. However, Theresa and I were not able to finish our interview because of her schedule, so we set up a date and time to talk through Face Time. We were only able to talk for 18 minutes when a personal situation arose. After multiple attempts to meet again via Face Time, Theresa asked if I could send the protocol to her via email. Theresa emailed the completed protocol back at her earliest convenience. An email was sent to the four participants on a final question for the study.

Since Diane was the only participant in Anderson County, our discussion was led through the focus group and individual interview protocol. An email was also sent to Diane on a final question for the study.

Participants

The five participants in the study were reading specialists, who were considered experts or professionals in the area of reading in the middle schools. Recruitment letters (see Appendix E) were emailed to the participants after superintendent and Liberty University Internal Review Board **(**IRB) approval was obtained (see Appendices B, C,

D). Also, consent forms (see Appendix F) were emailed to the reading specialists, and the signed forms were collected through email or in person at the focus group interviews.

All the interviews were transcribed by myself, and I listened to the interviews at least twice to ensure accuracy and that pseudonyms were used consistently in the transcriptions. The documents were emailed to the participants to verify accuracy and to determine whether participants wanted to add any more information to their responses. All participants agreed to have their discussions for final use in the manuscript. The participants' profile information is displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Information

Participant	Years in Education	Years in Current School System	Years as Reading Specialist
Amy	9	9	1
Beth	7	7	2
Diane	2	1	1
Lisa	41	20	18
Theresa	14	14	7

Presented in this chapter are the findings from the data analysis. First, the participants are described, and then analysis of the data is presented as recommended by: (a) Creswell (2007); (b) Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010); and (c) Moustakas (1994). This analysis consisted of: (a) an epoché of my personal experiences with read-alouds (see Appendix A); (b) classification of significant statements; (c) grouping of statements into meaningful units according to the research questions; (d) development of

textural and structural descriptions of reading specialists' experiences and perceptions of read-alouds in the middle schools; and (d) overall description of the essence of the phenomenon of teacher read-alouds in the middle school classrooms.

Descriptions of Participants

The participants provided background information about themselves as a reading specialist and their responsibilities. Also, **t**he specialists described their experiences with read-alouds in the elementary and middle school levels and their perceptions about read-alouds in the middle school classroom. This information was collected during the focus group and individual interviews.

Amy. Amy has taught in Christian County for 9 years, and this is her first year as a reading specialist in the middle school. She has her Master's Degree in Human Resources with a concentration in Educational Leadership. She is currently continuing her education for another degree. Although she is available for assistance with any content area teacher in the school, she works closely with 20 teachers: 13 English/ language arts teachers and 7 social studies teachers. She works with the students for reading interventions and pulls specific students from the general education classroom to help with a particular assignment. In addition, Amy models lessons in the classrooms and works with teachers to plan lessons, research materials, and provide resources for teachers. Amy is responsible for the coordination of testing**,** and she is a member of the Pupil Service Team (PST). The PST is a committee of faculty who gathers data and information on a student about teachers is concerned. The members of the team decide whether the student should receive special services through an IEP or 504. Administrators consult with Amy: (a) for information and data on particular students, (b)

for specific intervention data, (c) to schedule collaborative planning sessions with teachers, and (d) to support teachers. Amy defines teacher read-alouds as:

> When a teacher reads aloud to a group of students or one student. . .You can say that in the math classroom, a teacher read-aloud is reading a problem to the students, so that the student has access to answer the problem and everyone has the same um. . . background information because there is a vocab- you know, or really, pronunciation that no one knows that's kinda holding them up from solving the problem. A teacher read aloud can be something like a teacher, reading, if it's, if a student turns in a paper, the teacher can read it back to that student and say, you know, "Is this what you were trying to say to me?" you know, and the student can say "Oh, I really didn't mean to say that" or "Let me make this change here.

Amy taught fifth grade Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) prior to her first year at the middle school and enjoyed reading aloud to her students. "In my elementary experiences we're always very positive with um. . . with read alouds. You know. . . and I've been talking mostly with novels. . . but I mean with picture books. . . students just love them."

> Amy views read-alouds as a very beneficial opportunity for teachers to model to students what fluent reading looks like. "Um. . . it's a chance to show students what active reading strategies with think alouds as well. It gives access to all learners, whether they're strong readers or not/. . . um. . . then other things. . . generating interest in students, wanting to read."

Beth. Beth has been employed by Christian County for 7 years and has been a reading specialist for 2 years. Her role as a reading specialist is to support instruction and learning across all contents, but especially focused on the 25 teachers in reading and social studies. Beth holds a Master's Degree in Administration and is currently working on her National Board Certification. Beth wanted to be an instructional reading resource teacher because she likes to work with adults. "The job was appealing to me because I like to work with adults. I like the professional development piece. I'm very passionate about education and really putting the student first. I felt like this was a good way for me to, you know, kind of broaden my use in a school as opposed to just being in my own classroom. I. . . I get to kind of work across the entire school this way."

Beth works with the administrators to show them the new curriculum development especially with the implementation of Common Core State Standards (2012) and helping them with the shift in curriculum. She supports teachers in the shifts and helps them look at different techniques and best practices, along with modeling in the classroom. She pulls students out for interventions or if the students need "something explained a different way, more time. And I push into a lot of classrooms to support the students there as well." She also works with the special education team and the English Language Learner (ELL) teacher for assessments and co-teaching.

Beth's definition of teacher read-alouds is "very broadly I think it's when a teacher reads aloud to students um. . . but I. . . I think the difference in**,** like what we are talking about, is using a text for specific purposes as opposed to like story time." She believes read-alouds is "a good strategy to use and a good, you know, best practice."

Diane. Diane has been employed with Anderson County Public Schools for 2 years, and this is her first year as a reading specialist. She holds a master's degree and is working on her doctorate degree. She became a reading specialist because the district she previously taught at "was a pretty high-poverty school and I worked with a lot of struggling readers and then when I came here I didn't get to do that as much, and I missed that so as a reading specialist I get to work a lot with, you know, struggling students and trying to um. . . really target instruction toward their needs." Diane works with 17 teachers: 13 content teachers and 4 special educators across the grade levels. She works with the intervention students and oversees the intervention program. Diane serves as the reading and language arts department chair and works a lot with the curriculum and coaching of the teachers. She works with the administrators as an expert in the area of reading and provide answers for them whether it is "evaluating what's going on in the classrooms, or you know, facilitating feedback from an observation. . . they'll consult me just to get kinda that perspective strictly from that content point of view."

Diane works with teachers to serve as a coach, to provide professional development, and to be the link between the teachers and the supervisors of the department at the board of education. She helps with planning, facilitating different assessments, modeling lessons, and co-teaching. She works with the students for intervention and attends conferences whenever any of her intervention students' parents come to the school.

Diane's definition of teacher read-alouds is "When a teacher reads aloud to the class (laughs) and usually that includes stopping to think aloud, um, with modeling, um,

of different reading strategies and to probe discussion." Additionally, Diane views read-alouds as "a valuable tool to model fluency, to use to facilitate think-alouds. . . um. . . in the middle school level."

Lisa. Lisa is a former elementary school teacher. She is now a reading specialist at the middle school for Christian County Public Schools. She has been an educator for 41 years, but has been employed at Christian County for 20 years. She has been a reading specialist for 18 years. She holds a Masters +50 and her Master's Degree is in Curriculum and Instruction with a minor in Reading. Lisa's role is to provide support for the English/language arts and social studies curriculum and works with everybody, but specifically with 25 English/language arts and social studies teachers.

Lisa became a reading specialist because she felt more involved with the reading part of learning than the math and science part of elementary. "So every time I had an opportunity to specialize in something. . . if we were doing grouping instead of, uh, self-contained classroom, I would take on the reading part, the ELA part rather than the math and science part."

Lisa works with the administrators for the placement of students, especially with students who are struggling in the ELA situations so that they can meet their goals. She works with the teachers for appropriate placements and makes decisions for placements based on data and student progress. Lisa finds curriculum and materials for teachers to use, especially with the Common Core State Standards (2012). She is also part of the PST team and works with the special education teachers and ELL teachers for testing, placement of students, and interventions. Lisa pulls students out to work with specialized

intervention groups and used different programs to help students such as REWARDS, Wilson, Just Words, and others.

Lisa's defines read-alouds as "Whenever a teacher reads aloud to a class or a small group for, usually for a particular purpose: maybe to emphasize the beginning of the story, or emphasize a particular strategy or standard that they're looking at as opposed to a story time."

Lisa believes read-alouds are a positive experience for students as long as there is a specific reason for it.

> Well, in elementary we did a lot more of just reading to the kids. You know, reading from a picture book, settling down after recess, and just, you know, it was a good time to read something. . . or in the upper elementary we would be reading a novel one day at a time. Um. . . in middle school. . . it's much more um. . . tied to a specific standard or a specific skill that we're trying to. . . to have the kids meet and that's through the close reading or the teacher just reading it aloud and having the kids listen for specific. . . things.

Theresa. Theresa is a reading specialist at Christian County and has been employed for 14 years by Christian County, but she has been a specialist for 7 years. She holds a Master's Degree in Reading and works with 56 certificated staff members. Theresa wanted to be a reading specialist because she was seeing difficulties in the classroom and she felt she could "help kids close the gap and meet with success and gain grade level reading skills. So that you know, it really was out of a curiosity of trying to figure out what was going on with students and kinda help them achieve."

The primary purpose of her role is to support students and teachers and meet the students' needs with the grade level standards. She is also a test coordinator for the building: assessing students who transfer into her school and placing them in appropriate groups based on the data. Assessments are administered when teachers have a concern about the student, and Theresa will conduct informal reading inventories on the students and for PST referrals. Theresa works with intervention groups and helps the special education and general education teachers make decisions about the responsibilities and roles of each teacher and specialist. As a reading specialist, Theresa is responsible for pushing in or working with the students in the classroom, co-teaching, and mentoring teachers that may be requested by the teachers or by the administrative team because a teacher is struggling with something. She also finds resources for teachers to help meet student needs.

Theresa works with the administrators to analyze data about the students in order to make the best decisions. Theresa works with the special education teachers on interpreting data and "trying to figure out what's going on with kids. Although [special education teachers'] area might be in disabilities, they may not necessarily have a strong background in reading or had a lot of coursework in reading." Working with parents is part of Theresa's role as a specialist. She explains to parents the reading testing that has been done and what the data reveals to them about the child's reading achievement. Theresa also provides information sessions for parents about the expectations for reading, especially in light of the shift to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; 2012), and helps parents understand those changes.

Theresa described teacher read-alouds as:

> For kids to hear and model what fluent reading sounds like, you know, that diction and. . . and emphasis and um. . . interpretation of, emotion, uh. . . so that model fluent reading and what a skilled reader sounds like, is probably the biggest reason for read-aloud besides some of the things that Amy mentioned, you know access to content, if kids are struggling readers, or for hooking kids into novels and literature, reading too, often teachers will read a section of a text to a point so that they have drawn kids in because um. . . there's a lot of evidence that even the oldest person enjoys hearing fluent reading you know it's. . . it's captivating. . . so when reading's done well it's, it's engaging. So um… that idea that um. . . you are serving as the model of a really proficient reader.

Theresa believes "read alouds are an important part of instruction. I think that they can help hook kids to books. They can um. . . help teachers engage students uh, in content and that they're also um, essential for helping kids to know what good reading sounds like and looks like."

Significant Statements

I analyzed the data and identified significant statements the participants made during the focus group and individual interviews. These significant statements or "quotes provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Moustakas (1994) identified this step as horizonalization. I created an Excel spreadsheet of the significant statements, which the participants made relevant to the topic, and I gave each statement equal value.

Meaningful Units

The third step in data analysis is to organize the significant statements into meaningful units or themes (Creswell, 2007) and remove overlapping and repetitive statements (Creswell; Moustakas, 1994). The significant statements are clustered according to the research questions and the units were placed in different tabs on an Excel spreadsheet. Nine meaningful units emerged from my analysis (see Appendix I).

RQ 1

RQ 1 was created to gather the reading specialists' personal experiences with teacher read-alouds. The experiences included reading aloud to students in the elementary school level and in the middle school level. The discussion topic was left broad and open so the participants could give as much detail as they wished while describing their experiences. Three meaningful units emerged from the question: (a) Meaningful Unit One**,** Reading specialists' experiences with read-alouds; (b) Meaningful Unit Two**,** Student engagement and interest; and (c) Meaningful Unit Three**,** Opportunities teachers give to students before, during, and after a read-aloud

Meaningful unit one: Reading specialists' experiences with read-alouds. All reading specialists acknowledged personally employing read-alouds in their classrooms and in small groups. The participants also reported that content area teachers were reading out loud to the students across the grade levels whether they actually witnessed the read-aloud or whether the teachers were sharing their experiences with the specialists.

> ***Amy.*** Oh when I was in the classroom all the time, I mean, we would do a read aloud and I'd have students begging me "Just one more page, just one more

chapter." "Sorry guys, it's time to go to lunch." You know, so we would always read. Even my STEM kids, we would read right before lunch and, you know, "We gotta go, we gotta go to lunch" and they don't even want to go to lunch. They want, you know, "get us to the end!" You know, "what happens next?" kinda thing so definitely you know. My student teaching was in 3rd and I taught 4th and 5th and in that age levels. . . love, love read alouds.

Theresa. I mean in my experience when I had my own classes, I had kids never wanted you to stop, because if they were hooked in the book they were hooked, and they just wanted to know and get to the end. In fact, often, I employed the technique that I would read to a point that was really exciting and then make them finish the rest of the chapter. Because that was my way of having them have a shared responsibility for their reading.

