TEACHERS' DECISIONS IN CONDUCTING READ ALOUDS

By

LAURIE DAMER

B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1985
Dipl. in Education, University of British Columbia, 1997

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Department of Language and literacy education
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the reasons teachers hold for making decisions when reading printed material aloud to students. Using ethnographic interviews, the study explored the thinking of ten grade two and three teachers who read to their students in the classroom. Research questions addressed teachers' purposes for conducting read alouds, rationale for instructional strategies used during read alouds, and selection criteria of read aloud texts. Findings showed that decisions about read alouds were similar in kind to decisions teachers routinely make in other aspects of their work, and that the reasons are as much political as they are pedagogical.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Reading is among the most essential subjects taught in the primary years that provides a foundation for educational success. Those of us who have been reading for years may not remember how difficult it was to make sense of printed words, but our success in reading began with the acquisition of basic but essential skills. Teachers have a number of useful approaches to teach beginning reading skills including sight words, phonics, and picture cues. Teachers may also choose to read orally to their students in a practice known as the "read aloud."

Read alouds can take a number of forms. On the one hand, a read aloud can take place spontaneously when the teacher has an opportunity to read stories, information books, or almost any reading material. On the other hand, read alouds can involve pre-planning, careful selection of reading materials, deliberate strategies for reading, and follow-up activities. Holdaway (1979) likens classroom read alouds to traditional bedtime stories where children are encouraged to negotiate meaning of print with a significant adult in a comfortable and secure environment.

The Problem

As with any other pedagogical strategy, read alouds have their proponents and their critics, yet read alouds are common in classrooms today. Little is known, however, about why teachers conduct them. This is particularly intriguing because the read aloud can take so many different forms. Rather than examining the effectiveness or right way to do a read aloud, this study sought to investigate why teachers do read alouds as they do and why they choose certain materials.

Purpose of study

This study explored the decisions teachers made when reading aloud to students in their classrooms as part of a literacy program. It examined teachers' reasons for choosing pedagogical techniques and reading materials. There is a body of literature that advocates read alouds and a body of literature that discusses the decisions teachers make and the possible reasons why they make them. Although some of the literature examines the choices required to conduct a read aloud, very little asks teachers for their own reasons.
The research questions for this study were:

i) Why do teachers conduct read alouds? That is, what do teachers identify as their motives, intentions, obligations or requirements for conducting read alouds?

ii) Why do teachers use a certain pedagogy for read alouds? That is, are choices based on beliefs of pedagogical effectiveness, familiarity with a practice, concerns for public or administrative approval, or something else?

iii) How do teachers choose materials for read alouds? Are teachers guided by such influences as, personal preferences, the popularity and availability of materials, or peer recommendations?

Methodology

This was a qualitative study using ethnographic methods. The design was emergent and did not presuppose a particular theory (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993:15). Semi-structured ethnographic interviews were used to gain insight into the decisions teachers made before, during, and following read alouds. Semi-structured ethnographic interviews resembled casual conversations, but were guided by pre-determined research questions. Questions were open-ended and written on an interview guide that included possible probes. However, the order of questions and wording of questions were adapted to individual interviews. Semi-structured interviews imposed minimal control over participant responses. Teachers were encouraged to respond in their own words and highlight issues they perceived to be important. Teachers' voices were valued throughout the interviews although the researcher added her own interpretation. Following individual interviews, a focus group was used to clarify, discern, and extend concepts that arose during interviews. Teachers kept a log of read aloud materials used and the researcher kept a field note journal.

Another important aspect of the methodology was that the researcher was immersed in the sub-culture of the participants. Immersion occurs when the researcher participates directly in the sub-culture and experiences the subtleties of a particular way of life. Immersion allowed for
insight into contextual forces, including district and ministry directives, that may have influenced participant behaviour.

Rationale

The methodology used in this study helped to answer the research questions in ways that other methodologies could not. As compared to questionnaires, semi-structured ethnographic interviews were more appropriate for probing deeply into teacher's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and decisions. Ethnographers presume that people create meaning within their culture and through their actions; the researcher must try to interpret these meanings. It was through information gathered from the participant's perspective that the researcher gained valuable insight into the culture in question. Teachers ascribed meaning to their read aloud practices, the contexts in which they worked, the materials they used, and the values that they held. Semi-structured ethnographic interviews and focus groups allowed the researcher to peer into teacher culture.

Ethnographic interviews gave the researcher language that teachers used to describe and justify their practices. Within the language were words or expressions that stood out as having special meaning. Under closer examination and through the focus group session, the words were tested for their special meaning. Those words or phrases that did have special meaning were further explored to reveal categories of teachers' thought that guided their read aloud practice.

Significance and Implications

This study contributed to the literature by investigating an area not well represented: teachers' decisions surrounding read alouds. Researchers of read alouds have studied teachers' behaviours, children's responses, and the influences of classroom organization, but rarely have they asked teachers why they choose their pedagogy, materials, and management strategies.

Key to the present study were ethnographic interviews. Ethnographic interviews explored the perceptions, values, and thoughts that guided teachers. Earlier research into read alouds often used video cameras, audio tape recorders, personal observations, and
questionnaires to determine what teachers did in their classrooms. These studies relied on "outsider" observations and were limited to what teachers did while conducting a read aloud. By using ethnographic interviews, this study focused on the "inner world" of teachers and teacher culture.

Behind the relatively simple question about what guided read alouds was the more complex issue of literacy and literacy education. "Literacy" is a hotly debated topic, and definitions vary. In one view, literacy is simply the ability to read and write to a culturally appropriate standard. A contrasting view is that literacy is a communication tool that allows a person to participate fully in the social, economic, and political life of a community. In this latter view, literacy has a profoundly political dimension that can segregate and marginalize some or elevate and empower others. A study on the decisions that surrounded read alouds ties into these larger social issues.

Results from this study suggested themes for future qualitative and quantitative studies. This was a small, exploratory study and only began to address this area of research. Future studies might include an analysis of the read aloud decisions made by beginning teachers compared to those made by experienced teachers, an investigation into the role of teacher education on professional decision-making, an examination of teacher's professional "contexts" and teacher decision-making, a content analysis of the materials teachers choose for read alouds, an analysis and measurement of specific read aloud strategies on student performance and achievement, and further ethnographic studies similar to this one but conducted over a longer time with more participants.

There are others who might find this study useful. Teachers, for example, may find this study to be a useful touchstone in considering their own practices. Information gleaned from this research might encourage teachers to reflect on their own practice and decision-making. As teachers may be unaware of the decisions and practices of their colleagues, this study may help improve practice simply by sharing ideas and resources. Furthermore, findings could be useful in explaining classroom practices to parents who are curious about their child's education.
Administrators might also find this study useful. By understanding how teachers arrive at their choices, administrators are better able to support their teaching staff. Administrators might allocate funds for professional development materials or release time, read aloud materials, and other resources. School administration could also dedicate time for special school-wide reading events. Teachers appreciate sympathetic administrators who are aware of classroom achievements and obstacles.

Teacher educators may also find this study informative because it provides an opportunity to listen to teachers' concerns and thought processes. For teacher educators to know whether their work is effective, they need information from teachers. By allowing teachers to identify their reasons for action, the teacher educator can judge the influence of pre-service or in-service programs. Teacher educators may learn the extent of their influence on aspiring teachers, or that pedagogical decisions change as teachers gain more experience. By providing an opportunity for teachers to voice their thoughts, this study contributes to teacher education evaluation.

Limitations

As a small scale study conducted over a limited time, findings were not generalizable despite suggesting themes for further inquiry. Various contextual issues may have interfered with the interviews. As the study was conducted in a small school district, participants may have harboured concerns about anonymity. The politics of the school and wider community may have spilt over into the interviews or the focus groups. Being immersed in the school district in which the study was conducted, the researcher was privy to personal information. This added to a more informed interpretation of the data, but may have inhibited participants. Interaction in the focus group was likely influenced by interpersonal familiarity that either encouraged or restricted candid discussions.

As a novice, the researcher was also prone to certain practical shortcomings. Years of experience helps the researcher to develop better interviewing techniques and focus group management skills. Making participants feel at ease when their responses are being recorded, or knowing when to probe participant responses — and how deeply — are cultivated skills.
However, the first time researcher did take care not to impose her own interpretations on the participants' language and was aware of participants' reactive bias (Palys, 1997).

Summary

Why do teachers make certain choices when conducting read alouds? This question was answered through ethnographic interviews and a focus group, and interpreted with reference to contextual data. Chapter two reviews the literature that extols the virtues of read alouds. It then examines two broad perspectives on teacher decision-making, followed by a review of literature on the decisions significant to the read aloud. Chapter three describes the study's ethnographic methodology in greater detail. Chapters four and five present research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was concerned with a particular pedagogical practice—read alouds—but more significantly it investigated how and why teachers made certain decisions. This chapter reviews some of the promotional literature on read alouds as a vital component of a balanced literacy program, followed by a review of literature on teacher decision-making. The latter generally divides into those studies that used external observation methods to assess what teachers "really did" (whether they knew it or not), and those studies that used interpretive or ethnographic methods to assess how teachers understood their world and why they made their decisions. Finally, there is a limited body of literature about teacher decision-making for read alouds to which the present study contributed most directly.

Read Alouds

Read alouds are generally recognized as useful in helping young children learn literacy skills (Sipe, 2000). For decades, researchers of early literacy have encouraged teachers and parents to read aloud to children, often with unbridled—if uncritical—enthusiasm (Fox, 2000). However, some studies argue that the correlation between reading aloud to children and future literacy success is not as strong as previously believed (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Whitehurst et al., as cited in Beck & McKeown, 2001). It was not the purpose of this study to measure the efficacy of read alouds as a pedagogical practice, but to note that numerous studies and considerable opinion have lent support to this classroom practice. Whatever the value of read alouds, much of the literature available to educators promotes the practice and encourages teachers to read stories to their students.

The Value of Read Alouds

One of the most fundamental tasks of the literacy teacher is to model reading behaviours (Clark, 1982; Clay, 1991; Holdaway, 1979; Morrow, 1989). The read aloud facilitates the understanding of left to right progression, picture cues, contextual cues, prediction, sequencing, and other basic reading skills. Read alouds also encourage children to recognize the function and form of print and to understand that written texts—fiction and non-fiction, books,
magazines, posters, or any other printed media—convey meaning. Increased awareness of the reading process results from classroom read alouds. Researchers have advocated the use of regular sized books, "big books," texts enlarged through overhead projectors, and interactive classroom books to model reading behaviours.

For many years, researchers have also promoted read alouds as useful in modeling language. Linguists Chomsky (1972), Halliday (1975), and Heath (1980) argued that how one learns to read is similar to how one acquires a first language. Both require models of language, opportunities for "language-play," and dialogue to extend language use. Holdaway (1979) drew a direct comparison between learning written language and learning spoken language, noting the ease with which children acquire their first oral language (L1). He recommended that teachers replicate the conditions of L1 acquisition in teaching reading by using read alouds to encourage print awareness, model language structures, and provide a language enriched classroom. Although these ideas have been challenged more recently, they were influential for many years. Because some researchers see language essentially as a social activity where language users continuously test their understanding of language with others, they advocate read alouds as an excellent opportunity for teachers and students to negotiate meaning in a safe environment (Durkin, 1966, 1974; Holdaway, 1979; Morrow, 1989). Teachers are advised to consider the role of questions, comments, and spontaneous interjections, to decide whether to discuss the stories before or after reading, or to divide the class into small groups.

Finally, read alouds are seen as valuable in extending the natural, curiosity-based learning of students. Children who are frequently read story books, literature, and environmental print at home tend to transfer their skills to school-based reading norms more easily than children who are not (Durkin, 1966; Morrow, 1989; Teale, 1981). Classroom read alouds are most beneficial when built on the child's previous knowledge, thus extending previous literacy experiences. Reading instruction is determined by the child's interest and curiosity rather than his or her chronological age. Teachers are advised to expose children to authentic materials, environmental print, and books that appeal to the young curiosities.
Central to the good read aloud are the materials chosen. Proponents of read alouds encourage teachers to choose from various genres of literature and sources of print. Teachers are encouraged to read newspapers, magazines, non-fiction trade books, and other information texts to expose students to expository writing and to expand student's breadth of knowledge. Teachers are also encouraged to foster a personal enjoyment and appreciation of literature by reading traditional favorites. Fairytales, folklore, epics, legendary heroes, and bible stories (as literary texts) comprise traditional favorites (Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Hart-Hewins & Wells, 1999; Hepler, Hickman & Huck, 1989; Moss, 1995).

Poetry is also recommended for read alouds to encourage language play with rhythm, repetition, and chants. Teachers are encouraged to read "easy books" that children can successfully read independently following the read aloud. Teachers are also encouraged to choose books of high literary merit as identified by specialists in children's literature (Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Hart-Hewins & Wells, 1999; Hepler, Hickman & Huck, 1989; Moss, 1995).

Summary

For nearly forty years, researchers have accumulated evidence to support the educational value of classroom read alouds, although the perspectives have varied. Recommendations based on this research abound. It was unclear, though, whether teachers followed these recommendations or had specific criteria in mind when they selected instructional strategies or books (and other materials) for classroom read alouds. Before investigating some of the criteria teachers used to select pedagogy and books, and the various influences that acted upon their read aloud programs, it was necessary to look at the literature on the decisions they make.

Teacher Decision-Making

Teaching is a complex activity that requires frequent decisions about pedagogy, classroom management and organization, curriculum, and institutional relationships. Research on teachers' decisions—what teachers do, the nature and role of teacher knowledge (particularly theoretical knowledge), the decisions they make, and the value of normative prescriptions—generally lies
between two conceptual perspectives: a "view from the outside" that seeks to identify, measure, and explain teachers' decisions, and a "view from the inside" that seeks to reveal the teachers' own understanding of the decisions they make. This review of research on decision-making begins with general studies from both perspectives, followed by a review of literature on decision-making specific to read alouds (all framed in a "view from the outside").

Two Perspectives

The research into teacher thinking and especially teacher decision-making generally leaned toward one of two perspectives. The first, the external, "outsider" view described what teachers did and tried to explain the reasons for decisions by noting teacher and classroom behaviours or by quantifying teachers' responses to questions posed by researchers. These researchers collected quantifiable data and tried to create a model or theory to explain the teacher decision-making. Such research has more in common with logical positivism, basing knowledge on scientific methods of observation and experimentation (Marshall, 1994; Shulman, 1986). Research strove to present a "view from the outside" that can be shared by any who might observe and that is useful for control and prediction. Social reality was presented as "objective" and demonstrable.

The second perspective, the "insider view," explored the subject's consciousness and understanding of his or her own decisions. Research into teacher decision-making from this perspective often used ethnographic interviews and observations. Participants were asked to recount their practical experience and personal perceptions so that researchers might uncover the theory that lies within the practice (Clandinin, 1986; Marshall, 1994; Shulman, 1986). Such a perspective had more in common with interpretive views that posit a social reality that is "constructed" and contingent.

The following review of research explores the decisions teachers actually make, beginning with the "view from the outside" and ending with the "view from the inside."
Decisions teachers make

Research "from the outside" and "from the inside" have yielded different sorts of information about teacher decision-making. The former produced an inventory of what teachers actually did and still do—plan lessons, organize and manage classrooms, choose materials, and interact with students, peers, and parents. The ultimate objective of such research was to produce theories or models that can be shared with teachers to help their practice. The latter "inside view" dealt more with why teachers made certain decisions by investigating their reasons, motives, and values. Rather than create independent and prescriptive theory, this research attempted to help teachers understand what works for them and why, and to change if necessary.

The View from the Outside

Teachers' decisions are generally confined to their classrooms, although they have informal influence on their schools (through interpersonal contact or teacher committees) and educational politics (through teacher unions or associations). Deciding how to plan and implement instruction, and how to organize and regulate classrooms are the main responsibilities of teachers.

Instructional planning.

Instructional planning takes two major forms: pre-active and interactive. Pre-active planning refers to decisions made about instructional tasks before engaging with students, and can be done anywhere from a week before the end of summer holidays or an hour before the class arrives in the morning.

Each unit of planning, or task, has several components. Teachers choose learning goals, materials, and appropriate activities. Teachers also choose when to introduce content, how to accommodate student learning styles, and when to interact with individual students or the class as a whole (Clark & Yinger's study, Morine-Dershimer's study, both cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Before the teachers know their students, pre-active decisions...
tend to focus on content and materials rather than on student characteristics (Peterson, Marx & Clark's study, and Hill, Yinger & Robbins' study as cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986).

Teachers often choose the duration of an instructional plan. They might prepare yearly, monthly, weekly or daily plans to determine how instructional tasks will be carried out. The length of time covered by the plan and the model of planning chosen by the teacher sets priorities, guides instruction, and influences future planning decisions (Joyce's study, as cited in Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Yinger & Clark's study, as cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986).

Interactive decision-making, in contrast, refers to the decisions teachers make as they implement classroom lessons. During instruction, teachers monitor student attention and awareness, adapt lessons to immediate demands, gather information for future lessons, and evaluate student responses. Research into interactive decisions often used data collected through stimulated recall techniques where teachers review video-tape recordings from their classes and identify decisions made during lessons. Journal keeping, think alouds, policy capturing, and repertory grids have also been used to explore interactive decision-making but still remain oriented toward positivistic conceptions of research by using content analysis or quantified data (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shavelson & Stern, 1981).

Some of this research suggests that teachers use "mental scripts" to guide the lesson or activity through to completion (Morine-Dershimer's study, as cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986). Mental scripts are lesson or activity plans that teachers have in mind to guide them while they teach. Once instruction begins, teachers will use their mental scripts unless faced with unanticipated problems regarding student behaviour, context, or the teacher's own emotional state (Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Smith, 1991).

