

2015

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Recommended Citation

Freer, Staci (2015) "Conducting a Read Aloud Case Study to Increase Motivation, Create a Positive Attitude and Change Beliefs with a Struggling Reader," *Graduate Annual*: Vol. 3 , Article 8.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/graduateannual/vol3/iss1/8>

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CONDUCTING A READ ALOUD CASE STUDY TO INCREASE MOTIVATION, CREATE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND CHANGE BELIEFS WITH A STRUGGLING READER

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ABSTRACT

This paper will report on the positive changes seen in a struggling reader when a Read Aloud case study was conducted over a 4 week period. Key factors to the Read Aloud including offering choice in what was read, structuring each session to allow for consistency and gathering data through a pre-case study survey, post-case study survey, post-session surveys, observations and comparisons of Language Arts homework before and during the Read Aloud case study. With the exception of observations during each Read Aloud session, all data gathered was quantitative in nature. The data shows that his motivation to seek out literature on his own during the Read Aloud and both the students attitude toward reading and himself have improved over this short period of time.

INTRODUCTION

Joseph is a 5th grade student that has received extra support in both Math and Language Arts for the past four years. His support has ranged from pullout sessions, both one-on-one and group, as well as in-class aide support. He currently has pullout services offered to him for Language Arts where he works in the general education classroom on regular Language Arts, then gets pulled for additional one-on-one support three times a week with supplementary material.

Based on observations, conversations with parents and teachers and Joseph's academic performances, Joseph performs academically below average in comparison with his grade level peers, though all believe that his is in part due to his lack of interest and motivation in school. He has built up a sense of learned helplessness, which according to Finchman is "a disruption in motivation, affect, and learning following exposure to noncontingent (uncontrollable) outcomes" (2009). Joseph has repeated failures in his academic career and as a result, numerous levels of intervention have been offered. Joseph has learned to rely on others to help him through his work, which only exacerbates the problem. As a result, Joseph does not feel in control of his learning and is not motivated to do any work on his own, including reading. He is required to read 20 minutes daily, but according to him he only reads approximately four out of seven days, often not the full twenty minutes and never exceeds the minimum 20 minutes. He has no internal or external motivation to read and views himself as a below average reader.

I have been privately tutoring Joseph for five years now in all content areas. We primarily work on his homework and if time is allotted, we have worked on specific strategies to build his level

of understanding in all content areas. Joseph is compliant to work with me approximately 50% of the time, while the other times, primarily when we work at school, he complains about having to work with me and is not motivated to do his work. He has at times cried or outwardly whined when I have come to get work with him. Over the past five years he has repeatedly asked why he has to work with me and how long I have will continue to work with him. We have a good relationship, but oftentimes when I ask him how his day is going, his response is, "good, until you got here." I attribute much of his pushback towards me to actually to be geared toward his work. On the occasional times we have finished work early, we have played fussball together and he returns to his animated, lively self.

ISSUE BEING ADDRESSED

I am trying to understand why a student I have been privately tutoring for many years has no motivation to read and as a result is struggling tremendously in the classroom. He has received support in the past, though there is no specific diagnosis that points to why reading is a struggle for him. I have wondered if there are intrinsic or extrinsic (or both) factors that contribute to his reluctance to read, even for the bare minimum 20 minutes that is asked of him by the school. Due to this reluctance, he currently reads two grades below grade level.

AREA AND RATIONALE OF FOCUS

After conducting research on multiple intervention strategies that might foster literacy growth and motivation, I decided to conduct a twice weekly Read Aloud session with him on a book of his choice. I chose this strategy because Joseph indicated that he rarely is read aloud to right now, so this will be a novel strategy for him. According to GreatSchool Staff (2005) read alouds have many benefits, including allowing the "child to enjoy books beyond independent reading level and build vocabulary, model prosody and expression" and "creates a positive bond and and has a positive effect on child's attitude toward reading". Pleasure can be brought back into reading through this experience and if that becomes the case, then this could potentially lead to a snowball effect where Joseph might seek out more literature on his own, his attitude toward reading and his views of himself as a reader might improve as he reads more, and his academic success will improve as "students who read independently become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas, and have greater

content knowledge than those who do not” (Cullinan, 2000).

I also wanted to give him choice in what I read to him. Perks (2010) writes in *Adolescent Literacy In Perspective* that offering students a choice in what they read can foster motivation and higher levels of engagement. Children are “motivated to read when they were given an opportunity to decide what narrative text they would like to read” (Edmunds and Bauserman, 2006, p. 417) and Center on Instruction (2010) notes that students also spent more time reading when they were given a choice, both in and outside of the classroom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

If I conduct a twice-weekly read aloud session with him, to what extent will this:

1. Create a positive attitude toward reading?
2. Motivate him to seek out literature on his own to read?
3. Change his beliefs of who he is as a reader?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Over the course of four weeks, I conducted a Read Aloud session with my student twice a week.

