

A NEW CURRICULUM ENHANCES READING GROWTH

A Summary of a Quasi-Experimental Evaluation Study

For years, basal programs and guided reading have been the dominant approaches to developing reading comprehension in the upper grades. Explore what we learned about a new approach to comprehension instruction, one that combines volume of reading, transfer of skill, and motivation to increase success.

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THE PROBLEM WITH *BUSINESS AS USUAL*

The Problem The National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that growth in reading has stalled with 8th graders across the country scoring no higher than they did a decade ago. Other studies that focus on the efficiency of silent reading comprehension indicate that today's fourth through 12th graders do not read as well as students did 50 years ago (Spichtig, Hiebert, Vortus, Pascoe & Radach, 2016). We would argue that **the dominate curriculum designs for developing strong readers lack the effectiveness that teachers and students need.**



74% OF SCHOOLS
IN THE U. S.
USE BASAL READERS

Basal readers are still dominant in the country used in whole or in part by 74% of schools (Ed Market Research, 2012). We believe that **these programs over focus on skills and strategies and fail to provide the students with the volume of reading necessary for students to develop as effective readers.** The research questions their efficacy (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009; McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic & Zeig, 2006). The programs teach too many skills and strategies, they provide insufficient practice and none follow the release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Texts are not motivating and students do not read what they want to read.



GUIDED READING:
THE 2ND
MOST COMMON
APPROACH

Guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001), the next most common curriculum approach, is an approach in which the teacher makes the curriculum decisions. She prompts students to use strategies and text structure knowledge as needed occasionally employing mini-lessons. Text selection is guided by reading level and recently we have begun to question whether level is the most important factor in selecting texts for instruction (Hoffman, 2017). Walpole and her colleagues recently reported that **students achieve greater growth in reading when the focus on comprehension strategies is more sustained and intense (Walpole, Pasquarella, & Strong, 2017) than in guided reading.**

A NEW APPROACH TO READING INSTRUCTION

A new approach to reading instruction, the **Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach** (Collinge, 2011), draws on two principles:

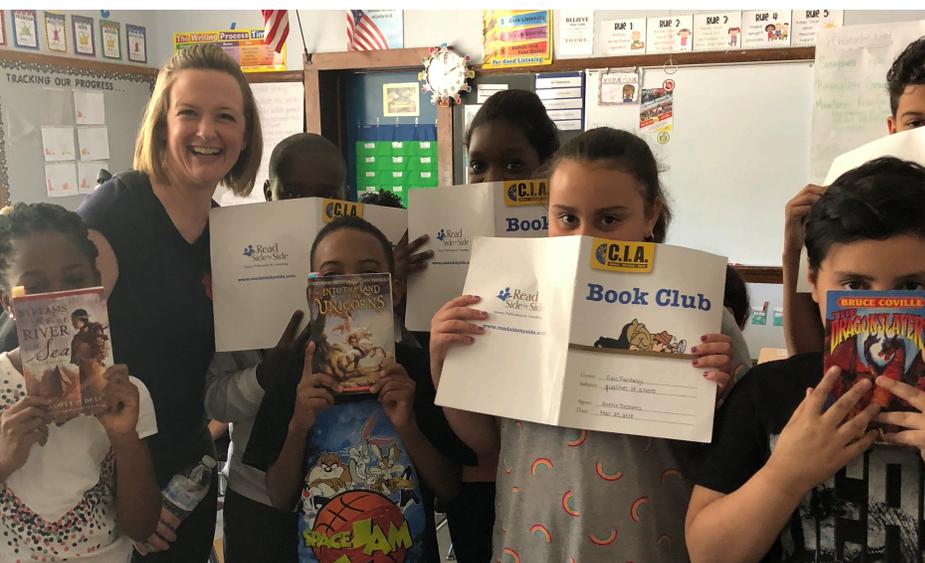
1. Students improve in reading when reading volume increases.

Increasing volume increases exposure to vocabulary and promotes the development of knowledge essential for comprehension.

2. The application and transfer of strategies is important.

When the instructional and reading activities are almost identical transfer is easily accomplished.