Other researchers also attempt to analyze how teachers think as they implement classroom lessons. Studies conducted during the late 1970s and early 1980s placed teachers' thinking and their decisions into four categories: objectives, content, instructional process, and the learner (Marx, Peterson's & McNair's study, both cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986). In contrast, Marland (1977) identified four categories that provided insight into the cognitive processes—
perceptions, interpretations, anticipations, and reflections—of teachers. Similar categories to these were used by Conners (1978) and Lowyck (1980) to describe the thought processes of teachers as they taught. These categories of interactive decision-making resemble problem-solving and decision-making models used by cognitive psychologists (Conners' study, Lowyck's study, and Marland's study as cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986).

More recently, research on experienced teachers has shown that interactive decisions tend to be cyclical. For example, teachers determine if previous lessons need to be reviewed and linked to the current lesson or integrated into other curricular areas based on immediate assessments of student understanding. In contrast, beginning teachers tend to follow the sequence of instruction outlined in their lesson plans and rarely review or link previous instruction to the current lesson (Westerman, 1991).

**Organization and management.**

Teachers make decisions about the organization and management of their classrooms (Doyle, 1986). Such decisions do not directly serve a pedagogical purpose but set the conditions for effective instruction. Typically, teachers determine behavioural expectations and choose how to manage classroom activities, organize groups, and establish rules (Pasch, et al., 1995). Doyle (1986) and Clark and Peterson (1986) found that classroom order and control are pervasive concerns in teachers' interactive decision-making.

 Teachers make numerous organizational decisions about non-instructional classroom activities. Some classroom activities help to establish housekeeping routines, foster student self-esteem, build rapport between teachers and students, and fill in time. Non-instructional activities in the primary classroom take such forms as selecting a "special helper," hosting "show and tell," and playing such games as "seven-up."

 Teachers must also decide when to use and how to organize group work during direct instruction. Whole class instruction can be a practical choice in schools, but small groups have certain internal dynamics that might be desirable (Morrow & Smith, 1990). Organizational decisions about classroom groupings consider the potential social and verbal interaction among
group members. Teachers may, for example, adopt a cooperative learning model to encourage interdependent skills and conceptual understanding embedded within a social context (Brown et al, as cited in Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Pasch et al, 1995; Slavin, 1987).

Teachers also make organizational decisions about how classroom rules will be developed and enforced. Classroom rules are statements identifying acceptable classroom behaviour and are generally written in positive terms. Consequences for inappropriate behaviours are also identified and discussed with students. Typically, rules are developed to promote a positive learning environment and reinforce respect for personal safety and property (Pasch et al, 1995). Methods of creating and enforcing classroom rules vary among teachers. Some teachers engage students in a cooperative process of developing rules and consequences for violating them (Doyle, 1986; Pasch et al, 1995). Conversely, teachers working from authoritarian or paternalistic perspectives may develop and enforce classroom rules independently.

Closely related to classroom rules are decisions teachers make regarding student behaviour. Organizational decisions to avoid inappropriate behaviour might involve manipulating the physical space of the classroom. Seating plans direct student traffic flow and remove excessive stimuli for children who are easily distracted. Teachers might also achieve desired behaviour through such tactics as proximity, eye contact and verbal praise (Pasch et al, 1995).

Researchers have identified a multitude of decisions teachers are required to make in their professional lives. Yet behind all of these decisions lie various motives, values, beliefs, and experiences. Other research has attempted to uncover the "inner life" of teacher decisions. The View from the Inside

From this perspective, research into teacher decision-making is more concerned with teachers' consciousness and personal understanding of their own history, circumstances, and values. Aspects of the teacher's inner world, like values, beliefs, and personal understandings
cannot easily be measured in behavioural terms or quantified for statistical analysis.¹ Researchers instead employ in-depth interview techniques to probe for information and an understanding of teachers' thinking. From the interpretive point of view, theory exists in the teacher and her or his practice and is not based on observable teacher behaviour. The present study was more interested in the reasons teachers give for their decisions.

Researchers from the interpretive camp have proposed several ways to understand why teachers act as they do. Some suggest that teachers possess a special sort of "practical knowledge" by virtue of the work they do and the social world they inhabit. Examining teachers' practical knowledge and how they express it provide insight into how teachers make decisions. Practical knowledge is often expressed through "images" that guide teachers' practice and the construction of their professional identity. Other researchers have posited the "reflective practitioner" as key to explaining teachers' decisions.

**Practical knowledge.**

Theory and practice are combined in the knowledge that teachers acquire through their personal and professional experiences. Personal experiences include the individual's values and beliefs, while professional experiences include the teachers' knowledge of educational theory, curriculum, classroom organization and management skills, students' strengths and weaknesses, and institutional and community expectations. Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1986) called this "practical knowledge."

Some proponents of practical knowledge perceive the interaction of professional and personal experiences as cyclical. Experience influences personal theory which in turn changes practice and leads to different experiences (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1986). Theory and practice cannot be separated. This process is evident in a situation described by Cynthia Tyson (1999).

Tyson selected fairytales to read to fifth-grade students (a curricular decision) to develop literary behaviour. Her decision to select fairytales was informed by her professional experiences and recommendations from within her work culture. Following a conversation with

¹ Some hold these approaches are irreconcilable, but I am not here entering the "quantitative/qualitative" debate.
an uninterested student, Tyson realized that the fairytales she had used were not relevant to some children in the class. This experience led Tyson to reassess her own understanding of the pedagogical implications of selecting children's literature, and her past experiences predisposed her to acknowledge student interests and explore several other contemporary themes in children's literature. She subsequently chose new stories more relevant to her students' lives.

Tyson's experiences demonstrated a cycle of theory and practice in her decision-making. She did not merely find other stories for her students, but she rethought her understanding—her personal theory—of teaching. Tyson's personal value of listening to students, her past experiences as a teacher, the ethnicity of her students, and her interest in social action contributed to Tyson's decisions.

Images.

Some researchers have proposed the concept of "image" to understand teachers' behaviour and decisions. "Images" are the perceptions teachers hold of themselves, their teaching, their students and classroom culture, and their subject matter. Images provide insight into how teachers understand their world and how they relate to that world, and explain their decisions. Some teachers may be aware of their professional self-image and easily express it to others. Other teachers may not be aware of the self-images that lie behind their classroom decisions (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1986). The role of the researcher is to help uncover those self-images.

Such case studies as those conducted by Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1986) examined how teacher's images influenced behaviour in the classroom. In one study, the teacher subject, "Stephanie," spent considerable effort decorating the classroom. Stephanie's frequent redecorations coincided with thematic units and showcased student work. Numerous comments recorded in field note entries revealed Stephanie held a powerful image in her mind of the "home." Stephanie's image of the home motivated and governed much of her efforts to create a secure and nurturing classroom (Clandinin, 1986).

Teachers also hold images of students, as individuals or in groups, that contribute overtly to decisions for the presumed good of the students. Other times, the images have more subtle
influence on teachers' decisions. Teachers might, for example, acknowledge and validate the insights of boys over girls if the boys demonstrate their knowledge in ways more valued by schools (Cherland, 1992).

Professional identity.

Closely related to the concept of image is professional identity (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1999). Recent research of teacher knowledge examined how professional identity is shaped and expressed outside the classroom. Teachers' personal histories and experiences as well as the social contexts teachers work within-schools-help to shape a professional identity.

Connelly and Clandinin (1995, 1999) used a landscape metaphor to describe the complex social context of schools. As a landscape, professional knowledge occupies space, has a particular place, and occurs over time. Landscapes are composed of relationships among people, places, and things, and have an intellectual, moral, and historical dimension. Teachers move between two distinct places within the landscape, the "in-classroom place" and the "out-of-classroom place."

The in-classroom place is where teacher knowledge is expressed through classroom teaching and curriculum making. Here, their decisions are guided by practical knowledge. However, the classroom is a private place and outsiders have limited information about in-class experiences. An outsider can, however, gain insight into individual classrooms through teacher's narratives or stories. The out-of-classroom place is where outside agencies determine which knowledge will dominate in schools and how knowledge will be imparted to students. Here, teacher's decisions are influenced by external forces. Knowledge is funneled into schools through administrators, policy makers, and curriculum planners and eventually to be assimilated in the classroom (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

As teachers move from one part of the professional landscape to the other, they often experience epistemological and moral dilemmas. Decisions based on personal practical knowledge can conflict with demands from outside agencies. To cope with these conflicts and dilemmas, teachers sometimes lead double lives. One life is lived secretly in the classroom
where teachers maintain some level of autonomy in their practice. The other life is lived
publicly in staff lounges, staff meetings, and professional development workshops where
teachers frequently represent themselves as having proficiency and expertise. Rarely do
teachers disclose their epistemological and moral dilemmas to colleagues (Clandinin &
Connelly, 1995).

The dual lives teachers lead are attributed to what Crites (as cited in Clandinin &
Connelly, 1995) originally called "sacred stories." Sacred stories permeate a culture but often
go undetected because they are so deeply embedded in people's consciousness. Connelly and
Clandinin (1995) identified the dominant sacred story of North American education as practice
guided by theory. Professional development workshops typically reinforce this sacred story by
featuring "experts" as guest speakers who impart their insights, knowledge, and instructional
strategies with teachers for the purpose of improving classroom practice. When teacher's in-
class experiences do not coincide or reinforce the sacred story, teachers create and lead dual
lives.

At other times, teachers openly question or challenge the sacred stories of their
professional landscapes, incurring unfavourable judgements from teacher colleagues (Craig,
when she and three colleagues formed a small professional development group within her
school. They maintained journals on their practice for later consideration, shared in-class
experiences with one another, and discussed the relevance of current educational theories to
their unique classrooms. Group members began to wrestle with the difficulties encountered in
reconciling theory with practice. When these discussions were misinterpreted by other
colleagues as "cliquey," the principal disbanded the group.

Hogan claimed that the discussions she and group members held conflicted with the
widely held sacred story that values the knowledge and abilities of "experts" over the knowledge
and abilities of practicing teachers. Professional development workshops reinforced the
message that teachers are educational technicians with incomplete knowledge rather than
independent professionals exercising personal judgement (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Hogan, 1995).

As actors in a professional landscape, teachers in Connelly and Clandinin's view made decisions based on their own practical knowledge or on the direction from other outside forces. Teachers can also be influenced by the sacred stories that permeate their landscape. When their practical knowledge conflicts with outside directions or sacred stories, teachers have limited options. They can accept the contradictions and lead double lives, or they can assert their own judgements and risk additional conflict.

The reflective practitioner.

Schon (1983, 1987) presented a slightly different account of "theory in practice" when discussing his reflective practitioner. He attributed the creativity and wisdom employed by some practitioners in making decisions to what he called "knowing-in-action" and "reflection-in-action." Knowing in action refers to the implicit almost intuitive ability for teachers to act in the classroom or make decisions about routine matters, what Polanyi described as tacit knowledge (Schon, 1987:25). This form of knowledge is employed spontaneously to execute a performance or judgement such as riding a bicycle or recognizing a familiar face in a crowd. Knowing-in-action, unlike following rules and procedures, is a dynamic process of responding to adaptations in new situations.

Schon (1987) asserted that because "the knowing is in the action," teachers find it difficult to describe and explain their knowledge. He advised teachers to describe their knowing-in-action to heighten their awareness of the knowledge and actions exercised in their practice. The additional insight into one's own practice—reflection—increases opportunities for conscious and creative problem-solving, adaptations, and overall improvement. Teachers can next engage in reflection-in-action to adapt their current thinking or behaviours in the midst of their activity, especially in unique and uncertain situations where prior knowledge and action are not applicable to current situations. The solutions to past problems are not used to solve current
ones, but the knowledge acquired previously informs the new situation. This also allows novel features in the new situation to stand out more clearly.

The views of Schon (1983, 1987), Clandinin (1986, 1995), Elbaz (1983), and others are attempts to understand teacher decision-making in reference to values, beliefs, and intentions, rather than actions. There is no question that teaching is a complex activity requiring many decisions. Research over the last few decades has identified various instructional planning decisions, organization, and management decisions. Other researchers have attempted to explain teachers decision-making based on cognitive process or, more recently, interpretive models. Many of these general considerations apply to decisions specific to read alouds, reviewed next.

Decisions Specific to Read Alouds

Teachers select materials, organize groups, choose methods, and provide activities to extend student understanding. Some of the decisions in conducting read alouds are specific applications of the more general decisions noted above.

Choosing Materials for Read Alouds

Several factors are known to influence teacher decisions to choose literature to share with their students. Personal fondness often plays a significant role in book selection. Studies of pre-service teachers indicate that decisions to select books were supported by such statements as "This reminds me of...," or "I like this because..." (Hart & Rowley, 1996: 216-217). Adults and children differ in their preference in books, however, each valuing different aspects of what they read and each with different emotional responses. Adults and children differ in their interest in detail and literary devices (Lehman & Scharer, 1995-96: 147-149).

Teachers also prefer to read fiction to their students rather than other genres of literature. One survey conducted with elementary teachers across the United States revealed that books most frequently used for read alouds were fiction. Both primary and intermediate teachers tended to exclude non-fiction titles for classroom read alouds (Hoffman, Rosser & Battle, 1993; Moss, 1995). Results from the survey suggest that teachers' preferences for fiction might
emphasize the value of one style of writing over another. (More recently, however, the quantity and quality of information books available to teachers has risen. A survey today might show an increase in teachers' use of such books for read alouds.)

Teachers might also choose books based on award status. Award books are promoted as the "best" in children's literature. The value bestowed on award books is reinforced through literature unit plans, professional journals, and keynote speakers in professional conferences. Such comments as "there is nothing like a gold seal to sell a book" (Jobe, 1982: 11) suggest that awards are widely accepted as indicators of quality regardless of one's familiarity with the books.

Teachers also reject books for classroom reading, suggesting further criteria for book selection. Some books are controversial and subject to censorship. Even Caldecott and Newberry award-winning books are on censorship lists because texts and illustrations are thought to depict sexism or racism (Albers, 1996; Felsenthal, 1973: 69; Gillespie, Powell, Clements & Swearingen, 1994; Kinman & Henderson, 1985; Roberts, 1976; Roberts & Chambers, 1976; Schubert, 1980). Teachers also judge as inappropriate books that frighten children, fail to represent the values represented by the dominant cultural group, or portray ethnicity and gender in disagreeable ways (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Even perception of the production quality of books influences teachers' decisions to reject books. The size and font of the print, correlation between text and illustrations, and the perceived attractiveness or propriety of the artwork influence teacher decisions (Hart & Rowley, 1996: 217; Kiefer, 1995).

Choosing Groups

Teachers must also decide how to organize students into groups for classroom read alouds. Different sized groups have different advantages and disadvantages. Reading to a single child is frequently impractical for classroom teachers, but trained volunteers can be used for this purpose (Wasik, 1998, 1999; Wood & Salvetti, 2001). Studies show that one-to-one story reading can help to prepare children for school based reading (Clark, 1984; Morrow, 1983; Teale, 1986).
Teachers might decide to read to small groups consisting of three or four children. Small groups encourage children to engage in interactive dialogue with the adult and other members of the group (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Morrow & Smith, 1990). Cochran-Smith (1984) observed children in small group read aloud sessions. The children participated frequently and discussions were complex compared to children in read aloud groups of twelve participants. However, a study of primary children revealed that fifty percent of young elementary age males preferred listening to a story in a large group. Females did not identify group size as a factor in their enjoyment of a story. Teachers could decide to consider children's preferences when choosing group sizes (Cochran-Smith, as cited in Mendoza, 1985).

Large groups of approximately twelve children or whole-class read alouds might be chosen to provide a social context in which students can construct knowledge. Students are invited to share their interpretations of the story with one another and reformulate their views as alternative perspectives are expressed (Beach, 1993; Lehman & Scharer, 1996; Piaget, 1974; Vygotsky, 1962).

Instructional Decisions

As well as organizational decisions, teachers make instructional decisions. As with instructional tasks more generally, teachers make pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading decisions. Much of the available literature describes what teachers do rather than why they do it.

Pre-reading.

Before introducing the book (or other reading material) to the students, teachers decide how much information to share with the students. Teachers might choose not to reveal any prior information about the book to avoid prejudicing the children's' personal interpretation of the text. By simply allowing students to enjoy the story on their own terms, the teacher may foster the students' appreciation for literature (Hepler, Hickman & Huck, 1989; Stewig, 1980).

Teachers might, however, decide to share information about the book prior to reading. They might use the title or author's name to spark student interest. Fifty-one percent of primary
children in one study responded that the author's name was important when having a story read to them (Mendoza, 1985). Studies of children's reading preferences have concurred. Pre-adolescent children have indicated a preference for books with familiar titles and authors (Burgess, 1985: 28; Whitehead, 1977: 113-117, 207). Serial books are extremely popular with young children because they encounter familiar characters and writing styles.

Teachers might also choose to provide students with a synopsis of the written text prior to reading. Discussing specific details ahead of time can alert students to important themes, characters, ideas, or actions, and help to prevent confusion during the reading. Teachers can use such strategies as pre-questioning, picture clues, and predictions based on illustrations or the story title (Morrow, 1984, 1989; Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon, 1989).

Mendoza (1985) found that prior to the reading, children wanted a summary of the story, information about characters, knowledge of whether the text would be accompanied by illustrations, and advance notification about whether they would be required to answer questions following the reading. Teachers might consider pre-reading information as an aid to comprehension.

Finally, teachers can choose strategies to challenge individual children. For example, a teacher may decide in advance to repeat reading a particular story to increase the complexity of questions, comments, and discussion. Such a strategy also seems to improve children's oral language skills (Martinez & Roser, 1985; Mautte's study as cited in Yanger, Rowe & MacGilliray, 2000; Snow & Goldfield's study as cited in Morrow 1983, 1988).

During-reading decisions.

A major decision teachers make is whether to read the text completely through with minimal discussion (non-interactive) or whether to encourage students to negotiate meaning during read alouds (interactive).