If it was an especially long chapter I might read aloud the beginning to make sure that I had kids invested before I sent them off on that chapter on their own so. . . um it's an engagement tool and it's also a tool to help kids see why fluent reading is important. You know, it's enjoyable plus comprehension comes easier when you're engaged in fluent well-done reading.

Lisa. Well, in elementary we did a lot more of just reading to the kids. You know, reading from a picture book, settling down after recess, and just, you know, it was a good time to read something. . . or in the upper elementary we would be reading a novel one day at a time. Um. . . in middle school. . . it's much more um. . . tied to a specific standard or a specific skill that we're trying to. . . to have the

kids meet and that's through the close reading or the teacher just reading it aloud and having the kids listen for specific. . . things.

Beth. *The Lorax*, like I read that book out loud, not because the kids couldn't read it by themselves, but we were using it for a specific purpose so I didn't want them to be focused on. . . I wanted them to listen to the story so then we can go back and they can see all those different things. Same way, when we do the close reads, you're reading the section your reading aloud is for a specific purpose. You're looking for, you know, the repetition of words or you know, the figurative language the author uses and how does that add to meaning.

Theresa spoke about a middle school teacher, who was not comfortable with a certain text because of the dialect, and she went into the classroom to read the story out loud to the students:

Watson Goes to Birmingham, it has a lot of dialect in it, and the teacher wasn't necessarily comfortable with the dialect, and I love that story, so I went in and did some read alouds in there and kids loved it. I mean they really. . . they really enjoy it. And part of it for some times when kids are reluctant readers they really enjoy it because they have more access to the story when a fluent reader reads it than when they try to read it themselves. So they really get the nuances then.

Diane. In intervention, we use them infrequently, so when I use a read-aloud in intervention, when I am introducing a new strategy, um, because a lot of what we do in intervention, is students reading their instructional level text, so they really need to practice reading independently. Now I will have students read aloud to one another but that's kinda different, so for a teacher read aloud, I usually do that

when I'm modeling a new strategy, for the purpose of showing how I'm using it when I'm reading. In classrooms when I'm co-teaching and modeling lessons in classroom, I usually use read-aloud for fluency, for engagement, and those types of things.

Meaningful unit two: Student engagement and interest. The reading specialists identified ways the students showed interest or at least engagement in the read-alouds through a variety of ways. According to Morrison and Wlodarczyk (2009), "Getting students to engage with texts involves a multiplicity of simultaneous activities, including motivation, content knowledge, literacy strategies, and social collaboration before, during, and after a literacy event" (p. 111).

Theresa. Students show interest in read alouds through rapt attention, through requests for the reading to continue even when the time for class is running out, through their discussions of the text, and through their eagerness to continue reading when the teacher has stopped the session or released the students to continue reading on their own.

Lisa. Some teachers have them um. . . the students will have some type of a graphic organizer in order to take notes about what's being read aloud um. . . so that shows that they are at least, they're paying attention you know, having them. . . Um. . . I guess showing interest would be when the teacher stops to ask questions and they are, they're enthusiastic about answering.

Diane. I've seen reading teachers use different strategies like visualizing so while they're reading aloud, students will be sketching to sort of um. . . get their visualizations out on paper as things are being read. And recently, with. . . there's

been some professional development in this county on annotating text, so recently I've seen um. . . students doing annotation as they're participating in a read aloud. Usually that's modeled by a teacher, too.

Beth. Well, again because there's a purpose for the read-aloud, um, they are annotating as they read or they're, you know, making notes on whatever it is. Um, again, because you're only reading a small section of it, you know, it would mainly be the annotation and, then, there's something that they're doing with that at the end.

Amy. If students are given an assignment to read something, you'll often hear them say, "Can we read it together?" or "Will you read some of it first?" Um. . . and I don't know that they are asking that for the right reasons or. . . you know, or what their purposes are behind that, but they definitely will ask to do it like that. Students also ask to read it out loud themselves, which is a different thing. But um. . . yea . . . I mean I do hear them ask for it.

I have one teacher who says one thing her kids will do. . . she'll start a read-aloud and then the kids will go out and buy the book. So that shows that they really do like it and want to follow along. . . and probably read ahead sometimes too. So. . . you know there's. . . confidentially of course. . . this can be a rough crowd here at XXXX, and you know if you walk into a room and a teacher is reading aloud and they're all quiet, then it shows you know that you got um. . . even some of them are doodling or drawing, but they're you can tell that they're…that they're listening. . . um. . . you know, cause they're not having side conversations. . . they're. . . um. . . not sitting at the edge of their seats staring at the teacher

necessarily, but I think the biggest show of interest is when they go out and purchase the book.

Amy shared how the ELA teacher piqued her students' interest in a novel they read as a class.

> She'll find the hottest book, you know, the book that is about to be made into a movie. You know she feels like when um. . . they're made into a movie, that's the best advertising that there can be. "Let's read it, you know, we're seeing the trailers on TV, and let's read it beforehand, and we can, you know, kinda compare and see if we like the book better or the movie better."

Amy further compared how two teachers differed in their ways to motivate students to read: "So that one teacher in particular, she will read the whole book to the class and then [I] have another teacher who. . . she's the one will do read aloud, 'I'm gonna pick this little piece and leave it right at the cliff hanger so that the students will pick it up and read it.'"

Meaningful unit three: Opportunities teachers gave to students before, during, and after a read-aloud. When teachers allow students to interact with a variety of text, teachers hope "intrinsic motivation to read regularly and widely" will develop within the students (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). Students can interact with the text in various ways: (a) analyze the narrative elements of the story or (b) compare and contrast to other stories or their own lives (Sipe, 2002). Also, students may: (a) participate in art, music, and drama activities; (b) take examinations and quizzes; (c) write in journals; (d) research and inquire about a specific topic; and (e) participate in small-group or whole-class discussions (Ariail & Albright, 2006).

Diane. Before a read-aloud, there are brief kind-of opportunities for activating background knowledge and um. . . previewing the text. And um...during reading, a lot of times the students are responding like I said with annotation, notes, things like that. And then after reading, a lot of times, which is usually with read alouds, is discussion, responses or like a class discussion or small-group discussion.

Amy. You know, in some group of students you'll have students who ask questions. . . like, you know, "Why did this happen. . . what's going on with this?" So answering students' questions and letting students answer each other's questions um. . .

Researcher. So discussion. . .

Amy. Mhmm. . . and predictions for what's gonna come next. You know, this is what we read yesterday, a little of a summary, and pick up from there.

Beth: We're just reading such a small section, even if it's a couple paragraphs or, you know, a whole page; you're not stopping while you're reading it. Like, the discussion is happening after and the student has to go back to the text and maybe it's from the middle of the text that you read, but they have to go find that you're not stopping them and saying, "Okay, why do you think this is important?" So I think that the student interaction and response when you're, when you're reading it out loud happens primarily AFTER I think. Again, because they, most of the time, have read it once through independently. There's some before like "What are the things that you noticed?" I know when we do Junior Great Books you know they read it through. "What are the big things you noticed? Let's get this basic understanding. Ok, now let's really look at this passage for this purpose."

So they've already kinda discussed what it's about and "Now, you're ready to listen. Maybe you're going to annotate this passage."

Theresa stated that "Response types can be in the form of written responses, oral discussions, online conversations through the use of a learning management system like Moodle or Blackboard, or even to create a visual that demonstrates the key ideas."

Lisa. Before, could be something as simple as what you think the text is going to be about, it's kind of like a KWL: what do you know about the topic and what do you think it will be about. Um. . . during, would be some kind of graphic organizer note taking and then, after is generally uh. . . a discussion.

Researcher. Is this whole-group or small-group?

Lisa: It could be either.

Researcher: Ok. Do you see any of them do a project afterward?

Lisa: Oh, sure, yea.

Theresa discussed the importance of balancing the opportunities during the read-aloud.

Theresa firmly believes:

There is a delicate balance. You can't interrupt the reading too often, otherwise it becomes difficult for the students to track what is happening in the text, but well-timed questions before, during, and after help to set a purpose before the reading begins, help to uncover key aspects of the reading during, and help to give kids guidance for thinking through the key ideas and learning of the text.

RQ 2

RQ 2 was designed in order to understand the reasons reading specialists gave to support teacher read-alouds across the content areas. Reasons teachers do not read aloud to their students were also investigated. Participants' responses created one meaningful unit, Meaningful Unit Four: Reasons for and against teacher read-alouds.

Meaningful unit four: Reasons for and against teacher read-alouds. The participants showed strong support of why read-alouds were used in the classrooms across the content areas. Also, this meaningful unit supported the perceptions of the reading specialists, which will be discussed in RQ 4. The biggest reason all participants agreed upon the reason for read-alouds was to provide access to the text for students who may be struggling or have difficulty in reading fluently.

> ***Lisa.*** It allows kids to have access to the materials and it. . . especially for students who have difficulties. . . it levels that playing field. It allows them to um. . . hear the information and then comment on it. Because they have…and I've been in situations where uh. . . the kids are listening to a particular. . . selection. . . and . . . would - if they had to read it on their own, they would have nothing to say. But if they listen to it, then they get that information, then they have a lot to say. They add a lot to the conversation.
>
> ***Theresa.*** Across all the contents, the primary use and impact of read-alouds besides engaging kids in the content is to help them uncover nuances of text that they may have missed or to emphasize the importance of certain sections of text to the overall goals of the lesson or the content learning that the reading is supporting.

Theresa further explained:

The primary reasons for read aloud are to build investment, engagement and interest in the lesson. However, it is important to note that for students to become proficient readers there cannot be so much read aloud happening that students aren't expected to interact and engage in the reading of text independently daily themselves. It is an important balance. We aren't building skilled readers if we are doing all of the reading.

They are choosing texts that they think kids will find engaging or worth reading and have some literary merit and value um. . . and that they're hoping will help kids, especially kids who say they hate to read find a genre or um. . . an author that they really can get into and might encourage them to be more of an avid reader.

Amy.. . . modeling. . . students get to see active reading strategies, um. . . gives access to all for whatever the text says. Everyone has access to it. . . and to generate an interest in different texts.

All the participants agreed there should be a specific purpose for the read-aloud.

Theresa. Some of them might start their class period with some independent reading of students, so then in the year they can set that example for kids. They do some reading aloud and then kids get some time to read their own books, you know, silently. Um or they might be reading to other kids. But umreading for the sake of reading, yea. . . there's um. . . not everybody, uh, is setting time to do that.

Diane. And I don't think read alouds should be used um. . . kinda as a crutch I want to say. So I think that read-alouds should be used in a purposeful way not

just as, "Ok I'm going to read to you so that we're all on the same page at the same time." And um. . . spend, you know, a whole class period of 45 minutes reading out loud. Because then, you know, you're losing students and they're not as engaged.

Although the reading specialists spoke about the benefits of read-alouds, and they have seen it across the content areas at least one time, they shared reasons why other teachers do not read aloud on a regular basis.

Diane. I have heard some teachers say, um. . . you know, "By middle school they should be able to read on their own." So I think that maybe it just comes from the viewpoint of not understanding how to use a read-aloud. Um. . . teachers who understand how to use a read aloud are usually, you know, pretty supportive of it. But maybe if they don't understand what the purpose is. . .

Amy. There's one teacher in particular who I've said I was doing this read-aloud thing, and they're like, "Oh I wish I had time for read alouds but I don't." Science teacher, and her argument was "How can I read aloud when I have all these classes on an A/B day schedule so I'm only seeing them every other day?" and "Where did we leave off and there's no really continuity when we're doing one [read aloud]." And so she's like, "I wish there's time but there just isn't." So, I think because she doesn't see her kids every single day that was part of her in the time piece. . . so. . . that was the only one that I really know for sure that isn't. . . but I haven't, you know, really talked to everybody to hear other people who are like, "I know I will never do a read-aloud."

Lisa. In many cases, we want the students to attempt it on their own first, so we want them to somewhat struggle with the text and make meaning on their own first. And then once they've done that and you've gotten as much information from them as possible, then the teacher might read a section of it so that the students pick up any other innuendos or any other um. . . wording in there that they missed the first time.

Beth. Um. . . I don't know. . . because they don't like to? I think that not all teachers are comfortable reading out loud. Some teachers, they're just not strong readers themselves orally. Um. . . and I think some of the, some of the other resistance has just been the shift. Like, they want, they want students to be able to do it independently, and they feel like if they read it to them then they're providing too many scaffolds or maybe it being, you know, whatever. . . I think that's some of the pushbacks we've had.

Amy. I feel like some teachers are feeling like. . . if if it's a read-aloud for pleasure they're already feeling "My curriculum is packed full, I'm not adding something else to it." Um. . . and then you have the other teachers who think, "You know, they're middle school students. They should already know how to read. I shouldn't have to read to them. They're never. . . they will never become independent if I'm holding their hand and reading to them."

Although some teachers are opposed to reading to the students because the students are in middle school, **Theresa** explained her reasoning for read-alouds:

They should be able to read by now, and yes, they should. HOWEVER, comma, kids have disabilities sometimes or kids have moved a lot and lacked skills

sometimes. So, middle school is still a chance for us to make a difference in their ability to read independently. Um, so there are some folks who get in that um. . . making sure that they read aloud sparingly because they want the kids to do the bulk of the reading. Um. . . but, they still will read pieces of text to engage kids and those kinds of things. I don't know of anyone who says "No, I just won't do that no matter what."