The new **Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach** blends fiction and nonfiction trade books. **Students read an average of ten novels or longer nonfiction books per school year.** Additional supporting articles are used to research topics in the curriculum. Teachers model how to read a book and solve comprehension difficulty. **Students transfer these skills and strategies into independent reading** during book clubs. This attention to transfer is based on the principals of Solomon and Perkins (2018). The **books, topics, and themes within the program appeal to students interest.** Students increase their motivation and competence as readers.



This program just makes sense. It gets kids excited about reading in ways that are authentic; they can and will use these skills both in and outside of school.

*~Classroom Teacher,
Lisa Sorrenson*

THE STUDIES

Two studies were conducted, one on the East coast (Massachusetts) and another on the West coast (Washington State). Both districts used the same curriculum and the Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach.

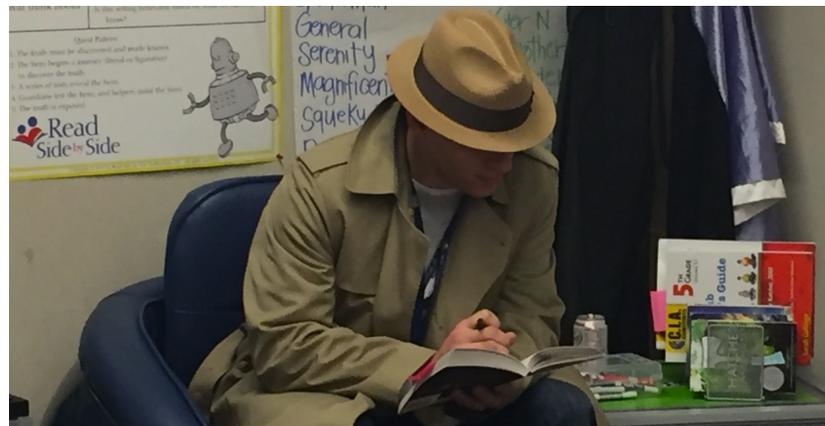
Massachusetts Study 1 Quantitative January - June, 2018			Washington State Study 2 Quantitative / Qualitative September - June, 2017 / 18	
Elementary Schools (Grades 3-6) 18 Classrooms - Read-Aloud/Book Club 17 Classrooms - Guided Reading			Elementary Schools (Grades 3-5) 26 Classrooms - Read-Aloud/Book Club 0 Classrooms - Guided Reading	
Demographic	RA/BC	GR	Demographic	District
% Economically Disadvantaged	71.5	68.5	% Economically Disadvantaged	30.5
% White	24.3	36.7	% White	75.6
% Hispanic	48.2	37.5	% Hispanic	13.8
% African American	14.7	18.2	% African American	0.7
% Other	12.8	7.6	% Other	9.9
Quantitative Assessment Data NWEA Reading Growth Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Reading Motivation Questionnaire (Schiefele & Schaffer, 2016) Teacher Logs of Texts Read			Quantitative Assessment Data NWEA Reading Growth Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Reading Motivation Questionnaire (Schiefele & Schaffer, 2016)	
			Qualitative Assessment Data Focus Teachers (12) 3 @ each grade level Teacher Interviews (3 times / year) Focus Students (36) 12 @ each grade level Student Interviews (3 times / year) Student Work Samples	
Quantitative Data Analysis: Multiple Analysis of Variance and Hierarchical Linear Modeling Qualitative Analysis: Constant Comparative Technique & Inter-rater Reliability (20% of Sample)				

The Quantitative Study. In this study we used a **quasi-experimentation design** and focused on quantitative findings. Teachers were assigned to either the Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach or a guided reading/strategy approach following school district guidelines. The students were from lower economic homes, an equal mix of Hispanics, African Americans and Caucasians. About 75% of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch.



Fourth Graders study Lewis and Clark in the Read/Aloud Book Club Approach. These students read the narrative novel, *Streams to the River, River to the Sea* by Scott O’Dell in Read-Aloud, then read the nonfiction text *Going Along with Lewis and Clark* by Barbara Fifer independently in Book Clubs.

