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Exploring Teachers' Read-Aloud Book Selections: What Drives the Decision

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EXPLORING TEACHERS' READ-ALoud BOOK SELECTIONS:
WHAT DRIVES THE DECISION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Literacy, Language, and Culture

by
Rachael L. Ross
December 2017

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ABSTRACT

Reading aloud is a common classroom practice that has many cognitive and affective benefits for students. Early childhood teachers conduct read-aloud events in classrooms across the country on a daily basis. A read-aloud event could not occur without the intentional selection of a book. This exploratory, sequential mixed method study explored the current use and frequency of read-alouds in K-2 classrooms. Specifically, the study sought to better understand teachers' decision-making when choosing books to read aloud.

This mixed method study occurred in two sequential phases: a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase. During the first phase, fifteen teachers were asked to document their read-aloud events in the classroom and share their rationale for selecting the books they chose to read. These teachers were then interviewed to learn more about their decision-making. Based on the findings of Phase I, a survey was developed and disseminated nationally. A total of 259 K-2 teachers from across the county responded to the survey during Phase II, which further explored the findings of the first phase.

The findings reveal that 90% of teachers report reading aloud in K-2 classrooms several times a week or more. While many teachers follow specific reading curricula required by their school or district, 63.9% of them choose additional books to read aloud in the classroom. While teachers predominately expressed that the purpose of reading aloud was to develop a love of reading, their actual selection of the book was determined by how the book would help them teach or develop skills.

Teachers shared many different modes for acquiring the books they use in their classrooms with the most common being the use of Scholastic Book Club, with 76.4% noting that they spend their personal money to build their classroom libraries. In selecting books for read-aloud, these teachers often make choices based on their own preferences, or on their assumptions of what their students like to hear. Teachers in this study reported a strong inclination to read fiction texts instead of informational texts, stating that they believed this is what their students wanted to hear.

The act of reading aloud has been explored in great detail in the literature. With much support from the literature for reading aloud to students, this study explored the lesser-studied half of the read-aloud equation – the book selection process. This study attempted to better understand the decisions teachers make prior to reading aloud, decisions that greatly impact students' outcomes.

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CHAPTER ONE

This study sought to explore Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers' decision-making when selecting books to read aloud to students. This exploratory, mixed methods study was designed to describe the decisions teachers make before they conduct a read-aloud in their classroom. The study specifically sought to explore the frequency of read-alouds in K-2 classrooms across the United States in order to emphasize the importance of understanding the decisions that teachers make before conducting each read-aloud experience. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, this study examines teachers' rationales for reading aloud, the type of books teachers read most often, what resources teachers report having access to when building a classroom library, and the reasons teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud.

There is a wealth of research on the act of reading aloud as well as the copious positive outcomes for students; however, there is limited research on the decisions teachers make before the act of reading out loud including the decision of what book will be read aloud. This research employed an exploratory, sequential mixed method design to first study a small sample of 15 K-2 teachers and then used the results to survey 259 other K-2 teachers across the country to better understand how teachers in these grade levels choose books to read aloud.

This chapter begins with an introduction of the current research on reading aloud in the classroom and a look at the research highlighting the many desirable outcomes for students is provided. Following the context and background is the statement of the

problem, the purpose statement, and the research questions guiding the study. Also included in this first chapter is a discussion of the research approach and the researcher's perspective. The chapter closes with a discussion of the rationale and significance of the study and definitions of key terminology used throughout the body of this research.

Reading Aloud

For decades, educational researchers and practitioners have acknowledged that reading aloud to children is important. Reading to children has even been said to be “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for success” in learning to read (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). This research base has continued to build over the last 25 years and has expanded to include the notion that reading stories to children should be accompanied by talking with them about the story (Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2014; Johnson, 1992; McGee & Richgels, 2012; Sipe, 2008; Snow, 1983). While some children are afforded the opportunity to hear books read aloud at home and at school, others may only have these interactions with their classroom teachers, so understanding these classroom read-aloud practices is of great importance.