RQ 3

The purpose of RQ 3 was to understand how read-alouds may impact the middle school curriculum. However, as I studied the literature review on read-alouds, and through the interviews with the specialists, I discovered this practice may not only impact the curriculum, but it can impact the different populations in the schools. Furthermore, the participants shared how the content area teachers used different types of texts to read out loud in order to meet Common Core State Standards (2012). Therefore, three meaningful units emerged from RQ 3: (a) Meaningful Unit Five, Impact on student populations with Attention-Deficit Hyptertension Disorder (ADHD), English Language Learners (ELL), students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorder (EBD), and students who posses an Individualized Education Program/504) (IEP/504); (b) Meaningful Unit Six, Impact on the content areas of English/Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies (SS); and (c) Meaningful Unit Seven, Types of text used for read-aloud.

Meaningful Unit Five: Impact on Student Population (e.g., ADHD, ELL, EBD, and IEP/504). The participants discussed how the use of read-alouds provided literacy support for the different populations of students as they learn across the content areas. Every participant mentioned read-alouds served the purpose of providing each

student population access to the text. Read-alouds were found beneficial for students with ADHD.

> ***Diane.*** I think that read-alouds, I don't know that I've seen them used for this reason, but I think that they can be beneficial as a way to engage and help the student focus. A lot of times with students like that, if you send them off to read something independently, you don't know if they're attending to the text, and a read aloud can kind of direct their attention, even model some of the you know, self-monitoring and things like that, they need to learn to do on their own, to help them focus.
>
> ***Amy.*** Some students should be able to focus in on a book and read[ing] is a challenge for students with ADHD. So if you're talking to them. . . with the read aloud for the ADHD kid, if they have the text in front of them, and you're reading it to them, it can help them focus in so, so they're getting the visual piece and the auditory piece.
>
> ***Lisa.*** It's to give them access to the materials.

Although **Theresa** found read-alouds to be an engaging tool for students with ADHD, she also had some precautions in the use of it for this student population:

> Hmm. . . I would say to you that's a little bit of a. . . that's a plus/minus. Because it depends on how much seatwork is happening in that classroom. If there's a lot of seatwork, and a kid is inattentive, a read aloud could definitely get them engaged, and keep them focused on the lesson and what was happening. But, if there is a lot of teacher talk and not very much student movement built in. . . um

. . . a read aloud might not necessarily help. A kid with ADHD, they need more movement built in, so that depends on how the lesson is structured.

Beth was the only participant who was not completely sure if read-alouds was the best strategy for students with ADHD.

Beth. I think sometimes that helps them focus and sometimes it doesn't. I don't know if it has a huge impact.

The participants found the use of read-alouds to be very beneficial for their English Language Learners (ELL). The specialists explained read-alouds provided this student population access to the text. Through read-alouds, the teachers are able to model what the English language sounds like with the proper fluency and pronunciation of words. Finally, the read-alouds can be used as an accommodation.

Theresa. A well-done read aloud is the best model for kids of what English sounds like for our English language learners. So um. . . it's really giving them access to the English language as a whole. And then, ligature as students are able to translate that language between their own and to make sense of the English.

Beth. They hear the fluency and they can kind of, you know, follow along and hear it and I think that helps with their language development.

Amy. Um. . . we really have. . . the pronunciation. I know, me trying to learn Spanish, I'm not pronouncing the words correctly. If a ELL teacher or Language Teacher is reading, then students are hearing how things are actually pronounced and, um, you know, we don't have the accents and all sorts of things that some of the languages have, but just the way that we speak, dialect, that sort of thing. Students need to hear that.

Diane. So for other ELLs, they will usually be grouped again in small group for read-aloud. And it is used more frequently, more as for an accommodation, not necessarily as a reading strategy, but just to provide them access to a text.

Lisa. It's to give them access to the text.

The next student population the reading specialists recommended reading out loud to was students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).

Theresa. Um. . . reading done right can be very soothing to kids and additionally, sometimes books are helpful to a kid with emotional issues because the book. . . if we're choosing the right topic, the book is a way to kind of help them think through their difficulties or their problems that are. . . so sometimes a book can be a model of how we might solve um. . . some of the struggles that a kid might be having. May be, you know, separate families or um. . . abuse, those kind of things. . . you know. Book is a rehearsal for kind of. . . trying to think through some of those problems in their lives. Certain books can be helpful for kids who are struggling with specific family or personal issues, to let them see they aren't alone in their struggles.

Diane. I think again it can be used for engagement. If a teacher does a read-aloud as a way to motivate students usually, you know, have to be selective in what you're reading aloud and your purpose for doing so. But, you can really kind of play on that as a hook. Students who have emotional/behavioral disorders are usually harder to motivate so the read-aloud could help with that. Even if it is in a small group setting, it's kind of a management piece.

Beth. Again, if it's just they have an emotional disorder, the reading aloud doesn't really matter one way or the other. But often, their emotional disorder is coupled with some learning disorders. Um. . . so again, it's just access to it.

Lisa. Same thing with ADHD. . . I would say the same. It's to give them access to the materials.

Amy. I know counselors who will use read alouds as, you know, those selected text or the character in the book is going through the same issue (laughs) that they might be. Or, I know that there are books that kinda teach skills. . . social skills so read-alouds can be used in that way. . . um. . . by the counselors.

The last student population, which was mentioned, was students with IEPs and 504s. However, struggling students were included in this population.

Beth. Well again, and I think, not necessarily just with the IEPs or 504, but I think for struggling readers would be a better. Struggling readers, I think the read-alouds allow them to access the text so that they can be involved in those um, conversations and those activities that are forcing them to look at the deeper meaning in the text, to look at the author structure, just giving them access.

Lisa. Well certainly for IEPs and 504s, um. . . many times they. . . and ELL also, they have uh. . . difficulty accessing the on-grade level materials. So. . . so In order to have an on-level playing field, a lot of the kids have great ideas and great um. . . insight, but because they can't read it for themselves, they, they can't participate in that discussions. So, if there is a read-aloud, and they can hear it then they can participate in the discussion. And that's important especially in Science and Social Studies. They have. . . they know the information; they just

can't necessarily access it on paper. So it's very important for all three of those groups in order to access.

Theresa. Um. . . kids who have IEPS and 504s sometimes have accommodations for receiving sections of the text or whole parts of the text read aloud. That accommodation is usually dependent on their own skills as a reader. So, if their reading skill is lacking, especially if they're still having issues with decoding, then that accommodation that read aloud accommodation either provided by uh. . . a human reader or by reading technology software such as Kurtzwell or other programs would be used to help them access the content.

Diane. So for that population, read-alouds are more common because usually it's serving a purpose for an accommodation. And in this school, teachers prefer to do the read-aloud themselves. If kids have a reading accommodation as opposed to using, like an assistive technology, teachers will read it aloud themselves so that they can have intonation and things like that, and usually that's done in small groups.

Amy. Just giving them access to the content. If, you know, you have someone who isn't able to read, they have an IEP, they are still working on. . . a pretty big awareness, you know, you have to do a read-aloud to them so they have access to the content. Um. . . you know, something like 504, if you have someone who's hearing impaired, they might have a hookup to the mic that the teacher has. Someone with visual issues, same way with the hearing impaired, I guess more for reading. Um. . . for read-alouds, it would be the hearing impaired piece. . . but um. . . if you have a student who needs some sort of accommodation like a

magnifier or whatever, and if you don't have access to that, then you need to do a read aloud for them. Um. . . you know. . . of course we have the Kurtzwell that writes. . . that will read to the students. [For dyslexia] they're losing the meaning because they're lost in the letters at that point.

Theresa provided a cautionary warning about reading out loud to students with IEPs and 504s and struggling readers.

Theresa: I would say to you, the middle school, its kind of a fine line, because kids also don't want to you know. . . there's a big part of fitting in their, with their peers. So if a kid needs read-alouds we need to make sure it's happening in a way that is um. . . not making them stand out. You know, especially if they need it as an accommodation because they have a reading disability. So the read-aloud is happening in a respectable way that doesn't call attention to them. Um. . . you know, whether it be in a small group outside the regular classroom or whether it be them raising their hand when they have a section that they don't understand that they need somebody to come over and read quietly to them. So that piece is really important. But, when it's employed in the whole class measure, kids really often comment about not wanting you to stop reading, being really engaged, and enjoying the story more. Because they're freed up and uh. . . and it's engaging when someone is doing a read-aloud and doing it well.

Meaningful unit six: Impact on the content areas: English/language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, social studies (SS). Read-alouds were discussed more in the ELA and social studies classes, since the reading specialists worked more closely with those content area teachers. In the ELA class, **Theresa** explained how read-alouds

played an important part in the class:

> Sometimes it's to get kids interested and engaged in a particular novel. Sometimes it's to read a section of the novel that's particularly challenging, not because the kids can't, but because that they need to hear it because there are nuances that they are missing, um. . . so they might be reading aloud. Um. . . kids have already read it, but they've kind of blown through a section that was critical and missed some subtleties that are essential to understanding what's happening, so they might read it aloud to kinda get kids to slow down and kind of think about what was really happening there.
>
> ***Beth.*** There are, there's a 6th grade teacher and there's a few of the 7th grade teachers this year used kind of kid books to get at the deeper, you know, to introduce something. They used The Lorax, and they used The Three Little Pigs, um, to look at point of view. So, it's a story that would be really familiar with so it went over really well. So when they looked at the grade-level text, you know, it worked very well. The same 6th grade teacher who introduced, shared, the Lorax activity, she um, also, I can't remember if it was Cinderella, but it was one of the fairy tale stories. She used it at the beginning, and then would continue to refer back to it for every new, you know, piece that she was introducing. So the kids all knew that story so that, that worked very well for her.
>
> ***Amy.*** For reading, language arts, I think the teachers are modeling think-alouds so when they're. . . students are expected to annotate and think critically about the text and respond their. . . you know, we're moving to pros constructive responses,

where students have a response that they need to read two complex texts and then they need to respond to a PCR that encompasses both um. . . texts.

Lisa. ELA teachers, specifically I know of two that are doing the story time kind of thing, but it's more. . . they're using it to work towards certain standards, but they are. . . they're using the entire novel to do that. And again. . . again I hadn't thought of the um . . . children's books that they're using for a specific setting or you know. . . a specific topic.

Almost all of the specialists reported that reading aloud in math class provided access to the students; the focus is on having the students solve the math problem, not being able to read the word problem effectively. However, it seems as if the participants were not able to give as much information since they do not work closely with the mathematics teachers.

Amy. **I**n math, the impact of the read-aloud is giving students access to the problem, I think. I think that's how it's supposed to be used in middle school. Again, you're teaching math, you're not teaching reading. If a student can't read the problem to do the math, that's not, you know. . . you want them to do the math so read the problem to them.

Theresa added: If a kid is a struggling reader, um. . . that the kid might know how to do the math, but if they can't read the word problem or they have difficulty with reading then [the math teachers are] not really going to be able to assess whether the child knows the math and can apply it. So that's the most common reason why teachers use read-alouds.

Amy talked about how a teacher used books outside of the textbook for read-alouds:

> I know I have a math teacher who tries to pull in some read-alouds, and she'll get math related books, and then they stop and will solve the problem when they're um. . . so it's still related to content, but they'll stop and solve the problem when they get to that piece in the book.

Read-alouds in the science classrooms were seen on occasion, but not as extensively as ELA and social studies. Read-alouds were dominantly used for teachers to model the pronunciation of vocabulary words. Amy expressed the importance of teachers keeping the reading fluent for comprehension purposes. "I think in science, teachers are using it with um. . . you know being able to pronounce new words. . . not getting hung up on the pronunciation of a vocabulary word and losing the meaning. They're keeping the reading fluent so that students can comprehend."

> ***Theresa.*** If I see science teachers doing it, sometimes they're sharing a really interesting scientific journal that they just read that might be beyond, you know, a middle school reading level but, you know, it's something. It's about, about something that they are studying with the kids and they want them to kinda see the value of science in the news, if you will.

Due to the shift to the CCSS (2012), the reading specialists noted the importance of read-alouds used to model how to read in that content area.

> ***Diane.*** They're really having to kind of take ownership of literacy now with Common Core. So I think that read-alouds could really be helpful for modeling how to read in that content area. You know, if you are reading as a scientist, then

you're going to be reading, like, with an eye for looking at bias and things like that. And so doing the read-aloud and going through the process for kids can actually hear where you stop, and, you know, think about different things, or how to um. . . read the text features. You know, different non-fiction text have different headings and structures that kids don't always know how to read. So being able to model that with a read-aloud will be helpful.

Beth emphasized that, due to the difficulty of the text on grade level in the science textbooks, "it's very technical so they'll read passages of the textbook out loud to students."

Lisa also noted the importance of using read-alouds to build background information on the science topic: "It builds their background information so that then they can access some of the other text on their own."

Since the adoption of the CCSS (2012), the reading specialists have shown their responsibility in making sure the Standards are implemented in the ELA and social studies classrooms. Amy explained how read-alouds played an important role in the social studies classroom at her school even though there were differing views on the roles of the social studies as far as read-alouds were concerned.

Amy. I do have a teacher who probably shouldn't, but reads out loud the tests sometime to the students, and the argument is –

Theresa. It's not the content.

Amy. (Laughs). Yes, "I'm not assessing whether or not they can read, I'm assessing, you know, what they're gonna do with the information once they have it." And I'm kinda giggling because I have two teachers who have very different

opinions on that. . . so we're. . . and they're on. . . so I have one who's like, "No, no, they need to read themselves," and another one's like, "No I'm their social studies teacher, not their reading teacher."