The Qualitative Study. In the second study conducted on the West coast we used a simple pretest post-test design because a comparison treatment was not available. In this second study we developed an extensive set of qualitative data to explore how students’ thinking changed as they participated in the read-aloud/book club approach. The students in the West coast district were largely lower middle-class Caucasians. Qualitative data was collected from classroom observation, students’ written work and student and teacher interviews.



A fifth grade teacher dresses like a detective during the Read-Aloud to encourage students to “read like detectives.” Students follow along in their own copy of the novel, *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau, as the teacher reads aloud.

THE STUDIES, *cont.*

Measures. In the **quantitative study** all students' reading comprehension was **pre, mid and post-tested** using the *NWEA Map Reading Growth Test*. Changes in the level and type of motivation were assessed using the *Reading Motivation Questionnaire* (RMQ, Schiefle & Schaffner, 2016). The RMQ reports **two different types of intrinsic motivation** – involvement and curiosity -- and two different types extrinsic motivation – reading for recognition and for competition. The data were analyzed using **multi-regression procedures** with both MAP RIT scores and motivation as dependent measures. We also conducted a **hierarchal linear analysis** so we could explore **the effect of motivation, reading volume, and instructional method on growth in reading ability.**

In the **qualitative study** we selected one target teacher and three students for deeper study. The teachers and students were **observed, interviewed** and **work samples** collected to determine how the students' thinking was changing as they read, discussed and wrote about the ten books in the curriculum. The work and interviews of 36 students were analyzed using a **constant comparative system of analysis** looking for emerging categories. The three authors and two assistants coded the data until we achieved 80 percent agreement on the categories. After that three people continued coding stopping to compare scores on 20% of the sample.

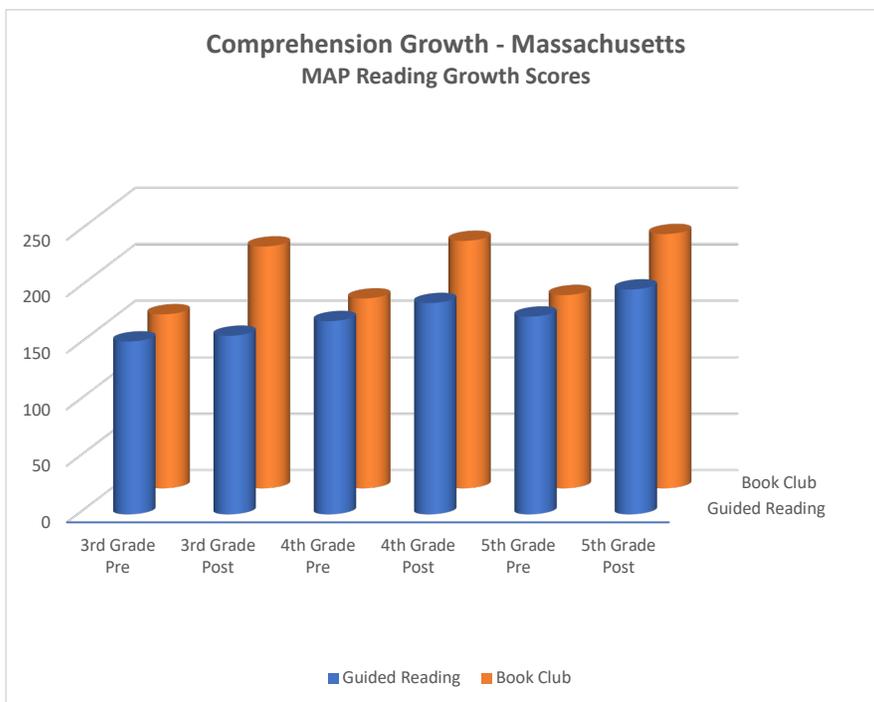
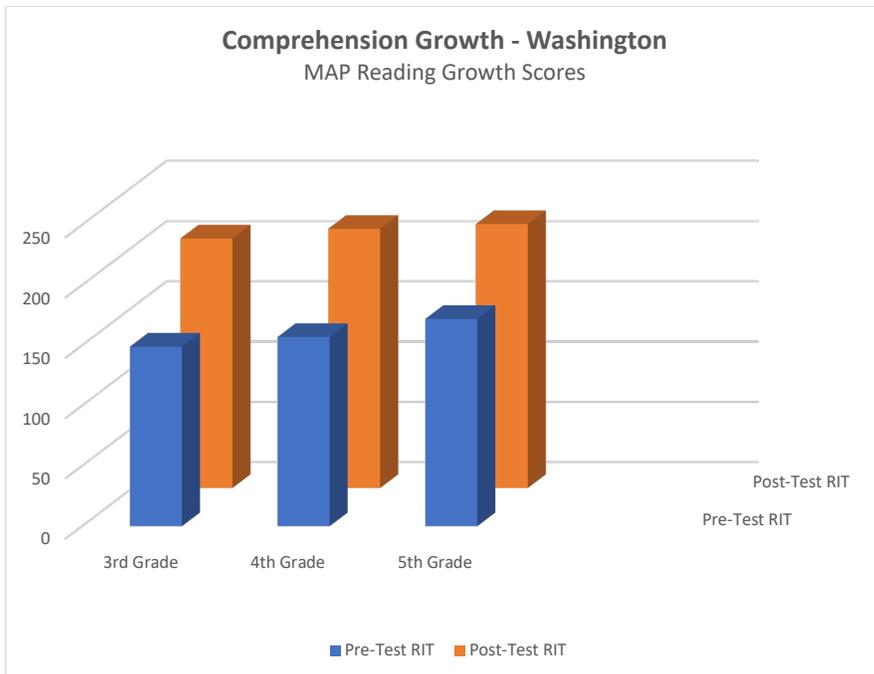
GUIDING QUESTIONS