Minimal discussion during the read aloud allows individual students to "connect" personally with the story, develop an interpretation of the story, and associate the story to experiences in their lives before negotiating meaning in a social context (Beach, 1993;
Rosenblatt, 1938). The non-interactive read aloud still allows for students' expressions or comments during the reading, but the teacher does not actively engage students in discussion.

In contrast, the interactive read aloud invites students to talk about the text as it is being read. Talk surrounding books is purported to enhance children's language development and understanding of stories' and is valuable to children's literacy experiences (Dickinson & Tabors as cited in Beck & McKeown, 2001; Morrow, 1992). During read alouds, teachers decide how and when to direct children's talk. According to some researchers, directing student attention to major story ideas and providing opportunities for reflection are essential components to an effective read aloud discussion (Dickenson & Smith, 1994; Teale & Martinez as cited in Beck & McKeown, 2001).

Teachers who choose to focus attention on major story ideas might conduct what Beck and McKeown (2001) called "text talk." Text talk invites students to think about story ideas and connect their own ideas to the text through a series of open ended questions. Teachers then rephrase or repeat initial student responses and probe for explanations to open ended questions (Orosolini & Pontecorvo's study and Nystrand & Gamoran's study both cited in Beck & McKeown, 2001).

Teachers also structure and support (scaffold) student responses to link background knowledge with textual information. Students often use their own background knowledge to derive meaning from texts. Beck and McKeown (2001) observed that primary students used their background knowledge to answer questions about the text rather than using information embedded in the text. Background knowledge that is not connected to the linguistic content of the text can alter student comprehension (Trabasso & Suh as cited in Beck & McKeown, 2001). Teachers must decide which knowledge is relevant and when to use it.

Since students, particularly primary students, tend to rely on illustrations rather than written language to derive meaning from stories, teachers might choose to withhold pictures during the read aloud. When pictures represent the written content of the story, students can appear to understand the written text; but when the images do not correspond to the text, student
understanding and interpretations can be obscured (Neuman as cited in Beck & McKeown, 2001).

Teachers might also decide to enhance student talk during the read aloud in what Goldenberg (1993) called "instructional conversations." Instructional conversations are intended to engage students in discussions that stimulate analytical thought. Discussions proceed as casual conversations but are directed by the teacher and contain learning agendas that are made explicit to students through demonstration (Goldenberg, 1993; Harste, as cited in Barrentine, 1996). For example, a teacher might guide discussions to help students recognize and understand story structure, an important aspect of developing story comprehension and identifying story schema (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; McConaughy, 1982). Through a series of open-ended questions, students are invited and encouraged to discover that stories have structures. Instructional conversations are modified in length to fit the on-going discussions that occur during read alouds.

Post read aloud decisions.

Typically, teachers conclude the read aloud with text-related activities or extensions into other curricular areas. For example, Campbell (2001) suggested numerous activities to accompany the story The Very Hungry Caterpillar such as re-telling the story with stick puppets, singing rhymes about caterpillars, and studying the life-cycle of butterflies. Decisions to engage students in drama, writing, art, and discussion enable students to express their insights and understanding of texts following the reading (Campbell, 2001; Hickman, 1981; Morrow, 1997; Peterson & Eeds, 1990).

Teachers might choose drama activities to enrich children's interpretation and comprehension of stories as well as increase their vocabulary and language experiences (Leu & Kinzer and Pellegrini both cited in McMaster, 1998). Students might perform a pantomime to accompany a story as the teacher slowly reads, or students might interpret and re-enact the story. Drama activities following the reading of a story might include role play, puppet plays,
readers' theatre, improvisation, tableaux, and variations of charades (Campbell, 2001; McMaster, 1998; Tarlington & Verriour, 1991; Trelease, 1995).

Writing activities are often an extension of drama activities, especially when children are required to write from the perspective of a character introduced in the story. However, teachers might choose to extend children's understanding of the story through such writing activities as reader response journals, student-made books, revised stories, or webs, lists and charts in the case of information texts (Campbell, 2001; Graves, 1991; Heinig, 1992; McMaster, 1998; Morrow, 1997).

Teachers might also choose visual art as a post read aloud activity to enhance children's understanding and interpretation of the text (Hart-Hewins & Wells as cited in Campbell, 2001; Morrow, 1989; Peterson, 1984). Art activities can range from simple illustrative or interpretive drawings to more complex presentations using prints, papier mache, and collage. Collage techniques similar to those of author and artist Eric Carle, for example, require students to engage in a sophisticated creative process. Numerous pieces of paper must be painted and dried before they are cut and pasted into the various visual forms represented in Carle's books (Cooper-Solomon, 1999).

Teachers might also choose to engage students in discussions following the read aloud. Mendoza's 1985 study found that seventy-six percent of primary children expressed interest in discussing a book after it was read to them. However, it remained unclear whether children prefer certain kinds of discussions. In one sort of discussion teachers control the focus, direction, and pace. Teachers who employ this approach risk dominating the discussion and imposing an adult perspective on the story. However, children and adults differ in their attention to story details and literary devices, and teachers are often required to judge children's comments and questions quickly to determine whether children are attempting to understand the story or if they are wandering off the topic (Lehman & Scharer, 1995-96). Another sort of discussion allows students to engage in dialogue without teacher assistance or intervention. However, when children are not prepared to participate in student-led discussions they
frequently wander aimlessly in their efforts to understand stories (Wollman-Bonilla as cited in Galda, Ash & Cullinan 2000).

Most teachers probably conduct discussions with elements of teacher and student direction that culminate in what Goldenberg (1993) called the "grand conversation." One important feature of the grand conversation is that both teacher and students work together as co-participants to negotiate meanings of texts. No participant in a grand conversations has the power to advance a definitive interpretation. Each interpretation has equal status providing that it can be supported through reference to the text. (Literature discussions groups are based in the concept of the grand conversation.)

Studies of grand conversations among intermediate students indicate that they are able to present personal interpretations, consider the interpretations of others, connect stories to their personal lives, and formulate evaluations of children's literature as literature. In contrast, primary children typically asked interpretative questions to aid their understanding of the story (Eeds & Wells' study and McGee's study both cited in Galda, Ash & Cullinan 2000). Studies of grand conversations suggest that the students' abilities to engage in sophisticated levels of discussion are developmental.

The quality of student talk is also affected by the type of text used during grand conversations. Investigations into discussions reveal that students are more focused, more disposed to solicit peer input, and are twice as likely to make predictions and inferences when discussing informational storybooks as when discussing storybooks or informational books (Leal's study as cited in Galda, Ash & Cullinan 2000).

As with other classroom activities, teachers make numerous decisions before, during, and after conducting read alouds. Although many of these are similar in form to other decisions teachers make, read alouds require unique decisions regarding materials, organization of groups, student-teacher interaction, and activities to extend student understanding.
Summary

It is clear that teachers have many decisions to make. Research into decision-making has been influenced by two perspectives. One is the view from the outside that seeks quantifiable and observable data. The research reviewed here divides teachers' decisions into those that are instructional and those that are organizational and managerial. Another perspective of teacher decision-making is the view from the inside, or interpretative perspective. The research reviewed here has explored teachers' practical knowledge, self-images, and professional identity.

Teachers are called upon to make many decisions in conducting classroom read alouds. Most of the literature reviewed here has taken the view from the outside, describing the kinds of decisions teachers make before, during, and after read alouds and noting the apparent effects of the choice. Although these studies have hinted at the possible reasons for teachers' decisions (all of which were pedagogical), little research has asked teachers to explain their choices. Research into teacher decision-making in general has begun to explore teacher-thinking and teacher decision-making from two contrasting perspectives, but teachers' decisions surrounding read alouds—whether pedagogical or not—have been poorly addressed.

For many years, advocates of read alouds have promoted their cause and prescribed effective ways to read to students. Many teachers incorporate read alouds into their literacy program but one might ask, why? During a typical day, teachers make countless decisions for pedagogical, classroom management, and other reasons. Because the reasons for making decisions about read alouds are not obvious, this study contributes to the literature by asking teachers about their choices.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a qualitative design employing ethnographic interviews, and was conducted in a western Canadian school district with grade two and three teachers. Semi-structured, personal interviews preceded a one-hour focus group. Participants were also asked to keep a "teacher read aloud log" to record materials they used and provide brief anecdotal descriptions of their sessions. The researcher used a field note journal to record such additional data as personal impressions during the interview and physical settings of the classroom. Data for this study were interpreted and analyzed in narrative anecdotal form, in an attempt to understand participants as they viewed themselves.

Ethnographic interviews were used to explore teachers understanding of their own classroom, and their school culture. Ethnographers, following Spradley (1979), theorize that "participants' perspectives are organized into cognitive or semantic schemata-categories of meaning that are systematically related to one another." That is, they posit an intimate connection between the language (or other symbols) teachers used to describe their world, the beliefs about their world, and their behaviour in that world.

Although not the primary subject of this study, the context in which participants worked was considered to be an ever present influence on their working lives. Details of the context, data collection process, and limitations follow.

Context

Before conducting the interviews and focus groups, it was necessary to consider the broader social setting in which the participants worked and reasons for selecting participants. The school district and the city in which it was located served as a backdrop to the interviews, while participants for this study were drawn from teachers in that district.

Setting

The city was small but cosmopolitan, with some fifty-five thousand inhabitants (located in western Canada). The city originated during Canada's imperial and colonial era. Civic leaders and many residents promote a sense of pride in their city's British heritage, evident in regional
festivals, cultural institutions, and heritage sites. The city still celebrates its century-old sports teams.

This sense of civic pride filtered into decisions about schools. Children regularly participated in "Heritage Week" and entered a colouring contest that featured a heritage building. Local citizens recently affirmed their independence as a "distinct city" by resisting a Ministry proposal to amalgamate the school board with a neighbouring board. Teachers were invited to promote this civic pride.

Yet the city schools were not so homogeneous. Ethnic composition varied within and between schools, as did socio-economic level. Teachers who worked in the city's elementary schools may have held different views about multiculturalism, poverty, or local traditions.

Practical Reasons for Choosing the Site

The size of the city made this study more manageable because most of the elementary schools were located close to one another, making it convenient to schedule individual interviews and the focus group. Teachers often attended informal and district meetings to share their ideas, resources, and experiences so were accustomed to frequent discussions with colleagues. They may have been more receptive to expressing their views within a focus group than teachers who were unfamiliar with one another. However, it is also possible that the group dynamics among the participants were already firmly established and the politics of the community played out in the focus group. This will be further discussed under "limitations."

The researcher's personal involvement with the school district was another reason for choosing the site. Having had the opportunity for immersion in the district's culture made the researcher somewhat familiar with teacher relationships, community involvement, and personal and familial history in the city. Having an "insider's view" of the culture made semi-structured interviews a valuable source of data collection and analysis (Fetterman, 1998).

Selection of Participants

Because the district was small, limiting potential participants to a single grade was too restrictive. Grade two and three teachers constituted a larger pool that was ideal for this study,
provided more potential participants, and ensured anonymity. Unlike kindergarten and grade one students, grade two and three students have already been somewhat socialized into school culture. For many students, grades two and three are crucial years to secure a foundation in basic literary skills. By grade four, class novel study sets are distributed among students who receive marks in language arts for the first time. Although read alouds can be done at any grade, they play a particularly important function in the early grades as an induction to reading independence. Books selected for grade two and three read alouds therefore may range from simple texts reinforcing print awareness and left to right progression, to complex texts providing sophisticated plot, characterization, setting, and mood.

Teachers were solicited by written correspondence requesting volunteer participation. A letter outlining the purpose of this study was sent to each potential participant (Appendix 1). Criteria for selection included whether teachers had a secure teaching appointment and actually conducted classroom read alouds. They had to be willing to participate in a face-to-face interview and one focus group discussion, and to maintain a read aloud log (Appendix 2).

Data Collection

Multiple methods for data collection (triangulation) strengthened the validity in the research. Triangulation allowed the researcher to compare data sources and check for consistency. There were four sources for data collection in this study: face-to-face interviews (one per participant), teacher read aloud logs, the researcher's field note journal, and a focus group. As per Spradley (1979), the following section describes the actual procedures that were followed, leaving the analysis to later. In actual practice, however, data collection and analysis were often woven together.

Interviews

Interviews of one hour or more were audio-taped in the participant's classroom. The first questions were designed to establish rapport and provide such background information as years of teaching experience, years taught in the district, educational background, coursework in children's literature, literacy related coursework, membership in professional organizations, and
areas of subject specialization, followed by six broad categories of questions. Notes were also taken. Immediately following each interview, personal impressions, observations, and descriptions were recorded in a field note journal. Data were collected and analyzed for "domains" of understanding and cultural themes. ("Domains" are discussed later under "Data Analysis.")

Semi-structured interviews rather than structured or informal interviews were most appropriate for this study. Semi-structured interviews encouraged the respondents to elaborate their responses freely and in their own voices, but within the boundaries set by pre-determined research questions and theories encountered in the literature. The researcher adapted the order of pre-determined interview questions and decided when to probe, clarify, or extend participant responses.

Semi-structured interviews are open-ended, imposing minimal control over participant responses. At all times during the interviews, participants were encouraged to respond in their own "voice" and use familiar terms specific to their work culture, strengthening the internal validity in the research design. Participants were also encouraged to express personal opinions and highlight information they perceived to be important to the study. This provided valuable insight into the participant's domains of understanding.

An interview guide of questions and topics to be covered was used to keep the researcher on track and to remind the researcher when to probe more deeply. The interview guide enabled the researcher to adapt the order and wording of questions to each interview situation and conversation (Appendix 3).

Interviews began with the researcher establishing rapport and trust with individual participants. Strategies to establish rapport included restating the purpose of the study to participants and reassuring them that their knowledge and perspectives were valuable contributions (Spradley, 1979). Participants were also assigned a number to ensure anonymity in the study, and personal information that made for easy identification of the participant or the school was not divulged.
Participants were then asked a series of descriptive questions. Descriptive questions sought background information and formed the "backbone" of the ethnographic interviews. Each type of descriptive question was designed to elicit information about the participant's experiences and to encourage her to use language common to the work culture. Data collected from responses to the questions were later used to formulate structural questions for the focus group.

There were five major types of descriptive questions: grand tour, mini-tour, example questions, experience questions and native language questions. Grand tour and mini tour questions consisted of several subsets of questions to facilitate detailed information from participant responses.

Grand tour questions were conducted in a location familiar to participants to prompt information about typical experiences, routines and language use. Following grand tour questions, mini-tour questions were posed to participants. "Mini-tour questions are identical to grand tour questions except they focus on smaller units of experience" (Spradley, 1979). Details concerning the preparation, implementation and selection of read aloud materials were addressed through mini-tour questions.

The three remaining types of descriptive questions—example, experience, and native language questions—were inserted into the interview at the discretion of the researcher. These types of descriptive questions were also omitted from the interview when sufficient data was accumulated through grand and mini-tour questions.

Example questions followed from information the participant provided. For example, one participant said, "Well, it has to be good literature before I'll read it," prompting the researcher to ask, "Could you give me an example of good literature?" Example questions were a way of clarifying vague responses without exciting the participant.

Experience questions asked the participant to recall an event, activity, or significant moment in which she was involved. For example, the researcher asked several participants about experiences in managing behaviour during read alouds. Participants provided detailed
information but there may have been a tendency for participants to focus on atypical experiences rather than routine events (Spradley, 1979).

Native language questions were designed to encourage participants to use terms from their culture. Questions posed to participants sought clarification of the participant's use and meaning of certain words or phrases that had particular meaning unique to the culture (folk terms). For example, the researcher asked for clarification of the term "dated language" by asking the participant to describe the term in her own words. Native language questions were followed by example questions or structural questions. Samples from the participant's language were later analyzed for domains of understanding.

Contrast questions were also posed to participants throughout the interview at the discretion of the researcher. Contrast questions probed for deeper understanding of how participants distinguished between folk terms. Contrast questions were introduced to participants in an informal (conversational) manner. Because there was only one personal interview per participant, clarification of terms was somewhat selective to avoid interrupting the "natural" course of the conversation. During the focus group session that followed, contrast verification questions probed for further understanding of the participants' use of folk terms.

**Teacher Read Aloud Log**

Participants were asked to record materials used in read alouds and brief descriptions of read aloud sessions (Appendix 4). Log-keeping was limited to one month to minimize the burden and maintain interest. All read aloud logs were collected during the week of the final scheduled personal interview. Data were analyzed and general findings were presented to the focus group after the logs were collected.

**Field Note Journal**

The researcher maintained a field note journal to record physical descriptions of classrooms and personal impressions during interviews. Information was documented in brief notes, narrative form, and what Spradley (1979) calls "sketch maps." Sketch maps included drawings to record physical environments. The journal also recorded the folk terms—the words
and expressions given special meaning in the sub-culture. These terms provided useful clues to the identification of domains and themes (see "Data Analysis").

After each interview, the researcher recorded her thoughts and impressions of the session. Following Myles and Huberman's (1994) suggestions, the researcher noted what the relationship with the participant "felt" like; second thoughts on what the participant was "really" saying; doubts about the quality of the data or second thoughts about some of the interview questions; any new hypotheses to explain what was happening; what to pursue in the focus group; cross-allusions to other pieces of data; personal reactions to a participant's remarks or actions; and elaboration or clarification about something said or done that later seemed to be significant to the study.

Focus Group

Following the completion of all semi-structured interviews, participants shared their ideas in a one hour audio-taped focus group session. Focus groups provide "a social environment in which group members are stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other" and allow the researcher to observe intensive interaction (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993). Focus group topics were suggested by data analyzed from teacher read aloud logs, interview transcripts, artifacts collected from the research site, and impressions recorded in the researcher's field note journal. The focus groups allowed the researcher to seek additional folk terms that were similar to previously used folk-terms ("included terms") and tested for domains.