However, Amy voiced: "But we're shifting now to where social studies teachers are kinda becoming reading and writing teachers as well so we're all responsible for that. . . so that's. . . that's a new shift."

Just as the middle school students in the science classroom were expected to read and think like scientists, students were expected to read and think like historians in the social studies class.

Beth. When they do the reading like a historian, a piece of that is, or one of the strategies I should say, they don't do it all the time, but it is to read one of the pieces aloud to the students before they. . . 'Cause they, the reading like a historian, I'm not sure if you're familiar with it, but they kind of have to synthesize different pieces together and then, like, create an argument so it's. . . The one that I did, when I pulled the teachers in was like, "Who was responsible for the War of 1812?" And so you look at all these different documents and all these pieces. Then at the end, they have to make a decision. So then you're looking at print text and non-print text and so there's, I think it's pretty successful in social studies.

The participants discussed the different types of text social studies teachers would read out loud in their classrooms. Beth stated, "They're doing a lot of thinking like a historian so there's you know official documents that they'll read out loud. And again,

it's not because they are not working on the skill set of reading, but they wanna look at those. . . the deeper meaning in the text so that all students need to access it."

Theresa and Diane discussed how read-alouds helped students understand how the different texts should be read because of the format or the language.

> ***Theresa.*** I would say I do see social studies teachers doing read aloud, usually that is related to like a primary source kind of thing because they tend to be more challenging. If it's a piece of the Declaration of Independence or something that has period language in it. . . that would be a good reason to read it, you know. A lot of our 8th grade teachers are doing and, uh, actually some 6th grade folks are doing Shakespearean work right now, so knowing the style of that language, that's often a good reason to read it out loud or at least parts of it until kids become familiar with the syntax and the sentence structure and those kind of things.

Diane added:

> Using a read aloud [is used] to model, one: how to utilize text features because a lot of what they're reading is nonfiction. Um. . . they also use a lot of primary source documents in social studies and sometimes reading that is very different than reading the kind of texts that kids are used to because it's historical text. It's written sometimes, you know, if it's a primary source it might be written with um . . . a different format, a different version of English, different things like that. So using read-alouds really help students to understand those unusual texts.

When read alouds are used in the middle school content areas, they help students understand the content (McCormick & McTigue, 2011).

Meaningful unit seven: Types of text used in read-alouds. The reading

specialists discussed the different types of text used in the read-alouds. Furthermore, the participants described how the different types impact the curriculum and student learning. Diane said she has seen fiction and non-fiction texts read aloud in the classrooms. "I've seen drama read aloud to students. Um poetry. . . that's often read aloud to students." Lisa also described what has been used in her school. "We have a lot of trade books that we use, novels we use. . . and we use articles that are related to whatever the topic is too, so . . . and those articles could be from newspapers, it could be from magazines, a variety of types."

> ***Amy.*** Fiction texts: that's what provokes the love of reading for students. And when you have struggling readers, often times they're reluctant readers because it's hard, and they don't want to do it. And you show them that it can be fun and they can enjoy it. . . gets them reading and maybe they'll pick up a book on their own (laughs).
>
> ***Diane.*** So fiction I think is where fluency is really um. . . modeled well, because doing a read aloud with fiction helps students to see how to use intonation, how to use expression when a character's speaking fiction, reading that dialogue with different voices, things like that really help to bring the fiction to life.
>
> ***Lisa.*** With fiction, they are certainly looking at a lot of the reading standards, and they're looking for the um. . . author's point of view or purpose and if it's read aloud then. . . the teacher will read a specific part of a selection for a specific reason and that will draw the student's attention to that, to what the author was doing on purpose, what was the. . . why was the author saying it this way or that way.

Amy observed that content area teachers are purposeful in the types of text read aloud, as well as the types of text students should read independently.

> Maybe in social studies they're trying to bring some historical fiction in and that might be. . . I feel like if it's going to be historical fiction in social studies that's the piece that they're trying to have students read independently. And then for nonfiction, they might read primary sources to the students.

All of the participants acknowledged the importance and necessity of exposing students to non-fiction texts.

> ***Beth.*** Well, I think there's a big push for more non-fiction text, um. But I think again, especially in English/language arts, because of the close read, fiction and non-fiction text is having the same kind of effect. You know, you're using the same strategy you're just looking at different standards for it. In social studies it's mostly non-fiction text just because that's what they're looking at.

Beth believed there needs to be a balance between fiction and non-fiction texts, and she believed there might be a balance between non-fiction and fiction texts in the classrooms. However, she recognized "because [of] our curriculum, we're still on the shift for the heavier on the non-fiction text."

Theresa identified the purpose of the different types of text during a read-aloud. The type of text read aloud will depend on the purpose of the lesson and the content that is being studied. Sometimes the reading is non-fiction, sometimes it is fiction, sometimes it is the newspaper, sometimes, it's poetry. Ultimately the point of the read aloud beside engagement though is to help kids notice things in the text that they didn't notice on their own.

Lisa. In non-fiction that would be more. . . more in the science or social studies. But again, often in social studies, it would be part of a speech or, and then again they're looking: "Why did the author, why did the speechwriter use these particular words? What was the purpose behind it?"

Diane. In non-fiction it's more about how to read. Um. . . like I said the text structure, and um. . . you know, reading headings, and when to stop and look at different visual aides and how do you read those. So there's much more of that in non-fiction and doing a read-aloud really does model the process for how to read those.

RQ 4

RQ 4 was developed in order to understand the reading specialists' perspectives on teacher read-alouds in the middle school classrooms. The perspectives were compared and analyzed. Furthermore, participants were asked to share their thoughts on the importance of professional development opportunities on what effective teacher read-alouds look like across the content areas in the middle schools. Research question four consists of two meaningful units: (a) perception on teacher read-alouds and (b) perception on professional development for read-alouds.

Meaningful unit eight: Perception on teacher read-alouds. All of the reading specialists had a positive attitude toward teacher read-alouds in the middle school classrooms. The participants shared their views not only with the educational value of read-alouds within each content area, but the personal and aesthetic values of this activity**.**

Beth described how read-alouds can be used to help struggling students gain access to the text.

> They're able to, you know still able to, you know, to still participate even if they cannot independently read the text. I think, again it's a best practice and I think students are more engaged in the text. Again, when it's, I think when you're reading too much they're bored, but when you're doing it correctly they really are more engaged.
>
> ***Amy.*** You're getting students who might be better visualizers and how they're listening to the teachers read and visualizing what's being read. I think that's a big benefit. The students who are struggling readers are still getting a chance to learn. Even if they're learning content, even if they're struggling with the text, someone's still reading to them.
>
> ***Theresa.*** I believe read alouds are an important part of uh, instruction. I think that they can help hook kids to books. They can um, help teachers engage students, uh, in content and that they're also um, essential for helping kids to know what good reading sounds like and looks like.

Diane thought read-alouds are

> definitely a valuable tool to model fluency, to use to facilitate think-alouds. I think it actually is maybe even more important in content area classes because a lot of times that text is so much more complex and like I said, they have to have those skills to read it with a certain lens, so there is a lot of value in a read-aloud in the middle school if it's used correctly.

Diane also noted the differences she observed between the classrooms where read-alouds are used more frequently than the other classrooms.

> Because I have seen read alouds used more in reading classes, um. . . there's just a kind of a um. . . better understanding in those classes of what's expected during reading, as opposed to other content classes where I don't see read alouds as much. I don't know that there is. . . if the same expectations exist or that the students are aware that you can transfer reading skills from one content to another. But, the read alouds in reading classes really set the expectations, and I think that's a benefit.

Amy discussed the importance of read-alouds in order to express passion for the content area to the students.

> I think this is true of every content teacher, the most important thing, besides having really strong skills and content knowledge, is being able to convey an enthusiasm for your content and when teachers employ read alouds and they are able to show their excitement and interest and. . . and. . . and that piece for their content through that it makes it interesting to kids. I see that as the real important value of read alouds. When the teacher brings that kind of vigor to their content and that kind of enthusiasm, then kids think it's fun and interesting.

When asked if read-alouds should be used for enjoyment, **Amy** wrote: "Yes! Teacher read-alouds foster a love of reading and create a shared experience for students. I definitely support teacher read-alouds for enjoyment in the middle school classroom."

Theresa noted:

As far as teacher read alouds being used for enjoyment, I would say absolutely!! The ultimate job of a reading teacher is to teach children to read and then help to build a love of reading and an understanding that reading can be a worthwhile activity to engage in. If we don't work to instill a value and love of reading, then the resistance and dislike of reading becomes another barrier for kids.

Lisa responded: "I think they should be used to 'hook' students into reading about a particular topic, author, genre, etc."

Beth shared a different type of perspective on read alouds. "I am not sure if I think that read alouds should be done solely for enjoyment. I believe that if done with a purpose, read alouds can be very powerful." She further explained:

When introducing a novel, I think it is absolutely appropriate to read the first chapter aloud to the class to hook them into the story. This is an enjoyable use of read alouds for both the teacher and students; however, there is purpose behind it, and the expectation is that students will continue to read independently.

The participants not only described the positive benefits of teacher read-alouds, but also the negative aspects of read-alouds and the importance of using read-alouds correctly and effectively.

Beth. I would like them not to be called teacher read-alouds. Again, every time we say that, my mind goes to teachers who are gonna hear that and they're just going to read like story time. And I think that we need to get away from that more and give the students a chance to kinda grapple with it. . . the complex text. I worry that teachers will lose sight of the learning standards and get caught up in more of a story time activity.

Beth told how a sixth grade teacher reads a book for the whole 45-minute class period. "Half of the kids are like staring at the ceiling, and they're counting the tiles, or their heads down, nobody's following along. And she's just up there, kinda reading along."

All of the participants had explicitly stated that read-alouds can be a substitute for student independent reading. Theresa stated, "Too much reading aloud negates the efforts in teaching kids to be readers themselves. Read alouds cannot be a substitute for student reading, but when used wisely can be a useful tool to continue to build students reading capacity." Diane reported that there was a "time where maybe read aloud was being used -over used- um, and we weren't encouraging our students to be independent enough."

Amy showed concern about teachers who always read aloud to the students.

You know. . . with the teacher who has, who always has the students listen to the story on CD first. . . why can't they read it first? You know, they're in eighth grade. Let's let them read it first on their own. Say, let says, "You know what? Ok, we're doing um. . . a drama, you know, where there's different parts. Let's perform this ourselves instead of listening to it on CD. Let's switch it up a little bit." So, and I know there are teachers who say, "I don't need to read to them at this point," and "they should be independent readers. I don't want to send them to high school, you know, not reading."

Diane brought up a different type of concern when it comes to read-alouds.

Well, my main concern would be that um. . . especially other content areas who don't have a reading background, if they were taking a read aloud um. . . without

kind of getting that background - so without having a little bit of professional development about how to effectively use a read-aloud. So I think once they have that background, I don't see any real negative aspects. But just if they're using a read-aloud, you know, for the wrong purpose or without that kind of knowledge of the best practices for doing a read-aloud.

Meaningful unit nine: Perception of professional development for read-alouds. The participants shared their perceptions on whether professional development for read-alouds is necessary for their schools. Although the idea of having professional development for read-alouds was not rejected, the participants felt it was not a priority, especially with the shift into the CCSS (2012).

Amy. I think, you know, [read alouds are] happening in classrooms more than we know and teachers might not even realize, you know, how they are using it in the classroom now and we can make them aware of it so that they can use it as a tool. Um. . . honestly, I think there are probably other things that we need to have on our list of professional development needs above read-alouds, and um I can see it being that way for a little while.

Theresa further explained:

In terms of professional development in the whole read aloud piece, the bigger focus right now has been thinking about um. . . choosing texts that are appropriate and appropriately challenging for your grade level.

However, the participants felt read-alouds were mentioned during professional development seminars when the focus was on reading strategies.

Diane. With um. . . Common Core we started doing some disciplinary literacy professional development and so there have been you know, just small mentions of um. . . using a read-aloud think-aloud as a strategy but there hasn't actually been any instruction given to content teachers or anything like that, just the mention of the strategy.

Beth stated, "It's part of the Common Core, and it's not anything separate from just a good instructional practice."

However, **Dian**e told why she would like to see professional development on teacher read-alouds.

I gather there was a time when teachers were kind of over using the read-aloud and basically not using it so much as a strategy, but using it more just like to read for the kids so that they don't really have to do any independent reading. Um, so I, I kind of fear that might be a misconception with other content teachers too, who don't have that, you know, background with reading instruction. But, I would like to see other teachers in other content areas use read-alouds, you know, once they've been trained. Because I think it is a good way to model fluency, and to show consistency across content areas. Um. . . and I think it's obviously a good way to tie in a think-aloud as well which they need to be thinking about, you know, how to unlock text in other disciplines, especially with Common Core.

Thick Descriptions of Participants' Experiences

The **t**hick descriptions of the reading specialists' experiences were intended to "provide rich, in-depth descriptions of the experiences, perspectives, and physical settings represented in the data" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 185). The thick descriptions can

make readers feel like they can experience the events described (Creswell, 2007). Two types of descriptions were used as I analyzed the data: (a) textural description and (b) structural description.

Textural description. Textural description is a report of what the participants experienced (Creswell, 2007). What did the reading specialists experience as they read out loud to the students? Participants provided positive feedback on their experiences. They told how the students were engaged with the story and exclaimed, "get us to the end!" or "what happens next?" One participant stated, "I had kids [who] never wanted you to stop because if they were hooked in the book, they were hooked, and they just wanted to know and get to the end." Amy noted how her school is a tough school, so read-alouds can be a time for the students to be quiet, calm, and focused on the text. She stated, "I'm not gonna stop and tear this apart. I'm gonna let it flow and I'm gonna let the kids enjoy it."