Does the Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach produce greater gains in comprehension and intrinsic motivation than guided reading?

How well does motivation and volume of reading predict growth in reading ability?

How well does growth in comprehension predict growth in reading ability?

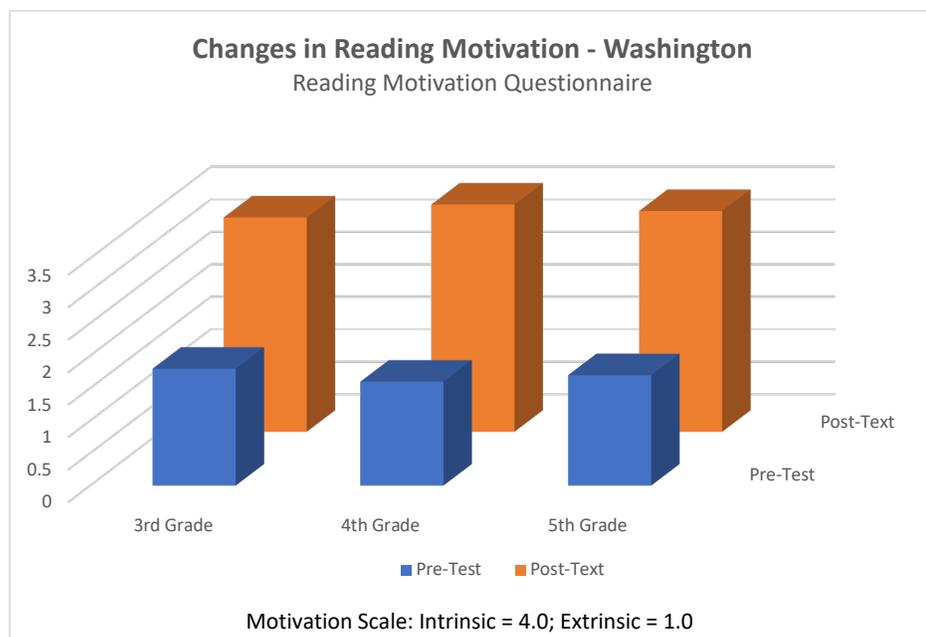
RESULTS



Quantitative Results

Students in the Read-Aloud/Book Club classrooms compared to guided reading/strategy approach demonstrated **significantly more growth in reading achievement**. The data is presented in Table 2. Their scores on the MAP test revealed mean growth of 21 percentile points compared to a growth of 8 percentile points for the guided reading group. The changes were similar in both sites with no statistical differences between the sites. There was an overall effect size of .86 (Cohen's *d*).