The one hour focus group met in a location near participants' worksites, promoted a comfortable atmosphere, and ensured a reasonable amount of privacy to protect participants' anonymity. Location within a relaxed atmosphere was chosen to encourage candid conversation. The first few moments of the meeting were critical in setting the tone for the entire discussion (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Participants were reminded of the purpose of the study, ensured anonymity, and encouraged to share honest and candid responses to questions. Following the researcher's introductory statements, each participant was asked a series of
questions designed to advance the focus group discussion from the general to specific, clarify folk terms, and test for domains of understanding (Krueger and Casey, 2000; Spradley, 1979).

Participants also engaged in an activity to determine how they distinguished between folk terms (a form of the contrast verification question). All folk terms identified from the transcripts as belonging to a hypothesized domain were recorded by the researcher, on a single sheet of paper. Copies of the paper were distributed to participants in the focus group. Participants were asked to write folk terms that did not belong to a hypothesized domain on individual cards and place them within a designated container. Differences between the terms suggested possible boundaries that included or excluded a folk term from a particular domain (see Section III, "Data Analysis"). Participants also were invited to record additional terms that did not appear on their paper. All cards submitted were discussed and participants confirmed similarities among and differences between folk terms.

Following the questions and the activity, the researcher summarized the major points of the discussion to ensure that the critical aspects of the study were not overlooked. The summarization process and the researcher's final question were posed approximately ten minutes before the session adjourned. The final question invited participants to share their final thoughts and comments, highlight information they perceived to be important, and suggest additional ideas missed in the discussion.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed not only at the end of collection but during the interviews and focus group. There was a constant interaction between the analysis and collection. Some of the analysis described below occurred during the data-collection process. Analysis was guided by the primary research questions about teacher decision-making before, during, and after read alouds. The analysis of participants' folk terms revealed categories of cultural meaning, or domains. An analysis of language in its natural context yielded insight into teachers' reasons for action. This section discusses the analytical value of immersion, teacher logs, and field note journals, followed by detailed procedures for analyzing the interviews and focus group.
Immersion

One of the ongoing influences in the data analysis (and even its collection) was the researcher's familiarity with the school district and city where the study was conducted. Having experienced the teaching culture first-hand, the researcher was already somewhat familiar with the internal politics, personalities, and neighbourhoods surrounding each of the schools. She had information about District-wide policies, in-services, and resources that influenced teachers. Immersion, according to Spradley (1979), is the most effective method of discovering cultural themes.

Teacher Read Aloud Logs

Data collected from teacher read aloud logs were designed to elicit factual and anecdotal responses from participants. Teachers recorded materials used in read alouds and wrote brief comments after individual sessions. The list was examined for patterns not only for preferred types of materials (genres, authors, etc.), but also for the kinds of content (themes, contemporary issues, etc.) teachers preferred. These patterns suggested reasons for decisions, although materials that did not fit a pattern were also analyzed and represented on the tables under the category "other." Data was shared anonymously with the focus group.

Anecdotal responses from the read aloud log were analyzed for folk terms and their categories (cover terms and possible domains). Structural questions to further identify categories (cover terms) were also formulated from the data to confirm or reject domains.

Field Note Journal

The researcher's field note journal recorded information such as personal impressions of participant comments, physical descriptions of classrooms, and observations of read aloud re-enactments performed during interviews. The journal also noted any District or Ministry memoranda, minutes, professional resources, or other artifacts created to influence teachers' decisions. By recording the researcher's impressions during the interviews, the field note journal also suggested how other data might be interpreted. Conversely, these recorded impressions could caution the researcher against imposing her own values too strongly on the
data. The field note journal was also useful to suggest possible leads to pursue in the focus group, review sketch maps to identify possible cultural themes, and ensure internal validity in the research design.

**Interviews**

Written transcripts of each interview were made and teachers' personal background information was summarized for later use. Information was used to suggest possible ways to compare and contrast the responses of the participants. Transcripts were also analyzed for folk terms and later for cover terms, words that represented certain categories of knowledge.

Cover terms that were identified during the interviews were tested immediately with structural questions to confirm or deny whether the cover term was the proper concept for the included terms (folk terms which belong to the same category identified by the cover term). If the cover term was confirmed, it became (at least tentatively) a folk domain. Structural questions were then posed to test the cover term, generate additional included terms and explore the participants' organization of knowledge. All of the hypothesized domains were recorded on a list and transcripts were searched to determine whether the existence of the domain was warranted. Hypothesized domains that were not confirmed through transcripts or suggested possible themes were later confirmed by focus group participants.

**Focus Group**

The focus group session was the final source of data collection for this study. Additional folk terms and cover terms were added to existing lists. One main purpose of the focus group was to refine and clarify folk terms, and transcripts of the session were searched for subtle differences between previously identified folk terms. The responses to contrast questions, especially contrast verification questions, were of particular note here. The other main purpose of the focus group was to test cover terms for their appropriateness as domains. Transcripts of the session were searched by the researcher to confirm or reject cover terms.

The testing of cover terms was crucial and was done through structural questions. Responses during the focus group helped to confirm or deny whether the cover term was the
proper concept for the included terms. If later analysis provided confirmation the cover term became a "domain." Focus group responses to structural questions were searched for additional included terms and explored the participants' organization of knowledge.

The Final Analysis

After all the data had been collected, several analyses were performed to help understand the reasons that guided teachers' decisions about read alouds. Spradley (1979) outlines several procedures.

The domains identified from the interview and focus group data were analyzed for their internal structures. This was done with a taxonomy that revealed the relationship between all of the folk terms and how they related to the domain as a whole. Because this was a small, short-term study, only a surface analysis of several domains was performed.

A componential analysis then followed to relate components of meaning ("attributes") to folk terms through multiple semantic relationships. Unlike the domain analysis that linked two folk terms in a semantic relationship, componential analysis incorporated all the possible semantic relationships solicited from participants. The identification of attributes provided insight into how participants perceived their world.

A componential analysis helped to organize the additional information elicited by participants and demonstrated how each attribute was linked to the folk term by semantic relationships. According to Spradley (1979), participants tend to provide more information than is necessary to answer a question. Additional information provided the researcher with insight into the participants' perspectives and values, eventually leading the researcher to identify cultural themes.

In conjunction with the procedures outlined by Spradley (1979), the researcher also followed Krueger and Casey's (2000) suggestions for identifying cultural themes. The procedures outlined by Spradley provided the researcher with a systematic and detailed analysis of the participants use of language. Similarly, Krueger and Casey (2000) provided a general overview of participants' language to gain insight into cultural themes. The combination of both
procedures enabled the beginning ethnographer to investigate thoroughly the data and identify cultural themes, any "cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning" (Spradley, 1979, p. 186).

The purpose of this analysis was to help explain teachers' choices in conducting read alouds and choosing materials. Central to the analysis was the study of teachers' language obtained through interviews and further queried through a focus group. The analysis of language helped reveal how teachers understand and ascribe meaning to one particular professional activity, the read aloud. The researcher's immersion in the culture, the use of teacher logs, and a field note journal provided information about the participant's context that aided the interpretation of data.

Limitations

As a first study by this researcher there were a number of limitations, ranging from inexperience to uncontrollable variables. The research design considered Schumacher and McMillan's (1993) recommendations to enhance reliability, internal, and external validity. However, immersion may also have been a limitation. Being known in the district where the study was conducted may have influenced participant responses and compromised the reliability in design. Participants may have provided the researcher with information they thought she wanted to hear (what Palys (1997) calls "reactive bias"). On the other hand, it is also possible participants withheld certain information from the researcher.

By using interviews, a focus group, a teachers' log, and a field note journal, there were multiple sources of data for triangulation. However, the short data collection period decreased internal validity and the lack of multiple researchers decreased reliability in data collection. Because there was no direct observation of teachers, their accounts provided the only source of information about their classroom behaviour.

The focus group also had limitations because only one session was conducted. Typically, researchers conduct several focus group sessions until they cease to hear a range of ideas or new insights (saturation). However, information gleaned from a single focus group session did
clarify folk-terms used by participants in this study, tested participants' domains of understanding, and suggested possible themes for future researchers to explore.

Another possible limitation of the focus group was the composition of the group. As with any social group, characteristics of individuals must be quickly assessed to avoid a few from dominating and to allow each group member to contribute. A participant might have responded differently in the group setting than she did in the personal interviews, especially when discussing sensitive issues such as the role of educational stakeholders (Bernard, 1994).

Although participants already familiar with one another shared their personal views, the opposite was also possible. Participants who were known to one another might have been reluctant to disclose information on certain topics because they perceived other participants as possessing more knowledge and holding informal positions of power within the district (Krueger and Casey, 2000). The group dynamics among teachers may have been more established than the researcher realized and the politics of the community may have overshadowed the focus group.

Both the interviews and the focus group raised ethical concerns. Participants were assured of anonymity and invited to read their own transcripts, and their schools were kept anonymous. However in a small school district it was difficult to hide participant identity. Candid responses may also have been hindered if participants suspected their identity could be traced.

Summary

This study sought to understand the reasons why teachers made certain decisions about read alouds. It was a qualitative study based on open-ended ethnographic questions. It also used a focus group, researcher field-note journal, and teacher logs for additional data. The procedure largely followed Spradley's model to search for the linguistic symbols (folk terms) meaningful to the participants and the conceptual categories (domains) in which the folk terms lay. By following this research design, the researcher hoped to gain a better understanding not only of what teachers did (or say that they did) when conducting read alouds, but also why they made certain choices.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The researcher's analysis of the transcripts yielded a number of categories of understanding—domains—that helped to explain what these teachers did and why they chose their practice and materials. These domains and the sorts of teacher comments used to establish them were further analyzed and are presented here as tables. The tables are used to simplify and present data rather than reduce them for statistical purposes. However, the tables only present responses to direct questions and do not account for more subtle inferences from other data. As per Spradley, participants' quotations are included with the tables to add "rich description" and correct the biases of the tables, if necessary. Two of the tables (numbers 1 and 3) present demographic information that was not subject to domain analysis, and four tables (numbers 21 to 24) present an analysis of the materials participants used during the study.

The tables summarize and present information in a clear and concise manner, leaving a discussion of significant themes to chapter five. Individual categories for each table represent participants' perspectives and insights but are labeled with the researcher's terms. Rather than detract from the participants' voice, such an approach avoids the potential ambiguity and misunderstanding associated with participants' language—particularly their use of folk terms.

The tables in Chapter 4 are in four sections. The first section, Tables 1 to 6, provide contextual information about teachers' education, experiences, and worksites but do not directly address the research questions. They do, however, help to interpret the data. Tables 7 to 16 present the procedures individuals followed before, during, and after read alouds. Next, Tables 17 to 20 present the rationale behind teachers' decisions to conduct read alouds and select materials. These reasons are the ones directly volunteered by respondents during the interviews. Only those responses participants gave to specific questions directed at teacher thinking are represented in the tables. Finally, Tables 21 to 24 present the researcher's content analysis of the books listed on teachers' reading logs.
Context

Teachers made numerous decisions to prepare and conduct classroom read alouds. Decisions were not made in isolation, but were influenced by various factors ranging from teachers' educational background to provincially mandated standards of achievement. The following tables present aspects of the participants' personal background and their perspectives of their worksites.

Teachers' Background Information

Ten teachers participated in this study. They were all from the same school district and they were all female. They shared several additional characteristics, but differed in others. Table 1 presents background information on the education and experience of participants.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teaching experience is 10 years or greater</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching experience is &gt; 5 years but &lt; 10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching experience is less than 5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educated in the province of employment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completed undergraduate degree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completed graduate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal training in children's literature</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal training in children's literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal training in reading instruction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal training in reading instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 1, participants received both formal and informal training in reading instruction and children's literature. Informal training included colleague recommendations and participation in workshops, particularly at the district level. Each of the respondents confirmed
attending district sponsored workshops but only experienced teachers with five or more years of experience mentioned attending workshops organized by non-school agencies.

Experienced teachers also maintained memberships in professional organizations and subscribed to newsletters and professional journals. In contrast, beginning teachers did not belong to professional organizations or subscribe to journals or newsletters. Informal training among beginning teachers included reviewing university textbooks, "browsing" through bookstores, "browsing" through children's literature, and utilizing personal knowledge of children's literature (acquired through related employment).

The participants were homogeneous in many ways. They were members of the dominant culture who seemed to share many typical middle-class values such as obtaining a university education, securing steady employment, and becoming home owners. Most shared a similar cultural background.

**Teachers' Perceptions of their Work-Sites**

The students in each school came from the local neighbourhood or catchment. Participants were asked how they viewed their school's catchment. Table 2 presents individuals' perceptions and not the actual demographics of a particular neighbourhood.
Table 2
Perceptions of School Catchments (N=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Total number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>immigrant population</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-dominantly middle-class</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable population</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuclear family units</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-dominantly working class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single parent family units</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transient population</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multi-generational families</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inner city school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended family</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-dominantly upper middle-class</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 2, respondents commented on the socio-economic and immigrant characteristics of their catchments. Six teachers identified a particular socio-economic class, but the remaining respondents could not. When asked about immigrant populations, teachers in predominantly middle-class catchments that also contained families of upper middle-class mentioned international students paying tuition. (International students often have visitor rather than immigrant status, but respondents did not make this distinction.) In contrast, respondents in predominantly middle class catchments that also had working class families mentioned recent immigrants. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, these features played a role in teacher decision-making.

Classroom Composition

Classrooms contain diverse populations of children. They vary in gender, academic ability, and cultural background. When asked to describe their class compositions, teachers most often identified students with academic, linguistic, or emotional difficulties. These
students often required assistance but only those identified by Ministry of Education guidelines received supporting funds. Table 3 shows the features of participants' classroom composition as identified by them.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Composition (N=10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students requiring E.S.L. services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>split grade levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional school based assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-identified students (no funding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identified students generating funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>para-professional assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gender imbalance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 3, classroom compositions were diverse and few teachers received para-professional assistance. Funding for such assistance was determined early in the school year and based on Ministry of Education guidelines for identifying pupils who require special services. Respondents reported receiving assistance from school-based professionals such as counselors and resource teachers. They observed and documented students targeted for funding, developed individualized education plans, recommended materials, and scheduled pull-out programs or in-class instructional sessions. Some participants perceived this assistance as supportive and others perceived it as an ineffective distribution of time and services.

Teachers' Perceptions of Educational Stake Holders

Teachers were asked, "who outside the classroom is interested in your read alouds?"

Their initial reactions to this question are recorded in Table 4. Several individuals gave more than one response to the question.
Table 4

Stakeholders in Classroom Read Alouds (N=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>colleagues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students' parents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers' family members</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no one</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Personnel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 4, colleagues and parents were most frequently identified as those interested in classroom read alouds. Interested colleagues were teachers who conducted their own read alouds as well as the school librarian. Study participants believed colleagues were interested in gathering new ideas and resources (see Table 7). Interested parents inquired about reading materials, recommended books to teachers, and read to their children at home.

Participants believed that parents were mainly interested in book titles and content.

...I think my colleagues [are interested in my read aloud program] as well if there’s something that I’ve read that I think will apply to a lesson someone else is doing or that they would enjoy. Also parents I think sometimes saying we’re reading a book about such and such and encouraging them to talk to their kids at home or to look for another book like that in the library (Participant 3, page 14).

Could be parents. Probably parents or I guess other teachers. Friends wanting to know what I'm doing, friends from other schools because I ask them what they're reading, just trying to find out what is appropriate for [students] their age so often I'll try to ask them, "oh what do kids usually read?" (Participant 4, page 21).

I think parents are. We have parents that send books along or chit chat about what's being read. I think parents are definitely interested in what's being read in
their classroom. The administrator. Colleagues. We often share good reads
(Participant 6, page 26).

The table, however, only records the response to the direct question. When considering all of the data, the importance attached to all stakeholders except "family members" and "no one" increased substantially. For example, when discussing preparation for read alouds, two participants referred to the district curriculum coordinator: "...I am just going to use the [coordinator's] little strategy..." and another participant, when asked to define good book, said "it depends on what I'd like to do with it...whether it's for enjoyment or if I'm doing a [coordinator's] activity." This suggests a discrepancy between participants' explicit and implicit knowledge, and is discussed further in Chapter 5.

**Teachers' Perceptions of Supporters**

Respondents were asked to identify stakeholders who actively supported literacy within their schools. They were also asked for examples of how the support was demonstrated. Responses to these questions are recorded in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Direct Supporters of School Wide Literacy (N=10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporters</td>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrators</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other classroom teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-enrolling teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers identified four stakeholders as supporting school wide literacy programs. School administrators demonstrated support for literacy by reading stories to students, securing resources for teachers, and endorsing special events such as school wide read-a-thons. Parents contributed to school wide literacy by organizing and managing book fairs and fund raisers, purchasing and donating books, volunteering to read stories to students, and participating in home reading programs prescribed by classroom teachers. Non-enrolling teachers provided
instruction for students experiencing difficulty with reading, writing and English language acquisition. In one case, the librarian ensured students and parents access to the library during school hours. Colleagues—other classroom teachers—supported school wide literacy through buddy reading, organizing special literacy events, and arranging for guest speakers. When one considers the entire pool of data, the emphasis on colleagues was considerably higher.

[The administrator] read to many of the classrooms and you know talks about his favourite books to the classes and his favourite authors. So I don't think he's you know encouraged literacy wide themes throughout the school but by his actions...and he'll bring a book. He'll either try to tie it into a [classroom] theme or he'll bring a book that's a personal favourite of his to share with the kids (Participant 8, page 7).

I have had the principal read to my class before though and the children always enjoy that (Participant 2, page 10).

[The administrator] is also a good teacher and he recognizes how valuable that [literacy] is so as a staff under her leadership we have talked about things for instance planning school literature days or having a silent reading time throughout the school. We have had professional development to do with reading strategies and literature so there is definitely a valuing of literature there (Participant 6, page 27).

...the focus has been on literacy but [the administrator] has definitely been an advocate of it. There's no hesitation in seeking out resources, "what do we need to do to increase our student output in that area?" (Participant 10, page 5-6).