However, it was evident that read-alouds were used to help students understand the content area. The read-alouds across the content areas were used for all students to have access to the text in order to reach the objective. Additionally, the participants agreed that read-alouds were used: (a) "for fluency, for engagement," (b) "to facilitate discussion," and (c) "to model reading strategies." One participant described how a teacher would read an important paragraph out loud to the students in order for the students to study the paragraph.

Structural description. Structural description is a "description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). I considered the setting and context in which the read-alouds were

experienced. Although the reading specialists were able to describe how read-alouds could impact the curriculum across the content areas, the specialists reported teachers' read-alouds mostly occurred in the English/language arts and social studies classrooms. Almost all of them answered, "so in Reading and language arts is where I primarily see the most read-alouds," and "probably all of my English/language arts employ read alouds at some point for various reasons." The participants told about the many different ways the read-alouds were used specifically for the ELA and social studies classrooms. In ELA, read-alouds were used "very closely [in] examining the author's craft," and "to read a section of the novel that's particularly challenging," and as "an engagement tool." In social studies, read-alouds were used because "they're doing a lot of thinking like a historian so there's, you know, official documents that they'll read out loud." Additionally, because of the CCSS (2012) shift to reading more non-fiction texts, read-alouds in the social studies classrooms were used "to model how to utilize text features" and "help students to understand those unusual texts."

The participants reported that science teachers would "sometimes read pieces of the textbook just to make sure that all students have access," and "there's not as much in the science classroom as there could be." One participant noted the importance of having students understand the content, and not getting caught up on the pronunciation of a vocabulary or complex word. She stated that teachers read aloud to "keep the reading fluent so that students can comprehend." However, one participant told about a science teacher, who reported she did not read out loud to her students as much, because she did not have time for read-alouds, especially on an A/B schedule when she is only able to meet with each class every other day.

The reading specialists were not able to identify many ways about how read-alouds were used in the mathematics class. One participant admitted, "In math, I'm not sure how the read-alouds work there." Two participants reported read-alouds were used "to provide access to the content."

Composite Description of the Phenomenon of Teacher Read-Alouds

The final step in the analysis was to write "a composite description that presents the 'essence' of the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). The essence centered on the "common experiences of the participants" (p. 62), and the common experiences of read-alouds amongst the reading specialists had an underlying structure or theme (Moustakas, 1994). I identified two underlying themes that appeared in each step of my data analysis. The underlying themes were: (a) The phenomenon of middle school teacher read-alouds in two Maryland school systems do exist to provide positive impact on different student populations and across the content areas; and (b) Teacher read-alouds are recommended by the reading specialists and should be used for specific purposes, whether it is for the academic, behavioral, aesthetic, or emotional needs of the students.

Although there is a plethora of literature on the topic of teacher read-alouds in the elementary schools and for students with special needs, there is a lack of literature on the existence of teacher read-alouds in the middle schools across the content areas. Additionally, detailed descriptions of how and why read-alouds are used in the content areas are sparse, specifically through the lens of middle school reading specialists. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of the reading specialists and their perspectives toward the phenomenon of teacher read-alouds. In the first underlying theme, the focus was on the different ways read-alouds could impact student learning.

One participant noted that one ELA teacher "use[s] children's books to introduce different elements of the story and look at deeper meanings," or teachers are "modeling the use of context clues."

Additionally, the participants revealed how read-alouds help students with different needs. For students with ADHD, read-alouds can "help them focus" and "model some of the self-monitoring." Read-alouds are beneficial for ELL students. Read-alouds "helps with their language development" and read-alouds serve as a "ligature as students are able to translate that language between their own and to make sense of the English."

Presented in the second underlying theme was the reading specialists' perspectives on teacher read-alouds. All of the reading specialists described the value of read-alouds for students: "partly just so they listen to it again, but the other part so then they hear that fluency, and they're looking at that deeper meaning so they're really focused in on it." Additionally, read-alouds are "an engagement tool, and it's also a tool to help kids see why fluent reading is important" and "comprehension comes easier when you're engaged in fluent well-done reading." The participants acknowledged read-alouds were positive experiences for them. Participants remarked, "it's enjoyable," and "yes, it was for me." Phrases, such as "I definitely support teacher read-alouds," "it's a best practice," "I think teacher read-alouds are definitely a valuable tool, " and "an important part of instruction," were evidence of a vital practice that should be continued from the elementary grades through the middle schools.

Summary

Presented in this chapter were the findings from the study, which involved five reading specialists' experiences and perspectives toward teacher read-alouds in the middle schools in two Maryland school systems. All of the participants ($N = 5$) consented to participate in the study**,** and four discussed their experiences through focus groups. Every specialist participated in face-to-face interviews and email interviews, and one participated in a Face Time interview. All recordings were transcribed verbatim and the data were analyzed. Through the analysis, I was able to cluster significant statements into nine meaningful units. Textural and structural descriptions were given, and finally, two underlying themes were identified in order to understand the experiences and perspectives of middle school teacher read-alouds through the eyes of five reading specialists.

Presented in the next chapter is a discussion of the study. A summary of the findings is provided along with the implications of the study. The theoretical, empirical, and practical implications are described. Additionally, recommendations for future research are given.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Although there is an increase in the research on teacher read-alouds at the elementary level, studies on the use of read-alouds in the middle schools are still limited. Researchers (Kraemer, McCabe, & Sinatra, 2012; Maynard, Pullen, & Coyne, 2010**;** McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010; Silverman, 2007a) have identified the benefits and methods of read-alouds in the elementary grades, but there is a gap in the literature on how the read-alouds are used in the middle grades, and if it is even a strategy for teachers to utilize and model for active and fluent reading. Presented in this chapter are a summary of the findings, implications, and the limitations of the study. Furthermore, recommendations for future research are presented.

Summary of the Findings

This researcher's goal was to identify and describe how read-alouds were used in the middle schools based on the experiences and observations from five Maryland reading specialists. These descriptions were elicited in order to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the impact it has on the curriculum and students. Additionally, the participants shared their perceptions about read-alouds and the reasons to implement this practice across the curriculum. Four research questions were developed to fill the gap in the literature and as a framework for the study.

RQ1: How do middle school reading specialists describe their experiences with read-alouds in the classroom?

RQ2: What reasons do participants give to support read-alouds in the middle schools?

RQ3: How do participants describe the impact the read-aloud program has across the curriculum?

RQ4: How do participants' perceptions of read-alouds compare/contrast?

A transcendental phenomenological design was used to understand the experiences and perceptions of the reading specialists on the use of teacher read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools. After collect**ion of** the data and verbatim transcription of the interviews, a systematic procedure to analyze the data was followed, as outlined by Moustakas (1994). In the first step, epoché, this researcher wrote all the presuppositions and personal experiences in order to "take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under investigation" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). Using an interview guide with prompts, data were as the voices of the reading specialists were elicited through the use of focus groups and individual interviews. These interviews were conducted: (a) face-to-face, (b) emails, and (c) Face Time. In the next step, horizonalization, it was necessary to identify the significant statements or quotes of the phenomenon. Next, meaningful units were identified in the statements. Textural and structural descriptions were developed to describe what the reading specialists experienced during the read-alouds and how they experienced it in terms of context and setting. Lastly, the essence of the phenomenon was described which included two underlying themes.

Research Question One

How do middle school reading specialists describe their experiences with read-alouds in the classroom?

Three meaningful units were identified from the data analysis related to question one; the reading specialists shared positive experiences with read-alouds, students were

actively engaged and displayed interest in the text, and teachers provided opportunities for students to interact with the text before, during, and after a read-aloud.

The participants provided definitions of read-alouds that included reading out loud to: (a) model reading strategies, (b) build background knowledge, (c) teach vocabulary, (d) teach text structure, and (e) reading text above the students' reading skill levels. All of these characteristics aligned with the definition provided by Fien**,** Santoro, Baker, Park, Chard, Williams, & Haria (2011), read alouds are the use of "planned oral readings of a book or story in which the teacher builds background knowledge, explicitly teaches vocabulary, reviews text structure, and models comprehension strategies in text that is above their students' reading skill level" (p. 308). Also, the reading specialists reported the different types of texts, which were used in the classroom: (a) fictional and nonfictional literature, (b) poetry, (c) newspapers, (d) historical documents, (e) magazines, and (f) selections from anthologies of literature. In addition, the reading specialists included: (a) reading out loud directions, (b) student work, and (c) selections from the textbook. However, according to Ariail and Albright (2006), read-alouds do not include "reading aloud selections from textbooks, with the exception of literature anthologies" (p. 73); also, it does not include "reading aloud items such as directions or announcement" (p. 73). Nevertheless, the participants focused more on the elements of read-alouds as detailed by Fien et al**.** (2010) as well as the different types of text Ariail and Albright identified as appropriate for use in read-alouds.

The focus of the second meaningful unit was on the ways students showed engagement and interest in the read-alouds. Students showed interest when they: (a) asked teachers to continue reading out loud, and (b) showed "rapt attention" through their

"discussions of the text" and "eagerness to continue reading when the teacher has stopped the session or released the students to continue reading on their own." These statements from the reading specialists demonstrated how the use of read-alouds motivated students to participate in the class through attention, discussion, and reading the text independently.

The third meaningful unit, which was identified in the analysis, was related to the opportunities or interactions that students had with the text before, during, and after a read-aloud. The specialists reported that reading strategies were used as opportunities for students to interact with the text: (a) activation of background knowledge, (b) participation in small-group and whole-group discussions, and (c) annotion of text. The teachers implemented the Common Core State Standards (2012) for reading strategies into their read-alouds**,** so that students could acquire the knowledge and practice the skills that were expected of them as Maryland has adopted the Common Core State Standards.

Research Question Two

What reasons do participants give to support read-alouds in the middle schools?

One meaningful unit emerged from the analysis of Research Question Two: Reasons for and against teacher read-alouds. All of the participants mentioned the same reasons for the read-alouds: (a) "to model fluency," (b) "to facilitate think aloud for different strategies," (c) for "engagement and interest in the lesson," and (d) "to provide access to the text." These phrases aligned with the Fien et al. (2011) definition of a read-aloud. Also, the participants mentioned that there should be a purpose for the read-alouds**,** and there was enthusiasm in their voices as they spoke about the different purposes and the experiences they had encountered during read-alouds.

The participants provided several reasons why some teachers were negative about the use of read-alouds: (a) "they should be able to read by now," (b) "they want the kids to do the bulk of the reading," (c) "there is not enough time," and (d) "not all teachers are comfortable reading out loud." Despite these reasons against reading out loud to the students, the reading specialists mentioned that none of the content area teachers refused to read out loud to their students nor stated, "I'll never read out loud." However, the participants admitted read-alouds did not occur as frequently in mathematics and science, while ELA teachers read out loud more frequently.

Research Question Three

How do participants describe the impact the read-aloud program has across the curriculum?

Three meaningful units emerged from Research Question Three: (a) The impact read-alouds have on the student population, (b) The impact read-alouds have across the content areas, and (c) The different types of text used in read-alouds. The student populations, which were discussed, was: (a) students with ADHD, (b) English Language Learners, (c) students with emotional or behavioral disorders, and (d) students with IEP or 504 plans. There were different ways read-alouds, which were beneficial for each student population: (a) students had access to the text, (b) students saw what fluent reading looked and sounded like, and (c) gave students opportunities to interact with the text because they were able to listen to the content. For student with EBD, teachers read about characters, who were in the same situation as that particular student. Teacher and students discussed the conflict and resolution, which could be applied to the students' own lives.

Across the content areas, teachers read out loud to: (a) develop vocabulary, (b) examine the author's craft, (c) conduct a think-aloud using reading strategies, and (d) engage students in the text. The different types of text, which were used in read-alouds were: (a) fiction, (b) nonfiction, (c) science fiction, (d) newspapers, (e) science articles, (f) journals, and (g) historical documents.

Research Question Four

How do participants' perceptions of read-alouds compare/contrast?

Two meaningful units were identified for Research Question Four: (a) perception on the need to provide professional development on the topic of teacher read-alouds and (b) perception on the need to provide read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools. The reading specialists reported that the use of read alouds has been mentioned as a reading strategy. However, the provision of specific training for the delivery of effective teacher read-alouds has not been provided to the specialists and teachers. Some of the reading specialists reported that they believed that training on read-alouds is not a top priority. Instead, the current focus is on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (2012) into the curriculum.

The second meaningful unit was identified as the perception about the use of read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools. All specialists agreed that the uses of teacher read-alouds were "beneficial," "a best practice," and they wanted to see teachers reading out loud to the students. The participants strongly believed read-alouds motivated students to read independently and understand and apply how to read in each content area. For example, students can learn to read like historians**,** when they examin**e** historical documents, and students understand how to read and think like scientists, when

they read a scientific journal article. However, the specialists believe that teachers should not read out loud during the whole class period. Students should be able to read the text themselves after they listen to the teacher read the material first. One participant stated, "They are reading to learn," and another participant reported that students will not become independent readers if the teachers read to them every time.

Implications of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand if and how read-alouds were used across the content areas in five middle schools in rural Maryland. Five reading specialists voiced their experiences and perspectives on teacher read-alouds. Although the reading specialists came from different educational backgrounds and varying years of experience as a reading specialist, they all shared the benefits and importance of read-alouds in the middle school classrooms. Read-alouds were used more frequently in the Language Arts and English classes and least frequently in the mathematics class. However, the reading specialists primarily worked directly with the ELA and social studies teachers, even though they did provide support to the science and mathematics teachers as needed. The findings from this study provided support for the use of read-alouds in the middle schools and that they are delivered in purposeful and engaging ways.