RESULTS, *cont.*



The **motivation to read** increased and the majority of students who originally reported reading for extrinsic reasons, recognition or competition, now reported **reading for intrinsic reasons**, primarily involvement, less so for curiosity. The data are presented in Table 3. **The students who entered the study with the highest reading motivation also achieved the greatest growth in reading comprehension.** However, the students who achieved the greatest growth in comprehension, especially in the qualitative site, also achieved the greatest growth in motivation. This suggests that **as ability increases so does the motivation to read.**



The **written work** of these students demonstrated that they could transfer what they learned in the read-aloud lessons to their book-club work or independent work. This was evident in a number of ways by studying two types of written information.

Students write several **summaries** at different points in the novels both in read-aloud novels and book club novels. The reading and rating of these summaries indicates that the **students were able to maintain the quality of their summaries without teacher support.**

Their summaries grew in three ways:

1. Summaries became **longer** and included **more pertinent information.**
2. Summaries reflected a more **causal understanding** of the plot. Instead of simply listing the events the students described the causal circumstances that tied one event to another.
3. Summaries included more inferences as the year progressed.

*When have you ever had your students beg you to continue writing? We were working on a summary of *The Castle in the Attic*, on a Friday afternoon and when I told my students it was time for recess, they begged me to continue when we got back in. WOW! This program is amazing!*

~Classroom Teacher, D'Andrea Olsen



A fourth grade trio of boys meets to discuss the actions of the main character in the read-aloud book *The Castle in the Attic* by Elizabeth Winthrop.

Discussion & Discourse. Our second piece of evidence was students *turn and talk* statements. Periodically in the reading of a novel the students are asked to *turn and talk* with a partner and identify a passage, reflect on its importance and consider what it might mean for the development of a character or her progress toward the goal. This task has them consider what is important in the narrative and how do they interpret its importance. Students *turn and talk*, writing their responses, in both the read-aloud task and in the book-clubs. As the students moved from the guided instruction of the read-aloud to the independent work of the book club they maintained the same level of insight. They were able to **identify important points in the novel and make appropriate inferences** about the character's traits, feeling and motives. As the students moved through the school year their **insight and inferences became more precise.**

SAMPLE TURN AND TALK DISCUSSION

PARTNER 1: When the book said *Poppy was shaking* I was thinking *she was scared*. This helps me understand *that she doesn't want to be there*.

PARTNER 2: I agree with you because *it says she was shaking and had to swallow*. I think *she will run away*.

The above turn and talk stem prompts discussion during a third-grade read-aloud lesson of the book *Poppy* by Avi.