Before I started the Read aloud case study, I surveyed the student to assess:

- his attitude toward reading
- his understanding of what reading is
- types of books he finds interesting, as well as interests outside of reading
- his beliefs of who he is as a reader
- the frequency and duration of his independent reading time
- what kind of supports he is offered both in school and at home to read

This survey is primarily quantitative because the answers are within a range of 1-5 to reflect his opinions on the topics, with the exception of the final question asking about his feelings toward reading, which is open ended.

After the survey a Read Aloud was conducted where the student was offered summaries of books that were found based on his responses to his interests in reading from the survey. He chose the book and a Read Aloud was conducted twice a week for 20-45 minutes each session over the course of 4 weeks. After each Read Aloud session, the student answered a brief survey-approximately 20 seconds-to assess his reaction to each read aloud session.

Observations from each Read Aloud session were also recorded immediately following each session.

Upon completing the read aloud case study, a similar survey to the initial survey was issued to reassess his attitude towards reading, and his view towards Read Alouds, as well as him offering other ways that might engage him in the reading process in the future. All sample surveys are in the Appendices section and actual surveys and observations from the case study are attached.

As the case study progressed, it was noticed that Joseph’s required weekly Language Arts homework was improving both in length of responses, which he was required to do twice weekly, as well as the depth and detail. For this case study data was captured on his responses to included in the analysis to see if there was any correlation to this case study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Editor’s Note: Graphs in this section can be viewed in the digital version of the Graduate Annual, available at digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/graduateannual.

Below is the quantitative data gathered from the case study. From the data, it is clear that Joseph’s attitude toward reading increased as the case study progressed. The data correlates to observations taken during the Read Aloud as there were two days-October 16th and October 23rd-where Joseph was not interested in reading during the session, though the data does not indicate why. On both of those days the Read Aloud session was at school, pulling him away from outside time with his friends to read. These two days gave great insight into how to refine the case study going forward. After comparing what data gathered and talking with Joseph, it was decided that going forward three chapters would be read on days the session was conducted at school and five chapters on days the session was at home. This greatly helped him stay focused and motivated. As the data shows, from that day forward, his motivation to continue in the Read Aloud case study consistently remained at “Always-5” across the board. Adjusting the case study to allow for predictability seemed to greatly improve his responses during the subsequent sessions.

Although it seems apparent based on the results below that the Read Aloud was a success, it is imperative to readdress each of the three research questions to see if the goals were met.

To what extent did this case study create a positive attitude toward reading?

The six questions asked after every Read Aloud focused are all components of fostering a positive attitude toward reading. Based on the Chart 3, “Post Read Aloud Sessions Overall Score” where all the scores were added other than the one dip in the chart on one of the days that Joseph did not want to read, his scores kept increasing closer to to the top end of the score of 30, with it maxing out the last three sessions once we adjusted the case study to how many chapters we would read. Even more outstanding, the total scores from the Pre and Post Surveys show that his positive attitude increased from a score of 11 to 26 and even more impor-

tant every single of the six questions scores increased from the beginning of the case study to the end of the case study. Joseph's attitude increased in a positive attitude based on the scores alone. The observations and conversations had before, during, and after the case study demonstrate that Joseph wanted to read almost every single session and even on the two days he did not want to read he still sat through it and did not complain. Reflecting on Joseph's background is key here as before this case study Joseph rarely read event he 20 minutes of required daily reading and was oppositional to any type of reading. After the survey, not only was he open to reading, he enthusiastically participated in most sessions and actively sought out literature of his own, which leads into the section question.

To what extent did this case study motivate him to seek out literature on his own to read?

Prior to this case study, Joseph responded that he rarely (score of 2) read the required 20 minutes of daily reading required by the school and that he never (1) read beyond the 20 minutes of required reading. After the case study he responded that most of the time (4) he read the required 20 minutes and some of the time (3) he read beyond the 20 minutes. Through conversations with Joseph and his parents, Joseph read two full chapter books over the course of the three weeks of this case study on his and by his own volition, so oftentimes he read more than an hour each day. The last day of the case study Joseph reported that he started a new book the night before and read 100 pages on his own in the course of one day. It must be noted that all of this reading he did is on top of the Read Aloud reading, which we agreed we would count toward his 20 minutes of daily reading. it is also important to point out that all books that Joseph read independently were books he chose to read, as opposed to being assigned to read.