Theoretical Implications

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The social learning theory was applicable to this study because Bandura held that individuals learned how to complete a task by the observation and imitation of the behavior of another individual. Kim, Jain, Westhoff, and Rezabek (2008) stated, "Continuous reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental

influences" (p. 277) are necessary to support this theory. In teacher read-alouds, the cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences have continuous reciprocal interactions, because students need to know and understand the strategies (e.g., cognitive) in order to imitate how to use the strategies (e.g., behavioral). Furthermore, the teachers must model the effective strategies through read-alouds in class and provide opportunities for students to practice and master the strategies themselves (e.g., environmental).

According to Bandura's (1977) theory**,** individuals must be attentive to the desired behavior and retain what they observed. Additionally, individuals need the opportunity to practice the modeled behavior (Zambo, 2006). In order for the individual to practice the behavior correctly, immediate and continuous feedback from the model is imperative. Eventually, the individual should be able to display the targeted behavior naturally and with automaticity. The individual is motivated to imitate that desired behavior for internal and external purposes.

Another theoretical support is Vygotsky's (1978) sociohistorical theory. In this theory, there is recognition and support for the important relationship between human mental processes and the cultural, historical, and instructional settings. One basic theme of this theory is that higher mental functioning has its origin in social life (Oguz, 2007; Vygotsky). Higher mental functions include: (a) the analysis of processes, not objects; (b) the provision of explanations, not just descriptions; and (c) the importance of understanding the process and not just the product of development. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the ability to support higher mental functioning in the individual and allows educators to assess the intelligence of the individual. In addition, the ZPD can be used to help teachers organize their instruction (Gunning, 2005). For

example, in Wiseman's (2010) study, the teacher read and shared a picture book with the kindergarten class and fostered involvement through discussion, modeling, and questioning. When the students became more familiar with the teacher's organized structure of how she introduced a book, the students were able to take more control of the classroom discussion without her prompting.

Since teacher read-alouds is a natural and common activity, the support of oral language and literacy are provided (Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008). For instance, the students observe the adult use different methods to understand the text and to read the text fluently and with meaning, thus, scaffolding is provided. The teacher provides the support in order for the student to extend his or her current skills and knowledge (Hausfather, 1996). The teacher engages the student, simplifies the task so it is practicable, and motivates the child to continue reaching the goal. Through encouragement, the child takes more control over the learning, and the teacher gradually fades away from the task. Once scaffolding is established, the ZPD can begin (Hausfather).

Social learning theory has ample implications and applications in the classroom. Rutledge (2000, as cited in Kim et al., 2008) identified several educational implications of social learning theory.

1. Students learn through the observation of other people.
2. Modeling is a faster, more effectual method for teaching new behaviors. To encourage successful modeling, a teacher must make certain the four critical conditions are present: attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation.

3. Students should be exposed to different types of models: parents, family members, and community members.

Through the use of teacher read-alouds, students learn and see the characteristics of effective and engaged reading. Teachers use verbal and imaginal cues during the read-aloud. Repeated modeled behaviors allow students to produce lasting, retrievable images of the desired behavior (Bandura, 1977). Verbal coding of the modeled behavior regulates behavior**.** For example, teachers provide: (a) verbal cues during a read-aloud about what strategies are being used, (b) the type of questions the teacher may ask the students, or (c) comments about the text. In order to imitate the behavior correctly, students must use attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation to become successful in fluent reading with strong comprehension skills.

Methodological and Empirical Implications

A transcendental phenomenological design was used to understand the experiences and perceptions of the reading specialists about teacher read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This was a transcendental study because it was not focused on the researcher's interpretations or experiences, but instead the focus was on the description of the experiences of the reading specialists (Creswell; Moustakas). The goal was to describe and speculate on the phenomenon of read-alouds in the middle school across the content areas through focus groups and interviews with the participating reading specialists in two school systems in Maryland. In Chapter Four, the in-depth analysis of the details of the reading specialists' experiences with and their feelings toward read-alouds was provided. The data were

analyzed to develop meaningful units and the essence of the phenomenon through the participants' experiences.

Before data collection, a review of the literature on middle school read-alouds was conducted. Studies on read-alouds in the elementary grades and students with special needs were present. However, not many studies were available on the use of read-alouds in the middle schools. Findings from the studies in the elementary schools showed students improved in their fluency and comprehension. Although there were studies whose authors encouraged the use of read-alouds in the middle schools (Ariail & Albright**,** 2006; MacLaughlin, 2013; Meehan, 2006; Zehr, 2010), there has been little attention on how read-alouds are used across the content areas in the middle schools. Additionally, in-depth descriptions and perceptions of read-alouds from the educators themselves were rare in studies. Since completion of the study, this researcher found one scholarly article on middle and high school teachers' perception of read-alouds, but each teacher provided only one to two lines of how they use read-alouds and their attitudes toward read-alouds (Zehr, 2010).

Practical Implications

Many studies exist on the positive results of teacher read-alouds in the elementary grades (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009; Coyne, Loftus, Ruby, Crevecoeur, & Kapp, 2010; Delacruz, 2013; Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008; Heisey & Kucan, 2010; Kraemer et al., 2012; Maynard et al., 2010; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010; Santaro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008; Silverman, 2007a; Sipe, 2002; Trivette, Simkus, Dunst, & Hamby, 2012), and with students with disabilities and special needs (Antoniou & Souvignier, 2007; Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Brady, Thiemann-Bourque, Fleming, & Matthews, 2013;

Browder, Mims, Spooner, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Lee, 2008; DaFonte, Pufpaff, & Taber-Doughty, 2010; Durando, 2008; Fien et al., 2011; Hickman, Pollards-Durdola, & Vaughn, 2004; Hollenbeck, 2011; Hudson & Test, 2011; Jitendra, Burgess, & Gajria, 2011; Liboiron & Soto, 2006; Lovelace & Stewart, 2007; Mims, Browder, & Baker, 2009; Ranker, 2007; Sencibaugh, 2007; Silverman, 2007b; Steele & Watkins, 2010; Stetter & Hughes 2010; van Bysterveldt, Gillon, & Moran, 2006; van der Meer et al., 2012).

For middle school students, the use of reading aloud:

1. "increases test scores;
2. introduces readers to new titles, authors, illustrators, genres, and text structures;
3. builds a sense of community;
4. provides opportunities for extended discussions;
5. provides pleasure;
6. connects readers with content area subjects;
7. demonstrates response strategies;
8. increases readers' interest in independent reading;
9. provides access to books that readers may not be able to experience on their own;
10. provides demonstrations of oral reading and fluency;
11. helps readers understand the connection between reading in school and reading in life;
12. provides demonstrations of quality writing; and

13. supports readers' development" (Moen, 2004; Norland, 2004; p. 183)

Although read-alouds may provide benefits to middle school students, there is a lack of research to show evidence of these benefits. Middle school educators who use read-alouds and see the impact it has on the students should be provided with the opportunity to share their positive experiences. Based on the findings from this study, there is evidence that these teachers in two public school systems in Maryland use read-alouds in the middle school classrooms, especially in the ELA and social studies classes. Additionally, the students in these counties are motivated and engaged in the reading and learning. The findings provide practical implications for middle school educators and students.

Implications for Educators

Albright and Ariail (2006) communicated the need for read-alouds in the middle school classrooms. The participants in this current study shared the importance of read-alouds and how this practice can be integrated in the classrooms. However, the participants provided more about the use of read-alouds in English/language arts and social studies since they worked closely with those content areas. Additionally, the specialists reported that other teachers had provided a good balance between nonfiction and fiction texts in the classrooms.

It is important for teachers to incorporate read-alouds across the content areas. Delacruz (2013) argued that the use of read-alouds can enhance content area instruction. Delacruz stated, "Teachers who implement interactive read-alouds in their classroom tend to foster comprehension, promote independent thinking, and improve thinking through discussion" (p. 21). Heisey and Kucan (2010) maintained that students were

engaged in "thoughtfully considering important text ideas in a read-aloud context and that careful selection of texts supported their developing understanding of themes that emerged in compelling ways when more than one text is used" (p. 674).

McQuillan (2009) stated**,** "When teachers read aloud, they model the characteristics of fluent, independent reading. Reading aloud is the foundation for literacy development and is the single most important activity for reading success" (p. 30). In the middle schools, teacher read-alouds of different texts support students' understanding of the content. Additionally**,**

> authentic secondary texts make the content concrete, see how the curriculum is most currently connected to their daily lives, and experience applications to the topic in different formats. Reading aloud to students engages their interest and can provide motivation for students to pick up and read the same book**.** (McCormick & McTigue, 2011, p. 46)

McLaughlin (2013) provided examples of the different types of secondary texts teachers can use across the content areas. When seventh-grade students in a biology class are studying DNA, the teacher can read articles on how DNA plays a role in court cases. In social studies, if a sixth grade class is learning about World War II, the teacher may read aloud letters written by World War II soldiers and study photographs, which the soldiers sent home during the war. Students in an eighth grade English/language arts class may read aloud portions of the literary work or biography of a specific author. Lastly, in mathematics, the teacher and students may read aloud sections of a mathematician's biography or an interesting article on how mathematics is used in daily life.

Educators in the middle schools must have professional development opportunities on how to effectively deliver read-alouds in their content area. Some of the participants noted that some teachers may overuse the read-alouds so that the students do not have to read independently. Also, the participants reported that some teachers do not use read-alouds because students should be able to read independently. Therefore, consistency and balance of the read-alouds must be maintained across the grades and content areas. For teachers who are read-alouds appropriately, professional development providers can endorse strategies and instructional design that is practical and builds upon the groundwork from which they implement and assist their students (Nichols, Young, & Rickelman, 2007).

The use of read-alouds is an effective method to start class, and it should be used for only 5-10 minutes (Juby, 2010). Texts from different genres should be read and follow-up activities should be included in order for students to be engaged in the text. Some follow-up activities include: (a) art/music/drama activities; (b) examinations/ quizzes; and (c) journal writing. Additionally, research/inquiry, small-group discussion, and whole-group discussion are other types of opportunities for students to respond to the text (Ariail & Albright, 2006).

Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) and McCormick and McTigue (2011) described the essential components of an interactive read-aloud. First, books chosen were suitable to students' interests and corresponded with their developmental, emotional, and social levels. Second, the teacher previewed and practiced specific portions of the book and a clear purpose for the read-aloud was created. Next, the teachers modeled fluent oral reading and used expression while reading the text. The

teachers stopped occasionally and meticulously questioned the students to concentrate on details of the text. Lastly, teachers connected the text to independent reading and writing.

Furthermore, Mayberry (2014) emphasized the importance of using trade books for content areas. For example, in science classes, each book must have an extensive amount of science content and the information given "must be correct, current, and clear" (p. 65). The teachers should share the interesting facts with the students and share the different visuals in the text. Lastly, the book should be made available. "Students enjoy rereading great books that have been read aloud to them" (p. 64). Reading aloud provides opportunities for students to read the same text independently.

The types of text teachers should read out loud are: (a) information/nonfiction books, including biographies; (b) literature anthologies; and (c) magazines (Ariail & Albright, 2006). The researchers also encouraged teachers to read: (a) newspapers; (b) novel/chapter books, including historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy; (c) picture books; and (d) poetry books. Although picture books may seem **too** elementary to middle school students, these books are typically appropriate in length for a quick read-aloud in order to introduce a topic and activate background knowledge (McCormick & McTigue, 2011). The picture books

> are appealing to middle school students because they often have a narrative structure and are visually attractive, factors that provide students with a larger framework and associated images to help them organize the more technical and specific concepts of the curriculum**.** (McCormick & McTigue, p. 47)

Text selection is an important aspect for fostering responses in the classroom. Teachers need to build on students' understandings in methods that are both relevant and engaging (Wiseman, 2011).

Study Limitations

The focus of this study was only on reading specialists.. Thus, there was only one population from which to collect the experiences and perceptions of teacher read-alouds in the middle schools. Teachers across the content areas and students should be interviewed about their views and experiences with read-alouds. Only five participants were available for the study, so the findings cannot be generalized to other reading specialists in Maryland. The participants were all female Caucasians and, therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all reading specialists. However, it is not unusual to have a high percentage of female reading specialists in Maryland. The participants had varying years of experience as reading specialists, which ranged from 1-18 years.

Additionally, the reading specialists had little interaction or access to science and mathematics teachers. Therefore, the findings from this study may not be generalizable to all content areas. For Anderson County, there was only one participant, thus, no focus group could be conducted for that county. Lastly, the number of participants was low. The study took place at the end of the school year, and the findings from the study cannot be generalized to all reading specialists.

Recommendations for Future Research

The goal of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discuss the read-aloud practices, which were used across the content areas in the middle schools in Maryland through the lens of the reading specialists (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Significant statements, meaningful units, and the essence of the shared phenomenon were analyzed and discussed in order to provide a rich and in-depth description of the participants' thoughts, perspectives, and experiences of read-alouds. However, it is critical for researchers to continue the study of this phenomenon in the middle schools across the United States. Therefore, the following recommendations are made in this discipline.

A larger sample of participants should be used across the country for qualitative and quantitative purposes (Ariail & Albright, 2006). Quantitative studies should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher read-alouds on student reading comprehension and fluency across the content areas. Through correlational statistical tests, a relationship between teacher read-alouds, student reading motivation, and student reading progress can be analyzed. Qualitative research should be conducted and include interviews with more reading specialists, literacy coaches, and other educators who specialize in reading**,** specifically**,** those who work with mathematics and science teachers. Additionally, ongoing observations of teacher read-alouds are strongly recommended along with interviews of content area teachers and students about their experiences and perceptions of read-alouds across the content areas (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, & Franke, 2008).