Hindrances

Various stakeholders inside and outside the school could also hinder teachers' efforts to conduct read alouds as part of their literacy programs. Table 6 presents participants' perceptions of those whom they felt were hindrances. Note that data for this table came from the focus group of eight participants.
Table 6
Perceptions of Hindrances to Literacy Programs from Outside Agencies (N=8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agencies</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District personnel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As suggested by Table 6, most participants were critical of politically-motivated non-governmental organizations that promoted undesired school reform, and least critical of their school's administrative officer. Strategies recommended by school administrators and district personnel could also hinder classroom literacy practices. Parents hindered classroom read alouds by recommending special projects and events that superseded teachers' scheduled lessons. For example, one participant cancelled a read aloud session to satisfy parental requests for student participation in a spell-a-thon. Ministry pressure for higher student achievement also made teachers feel overwhelmed and overloaded, especially in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

...when there's directives coming down or when there's the fear that if your school doesn't score a certain rating than...I can't say I know anybody who's doing it yet, but we're [teachers] all talking about how fearful we are that that may be what starts to happen [teaching to the test to increase students' achievement scores] (Focus group participant).

So when you have a class with a lot of ESL you teach a formula rather than teaching them [students] something that's more rich and let's them develop their own sense of what they like and their style. You teach them the way to read and the way to spit back the answer [to increase student performance standards] (Focus group participant).
I have [grades] three [and] fours and [standardized tests] are coming up and there's that pressure. And I just did some practice runs with them [students] and I'm looking at it and thinking I don't know how they [students] can do it. I've got a lot of ESL [students] and just when I'm getting them [students]....learning how to read and give back certain information when they're trying to interpret a question, I feel really bad for them. And there's that pressure that I know they're [students] not going to do well because of the language barrier. It's tough for these kids (Focus group participant).

It seems to me that the Ministry is and it's also been told to us at the district level that [the ministry is] data driven, data driven, data driven, and my concern is that we're going to start teaching to a reading test rather than enjoying literature. I feel that from the Ministry (Focus group participant).

Strategies recommended by school administrators and district personnel could, however, also hinder classroom literacy practices.

Yes I will be honest. I have felt I guess forced to be, just one or two times, to be limited to use certain strategies. And personally I like to feel that I'd like the strategies to be out there for me to use and try out but I don't want them to be the only ones. I want to be free to use other things that I find in other literature anything that I choose whatever works for my kids...I like them [the strategies] but I don't, I felt and this is probably my interpretation, that those [strategies] are the only ones I was suppose to use (Focus group participant).

I think it [strategies] does both [supports and hinders classroom literacy]. Anyways it [strategies] supports literature but I think sometimes it's an additional pressure. Like it's something to work towards but then some of them [strategies] are just so time consuming which I mean in the end most of the time the end product is worth it. But I think there is additional pressure that limits everything else that you're trying to cover within the curriculum (Focus group participant).
I think though that there is often a push to attend the seminars because we need to learn these things [strategies] but nobody is coming to see that we're actually using them. And when I've made invitations for people to come to a sharing afternoon with parents nobody's come [district personnel or school administrator]...Yet I'm still encouraged to go to these workshops and learn the new strategies. But my knowledge is people are assuming what my knowledge is without having seen what actually is in practice (Focus group participant).

...we can only use the books for the strategies at our grade level or lower we're not allowed to go higher [grade]. And we're limited in that way (Focus group participant).

Beginning teachers also cited the difficulties encountered in collecting their personal supply of classroom materials. One beginning teacher stressed the discrepancy between classroom resources belonging to beginning and experienced teachers. She perceived that experienced teachers had accumulated items over many years and had greater buying power due to a significantly higher income than beginning teachers. This individual perceived a correlation between students' performance standards and teachers' access to instructional materials.

But if the school doesn't have any funds to purchase the resources either. And if we're going to be assessed on the way that our kids are doing on tests and school "A" has the money to buy the resources or teacher "A" or teacher "A" has acquired these things that the other teacher doesn't than you're going to be allowing one teacher to buy more because they're paid more and the other ones still won't have the money or the extra money to enrich their classrooms. That's scary (Focus group participant).

Procedures

Teachers followed similar general procedures to prepare, conduct, and extend classroom read alouds. All participants, for example, selected materials according to their judgements of student interest in literary content, genre, and theme. Each participant also designated specific
classroom locations to conduct read alouds. However, details in the procedures varied. Tables 7 to 16 examine what teachers said they did before, during, and after read alouds.

Preparations for Read Alouds

Prior to the read aloud participants selected materials from a variety of sources. All teachers identified personal contacts as a means to obtain materials. Personal contacts were identified as mainly colleagues but also included friends, students, and parents of students. Table 7 shows the various sources teachers used to obtain read aloud materials.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Total number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>personal contacts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized workshops / in-services</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal favourites</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal collections</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school library</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>familiarity with an author or series</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>journal subscriptions / book club memberships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public library</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school districts' resource centre</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional organizations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book stores</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university/college</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 illustrates that each of the participants in the study obtained read aloud resources from personal contacts. Participants shared information with each other primarily through informal interactions. Experienced teachers cited casual conversation as a frequent means to obtain ideas and recommendations for read alouds. Such information about materials often took the form of testimonials based on teachers' practical experiences with certain books. Resources
specific to a teacher's individual interests and classroom themes were also shared among colleagues. All ten of the participants also mentioned that they obtained ideas for materials from organized workshops and in-services.

Several experienced teachers (five out of seven) also stated that collaborative planning was conducted informally with colleagues during the school year. Collaboration consisted primarily of developing literature units and brainstorming for books to correspond with classroom themes and curriculum. Experienced teachers tended to describe their relationships with colleagues as friendly and affectionate.

...there's a level of involvement that transcends the school day so that it's a, you know it is a very friendly sort of integrated staff... (Participant 7, page 6).

I think all the people that we work with at our grade level are open for sharing and communicating. I don't feel any tension, you know, you can walk into the staff-room and you can talk to anybody and everybody and feel o.k. about it (Participant 1, page 7).

...it's a lovely little staff...Ah, they're just you know, they've all become good friends, we're all close (Participant 5, page 5).

So these teachers have been working together for a really long time. And they, you know they're highly professional and have real deep regard for each other so it's a pretty nice spot to work in that sense (Participant 6, page 5).

Beginning teachers also received personal recommendations for read aloud materials from colleagues. Beginning teachers tended to focus on acquiring specific information to secure resources not to engage in social bantering. However, beginning teachers did not restrict personal networking systems to their work-sites and mentioned sharing information with colleagues from other districts. Two of the beginning teachers' descriptions of interactions with colleagues suggest that they had experienced difficulty in sharing resources informally with colleagues.
Being a first year teacher there was nobody else teaching my grade. I was the [grade] two [and] three [teacher] and I had three grade twos so you're not really connecting with the grade two teacher because that wasn't my make-up and I didn't know any other grade three teachers (Participant 10, page 13—recalling initial years of teaching).

I guess the decisions that are made because of [teacher politics] are divided and certain groups will hang around certain groups. I find some people a bit difficult to approach for help (Participant 4, page 3).

Teachers were asked to describe how they prepared for read alouds. Most respondents said they determined student learning outcomes, planned student activities, choose whether or not to pre-read materials, and scheduled read alouds into the weekly timetable. Table 8 illustrates how many respondents followed these procedures when preparing read alouds. Table 9 presents specific learning outcomes teachers identified prior to conducting read alouds.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational consideration</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>determine desired learning outcomes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plan student activities and preview materials</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schedule frequency of read alouds</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 8, the majority of teachers planned their read aloud sessions. Individuals who designed the read alouds for instructional purposes identified preparations such as choosing activities to complement their readings and selecting visual aides to clarify student understandings of the text. Planning considerations also included decisions to pre-read materials. Although participants considered what they would do for all read alouds, those intended for student enjoyment required very little formal planning. Scheduling read alouds into the weekly time-table enabled all class members to participate in the read aloud. Teachers
adjusted read aloud times to correspond with schedules of individual students attending specialized programs outside the classroom. Some participants scheduled read alouds after recess and lunch breaks as a means to calm and settle students. They reported scheduling read alouds at least two days per week and sometimes five days per week. Individual sessions ranged from ten to thirty minutes.

Usually I read the story myself through. I wouldn't want to read it cold. And then I think of the activities it would fit with. If I'm doing a theme...then I would go to the public library and look through the books myself, I would ask other teachers if they have good books they have used. I ask our librarian if she could suggest books. I ask the librarian aide when she comes if she could pull some materials...(Participant 2, page 10).

If I'm going to practice writing then what I usually do is, most of the books that I want to pick have pictures in them so I'll actually photocopy the pictures and blow them up, maybe six pictures and post them around the room and I'll have the kids kind of do a carousel activity where they're with partners and they go to each picture and, this is something I learned from a workshop, and they'll go to each picture and in their mind and discuss their predictions of what this chapter is going to be about... (Participant 4, page 9-10).

When I read to my students I always give them the background of what the story is so they're familiar with that. And I usually give the setting you know the time and the place and the involvement. And obviously the book I choose they [students] could relate to so you know whatever the book is I would try to make it relevant to the children. So whatever the subject area is sort of draw out their [students] experiences and have them relate with the story. That's what I do (Participant 9, page 7).

Well I, usually it's a book that I want to read that I enjoy reading. And if my purpose is just to share a really good book with the boys and girls I don't do
anything. Like we have a read aloud that's a short novel that I just read to the boys and girls everyday before they go home. I don't do any preparation for it. It's a story I know and it's just, because I find that sometimes I get caught up in dissecting the story, "Oh here's a really good part we should talk about", "Oh this is a really good word we should talk about" and then you're stopping so often you're just lose sort of the magic of the story. So sometimes I do nothing. Sometimes I just have a book of which I read. Sometimes there's a specific thing I want them to get for example, I want them to get that there's a certain problem in this story and there's a certain solution or there may be a variety of solutions. So if I want to teach that then I'll look for a read aloud that would go along with that. Or I might have a book that I really enjoy or that goes with our theme and I'll read it and I'll say, "well what can we learn from this?" and then I'll sort of approach it from the other way. Oh we can learn that, we can learn about characters because they really deal with the characters well in this read aloud. So then I'm going to develop a character analysis activity (Participant 8, page 11-12).

Teachers often pre-determined the desired student learning outcomes when preparing read alouds. Table 9 presents specific learning outcomes identified by respondents.
Table 9

Student Learning Outcomes (N=10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to enjoy reading</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to enjoy reading as only outcome</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to read with expression</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to recognize various written styles</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to gain exposure to social issues</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to read for information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to recognize various art styles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to build vocabulary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to recognize &quot;story schema&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 9, seven of the teachers expected read alouds to facilitate students' enjoyment for stories and recreational reading. However, only two of the seven identified student enjoyment as the only learning outcome. The remaining participants identified two or more objectives for individual read aloud sessions.

Well I guess I want them to enjoy reading and also I want them to learn how to use expression in their voice because I'm finding a lot of the kids in my class don't use expression it's very flat, and how important it is to use expression in the voice. And also I want them to maybe pick up words to emphasize during their reading, what words they think are important (Participant 4, page 20).

I don't always do an activity from the book because I think some books are just straight for enjoyment. But sometimes we do art work from a book or we'll do a writing activity from the book or it goes along with families from social studies (Participant 2, page 10).

...I believe every single one of my children can say they enjoy story time. At listening to stories, it's just as important as reading them...I think all children enjoy a good story and it can be appreciated at many, many levels...(Participant 5, page 16).
Prior to read alouds teachers' identified locations to conduct read alouds. All of the participants considered their proximity to students when choosing classroom locations. Some participants identified more than one classroom location and one individual read outdoors when weather conditions permitted.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>designated area in the classroom with close proximity between teacher and students</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>designated area in the classroom with distance between teacher and students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>designated area outside the classroom with close proximity between teacher and students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 illustrates that teachers preferred to conduct read alouds in designated areas of the classroom in close proximity to students. Proximity to students was employed to foster a positive atmosphere during read alouds, ensure visibility of book illustrations, monitor student comprehension, and observe individual behaviours. Language used by respondents to describe interactions with students in designated read aloud areas suggested a desire to create a warm and nurturing atmosphere. Designated read aloud locations in seven of the ten classrooms featured specialized furniture, attractive book displays, and samples of students' written and artistic responses to stories hung on the wall. Two respondents invited students to bring cuddly toys and snacks with them to the area.

...I sit there and I have my children come and sit beside me and that is where we read. It's very comfortable the ambience is wonderful and we both we all enjoy it (Participant 9, page 9)

...I will always unless I'm wearing something very restrictive sit down on the floor with them you know have my legs crossed and off we go we're reading. And you know it's
more of a kind of a friendly little gather round get cozy with a book kind of deal. It's not you know sit down listen you know hands in lap. It's very casual and I find that there's a lot of respect for that (Participant 7, page 11).

...I allow them to have fruit after, during story time, they can bring fruit, a fruit or vegetables, no granola bars or yoghurt or pudding cup, it has to be fruit, raw fruit or vegetables. And so they come in and sit down at their desk, they've got their apples and their bananas and their grapes and I take attendance and then I invite them to join me on the floor down here... (Participant 5, page 13).

And so I would, in the afternoon I would call them to the back and they would come, actually recently I have brought home, brought to school a whole bunch of my [child's] stuffed animals so they're allowed to take a "stuffy" as they call them and sit and listen to the story as they cuddle up with a stuffed animal (Participant 9, page 9).

Participants also directed students to sit at their desks during read alouds, but they did not maintain close proximity to students. Decisions to conduct read alouds with students at their desks were determined by the amount of reading required and the purpose of the read aloud. Teachers read novels, non-illustrated materials, and lengthy reading materials while sitting behind their desks or walking throughout the room. Participants also mentioned that they used specific instructional activities during such sessions. Writing in role, illustrating descriptive passages, and recording personal impressions of characters in literature journals were a few of the assigned student activities.

With the novel sometimes they just put their head down and listen sometimes though they like to draw or...if we are doing a lesson or say shading a map and the lesson part is over and it's just that time when you just sort of drone and shade all the water in the map and we're just going to relax and actually what I do is I have them sit on the desk and you know I sort of say, "O.k. now I'm going to start to read" and as I say they love it so if I say, "You may get all the pencil crayons you
need and get that all figured out. Get yourself set up” and then we settle in and I just read (Participant 6, page 20).

Generally we come to the carpet...Occasionally depending on them we will sit at our desks and they'll draw and I'll sit at the front table and read (Participant 10, page 18).

I vary it. Sometimes they sit, yes, in circle time and so they are close to me. Sometimes if it's a longer story they will sit at their desks (Participant 2, page 11).

Procedures Followed During Read Alouds

During read alouds, teachers engaged in a variety of procedures. Some participants followed specific routines such as showing students jacket-covers when introducing new books. Others responded to students' reactions, and apparent comprehension and interest in the story. Tables 11 to 15 illustrate the procedures teachers employed during read alouds.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>create a comfortable atmosphere for students</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss surface features of the book</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express personal interest in the book</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invite the students to make predictions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show illustrations prior to reading</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss the content of reading material</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>review prior readings (previous chapters read)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elicit students' knowledge prior to reading</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explain the purpose for the read aloud</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 11, all teachers tried to create a comfortable atmosphere during read alouds. Individuals attempted to facilitate a pleasant ambience by permitting students to eat snacks, cuddle with stuffed animals, or sit beside friends during read alouds (see also Table 10).
They also reported discussing surface details of individual books during read alouds. Surface details were identified as visual clues featured on book jackets that provided students with specific information. Teachers for example, highlighted the call numbers from books and asked students to explain how this information provided clues to the books' location in the school library.

Well I usually start with the title and I might, usually use my finger to show them where the words are and to model going from the left to the right, we read the title, I talk quite often about the front cover, the back cover, the spine of the book, we talk about the author, if they've read other books about this author, we might say "where would you find this book if you wanted to look for it in our library?" so they would know to look under the S then in the easy book section, we talk about the pictures, what we think the story might be about, who might be in the story (Participant 2, page 13).

We might talk about the front of the book.... And we talk about what an illustrator is and then we talk, oh if there's any medals....And then we talk about...whether the picture wraps around [the cover] or not....And we talk about the title page....we talk about the dedication page if they have it. If they don't have it we talk about that....we'll talk about the author or other books by this author. We'll talk about where we can find this in the library...(Participant 8, page 21).

We usually look at the cover, do a talk about, see what information we have on the cover, we talk about the title, the author's name, the illustrator's name, we look at uh, we do a few predictions, what do we think it will be about, and generally a little talk about it. If I really love the book, I'll tell them "this is one of my favorite books and I hope you enjoy it like I have" and then I read...(Participant 1, page 10).

During read alouds some participants did not pose questions or engage students in discussion until the reading was completed. These individuals expressed a desire for students' to enjoy stories without interruptions. They perceived interactions with students during the
reading as a tendency to over-analyze a story and to hinder students' listening pleasure. Others conducted interactive read alouds. These teachers performed certain tasks and engaged students in activities during the read aloud. Tables 12 and 13 present the various activities teachers and students performed during read alouds.

Table 12
Teacher Activities During Read Alouds (N=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>observe and monitor behaviour</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use visual aids</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show book illustrations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provide direct instruction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>model reading</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modify or change the author's words</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pose questions to students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provide adequate &quot;wait time&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write (on charts and boards)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss materials with students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 12, teachers were most interested in monitoring student behaviour during the read aloud. Most activities were designed to maintain attention throughout the reading and prevent disruptions to the flow of the story. Participants varied the tone of their voice when reading, imitated foreign accents, and read with expression to maintain students' interest throughout the story. They also posed questions, substituted children's names for fictitious characters' names, and established eye contact with potentially disruptive individuals.