To what extent did this case study change his beliefs of who he is as a reader?

The final question on both the Pre and Post Read Aloud Case Study Survey asked Joseph what comes to mind when he thinks about reading. In the Pre Survey, he immediately responded with, "Death, extremely boring!". Obviously his feelings toward reading were very negative and based on other responses in the Pre Survey, he did not believe himself to be a reader. After the Read Aloud Case Study in the Post Survey his response to what he thought about reading was, "It's not that bad." If one were to only look at the ending response, one might conjecture that his attitude toward reading is pretty negative, but in comparison to his initial response, this is a huge positive increase in his attitude toward reading. Similarly, he viewed himself as a reader that some of the time (3) had a book always to read, as opposed to never (1) in the Pre Survey. About midway through the case study Joseph would also talk about books he was reading on his own and comment on how he would have a "problem" when he was getting close to finishing a book because that meant he needed to find a new book to read. Before the case study Joseph never had a book that he was actively and consistently reading. The two books he read independently during the Read Aloud were both books bought for him based on his interests six months ago that he had read the first few chapters, but then put them down and never reengaged in the books until this case study started. Joseph now feels like a reader

and has a repertoire of different series of books that he is currently reading, including *Diary of A Wimpy Kid*, *Big Nate* and *Origami Yoda*.

The chart above was an add-on to the case study as it was recognized that Joseph's Language Arts Reading Responses started increasing in the amount of words he used to respond to his daily reading. This is a snapshot of before the case study, during the case study and after the case study. It must be noted that once he started writing 70+ words, he was running out of room on the page to write his responses, so it is not certain whether his responses might actually be longer if he was given the space. The first three responses did not fill up the entire space given. It is not clear whether there is any correlation to his responses and the case study, but his Language Arts Teachers (both regular and pull out) noticed a significant change in Joseph's attitude toward his work and attitude toward reading overall in the classroom so much that they contacted the parents to ask what was changed at home to create such a positive change. Once they found out that Joseph was partaking in this Read Aloud Case Study and that he was responding so positively to it, the teachers encouraged the parents to continue with the sessions past the case study conclusion and to also keep offering Joseph choice over what he reads, which seems to keep him engaged and make him feel like he is in control of the whole process.

Based on all the data, observations and conversations, it is clear that this case study was a success. The two major components that contributed to this success were that Joseph was given choice in what was read and the delivery of the book. Joseph felt actively engaged in the book, even though he was not reading it himself. He was able to make many connections to other books, events and people while reading and he was able to comprehend, with all of this leading to him viewing himself as a reader that was good at reading and likes reading.

The success of this case study spilled over into other areas of reading life, namely school and personal reading. It is not clear if there is a specific correlation between this case study and him increasing his reading time and length of reading responses, but numerous strategies have been applied throughout his academic career and none have had such a positive impact on both his reading and views of reading than this has. It might be that this process has helped build his confidence and involvement in the reading process enough that he started to take control of more aspects of his reading, as opposed to his previous behavior of being a passive recipient.

LIMITATIONS TO THE CASE STUDY

Although this case study case study show great results in terms of improving motivation to read, there are limitations to this case study. First, the success of this case study does not mean that it will always be successful on a broader scale. This case study was conducted on a one-to-one ratio of student-to-teacher, which is almost near impossible to consistently replicate, especially considering the frequency and duration of the sessions. Most teachers do not have two periods of 30-45 minutes weekly to devote time to each individual student in a classroom setting, so this model is not one to replicate then.

It must also be recognized the demands of teachers by their superiors, be it department head, principals or the school district administration. Many teachers are required to teach in a scripted way that does not give much room for choice on the students' part. A key component to the success of this case study is that the student was able to choose his own literature, something that is not always possible to do in the classroom.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL PEDAGOGY

As a result of the data collected, observations made and conversations that took place over the course of the case study, it is clear that Joseph benefitted from the Read Aloud process. It must be pointed out that it was not just the process of the Read Aloud where he was an active participant that made this case study successful, but in the fact that Joseph was exposed to a variety of books and was ultimately given a choice as to what would be read. He felt in control of his reading, which all students should feel like. When students have control and feel like their point of view and likes are taken into account, they become more active and involved in the process. Going forward, it seems necessary to offer students choice in both what they read and how it is delivered. That is not saying their exposure to all types of literature and ways to read should be limited to what they want, but that should feel like their voice is being heard.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Going through the process of an case study paper gave me very explicit instruction on the value of collecting data to guide learning. For five years this student disliked reading so much that he would avoid it at any cost, even if it meant punishment from the parents. I have been working with this student for almost 5 years now and I would have never thought to do a Read Aloud Case Study with him. I have tried so many other ideas to get him motivated to read and none of them have been successful. It never occurred to me before the case study process to actually gather data on my student and to let that data drive my instruction. Conducting the Literacy Review before going forward with any plan gave me research-based, concrete examples of ways to motivate Joseph and by pursuing one activity more in depth with background knowledge and a structure, it allowed me create a program that was hugely successful for him that also allowed for me to reflect during the process and tweak it as we continued. Going through the process guided my teaching and taught me that I just have to keep trying, but in a systematic fashion and that it is key to gather quantitative and qualitative data to determine if a strategy is working or not and then actually use that data throughout the process.