Future research should be undertaken about how the use of professional development can be provided to train teachers on the delivery of effective read-alouds across the content areas, because this topic is vitally important (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). Fisher et al. found that the provision of high-quality professional development programs resulted in improved student performance. During the professional

development, the teachers used a think-aloud record for different types of text to ensure that they modeled the different strategies such as: (a) use of context clues, (b) skim text, (c) make or revise predictions, (d) make connections, (e) ask questions, and (f) summarize or synthesize the text.

From the perspectives and experiences of the reading specialists and the review of the literature, read-alouds provide many benefits to students in the elementary and middle schools. Additionally, read-alouds can be used in each content area for various reasons. Teachers should take the time to incorporate the use of read-alouds in their classrooms, so that students can have access to the text, understand what effective and engaged reading looks like through the teacher modeling, and to simploy enjoy a text that is read out loud. A short activity such as read-alouds can bring benefits that last a lifetime.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCHER'S EPOCHÉ STATEMENT

Growing up, I enjoyed family members, relatives, and teachers reading out loud to me. I learned English through read-alouds and taught myself to visually recognize those words that I heard repetitively. Listening to stories strengthened my listening skills and strengthened my skills in picturing the stories in my head. Read-alouds were fun and enjoyable for me and were one of the reasons I wanted to be a teacher: to provide an enjoyable learning time with my future students. Due to fond memories of read-alouds, I have created epoch statements that I need to set aside in order to have a fresh outlook on this practice when the interviews with the reading specialists take place. These presumptions are not in a particular order.

1) All teachers should take the time to read a book out loud, no matter the grade, no matter the content area.
2) Reading is an essential skill in school and in life.
3) Reading specialists should encourage teachers to read aloud to their students several times a week.
4) Administrators should support read alouds in their schools.
5) Professional development on read alouds should be given so that content area teachers can properly utilize read alouds in an effective and enjoyable manner.
6) If the students enjoy read-alouds and read-alouds will motivate them to read, then teachers should read-aloud.
7) Teachers should read from a wide genre of books aloud to their students.
8) If middle school administrators and teachers encourage students to read, why are teachers not being encouraged to read out loud to their students?
9) Reading aloud opens the ears of the children and widens their imagination.
10) Although there is pressure on middle school teachers to teach to the test, students will not be able to take the tests well if their reading skills are not strong.
11) Teacher read alouds demonstrate how reading can be enjoyable and necessary in order to learn.
12) Middle school students are reading to learn.
13) The reading specialists may say something that I may or may not agree with regarding read-alouds. However, I must stay neutral as much as possible during the interviews.

APPENDIX B

"ANDERSON" SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER

Middle School Teachers' Read-Aloud Practices in the Classrooms
Doctoral Dissertation Research Study
Christina Durham
Liberty University
School of Education

April 2014

Dear Dr. XXXXX,

My name is Christina Durham and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University entering the research stage of my dissertation. The purpose of my study is to develop a deeper understanding of teacher read-alouds in the middle schools in the county. I am asking for permission to invite the middle school reading specialists in your school system to be in a research study of their experiences on read-aloud practices across the content areas. These specialists are selected to be in the study because they are considered to be professional educators in the field of reading and literacy. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing for this study to be conducted in your school district.

This study is being conducted by: Christina Durham, Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is although there are documented benefits to teacher read-alouds in the elementary grades and to students with disabilities, the researcher has not found any current studies on the practice of teacher read-alouds in the middle schools, specifically in Maryland. Therefore, this study will help educators understand the role of teacher read-alouds in the middle school classroom.

Procedures:

This letter has been emailed to you for permission to conduct this research study at the following schools in order to interview the following reading specialists/literacy coaches: XXXXXXXXXX (Reading Specialist). After your approval, I will submit an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to approve the study. After IRB approval, a letter outlining the purpose and procedures for the study will be sent to the principals XXXXXXX for their approval. After principal approval, I will email the reading specialists a recruitment letter and a consent form in order to receive their consent to participate in the study. A focus group interview and individual interviews will be conducted. The focus group will take 45 minutes to one hour and the interviews will last approximately one hour. The focus group and interviews will be audiotaped, transcribed by the researcher and the transcripts will be read and analyzed. The reading

specialists have the opportunity to review their interview after it has been transcribed and before the final submission of the study if they choose.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

As in every study, there are the risks of participating in a research study. Some of the risks may include: (a) fatigue from answering questions and from the interview lasting for one and one half to two hours and (b) discomfort in answering some of the questions. Additionally, a risk of focus groups is the breach of confidentiality. I will emphasize the importance of confidentiality to the participants prior to, during, and after the focus group. However, I am not able to guarantee that all participants will preserve that confidentiality. Nevertheless, the information collected will be kept confidential and names of participants will be aliases on the transcripts and audiotapes. I will be jotting down notes while audiotaping each interview.

There are no direct benefits to the participants.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. The county, schools, and reading specialists will each have an alias. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the records. The records will be shredded three years after the study is completed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

I will assure the reading specialists that participation in this study is voluntary. Each specialist's decision to participate will not affect his/her current or future relations with the public school system or with Liberty University. The specialists will be informed to notify me if he or she wishes to withdraw his/her participation records from the study at any time. If he/she wishes to withdraw his/her records, I will record over the original audio recordings, shred the handwritten notes I took of his/her responses, and delete the typed notes and audio recordings on the electronic files.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Christina Durham. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at 240-237-5822 or cdurham2@liberty.edu or my advisor Dr. Rick Bragg, rbragg2@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Approval:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I approve to have this study conducted in my school district.

Middle School Teachers' Read-Aloud Practices in the Classrooms
Doctoral Dissertation Research Study
Christina Durham
Liberty University
School of Education

Statement of Approval:
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I approve to have this study conducted in my school district.

Signature of Superintendent: [redacted] 4-8-14

Signature of Investigator: [redacted] Date: 4/8/2014

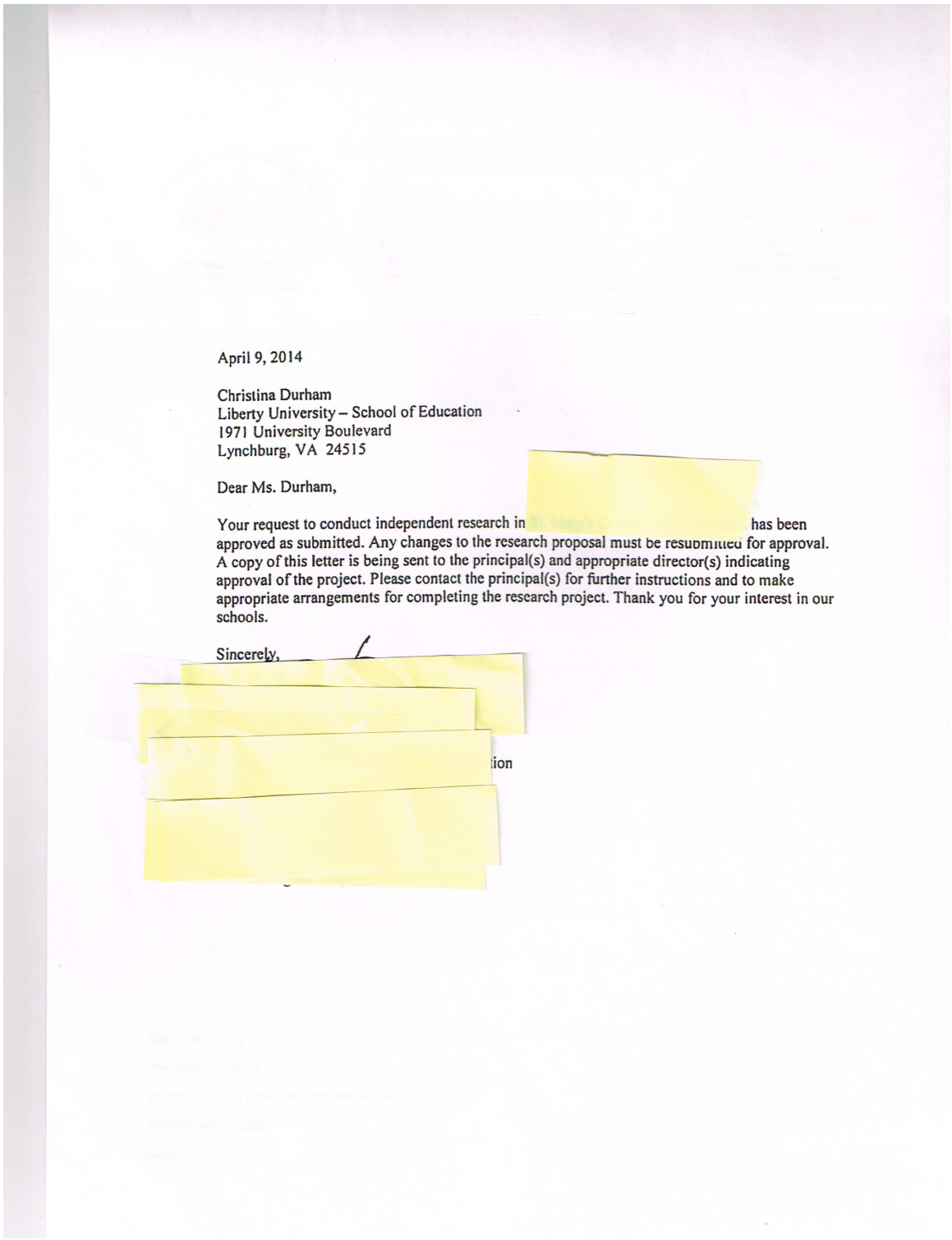
Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is: Christina Durham. If you have questions, **you are encouraged** to contact me at 240-237-5822 or cdurham2@liberty.edu or my advisor Dr. Rick Bragg, rbragg2@liberty.edu.

[redacted]

IRB Approval # 1839.041014

APPENDIX C

"CHRISTIAN" SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER



April 9, 2014

Christina Durham
Liberty University – School of Education
1971 University Boulevard
Lynchburg, VA 24515

Dear Ms. Durham,

Your request to conduct independent research in [redacted] has been approved as submitted. Any changes to the research proposal must be resubmitted for approval. A copy of this letter is being sent to the principal(s) and appropriate director(s) indicating approval of the project. Please contact the principal(s) for further instructions and to make appropriate arrangements for completing the research project. Thank you for your interest in our schools.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 10, 2014

Christina Durham
IRB Approval 1839.041014: Middle School Teachers' Read-Aloud Practices in the Classroom: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Christina,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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1971 UNIVERSITY BLVD. LYNCHBURG, VA. 24515 IRB@LIBERTY.EDU FAX (434) 522-0506 WWW.LIBERTY.EDU

APPENDIX E

READING SPECIALIST RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date: April 7, 2014
Reading Specialist Name
XXXX County Public Schools
Address
Address

Dear XXXXX

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a degree Doctor of Education. The purpose of my research is to describe read-aloud experiences of middle school reading specialists; examine the reasons for supporting teacher read-alouds in the middle school classrooms; and describe the impact, if any, of read-alouds across the content areas and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study. You are selected to be in the study because as a Reading Specialist, you are considered to be a professional educator in the field of reading and literacy. Reading specialists are required to hold a valid teacher's certificate, previous teaching experience, and a master's degree specialized in reading.

If you are willing to participate you will be asked to attend a focus group interview. This will be at a convenient location within your school district as agreed upon with the other reading specialist participants and me, the researcher. This group will meet for half hour to one hour on a school work day. Please use pseudonyms when discussing individual students or teachers and please keep all discussions confidential. The focus group will be audiotaped in order to guarantee accuracy and I will take notes. The transcripts will be read and analyzed. You will have the opportunity to review your responses after it has been transcribed and before the final submission of the study if you choose. After the focus group interview, we will set up a date and time for individual interviews on a school work day or weekend if necessary. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. This interview can be done in person or face-to-face on Face Time or Skype. This interview allows you to voice any opinions or other experiences in regards to read-alouds that you may not have felt comfortable sharing with the other specialists. The interview will be audiotaped notes will be transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts will be read and analyzed. You have the opportunity to review your interview after it has been transcribed and before the final submission of the study if you choose. It should take approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours total for you to complete the procedures listed. Because the focus groups and interviews will be recorded, participation will not be anonymous, but aliases and pseudonyms will be used in order to maintain confidentiality.

To participate, download the consent form attached to this email titled Reading Specialist Consent Form and contact me to schedule an interview: Christina Durham, phone #: 240-

237-5822 or email cdurham2@liberty.edu. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the focus group or email it back to me.

Sincerely,
Christina Durham
Doctoral Candidate/Liberty University

APPENDIX F

READING SPECIALIST CONSENT FORM

Middle School Teachers' Read-Aloud Practices in the Classrooms
Doctoral Dissertation Research Study
Christina Durham
Liberty University
School of Education

April 2014

Dear Mr/Ms. XXXX,

My name is Christina Durham and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University entering the research stage of my dissertation. The purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of teacher read-alouds in the middle schools in the county. I am inviting you to be in the above research study. You are selected to be in the study because you are considered to be a professional educator in the field of reading and literacy. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Christina Durham, Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that although there are documented benefits to teacher read-alouds in the elementary grades and to students with disabilities, the researcher has not found any current studies on the practice of teacher read-alouds in the middle schools, specifically in Maryland. Therefore, this study will help educators understand the role of teacher read-alouds in the middle school classroom.