Well, vary the tone of your voice. If I find they're [students] getting a little restless then I try to whisper so that they have to listen a little more carefully. Certainly sometimes using, as you say a puppet or just using a little prop, but mostly by my voice (Participant 2, page 16).
I'll perhaps make accents or I might exaggerate how someone speaks if it's what they call a shrill woman who likes to complain I'll maybe use a really cranky voice and that'll hold their attention. If there's someone who's crying I'll talk in a sobbing tone. I also, I guess tend to use my hands and my eyes from what the kids have told me because they've said they know when a scary part's coming because they'll see it on my face. Or I might do some actions for example like if they [the author] talk about scratching the door I might scratch or if they [the author] talk about oh he pointed his finger angrily I'll point angrily at the children as well (Participant 4, page 18).

Well, when you read to kids, or when I read to kids, you read with expression...so I'll read and then I'll give them a little bit of time to take it in [information from the story] and to enjoy the picture. So I read but not at a fast rate. I give them time to enjoy it. I give them time to absorb what they're listening to and I look at them a lot. I look at the book, I read and I look at them. So I'm reading and you know, you can read part of the line and you've got the rest in your mind and you can talk right directly to them [students]. I'm not, I hold the book looking at them right? I don't look at the book myself...I've learned over the years you can hold the book and look at them [students] and look at the book. Back and forth. And then if anyone is not paying attention I give them [students] the eye (Participant 1, page 16).

Teachers sometimes assigned activities to students during the read aloud. Some of those activities were specifically related to the read aloud, some were not (Table 13).

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>related to read aloud</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not related to the read aloud</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 13, not all teachers assigned tasks to students during read alouds, although most participants expressed expectations for appropriate listening and behaviour during read alouds. Assignments included such activities as writing in role, illustrating descriptive passages from the text, and miming actions. Tasks unrelated to the read aloud included drawing, colouring, and completing unrelated work assignments.

Oh sometimes I encourage participation some books are really you know good for that. We were reading Jack and the Beanstalk today and while Jack climbed the beanstalk we all climbed the beanstalk or you know this is what the giant said and "what did the giant say?" and they all said, "Fee Fi Fo Fum." So sometimes it's participatory and it just I think depends on the book. Sometimes it's a quiet story so we read it really quiet. Sometimes it has loud parts so I read it really loud (Participant 8, page 19).

O.K. generally they [students] seem to be really good about reading the proper cues as to when they can participate. They'll be times when I'm reading a story and I'll motion with my arm if it's a rhyming passage or something and they'll [students] fill in the rhyme, it's just something I'm comfortable doing with these particular kids. But they've all, they do, I do allow them to participate, I invite them [students] to participate but we don't stop and get into a long discussions or long anecdotal comments about things they [students] know about this topic (Participant 7, page 13).

They [students] might do a prediction activity [during read alouds] or they might have a reaction [to the story] or I might get them to write in role or how does this person feel right now? and give me evidence. So they might write a letter and pretend to be a character in the book (Participant 4, page 19).

Participants were asked the question "how do you challenge individual students during the read aloud?" Most teachers hesitated or required probes from the researcher before
answering the question. Table 14 illustrates the techniques participants employed to challenge students during read alouds.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pose questions to students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourage peer attentiveness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chose books two years above students' grade</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level or chronological age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highlight unfamiliar vocabulary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrange for partner discussion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 14, half of the respondents reported posing questions during read alouds. Questioning techniques employed to challenge individual students varied. Some respondents posed questions designed to elicit students' responses and interpretations of the reading. Others asked questions targeting students' prediction, comprehension, and immediate recall skills. Teachers also challenged students by highlighting unfamiliar vocabulary and arranging for students to share personal responses to the story with other children during read alouds.

I guess popping questions to them, "what does it mean to you?" And I often ask for interpretations and I might say " o.k. well did you agree with his interpretation? or her interpretation?" So I'm also challenging them to listen to each other as well....There are several kids that I will make a point of asking at least once a week because they need that stimulation. I will try to make sure that I ask every kid during that week but some kids I might touch on for a couple times, it might be because they have to learn how to pay attention or simply because I want them to get more involved in the story (Participant 4, page 18).

By asking questions. By asking them specifically something that I've just read...Sometimes comprehension but sometimes just sort of an inference too. I'm
thinking of a story I read today. I just asked how did they know that it wasn't a true story. So what in the story told them that? Or asking children for words that they thought were exciting words or words (inaudible) she said or he said. In our writing I'm trying to have them notice in books to listen for other ways of saying, "said" (Participant 2, page 17).

Oh I'll get them on their toes by asking them spot questions or you know I'll just go for immediate quick recall, "what did she say?" and "what did he do?" "what were they wearing?" and "what were they eating?" you know that kind of thing (Participant 7, page 22).

Participants were asked "how do you assess individual students during read alouds?"

Eight participants said they evaluated responses to questions posed during or after the read aloud. However, only five teachers said they posed questions to challenge individual students during the read aloud. (See Table 14 above). The discrepancy between the tables are due to the responses of three individuals. These participants stated that they did not personally challenge individual students during the read aloud. Two teachers said that the books chosen for read alouds challenged students. One individual stated she challenged students after the reading. However, these three teachers did pose questions after the read aloud to assess students' comprehension and interpretations of the story. Some participants also observed students' behaviour and the children's' ability to complete task-related assignments as evidence of learning. Table 15 presents the techniques used to assess individual students during read alouds.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>evaluation of responses to questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monitor students' listening &quot;skills&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maintenance of running records</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critique of student work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observe students' reactions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluate student participation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intuition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 shows the techniques used to evaluate students during read alouds. The most common assessment technique was the evaluation of responses to questions. Assessments were used to confirm students' understanding of vocabulary, comprehension of texts, and ability to interpret texts. To assess personal interpretation and analysis, respondents examined students' ability to relate current read alouds with other stories, provide evidence from the reading to support personal responses, and demonstrate independence in responding to texts.

I might ask questions, comprehension questions as I read. If I'm reading for enjoyment I don't do that but I do find out what they've learned in the book. What can you tell me about the book?, What's your favorite part? And if they can't tell me anything I know they either weren't listening or they didn't understand it. So it's either throughout the book or at the end, I will find out what they got out of it. Through questions. Through questions (Participant 1, page 17).

With questions. Also their response so how they respond to their reading. If they're able to complete the activity or if they haven't paid attention. How much they rely on the book or what we, the notes we've put on the board, if they're able to come up with their own ideas or if they really cling to that on the board (Participant 3, page 12).
I wouldn't say that [during read alouds] would be a main assessment time. Sometimes if a child recalls other stories or similar stories, I have a page on my desk...after the story is read, I would quickly make a note that the child could recall, say characters or similar stories or a different version of the story. So it's mostly by observation and then I would just quickly make a note or on a post it note but I don't actually stop and do the writing as I'm reading, I try to do it as soon as I finish but it's very hard to do that and occasionally I'll you know, make a note at recess or lunch or after school (Participant 2, page 17).

Assess whether? Well to me the main, the first thing is whether they're enjoying it [the book] because I want them to love books so that's really important to me. And some of our books that's all the assessment, that's all that I need from it. Other activities the assessment will be their participation in the discussion and I have a little grid with all their names so I can quickly jot things down if I need to. So assessment of participation and discussion. Or I might have like an activity, say we did a story then we did a story map or a problem and solution sheet. And for grade twos sometimes I can just look at that [their sheet] and see what they've got down. Or I might have to go ask them for more information because sometimes I think I know they know it but they just don't know how to put it down in words or maybe they're, especially the grade ones, they can't write the words for it [the worksheet] (Participant 8, page 22-23).

**Procedures Followed After Read Alouds**

The question, "how do you extend the children's understanding of read aloud materials?" was posed. Two respondents said they did not attempt to extend the students understanding of the text. They read selected materials for the sole purpose of student enjoyment and when the reading was completed they concluded the read aloud session. However, the remaining respondents assigned various activities following the reading to extend student understanding (Table 16).
Table 16
Follow-up Activities To Extend Student Learning (N=10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dramatic or artistic expression</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literature appreciation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re-telling of the story</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussing the story</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revising or extending the story</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summarizing the story</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 16, teachers extended understanding of individual texts through a variety of post-read aloud activities. Several assigned written activities following read alouds. Assignments included identifying and recording story themes, writing personal interpretations in journals, and writing from the perspective of a particular character. Teachers also extended students' understanding of the read aloud through activities they called "literary analysis." Students engaged in activities to identify such literary elements as story structure, character and plot development, and features unique to specific literary genres.

We have a writing strategies notebook and so a lot of times what I will do is, there might be some art involved, with Harry Potter we've done crests and we've done some other you know preliminary things with that, there might be an art project involved or there might be a connection to another story and so we do a focus sort of literature analysis in this writing strategies book (Participant 7, page 14).

We read The Bedspread. First time I had ever read it. I just loved it, about two sisters, I just loved it, it really touched me. And then I had them [students] write about their own bedspread or blanket or quilt. And they had to describe it and you know what it felt like, why it was special (Participant 5, page 20).
...they'll do their story map or that's when they'll do a response in their reading journal or you know, "tell me the part that you like the best" and "tell me why or who is your favourite character and why?" So but we'll talk about it [their response] first and then I look at the written work but sometimes that's not enough because I know sometimes they can't express themselves in the way I've given them to express themselves. So sometimes I have to follow up and kind of interview them I guess. And then just as they're working talk to them about it (Participant 8, page 24).

...When we did The Dreaming Tree that was one of the things I wanted them to think about [deeper meanings and themes]. We ended up with I think eight important ideas that were messages that we figured the author was trying to say, everything from kids can make a difference to we all need trees for our environment to we should all respect living things to adults should listen to children and children should listen to adults so quite a variety. And then eventually their writing assignment grew to where they had to state which one they felt was an important idea and then connect how that they got that from The Dreaming Tree and then sort of support their reasons for that being important (Participant 6, page 23).

Rationale

Teachers' held various reasons for their read aloud decisions. Responses to specific questions about their reasons for conducting read alouds and selecting certain materials are presented in Tables 17 to 20. The general themes suggested by these responses and a more detailed consideration of teachers' decisions are discussed in chapter five.

Rationale for Conducting Read Alouds

Respondents were asked three questions to elicit their rationale for conducting the read aloud program. The first two questions posed were "what do you want students to learn from your read aloud program?" and "why do you chose to conduct read alouds?" Similar answers to
both questions were provided so their responses are represented in one table. They were also asked, "how do you determine whether you've met your objective?" Tables 17 and 18 present the reasons for conducting read alouds, their objectives for student learning, and the methods they used to decide whether their read aloud program objectives were achieved.

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>student enjoyment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher enjoyment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to model oral reading</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to promote a social or political message</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for specific instructional purposes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to increase vocabulary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to expose students to various writing styles</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to expose students to literature</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to model reading</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to build a sense of community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to model meaning-making</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to foster imagination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to foster an appreciation of art styles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to increase students' attention span</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to calm students after breaks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to apply knowledge acquired in teacher training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 17, a variety of reasons for conducting read alouds were identified. The most frequently cited rationale for conducting read alouds was student enjoyment, a consideration that extended into teachers' selection of materials. Teachers expressed personal satisfaction in reading favourite stories and sharing what they considered "good books." They
also conducted read alouds to reinforce thematic units, teach research skills, and implement district learning strategies among other instructional purposes. When, however, all the study data were considered, it became apparent that some of the numbers in the table did not correspond with information provided by participants throughout the study. For example, all teachers wanted their students to enjoy the read aloud, and more participants modeled reading or provided instruction than is suggested by the tables. Several additional teachers strove to foster an appreciation for literature and art, and to build a sense of community.

I want them to love stories (Participant 5, page 21).
Number one is an enjoyment of literature and books that's the number one. And to try to open up to a book they may not be drawn to on their own. To support our own needs within the classroom and in needs that I want to say that fall into morality socialization just human skills...and imagination (Participant 10, page 25).
How much fun it is to hear stories so I want them to enjoy it. That's probably my number one goal. But also to learn about different types of stories, to learn different styles that authors have. To learn new words. To notice different art styles. To get an appreciation of the different kind of books (Participant 3, page 13). To learn to love reading. And of course that's not reading it's listening to a story but usually the story is a few grade levels above their, and so that is basically it. So that they would love stories (Participant 9, page 13).

Several methods were used to decide whether read aloud program objectives were achieved. Some of the methods identified were similar to techniques used to assess students' learning outcomes. Methods that resulted in measurable outcomes for example, were often used when teachers conducted read alouds for instructional purposes. Two individuals in the study were unable to identify the methods they used to determine whether program objectives were achieved. Table 18 presents the methods employed to determine whether teachers met their read aloud program objectives.
Table 18
Methods to Determine Achievement of Program Objectives (N=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>observe students' reactions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluate students' oral responses</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluate student work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask students for feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observe students' selection of recreational reading materials</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 18, participants observed students' reactions to stories and read aloud sessions. Student attentiveness and enthusiasm for books and read aloud sessions were considered evidence that program objectives were achieved. Two participants asked students for their views on individual books. One teacher, for example, asked students to recommend and select books for next year's class.

I've met my objectives by how engaged they are. Like I know I've been successful in the book that I've selected if they want to listen and that they are listening and they're excited about coming to the carpet and listening to a story not dragging [groaning sound] "I don't want to do this." So that's how it's measured (Participant 10, page 24).

Well I don't know if I'm ever going to know for sure [if program objectives are achieved] but I feel comfortable in being able to make the assumption when they're [students] so engrossed when they're excited and interested to come and sit down and read when they bring a story to me that they want me to read because they may not be able to read it. That's sort of how I gauge that and I guess you never know for sure but I don't think I've ever, I've never had anyone say, "another story? You have to read another story?" They're [students] always really interested and wanting it [the story] (Participant 8, page 25).
Oh I know if they're interested enough I will always try to stop at a cliff hanger or stop in the middle of a sentence and so I'll invariably someone will say to me, "Oh can you tell me what happens next" that kind of thing I love that I think that's a really good way to tease them about it (Participant 7, page 15).

Well it's very easy because I ask them and they usually tell me. They're very honest and they you know they're told and I would often frame it in such a way that you know for example if I was reading a new story I would ask them if they would recommend it to another group if it's worthwhile for me to. And then sometimes I would ask them to compare it to this other book and you know which is better and so I do that but it's not in a written way it's just an oral questioning (Participant 9, page 13).

**Rationale to Select Materials**

Respondents were asked to describe general reasons for selecting materials for classroom read alouds. They identified five major reasons for choosing materials. Table 19 presents teachers' rationale for book selection.

Table 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>personal preferences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom composition</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complement topics of study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student recommendations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>represented through various media</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 suggests that respondents often chose materials because of personal preference. Individuals spoke of favourite childhood stories, personal interests and hobbies, and preferences for a particular author or genre when selecting books for classroom read alouds. Some preferences corresponded to the books recorded on teachers' read aloud logs. For example, one
individual who liked stories with happy endings recorded several fairy-tales on her reading log. Another who preferred books with old fashioned values and stories that "affect the heart" chose contemporary books with sentimental themes written by such authors as Patricia Pollacco.


...I like Roald Dahl so I used him and the kids enjoyed him. The next book that I just finished today is called Danny the Champion of the World, also by the same author, and the reason I chose that book was because when I was younger in elementary school my teacher also read that to our class and our class really enjoyed it (Participant 4, page 7).

I like happy endings...And sometimes it's nostalgia. Sometimes it's just books that I've know as a child and that I'd like to share...(Participant 8, page 15).

...I really love Shel Silverstein. Uh, I find in reading books, I like to read a whole variety. I like to read many different kinds of books so that we're not, so we don't get bored. Variety to me is the spice of life. I like the variety in reading. I like the variety in the kids, you know [laughter] (Participant 1, page 14).

Those who considered the classroom composition when selecting materials attended to academic and linguistic diversity and classroom management strategies. Individuals who selected materials to complement topics of classroom study chose read aloud materials appropriate to those curricular areas. These materials could also be used to reinforce thematic units.

Well when the children are very active we have to have a shorter book because we can't hold their attention. And usually the children tell you their interests as well (Participant 2, page 11).
Well, if they [students] are bouncing around I need to pick materials they are hopefully
going to be interested in and definitely keeping their attention is a sort of focus in my
mind when I'm picking a book. Are they going to be interested? and how long can I keep
them interested? And I might read only parts of a book...(Participant 1, page 7).

...you know I guess the only thing I'd watch for is there are some picture books that are
fairly lengthy and I do try and stay from those because that sometimes it's just too long to
sit (Participant 8. page 17).

Criteria for Read Aloud Materials

Respondents were asked to discuss specific criteria used to choose materials for read
alouds. Read aloud materials consisted primarily of books, but teachers also said they used
newspapers, magazines, and poems written on large sheets of chart paper. However, records
from read aloud logs reveal that only one newspaper article was used in classroom read alouds
during this study and all other materials were books. Table 20 shows the criteria identified as
guiding the specific selection of read aloud materials.

Table 20
Criteria for Selecting Materials (N=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of reading material</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artwork</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considered to be &quot;good&quot; literature</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developmentally appropriate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has an element of surprise (humour, mystery)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 20, various criteria for selecting read aloud materials were used.
Participants selected materials with content appropriate to specific educational themes and
instructional objectives, and that fit with their perceptions of appropriate topics. Inappropriate
content for read alouds included sensitive topics such as dating, death, and acts of cruelty to animals or humans.

...I choose them [books] depending on if we're doing a theme or right now because it's winter maybe reading winter books or something that goes with science (Participant 2, page 9).

...I do two months of research and then we kinda put to the side a lot of the other reading. Although if we're reading for example, research on bears, I will bring in some fairy-tale books so we get a little bit of a break from all that heavy research. You know, it gets kinda dry at times and it's heavy reading and so I'll lighten it up by bringing in a story book for them...(Participant 1, page 18).