CONCLUSION

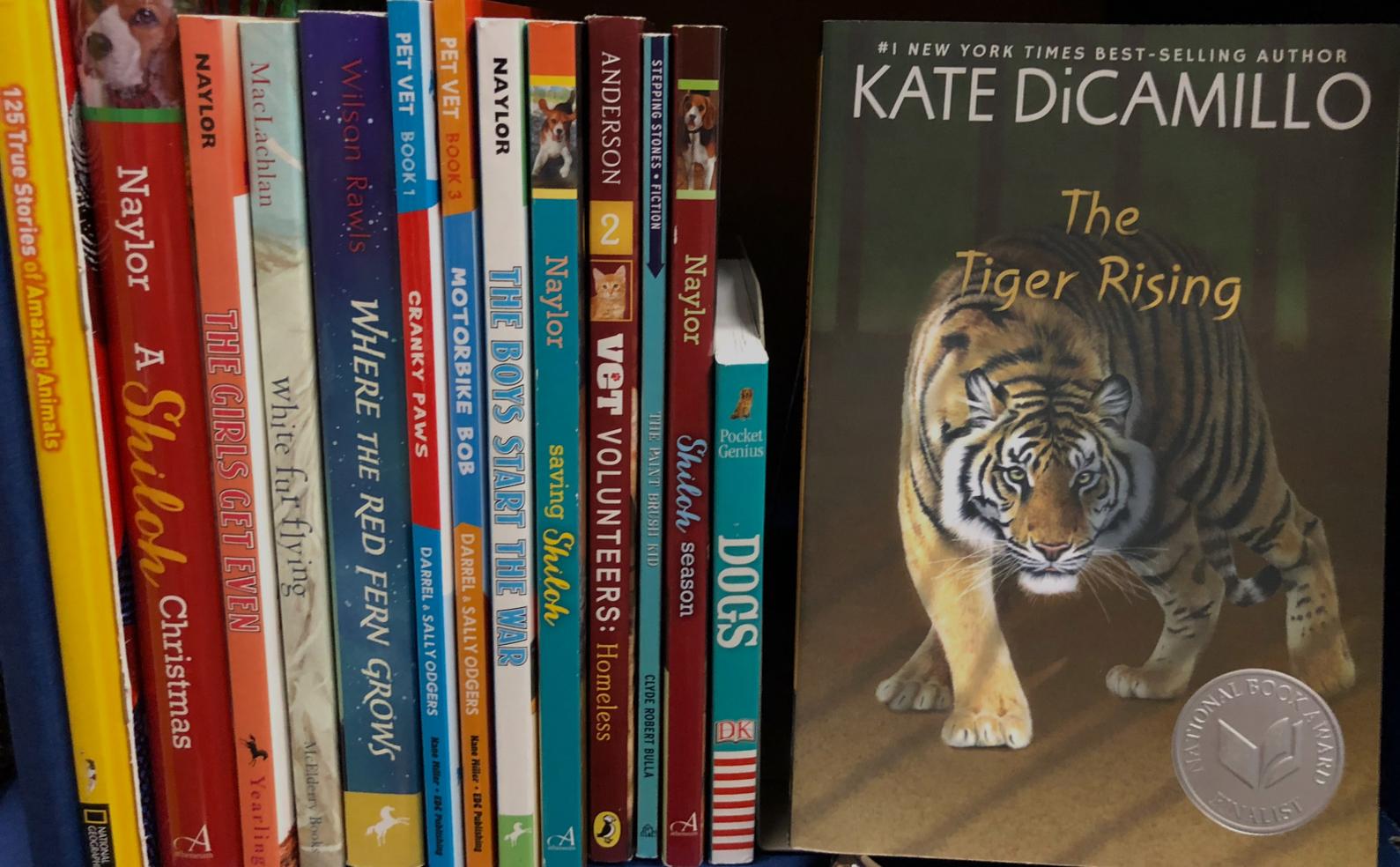
What We Learned.

- 1. Comprehension:** The Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach yielded greater gains in comprehension than did the guided reading approach.
- 2. Motivation:** The Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach increased intrinsic motivation more than the guided reading approach.
- 3. The Comprehension-Motivation Link:** Reading comprehension growth leads to growth in intrinsic motivation in either instructional condition.
- 4. The Motivation-Volume-Comprehension Link:** Motivation and reading volume contribute to growth in reading comprehension and this is more likely in the Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach.

The **Read-Aloud/Book Club Approach** to reading instruction produced significant gains in reading achievement and changes in motivation. We were able to document that **students were able to transfer what they learned** from the read-aloud to the book club. We were able to identify instances of transfer in the students' written summaries, documenting that their knowledge of text structure grew. Through both summaries and the turn and talk arguments we could see the transfer of strategic thinking. Finally, the motivation surveys and the teacher interviews indicated that the **students' attitudes toward reading were changing**. Once exposed to an author, a genre or a topic, **students wanted to read more** of that author or topic.

From the study **we are still exploring** how much of the growth in comprehension was attributed to the volume of reading, the interest of the students, or the quality of the instruction. We are further exploring whether the growth in motivation can be attributed to the growing competence of the students or the intrinsic interest of the book.

For further information about the study please contact
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