Procedures:

If you agree to this study and after gaining IRB approval, I ask you to do the following:

1) Attend a focus group interview. This will be at a convenient location within your school district as agreed upon with the other reading specialist participants and researcher. This group will meet for half hour to one hour on a school work day. Please use pseudonyms when discussing individual students or teachers and please keep all discussions confidential. The focus group will be audiotaped in order to guarantee accuracy and I will take notes. The transcripts will be read and analyzed. You will have the opportunity to review your responses after it has been transcribed and before the final submission of the study if you choose.

2) After the focus group interview, we will set up a date and time for individual interviews on a school work day or weekend if necessary. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. This interview can be done in person or face-to-face on Face Time or Skype. This interview allows you to voice any opinions or other experiences in regards to read-alouds that you may not have felt comfortable sharing with the other specialists. The interviews will be audiotaped and the researcher will transcribe notes. The transcripts will be read and analyzed. You have the opportunity to review your interview after it has been transcribed and before the final submission of the study if you choose.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

As in every study, there are the risks of participating in a research study. Some of the risks may include: (a) fatigue from answering questions and from the interview lasting for one hour and (b) discomfort in answering some of the questions. Additionally, a risk of focus groups is the breach of confidentiality. I will emphasize the importance of confidentiality to the participants prior to, during, and after the focus group. However, I am not able to guarantee that all participants will preserve that confidentiality. Nevertheless, the information collected will be kept confidential and your name will be an alias on the transcripts and audiotapes. I will be jotting down notes while audiotaping each interview.

There are no direct benefits to you, the participants.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. You will have an alias. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as the subject. Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the records. The records will be shredded three years after the study is completed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

I assure you that participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the public school system or with Liberty University. Please notify me if you wish to withdraw your participation records from the study at any time. If you wish to withdraw your records, I will record over the original audio recordings, shred the handwritten notes I took of your responses, and delete the typed notes and audio recordings on the electronic files.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Christina Durham. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at 240-237-5822 or cdurham2@liberty.edu or my advisor Dr. Rick Bragg, rbragg2@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional

Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

I, _____, reading specialist at XXXXXX Middle School allow Christina Durham to interview me in the focus group and one-on-one interview for her study.

Originals Signed and Dated _____
Signature of Reading Specialist Date

IRB Approval # 1839.041014

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH PROMPTS

Introduction:

The goal of this study is to describe and understand the role of teacher read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools. Although there are documented benefits of read-alouds in the elementary schools, there is a lack of literature that describes the benefits of read-alouds in the middle schools.

Instructions:

I will ask the following questions to you as a group. Please take your time in reading the questions and answer them as completely and honestly as you can. Please use pseudonyms when mentioning individuals and please keep our discussion confidential. Thank you.

Questions:

1) Please introduce yourself (alias, years of employment at current school system, years as reading specialist, role as reading specialist).

2) What is your definition of teacher read-alouds?

3) Are you aware of any teachers reading aloud to their students?

   If so, which content area teachers? What grades? Describe.

   If not, which content area teachers? What grades? Describe.

4) Does your school provide professional development opportunities for integrating read-alouds across the content areas?

   If so, please describe.

   Have you asked for training teachers on read-alouds as part of a future professional development? Why or why not?

5) Do you wish to see teacher read-alouds in the classrooms?

   Why or why not?

Appendix H

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH PROMPTS

Introduction:

The goal of this study is to describe and understand the role of teacher read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools. Although there are documented benefits of read-alouds in the elementary schools, there is a lack of literature that describes the benefits of read-alouds in the middle schools.

Instructions:

I will ask the following questions to you. Please take your time in reading the questions and answer them as completely and honestly as you can. Please use pseudonyms when mentioning individuals and please keep our discussion confidential. Thank you.

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee (Alias):

Position of interviewee:

Questions:

1. Why did you want to be a reading specialist?
2. How long have you been teaching? As a reading specialist?
3. How long have you been employed by your school district?
4. How many teachers do you work with at your school?

5. What is the purpose of your role as a reading specialist and how do you accomplish that purpose?

   Prompts:

   With administrators

   With teachers

   With Personnel specialists (special education teachers, teachers of ELLs, psychologists)

   With students

   With parents

   With community
6. What is your definition of teacher read-alouds?
7. What are your views on teacher read-alouds and read-alouds in the middle school classroom?
8. What has been your experience with teacher read-alouds (elementary versus middle school if applicable)?
9. How do teacher read-alouds play a part in the middle school?

   Prompts:

   Students with IEPS/504

   English Language Learners

   Students with ADHD

   Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

10. Tell me about the read-alouds you have seen in the middle school across the content areas. What impact does the read-alouds have in each content area?

    Prompts:

    Reading/Language Arts

    Mathematics

    Science

    Social Studies

    Fiction Texts

    Nonfiction Texts

11. What are the reasons for teachers to read or not read aloud to the students? What content area teachers specifically read aloud or do not read aloud?
12. What reasons do you give to support read-alouds in the middle schools?
13. What type of text is read aloud to the students?
14. How do students participate or show interest in read-alouds?
15. What types of opportunities do teachers provide the students for responding to the text before, during, and/or after the read-aloud?
16. What benefits, if any, do you see amongst the grade levels or content areas of teachers who do conduct read alouds?
17. What do you see as negative aspects, if any, of read-alouds across the content areas in the middle schools?
18. Is there anything else significant to this topic you would like to share?
19. Mention/request for a follow-up interview.

Appendix I

MEANINGFUL UNITS AND STATEMENTS

Meaningful Units and Statements

Meaningful Units	Clusters of Significant Statements
Meaningful Unit 1: Reading Specialists' Experiences with Read-Alouds	• We would do a read aloud and I'd have students begging me "just one more page. Just one more chapter." • When I am introducing a new strategy. • I usually use read-aloud for fluency, for engagement, and those types of things. • I've taught 6th 7th and 8th grades before I was an instructional resource teacher and I did do read alouds at all three levels and kids loved it. • I went in and did some read alouds in there and kids loved it...I mean they really...they really enjoy it. • In many cases, it's, it would be what we would consider text stretch. • Well, in elementary we did a lot more of just reading to the kids. You know, reading from a picture book, settling down after recess, and just, you know, it was a good time to read something. • In the upper elementary we would be reading a novel one day at a time. • In middle school...it's much more um...tied to a specific standard or a specific skill that we're trying to...to have the kids meet. • When I had my own classroom I readily used them at least several times a week. Usually it was to um...engage kids in choosing books and so I would book-talk books that I thought would be interesting. • If it was an especially long chapter I might read aloud the beginning to make sure that I had kids invested before I sent them off on that chapter on their own.
Meaningful Unit 2: Student Engagement and Interest	• I know the one teacher that reads "the Divergent" this year she says that they are always at the edge of their seat. • She'll find the hottest book, you know, the book that is about to be made into a movie.

	• Different strategies that I've seen are following along in, you know with their own copy of whatever's being read out loud. • Students will be sketching to sort of um...get their visualizations out on paper as things are being read. • Students show interest in read alouds through rapt attention, through requests for the reading to continue even when the time for class is running out. • Their eagerness to continue reading when the teacher has stopped the session • Teacher stops to ask questions and they are, they're enthusiastic about answering. • And using a read-aloud it really um...modeling active reading and active engagement with the text...I definitely see kids mimic that more. • She'll start a read-aloud and then the kids will go out and buy the book. • Some students being reluctant feeling like "read alouds are for babies, you know for little kids. we're not you know not little kids we don't need read alouds."
Meaningful Unit 3: Opportunities teachers gave to students before, during, and after a read-aloud	• Before a read-aloud there are brief kind-of opportunities for activating background knowledge and um...previewing the text. • Before could be something as simple as what you think the text is going to be about, it's kind of like a KWL: what do you know about the topic and what do you think it will be about. • During reading, a lot of times the students are responding with annotation, notes, things like that. • Well timed questions before, during, and after help to set a purpose before the reading begins, help to uncover key aspects of the reading during, and help to give kids guidance for thinking through the key ideas and learning of the text. • After reading, a lot of times, which is usually with read alouds, is discussion, responses or like a class discussion or small-group discussion.
Meaningful Unit 4: Reasons for and against read-alouds	• For: • It allows kids to have access to the materials.

	• Help them uncover nuances of text that they may have missed. • Emphasize the importance of certain sections of text to the overall goals of the lesson or the content learning that the reading is supporting. • Model fluency and to facilitate a think-aloud • Build investment, engagement and interest in the lesson. • Might encourage them to be more of an avid reader. • To create community in a classroom. • All the kids are really into this book and really enjoying it, and it's fun • Let kids love reading • Against read-alouds: • "By middle school they should be able to read on their own." • Not understanding how to use a read-aloud. • "Oh, I wish I had time for read-alouds, but I don't." • We want the students to attempt it on their own first so we want them to somewhat struggle with the text and make meaning on their own first. • I don't know...because they don't like to? • I think that not all teachers are comfortable reading out loud. • They're just not strong readers themselves orally. • They feel like if they read it to them then they're providing too many scaffolds.
Meaningful Unit 5: Impact on Student Population – ADHD, ELL, EBD, IEP/504,	• For the general student with ADHD, read-alouds can be beneficial as a way to engage and help the student focus. • A well-done read aloud is the best model for kids of what English sounds like for our English language learners. • It's really giving them access to the English language as a whole. • I also think with English Language Learners they hear the fluency. • Reading done right can be very soothing to kids (EBD) • The book is a way to kind of help them think

	through their difficulties or their problems (EBD) • Teachers does a read-aloud as a way to motivate students • Books that kinda teach skills - social skills (EBD) • They can hear it then they can participate in the discussion (IEP/504) • Kids who have IEPS and 504s sometimes have accommodations for receiving sections of the text or whole parts of the text read aloud.
Meaningful Unit 6: Impact on Content Areas: English/Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies (SS)	• Very closely examining the author's craft. (ELA) • In the language arts, I know of a few teachers who're doing like the story time of the novel. • Use children's books to introduce different elements of the story and look at deeper meanings. (ELA) • We used The Lorax looking at environmental issues and different things like that. (ELA) • Modeling (ELA, Math, Science, SS) • Teachers will listen to the entire selection on CD and then they go back and they focus on specific passages that have something underlined that they really feel like the students really need to see. (ELA) • For fluency, for engagement, to conduct a think-aloud for whatever the focus may be. (ELA, Science) • Using read-aloud as a strategy, called Shared Inquiry (ELA) • Used to facilitate discussion (ELA) • Get kids interested and engaged in a particular novel (ELA, SS) • Read a section of the novel [or document] that's particularly challenging, not because the kids can't but because that they need to hear it because there are nuances that they are missing. (ELA, SS) • To look at point of view. (ELA) • Unlocking word problems (Math) • Giving students access to the problem (Math, Science) • Get math-related books and then they stop and will solve the problem.

	• To pronounce new words (Science). • Teachers sharing a really interesting scientific journal that they just read that might be beyond a middle school reading level. • [Teachers] want [students] to kinda see the value of science in the news. • In science class it's very technical so they'll read passages of the textbook out loud to students. • It builds their background information (Science, SS)
Meaningful Unit 7: Types of Text Used in Read-Alouds	• There has been some sci-fi • historical fiction • Nonfiction • Primary sources • Fiction texts • The teacher will read a specific part of a selection for a specific reason and that will draw the student's attention to that, to what the author was doing on purpose (fiction) • Sometimes it is the newspaper, sometimes, it's poetry. • I think there's a big push for more non-fiction text • In non-fiction is more about how to read. • We have a lot of trade books that we use. Novels, and those articles could be from newspapers; it could be from magazines, a variety of types. • I've seen drama read aloud to students. Um poetry
Meaningful Unit 8: Perception on Read-Alouds	• Teacher read-alouds foster a love of reading and create a shared experience for students. I definitely support teacher read-alouds for enjoyment in the middle school classroom. • It's a best practice and I think students are more engaged in the text. • I believe read alouds are an important part of instruction. • I think the negative piece is when they...you read too much or you give too much away and you don't let the kids kinda figure it out for themselves and, and pull out what they want to talk about. • It's the chance for teachers to model to students

	what fluent reading sounds like um...it's a chance to show students what active reading strategies with think alouds as well it gives access to all learners, whether they're strong readers or not...um...then other things we talked about...generating interest in students, wanting to read.. • Too much reading aloud negates the efforts in teaching kids to be readers themselves. • Read alouds cannot be a substitute for student reading, but when used wisely can be a useful tool to continue to build students reading capacity. • I would like them not to be called teacher read-alouds. • It can be done without taking up too much time • Doing this multiple times throughout the year exposes students to a variety of texts • They can find something they may enjoy reading for their own independent reading. • I think that's the value of teacher read alouds is that they're helping kids see how important reading is. • The students who are struggling readers are still getting a chance to learn. • I think if you're doing read-alouds it needs to be for that specific purpose; like this is WHY you're reading aloud. • I am not sure if I think that read alouds should be done solely for enjoyment. • I believe that if done with a purpose, read alouds can be very powerful.
Meaningful Unit 9: Perception on Professional Development for Read-Alouds	• We have not done any professional development. • I don't necessarily think it's high on the priority list, but I also think a lot of people are already doing it so I don't think there's a lack of understanding about the importance of read-alouds. • I do think it would be good to see that...um after teachers have been trained for how to do it. • We haven't specifically mentioned read-alouds. • As part of professional development we show some techniques and some of them might be reading aloud a section