Well I have a Curious George book that I haven't read for a long time and I looked through it and it talked about how Curious George was first found. And he basically was snatched out of the jungle and encouraged to go to the zoo. And I thought hmmm this book is no longer appropriate for what I want my students to have. So I think books that have been around for a long time that maybe I feel uncomfortable about, what's become a political content I would choose to stay away from. And whether it be something I agreed with or not I think, and again maybe I'm biased and don't even realize it, maybe I do read books that sort of have a bit of a political agenda that I agree with and I don't even realize that I'm trying to promote it. But I think, I don't want to stay away from controversy but things, there's just some things that I don't think I'd feel comfortable saying like not being good to animals and things like that. I'm trying to think of other examples. I have a favourite story from my childhood it's The Little Match Girl and I bought the book and read the story and I thought this is about a little girl that dies. I don't feel comfortable reading this to these children it's not, I didn't feel that at the age of seven that I should be talking about how to deal with death. I thought that might be, at least death in that way
because I have read books about grandparents dying but I thought maybe that should be something that should be done at home (Participant 8, page 16).

...something that is overly romantic and really focuses upon, really um, boy girl relationships I don't particularly want to read that. But if it has something to do with friendship absolutely. It [the story] has nothing to do with who the friendship is between but as long as it's not romantic love it's ok. And I think that it [the story] needs to have a positive message something that has to do with morality or something that we all benefit from (Participant 10, page 11).

The language in books was also identified as a criterion for choosing certain read aloud materials. Participants frequently cited preferences for descriptive words and original nonsense vocabulary. Individuals admitted to selecting materials with vocabulary they considered inappropriate but added that they omitted and substituted these words during read alouds. For example, they would replace derogatory terms, ethnic slurs, or unfamiliar colloquialisms with more appropriate terms.

I like to have rich language, lots of good descriptive words. Because I have young children I like to have pictures that will attract their interest. I usually read books that have a picture on most pages. Now that I have the grade twos this year I will read a chapter book to them as well because children at that age begin to like chapter books (Participant 2, page 10).

Ok. To me good literature is not putting things in the most simplistic terms. It's painting the picture with words...in a picture book it's usually a page and I like that description, that much description. And a read aloud to me is, has interesting vocabulary and interesting pictures to either make you think about the vocabulary in the story or maybe it's something that hasn't been said in the words but it's adding to the story. To me that would be enjoyable, a good book or good literature (Participant 8, page 19).
Using the word "Indian" or things that are derogatory that you know might not a long time ago been considered that. I find in read alouds, I even if the word "stupid" is in the book I'll say "dumb" or "silly." I don't, you know I don't really like that, so yeah sometimes I'm kinda picky about that kind of thing (Participant 6, page 13).

I really respect author's words but I find as a teacher I censor things as I'm reading them. For example, Roald Dahl has some pretty scathing things that he incorporates into his writing and I'll delete words like "stupid" and all those other words that'll be shocking the kids and just put in gentler words. I find that's one of the ways that I might not read a book the way it's meant to be (Participant 7, page 19).

...I mean even with Harry Potter it says "shut up" well we say "be quiet" ...I'll ad lib and modify [vocabulary] (Participant 10, page 11).

Analysis of Read Aloud Materials

Teachers maintained a one month record of materials used during classroom read alouds. One hundred and forty-three books and one newspaper article were read in ten different classrooms. A content analysis of one hundred and sixteen of the read aloud materials was conducted and findings were compiled into tables. Categories for each of the tables were developed by the researcher and do not represent the views of participants. Some of the materials recorded in reading logs were not available for analysis and some materials were photocopied poems that could not be traced to the original author or book. Five of the one hundred and sixteen books were read by more than one teacher but analyzed only once. However, each of the five books are represented in the tables. Two of the books from the category "traditional literature" are anthologies and recorded on Tables 21 and 22. However, individual stories from the anthologies are recorded on Tables 22 and 24. Tables 21 to 24 present the materials according to genre of children's literature, format, language usage, and artistic style of illustrations.
Genres

The reading logs showed that teachers introduced seven genres of children's literature during classroom read alouds. Charlotte Huck (1989) provides a useful taxonomy to identify literary genres although her definitions are modified here. The one biography used in this study was a simplified fictional biography. Fictionalized biographies are based in fact but the author dramatizes personality traits and significant events in the character's life. The second genre, historical fiction, includes fictitious stories based on historical events and personal memoirs. Contemporary realism includes stories associated with living in today's world and personal issues about young people: self-acceptance, peer pressure, family dynamics, and other trials of youth. Traditional literature is defined as stories recorded from oral traditions such as the Grimm brothers and Perrault. Traditional literature identified in this study included wonder tales, characterized by magical and supernatural occurrences, and beast tales, characterized by anthropomorphized animals. Poetry books, the fifth genre selected for classroom read alouds, include narrative poems, lyrical poems with melodic rhythms, and free verse poems incorporating cadence or rhythm as its poetic form. Informational books relay factual information in a variety of forms. Fictitious stories and characters such as Mrs. Frizzle from The Magic School Bus series introduced factual information in the context of an imaginary field-trip. Counting books depict correspondence between numerals and words, while concept books explore abstract characteristics of objects or ideas. Survey books provide general overviews and summaries of various topics or events. Identification books correlate pictures of objects with labels, and photographic essays document information captured on film. Life-cycle books explain the sequence of events or one aspect of the life of a living being. The category "other" identifies books that did not qualify for a particular category, including joke books or books that were not easily identifiable. Table 21 illustrates the specific genres of children's literature used in classroom read alouds.
Table 21

Genre of Book (N=119 books)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>modern fantasy</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contemporary realism</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informational</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historical fiction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poetry</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 21, modern fantasy was by far the most popular genre of literature selected. Picture storybooks and novels were frequently used to convey stories in this genre. According to Huck (1989), modern fantasy replicates a structure similar to the oral tradition but with a modern perspective or problem and an identifiable author. Modern fantasy identified from participants' reading logs included stories about the worlds of toys, animals who have various human qualities, imaginary kingdoms, magical worlds or characters who possess magical powers, eccentric characters, unusual situations, and modern fairy tales.

Teachers' reading logs revealed similarities in the formats of books selected for read alouds. Book size, for example, was frequently about 28 cm x 22 cm (a little larger than a standard piece of notebook paper) and easy for teachers to manipulate. Books were easily featured in classroom displays or bookcases. Print was a standard size (12-14 point) and permitted teachers to read books from various angles, scan pages, and relocate their place on the page while simultaneously observing student behaviour. Table 22 shows features of the format of individual books used in classroom read alouds.
Table 22
Format of Books (N=119)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Number of books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>medium book size (aprox. 28 x 22cm)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small book size (aprox. 20 x 20 cm or smaller)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large book size (aprox. 80 x 110 cm)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium print (aprox 12-14 point)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small print (aprox 8-10 point)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large print size (aprox 18-24 point)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each page illustrated</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>half or more pages illustrated</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than half pages illustrated</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no illustrated pages</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence of award winning medal</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 22 and identified during interviews, participants chose highly illustrated books. Not surprisingly, most books used for read alouds were picture storybooks that use illustrations and written text to develop the plot and add depth and complexity to characters. For example, an illustration of a character’s facial expressions or a representation of how the character sees the world can convey additional insight into the complexity of a character.

Materials listed in reading logs were also analyzed for their types of language. During interviews, teachers identified language usage as a criterion for book selection and expressed a willingness to substitute inappropriate vocabulary with more acceptable terms. The read aloud materials were classified into several broad categories: conventional language, or informal language widely shared by most members of a language group; dialect, a widely comprehensible but a distinct use of language shared by a sub-culture, sometimes incorporating regional accents to add distinctive oral pronunciation; socially insensitive language that includes obsolete terms that poorly represent specific sub-cultures or ethnic groups; and specialized terminology that
emphasizes the accurate and precise use of language, particularly in non-fiction materials. Table 23 (following page) presents the types of language featured in books selected for classroom read alouds. Table 23 also shows the correlation between language usage and specific genres of children's literature.

As seen in Table 23, conventional language was most frequently used in books selected for read alouds. Books with conventional language often featured expressions from everyday speech such as "betcha you can't" (Betcha!) and "yuck!" (Magic School Bus and Yuck, A Love Story). Foreign words and expressions could still be conventional if they were incorporated into the text without creating a distraction, as often happened in books by popular author Patricia Pollacco. The category "other" included a joke book written with puns, a counting book without words, and a rebus story with limited vocabulary and sentences.

The art in the picture storybooks fall into four artistic styles, loosely based on Huck (1989). Representational realism imaginatively portrays realistic figures and forms. In contrast, strict realism depicts real life images, in this case through photographs. Folk art styles are flat, one-dimensional images which lack depth and perspective. Similarly, cartoon styles are also flat, one dimensional drawings but convey movement or humour. Table 24 (following pages) presents the artistic styles featured in the books selected for read alouds as well as the correlation between art style and genre.

As seen in Table 24, teachers tended to choose representational realism. Representational realism was featured in all genres of children's literature except biography. Sixteen of the books identified in the study were from books written and illustrated by Patricia Pollacco and are typical of her artistic style. In fact, one teacher did an author study on Pollacco. Acrylic paint, watercolour, and pen and ink were popular media, and colour and line were the elements of design frequently featured in the teachers' chosen books.

Chapter 4 has presented the direct answers teachers gave to particular questions. However, some of the answers to the research questions were not provided in a simple and direct manner. When considering the data from interviews, the focus group, cultural artifacts,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th>Realism</th>
<th>Poetry</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23

(Human generated text)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gene</th>
<th>Artistic Style</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4
and impressions resulting from cultural immersion, the researcher has uncovered explanatory
themes not attributable to any direct response. Some of the themes refer to the political factors
involved in read alouds. These are discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to existing literature.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to provide some insight into why teachers conducted read alouds and how they chose their pedagogy and materials. The research questions were: 1) Why do teachers conduct read alouds? 2) Why do teachers use certain pedagogies? and 3) How do teachers choose materials for read alouds? To arrive at this insight, it was necessary first to ask what they did and what resources they used. Chapter 4 presented a description of their practices as well as their responses to direct questions about their reasons. The answer to the preliminary question of how teachers conduct their read alouds and what kinds of decisions they make was not overly surprising: they made many of the decisions that can be found in the general literature. The answers to the questions about why they made certain choices were a little more intriguing, since these answers moved away from pedagogy and into politics.

What Teachers Did

Much of the literature reviewed for this study on what teachers typically do to prepare and instruct in their classrooms described the read aloud practices of study participants. For the most part, teachers planned and scheduled the read aloud by choosing learning goals, materials, and appropriate activities. They sometimes made decisions prior to considering students (pre-active), as when they chose materials well in advance to corresponded with educational themes or holidays. Interactive decisions—monitoring student attention, adapting lessons to immediate demands, gathering information for future lessons, and evaluating student responses—were similar to those identified by Clark and Peterson (1986) and Shavelson and Stern (1981).

Study participants also noted classroom management and control tactics used during the read aloud. Teachers determined behavioural expectations and chose strategies to foster an agreeable classroom atmosphere (Pasch, et al., 1995). They set "housekeeping duties" and built rapport with student, organized groups, and determined the level of social interaction (Brown et al, as cited in Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993; Hart-Hewins & Wells, 1999; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Pasch et al, 1995; Slavin, 1987). They even established rules to be followed during the
read aloud, some explicit and some implicit, some cooperatively formulated and some not (Doyle, 1986; Pasch et al, 1995). Teachers decided where students would sit and what would be the best form of student/teacher interaction (Pasch et al, 1995).

Finally, the teachers in this study interacted not only with their students but with colleagues, parents, administrators, and district personnel. The teachers also confronted Ministry of Education policy and were to some degree aware of broader social influences on education. The reasons why the study participants conducted read alouds and chose certain teaching strategies often had to do with the actions of these various educational stakeholders.

Reasons

When one considers the relationships between and among the tables and categories of the last chapter and consider the data as a whole, some cultural themes—the "cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning" (Spradley, 1979: 186)—were revealed. It became evident that the reasons behind decisions to conduct read alouds and choose practices and materials were influenced by the values, demands, or requirements of teachers, students, parents, school personnel, and others.

Why Did Teachers Conduct Read Alouds?

One reason for conducting a read aloud was that the teachers simply enjoyed them. The read aloud provided an opportunity to "connect" with the students in a personally meaningful way. Teachers in this study wanted their read aloud to be an enjoyable experience that would foster an appreciation for literature and encourage independent reading. Most said they enjoyed sharing an activity (reading) that was a personal delight. During the read aloud, some teachers enjoyed playing with their vocal expressions and interacting with the students. They designated special classroom locations to encourage a positive and pleasant atmosphere during read alouds. Teachers also enjoyed sharing the books that they themselves enjoyed, either as adults or as children. Hart and Rowley (1996) found similar inclinations in pre-service teachers. Holdaway
(1979) characterized a read aloud as similar to a bed-time story, and these study participants strove to create a close and nurturing experience.

Many of the teachers in the study used the read aloud as an opportunity to exercise their own autonomy. When asked about their choices, teachers were confident and proud to have made independent decisions. When faced with encroachments on their autonomy, the teachers found ways to avoid conflict and carry on with their own choices. However, it should be noted that teachers in the study did not emphasize their autonomy to the same degree as did the pilot study participants, who were from a different district. One of the pilot group participants stressed how much she enjoyed read alouds because she could escape from external scrutiny in regard to performance and assessment.

Two study participants also saw read alouds as a way to address the social values of their students. The teachers deliberately chose books on racism and bullying as a way to eliminate potential problems and misunderstandings among students in the classroom. During the interviews, they commented:

Well I remember I once had a child who was Black and so I read the novel *The Cay* because it deals with racism. And I did choose that specifically because it deals very nicely with that subject (Participant 9, page 8).

I'm thinking of a book I read to the class because I didn't like the climate in the school when I first got here and in my classroom because I actually did have a kid who was very aggressive and violent and bullying. So I actually went out and bought a book called *Bullying for you* and it's just a very short story book and I actually read that because of my classroom situation and because I saw some kids who were, I guess were allies with the bully who were kinda getting into it but I kinda wanted to pull them out as well and this book actually talked about how people became bullies and why bullies choose certain friends and I was just kinda hoping to reach those children and also the other children who weren't so prone (Participant 4, page 11).
Some participants believed that their read alouds were of particular value to those students with limited exposure to books and written English in their homes. Sometimes participants saw parents or other primary care-givers as unfamiliar with academic expectations at school or unable to speak fluent English. As a result, these parents were seen as unable to provide their children with literacy experiences consistent with school-based literacy. The in-school literacy program had added importance for study participants who perceived that their parent population fit these groups. Although it was unclear how these considerations influenced read aloud decisions, one might suppose that teachers who felt they played such a crucial role in a child's literacy development might feel additional personal responsibility to provide high-quality read alouds.

Participants in this study also seemed motivated by another aspect of home life related to education levels and fluency in English. There seemed to be a correlation between how teachers perceived parental support for classroom literacy programs and how they perceived the socio-economic status of their school's catchment. Teachers who perceived their parents to be economically stable and secure ("middle- to upper middle-class") were seen as capable of maintaining and supporting home reading programs, volunteering to read to students in the classroom, and lending, obtaining or recommending books for teachers to read. In contrast, parents in "low- to middle-class" neighbourhoods were often seen as unable to maintain and extend their child's school-based literacy after school hours. Single parent homes and immigrant families with limited English were seen as part of this lower economic group that could not always support home reading programs, regularly visit the public library, or provide/select "good books" for read alouds. Children from these homes were seen as more dependent on the school literacy program.

Exactly how teachers' perceptions of socio-economic standing influenced read aloud practices is not clear, but participants consistently identified school-based literacy as the standard. This standard fit the "middle- to upper middle-class" neighbourhoods more readily than the "low- to middle-class" neighbourhoods, suggesting a preference for "middle-class
values" by teachers in the study. Participants did not mention that different forms of literacy might prevail in less affluent neighbourhoods, nor did they suggest how they might better accommodate children whose experiences of literacy centred on such types of text as newspapers, sales flyers, or toy advertisements (Pellegrini & Galda, 1998) rather than books. Such children risk being inappropriately labeled as unmotivated, slow, or learning disabled (Allington, 1994; McQuillan, 1998).

Study participants also considered the curriculum prescribed by the provincial Ministry of Education. Although the Ministry did not explicitly prescribe read alouds, teachers naturally considered the policy and procedures governing their work. The practices described by most of the teachers in this study suggest that they were meeting many of the Ministry objectives for language arts through their read alouds. At the time of this study, such objectives included the ability to ask and respond to questions before, during or after reading, viewing or listening; predict, retell, and sequence events and ideas from selections students have read, heard, or viewed; describe aspects of stories including characters, when and where the events took place and what happened; and enjoy literature.

Of course, study participants did not make their decisions in isolation from their colleagues. All ten participants said that they recommended pedagogy or materials to each other. The researcher also knew firsthand that primary teachers more generally shared books and other materials. Teacher collegiality, however, went beyond this simple sharing through participation in a common work culture. Teachers socialized in district-wide events sponsored by the union and the city. District professional days and in-service workshops also brought teachers together. The experienced teachers in this study used affectionate terms when discussing their colleagues ("it's a lovely little staff," "we've all become such good friends"). They were very willing to collaborate with each other to share information, share resources, and co-plan literature units. Two study participants also combined their classes and shared instruction for some units. Two of the beginning teachers in the study initially found it
awkward to take advantage of this collegiality, but over time they were able to participate more fully (see Table 4).

Teachers were, in Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) metaphor, part of a professional landscape that included read alouds. The decision to read aloud to students was never strictly an individual choice. A teacher who decided against doing read alouds would soon be persuaded to comply with the practices dominant in the landscape. In the context of the present study, it would be odd to find teachers who did not conduct read alouds.

One of the stronger influences on participants' work culture was the curriculum coordinator employed by the school district. The current study tended to confirm the observation made by Connelly and Clandinin (1995) that North American educators were subject to the authority of outside experts who present theory to guide practice. During the study, participants frequently commented on the district curriculum coordinator. This person made recommendations for pedagogical techniques and books for teachers' use, even going so far as to purchase a "how to" inspirational book for every elementary school in the district. The underlying presumption was that teachers would regularly read to students as one of their routine duties.