APPENDICES: SAMPLES OF EACH SURVEY ADMINISTERED

*Pre-Read Aloud Case Study Survey

*Post Read Aloud Case Study Survey

*Weekly Postly Read Aloud Session Survey

PRE-READ ALOUD CASE STUDY SURVEY

Date Administered: _____

Instructions: Read the survey questions one at a time to the student and have student rank each question based on the following:

1- Never

2- Rarely

3- Some of the time

4- Most of the time

5- Always

1. How often do you read independently? ____

2. How often do you read the required 20 minutes daily? ____

3. Do you feel in control of your reading? ____

4. How often do you avoid reading? ____

5. How often do you read and feel like you understood most to all of what you read? ____

6. How often do you get stuck on unknown vocab? ____

7. How often do you use any of the following to avoid reading?

*Reading is boring. ____

*I don't have time to read. ____

*I prefer to do a different activity than reading. ____

*I cannot get into stories. ____

*I am no good at it. ____

8. How often have you had male teachers? ____

9. How much do agree with the following?:

*I find reading pleasurable. ____

*I prefer to choose my reading rather than someone else choose for me. ____

*Literature (i.e. books, magazines, etc.) is readily available for me. ____

*I feel comfortable in a library. ____

- *I know how to locate books. ____
- * I know who to ask for help. ____
- * I know how to check out and return books. ____
- *I always have a book I am reading. ____
- *I prefer to read books silently and independently. ____
- *I prefer someone else to read to me. ____
- *I regularly have someone else read to me. ____

10. If I could choose, these are the types of literature I would read:

Genres/Topics	Format
*Silly Stories ____	*Chapter books ____
*Mysteries ____	*Graphic novels ____
*Sports ____	*Articles ____
*Scary ____	*Manual/How To Guide ____
*Biography ____	*On computer/device ____
*Nonfiction/Informational ____	*Other:
*Friendship ____	
*Other:	

11. What comes to mind when you think about reading?

POST-READ ALOUD CASE STUDY SURVEY

Date Administered: _____

Instructions: Read the survey questions one at a time to the student and have student rank each question based on the following:

- 1-Never
- 2-Rarely
- 3-Some of the time
- 4-Most of the time
- 5-Always

1. How often did you read independently during the read aloud case study? ____

- 2. How often did you read the required 20 minutes daily during the read aloud case study? ____
- 3. Did you feel in control of your reading during the read aloud? ____
- 4. How often did you avoid reading when doing the read aloud? ____
- 5. How often did you feel like you understood most to all of what was read during the read aloud? ____
- 6. How often did you get stuck on unknown vocab during the read aloud? ____

How often did you feel like you were able to understand those unknown vocab words

either through the reading or from asking the reader for clarity? ____

7. How often did you use any of the following to avoid reading during the read aloud time?

- *Reading is boring. ____
- *I don't have time to read. ____
- *I prefer to do a different activity than reading. ____
- *I cannot get into stories. ____
- *I am no good at it. ____

8. How much do agree with the following?:

- *I find reading pleasurable. ____
- *I prefer to choose my reading rather than someone else choose for me. ____
- *Literature (i.e. books, magazines, newspapers, etc.) are readily available for me. ____

- *I always have a book I am reading. ____
- *I prefer to read books silently and independently. ____
- *I prefer someone else to read to me. ____

9. What comes to mind when you think about reading?

10. Would you participate in a read aloud again? Why or why not?

WEEKLY POST-READ ALOUD SESSION SURVEY

Date of Read Aloud administered: _____

(to be administered after each read aloud session)

Instructions: Read the survey questions one at a time to the student and have student rank each question based on the following:

1-Never

2-Rarely

3-Some of the time

4-Most of the time

5-Always

1. I enjoyed reading this book today. ____

2. I want to keep reading this book. ____

3. I did not want to stop reading today. ____

4. I understood most to all of what was read. ____

5. I was able to make connections from the book to other book, people or ideas.

6. I felt actively engaged in the texts. ____

Observations:

Chapters read:

Questions/comments/connections during the reading:

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