Students also played a significant role in decisions to conduct read alouds. In fact, the most commonly mentioned reason to conduct read alouds was that students enjoyed them. Students encouraged the read alouds more actively when they brought in their own books. Study participants were often willing to accommodate a student's initiative, treating it as an opportunity for a member of the class to share an aspect of him or her self. However, not every teacher responded favorably to student choice. One participant felt that students brought in materials that were overly colloquial or popular. Ironically, perhaps, this teacher read the popular novel *Harry Potter* to her class.

**Why Did Teachers Use Certain Pedagogies?**

Teachers occasionally made pedagogical decisions to fit their own tastes and preferences. For example, some teachers gave primacy to the author's words while others gave the listener
priority in interpretation. However, they more often chose pedagogy in response to various demands, particularly the learning needs of the students.

All teachers described their classroom composition as extremely diverse. Some of that diversity was in the academic ability of the students who varied in their intellectual development, language ability, and social values. Students were also diverse in their personalities, with varying propensity to sit still and pay attention to the read aloud. Some were quiet and attentive, others were easily distracted. To accommodate diverse student populations, teachers chose teaching strategies that would be effective with a wide range of children.

Believing it would appeal to the greatest range of student ability, teachers in this study often provided a model for language and opportunities for language play by using books that had "rich descriptive vocabulary" (Chomsky 1972, Halliday 1975, and Heath, 1980). Teachers also tested prediction skills that drew upon students' background knowledge as a way for them to participate at their own levels. Teachers also adapted read aloud activities to suit individual students' abilities, providing an opportunity to complete assignments successfully. One teacher accommodated diverse levels of English-language ability by using a great deal of animation when reading, emphasizing facial and vocal expression. As Clark and Peterson (1986) and Shavelson and Stern (1981) have observed, teachers more generally make these adaptations and modifications.

Student attention span and behaviour also encouraged teachers to adopt certain practices for their read alouds, as others have found in teaching more generally (Pasch et al, 1995). Teachers scheduled read aloud sessions for brief periods of time if they thought students were prone to restlessness or distraction or used the read aloud as a calming experience after recess or lunch breaks. The teachers also organized the classroom for maximum attentiveness by designating a special area for the read aloud. These areas encouraged students to sit still and pay attention to the teacher. Another teacher played classical music quietly to mask distracting background noise. During read alouds, teachers asked close-ended, low-level questions specifically to keep children alert. One teacher even inserted a student's name into the story to
see if the child was being attentive. Finally, teachers would read only short books or passages when students were inattentive. The study confirmed the observations by Doyle (1986) and Clark and Peterson (1986) that classroom order and control are pervasive concerns in teachers' interactive decision-making.

Although teachers shared pedagogy with their colleagues, they were much more influenced by the district curriculum coordinator who recommended instructional strategies. Some study participants thought the suggestions for pedagogy were obligatory, while others thought that they were optional. Some appreciated the suggestions, but others preferred to make their own decisions. However, even when they thought they were exercising their own judgements in conducting read alouds, some teachers in this study were incorporating suggestions previously made available in district in-services. To use Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) metaphor again, the district coordinator helped to introduce or reinforce pedagogical practices in the teachers' professional landscape.

Although not identified by the study participants, parents also influenced pedagogy by choosing materials for teachers. Some books naturally lent themselves to certain forms of presentation or suggested particular uses. Parental expectations of how materials were to be used also affected pedagogy, especially when parents volunteered to read their own books (which happened in several participants' classrooms). In those cases, parents brought their own reading "styles" to the event. Concerns about parental expectations led one teacher in a grade three and four split class to worry that it might be more difficult to justify her read aloud because it was not an activity that received a letter grade. Occasionally, a parent could influence pedagogy directly by insisting on a specific activity, as when one parent induced a teacher to cancel a read aloud in order to hold a spell-a-thon.

Finally, respondents commented indirectly on how the Ministry of Education influenced their pedagogy. They spoke favourably about some aspects of policy. The teachers' guide supplied by the Ministry identified teaching strategies and materials that many teachers found useful, especially for student assessment. On the other hand, most study participants felt
"pressured" and that the Ministry placed too many overwhelming demands on them. They thought that Ministry guidelines would soon force "other teachers" to adopt pedagogical practices that would satisfy narrow performance indicators; students might, for example, learn to score well on a test rather than develop personal skills of inquiry or understanding. Such fears were reinforced by a local, political non-government organization that encouraged the use of these narrow performance indicators.

Pedagogy is closely linked to the materials used. In some cases, books or other materials can suggest an appropriate pedagogical approach or vice versa. For example, informational picture books that mix fact and fiction can encourage discussions about what is real and what is not. Alternatively, a teacher who wants to teach prediction might choose reading materials that have a strong narrative element in the text or illustrations. Separating pedagogy from materials is a conceptual rather than practical exercise. How teachers chose their materials thus becomes a significant educational question.

How Do Teachers Choose Materials?

Teachers chose materials most often according to their own preferences and showed a bias for fiction, as Hoffman, Rosser and Battle (1993) and Moss (1995) found, and especially modern fantasy. This genre is highly appropriate to read alouds in a number of ways. They are often stories familiar to the teacher, easily evaluated and acquired, and are broadly accepted by the general population. As well, modern fantasy clearly illustrates literary structures. Study participants also liked easily manipulated, brightly coloured, and abundantly illustrated books, especially those using the medium of paint. Representational images and conventional language were common, and information books complemented instructional units. Although teachers exercised their own preferences to some degree, data from this study suggests that there was little experimentation and a tendency to avoid controversy or censorship.

Books were also chosen to accommodate student interest. One teacher said she chose folklore and traditional stories from various cultures to validate the different ethnic backgrounds of her students. Stories that had different cultural expressions (for example, a Korean version of
the western Cinderella) were ideal for these purposes. In keeping with concerns for classroom management, teachers might choose books that were believed to be of greater interest (especially to boys, since they were more prone to disruptive behaviour).

As an extension of the more general practice of engaging students in developing classroom procedures, the teacher let the students vote on their preferences (Doyle, 1986; Pasch et al, 1995). This choice was controlled, however, since the teacher pre-read and selected the books for the vote. On other occasions, the teacher had the class brainstorm titles that were sorted by genre and author. Students then voted for their choice, even if that choice was partially limited. It appeared that the teachers could use the read aloud to cultivate respectful or cooperative classroom behaviours.

As with other aspects of the read aloud, study participants also shared book titles—and books—with colleagues. Participants and other teachers often discussed titles informally and recommended books they thought would be of personal interest or appropriate for topics of study in the classroom. These recommendations could only be made between teachers who knew each other and their classroom practices fairly well, adding to a greater sense of workplace intimacy. This helps to explain why beginning teachers found it more difficult to share resources with peers.

The district personnel also suggested which materials the teacher would use, but in this case the influence was indirect. Over the last year, the curriculum coordinator decided to create a school-based resource to help teachers with literature instruction. Various teachers or teacher librarians were asked to choose books. Teachers across the district were asked to assign grade levels to the books and couple them with specific teaching strategies. With these "standards" in place for the literature instruction, teachers were reluctant to choose books for their read alouds that had been prescribed for a higher grade literature unit. One administrator reinforced this tendency by telling her staff that there is "nothing worse than a grade three teacher doing a read aloud with a novel that is prescribed for a grade five." This might create a conflict for those teachers who reported choosing books two grade levels higher than their students' level (Table
Parents were another significant factor in selecting materials. Most teachers said parents lent books from their personal libraries, donated books to specific classrooms, and purchased books as gifts for individual teachers. However, this was noted only by participants who identified their school catchment as middle- to upper middle-class. (See also Table 2.) These teachers appeared to have a friendly and positive relationship with parents. Having been immersed in the culture, the researcher knows that books are donated by parents in less affluent catchments as well but study participants from these areas did not identify their parents as donors of materials. Teachers seemed to respond more favourably to "middle-class values."

Parents, particularly parent advisory groups, were also perceived as valuable to secure books for school libraries. Parents in middle- to upper middle-class neighbourhoods were identified as book-donors and effective fund-raisers for book purchases. Parents in lower middle-class neighbourhoods were not identified as effective fund-raisers or contributors of resources. Sometimes these fundraisers were large book fairs that involved a major publisher. Book fairs in at least one poorer school were run by school personnel rather than parent volunteers. Although book fairs could be profitable at different schools, the fund-raising activities in the more affluent neighbourhoods provided considerably more money to purchase books.

Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) landscape metaphor again seems appropriate when considering the materials chosen. "Big books" and environmental print were no longer in these teachers' landscape; the topics simply never arose in conversation although there is no pedagogical reason why big books should be avoided and they are available in the district (Davis, 1999). (They are, however, a little awkward to use.) The more recent suggestion to read "easy books" so that children could later read them independently had not yet made it into the landscape (Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Hart-Hewins & Wells, 1999; Moss, 1995). The
teachers in this study tended to choose materials that were readily available and generally accepted in the district.

Conclusion and Implications

Despite the limited nature of this study, a general conclusion has emerged. The study also has implications for researchers, teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. Following the conclusion and implications are suggestions for further research.

General Conclusion

This study went in search of reasons why teachers choose their practices and materials, and found politics as well as pedagogy. The seemingly simple task of reading to a classroom of students required political maneuvering to balance the demands of students, parents, colleagues, administrators, and others. As a result, the teachers in this study generally conformed to dominant cultural tastes and values in their choices of materials and practices, as Wollman-Bonilla (1998) also found. The question of what decisions teachers make about their read alouds and why becomes the question of what options and choices are appropriate in the landscape of teacher culture. The option, of course, is to become a silent maverick and lead a "dual life" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995).

Central to this balancing act are contrasting definitions and views of literacy. Teachers find themselves surrounded by different values, practices, and desired outcomes when conducting read alouds as part of their literacy program. Some parents may feel literacy simply to be "reading and writing" as a way to secure future employment, while others may see literacy as learning linguistic conventions in order to participate in particular social circles. Teachers also bring their own values to their interpretation of literacy, and entire school systems embody broader social and political agendas. Paulo Freire's literacy work in Brazil during the 1970s contrasts markedly with most literacy programs in the industrial west. Read alouds, like literacy more generally, lie in contested terrain.
Implications

There are a few limitations that should be kept in mind. It was a small, short-term study involving a single researcher. Only one interview and focus groups was used, and there were no participant observations.

This study has several methodological implications. First, since it was largely based on interviews to illicit participants' perspectives, it leaves aside the question of whether study participants were aware of various shaping factors. For example, participants may not be aware of university personnel who introduce books to school cultures. They may also be unaware of the different roles between administrators and teachers which may give rise to conflict. Study participants did not speak of this divide, and one even asserted that the divide was nonexistent. Few participants mentioned gender, but numerous studies have argued convincingly that gender plays a significant role in decisions about classroom organization, pedagogy, and children's literature. Asking the same research questions using research methodologies that did not depend on participant awareness might provide other insight.

A second methodological implication is that the study could not isolate specific variables. Teachers touched on such influences as the socio-economic status of a school's catchment, their experience in teaching, or the cultural background of their students. However, the study was not able to control for or compare the influence of any given variable. Experimental designs might provide better insight into these relationships.

This study also has practical implications for educators. Teachers might benefit because it provides a larger perspective on the nature of one aspect of their work. Teachers spend much of their time alone in the classrooms and, despite sharing a common work culture, often do not have an opportunity to discuss in depth their classroom experiences. The read aloud experience can vary depending on the kind of support provided by parents, classroom composition, or the teacher's status in their professional culture. Conversely, teachers may recognize familiar experiences. Teachers may be in a better position to evaluate their practices or circumstances having read this study.
Teachers may not even be aware of many of the resources available to them. This study has generated a long list of books, children's literature websites, and professional organizations that support teachers in their read alouds and other facets of their literacy programs. These resources have been compiled and distributed.

Given the numerous influences on teachers in providing their read alouds, administrators might reconsider how they support their staff. Administrators may be unaware of the different expectations in different schools. If the proper professional role of teachers is to exercise independent judgement in choosing their pedagogy and materials, then administrators support teachers best by creating work environments that maximize teacher autonomy. School administrators have a responsibility to protect teachers from unreasonable demands from higher levels of administration, parents, or others.

The implications for teacher educators contrast with those for administrators. Providing a read aloud is not simply about closing the door and settling down with a nice book. Teacher educators should emphasize the complexity of the read aloud component of the literacy program. To be effective, teachers must learn how to balance the various demands placed upon them, and both pre-teaching and in-service programs can help develop the appropriate skills. Teacher education might also sensitize teachers to the various forms of literacy that might exist in their school catchments. Any attempts to influence how a teacher organizes or conducts a read aloud should, however, respect teachers' personal values and circumstances.

One feature lacking in the data is any reference to theory. This does not, of course, logically imply that the participants were unaware of any theoretical justifications behind their practices, but it does suggest that theory was not uppermost in their minds. No one cited "grand theories" (as found in the academic literature) or personal theories (such as the theories-in-practice noted by Schon (1983, 1987)) to explain their decisions. If theory helps teachers to predict the outcomes of their efforts, recognize patterns in learner behaviour, or anticipate changes in their working environment, teacher educators might take extra care to bridge the alleged "theory-practice" gulf. If it is not being done, pre-service education could be improved
by enhancing the practicum with broader exposure to both pedagogy and school dynamics. Such experiences can then be used as the basis for cohort discussions leading to personal theorizing or consideration of existing theories. Similarly, in-service education could make time for teachers to explore with others the theories that best help them to understand their experiences.

Future Research

As noted above, further research into certain relationships between variables would be beneficial. One might wish to explore how read aloud practices and materials are influenced by the socio-economic standing of a school's catchment, the gender balance in a classroom, the unique characteristics of a school's or district's culture, or the experience and background of the teacher. All these were raised to some extent during the present study but not explored deeply. Study participants seemed particularly aware of the affluence of their school's catchment, and researchers of educational equality might be very interested in this relationship.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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APPENDIX 1

NOTICE REQUESTING PARTICIPANTS

Teachers' Choices in Reading Aloud to Students

Do you read aloud to students in your classroom? If yes, then you could make a valuable contribution to a study on why teachers choose their methods and materials. Time commitments will be minimal, and designed to accommodate your busy schedule.

My research, which will result in a Master of Arts thesis at the University of British Columbia, investigates the decisions teachers make when they choose to read aloud to their students. I am currently seeking full or part-time grade two or three teachers for a one-hour interview (held after school in your classroom or other mutually acceptable location) and a one-hour group discussion. Participants will also be asked to maintain a teacher log to record dates, titles of materials, and brief observations made during classroom read alouds over a one-month period.

As per university requirements, this School Board has granted permission to conduct research with District teachers. Participants are ensured anonymity throughout the study and following its completion. Any concerns about the treatment of participants can be directed to Dr. Richard Spradley, Director of Research at the University of British Columbia, at 604-822-8598.

I would greatly appreciate your contribution to this study. If you are willing to participate please complete the attached form and return it to me as soon as possible. Completed forms can be placed in a sealed envelope and directed to me at [location]. If at any time you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone [xxx-xxx-xxxx] or by e-mail (lgarrett@interchange.ubc.ca). You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Marlene Asselin by telephone [604-822-5733] or by e-mail (marlene.asselin@ubc.ca).

Thank you
Laurie Damer
MEMO OF AGREEMENT SENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Teachers' Choices in Reading Aloud to Students
This is to indicate my willingness to take part in the study "Teachers' Choices in Reading Aloud to Students." I understand this involves participating in an interview and group discussion, and maintaining a teacher log for one month. I understand that data collected by Laurie Damer is anonymous and will be used according to the standards of the University of British Columbia. I also understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time with no further consequences. Please send this response form in a sealed envelope to Laurie Damer, c/o [X] School. Or e-mail me at <lgarrett@interchange.ubc.ca>, or telephone me at home, [xxx-xxx-xxx].

Name: ________________________________
Contact number: ______________________ (work)
                              ______________________ (home)
                              ______________________ (e-mail)

______________________________      ______________________
(signature)                        (date)  

Thank you!

Laurie Damer
APPENDIX 3
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Background information
   a) How long have you been teaching?
   b) How long have you been teaching in the district?
   c) How long have you been teaching in your current school?
   d) How long have you taught grade two or three?
   e) Where did you receive your training?
   f) Are you self-taught in the area of children's literature, or have you taken courses?
   g) Can you tell me about any courses or workshops you've taken in reading instruction?
   h) What sources do you use to keep informed about current children's books? Reading instruction?
   i) Do you belong to any organizations promoting children's literature or reading education?

2. Contextual Information
   a) Could you describe your school culture?
   b) Could you describe your class composition?
   c) How would you describe the parent population in your school? In your class?
   d) Where do you get resources for read alouds?

3. Pre-Reading Procedures and Decisions
   a) Could you describe what you do to prepare for a read aloud session?
   b) Could you describe how you choose materials for the read aloud?
   c) How does your class composition influence your preparations and selection of materials for read alouds?
   d) How do you use the physical environment to prepare for the read aloud?

4. During Reading Procedures and Decisions
   a) Could you describe a typical read aloud session?
   b) Could you show me how you do a read aloud?
   c) How do you hold student attention during the read aloud?
   d) How do you challenge individual students during the read aloud?
   e) How do you assess individual students during the read aloud?

5. Post Read Aloud Procedures and Decisions
   a) How do you extend the children's understanding of the book?
   b) What do you want the children to learn during the read aloud?
   c) How do you decide if it has worked?

6. Rationale
   a) Why do you choose to do read alouds?
   b) Who outside the classroom is interested in your read alouds?
   c) How do read alouds fit into your read aloud program?
APPENDIX 4  
TEACHER READ ALOUD LOG

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APPENDIX 5
CHILDREN'S BOOKS RECORDED ON TEACHER READING LOGS


Perlman, Janet. (1992). *Cinderella penguin or the glass flipper*. Toronto: Kids can Press.