Equally as important as reading aloud to children is *how* we read aloud to children. Hoffman, Roser, & Battle (1993) emphasize the importance of quality interactive read-aloud experiences that are well structured and intentionally planned in order to achieve the maximum effects in language and literacy. During an interactive read-aloud, the teacher selects a book to read and plans critical stopping points throughout the reading to ask and answer questions and to provide time for the students to make connections to the text. Researchers argue that a read-aloud that is interactive

involves both active teachers and active students (Cazden, 1992; Sipe, 2008) in the process of literary meaning-making. Sipe (2008) also advocates for a type of reading aloud that treats picturebooks “as highly sophisticated aesthetic objects, rather than mere tools for teaching literacy” (p. 6).

As teachers read books aloud, their students grow as engaged and responsive readers. This act of reading out loud to children positively influences reading development in both struggling and successful readers (Galda et. al, 2014). Listening to stories read aloud can teach children about concepts of print and boost comprehension and vocabulary, while also instilling a love of reading (Sipe, 2000). Read-alouds are one of the most effective ways to introduce children to the joys of reading and the skill of listening (Morrow, 2003) while still touching on developmental reading skills. Some of the most explored outcomes of read-alouds are language development and motivation (Gambrell, Palmer, & Codling, 1993; Sulzby & Teale, 2003). Pinnell and Jaggar (2003) conducted a review of the literature on oral language development and found that reading aloud to students resulted in growth for both first and second language speakers- an important finding for our increasingly diversified classrooms. Through read-alouds, children develop understandings of written language patterns and structures (Lapp & Flood, 2003). Galda and colleagues (2014) provide a list of the many academic benefits of read-alouds including teaching new vocabulary, introducing interesting sentence patterns, presenting language variety, developing a sense of story, motivating children to read, providing ideas for student writing, enriching general knowledge, and modeling fluent reading.

As research highlights, reading aloud to students transcends beyond the cognitive benefits to also include affective benefits for students. The books teacher choose, the questions they pose, and the discussion that ensues around the text can lead to increased critical engagement within and beyond the text (Baker, Santoro, Chard, Fien, Park, Otterstedt, 2013; Barrentine, 1996; Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). To provide students with the opportunity to develop these outcomes, teachers often specify a special time during the school day devoted to reading aloud. A structured read-aloud creates a supportive, intimate, and emotionally rich environment in which students share personal experiences that relate to the stories they hear. Because students are listening and engaging with the same story as a group, the read-aloud creates a space for an interpretive community. Through the mediation of the story, teachers and students may talk about “sensitive or complicated issues in an uninhibited and deep way” (Galda et al., 2014, p. 341). As Barrentine (1996) suggests, throughout a read-aloud children should be provided opportunities to respond to the text personally and interpersonally to make sense of it. The talk stimulated during this engagement with text enables students to express themselves as individuals, connect with others, and make sense of the world around them (Nelson, 1981).

The book is the critical element that must be present for the cognitive and affective benefits to develop. The read-aloud experience begins with the selection of a quality text that will be shared between teacher and students. As Sipe (2008) asserts, “to get the substantive talk and thoughtful literary interpretations we desire, teachers have to be serious and knowledgeable about literature, and be able to foster the development of

children’s higher-level literary interpretive skills” (p. 5). The books teachers select to read aloud to their students, therefore, hold great power and potential for learning, pleasure, refuge, and emotional satisfaction (Galda et al., 2014). The effectiveness of the read-aloud is dependent upon the interaction of the text selected and the teacher’s instructional practice in reading it with her students. While much of this research focuses on the instructional practices in reading aloud, less is reported regarding how teachers choose texts to match their learning objectives. This study seeks to examine the lesser-studied half of the read-aloud equation– the book selection process.

Statement of the Problem

Before a read-aloud event occurs, the teacher must first make important decisions in the planning phase. Book selection is a critical element of the read-aloud experience that is worthy of study. Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, and Duffy-Hester (1998) conducted a national survey of 1,207 Prekindergarten through fifth grade teachers’ instructional beliefs and practices. The results of their study indicate that early childhood teachers are committed to using children’s literature in the classroom. In fact, 97% of teachers in grades PreK-2 report regularly reading aloud to students and 67% of teachers in grades 3-5 revealed regular use of trade books, or commercially published texts.

Keehn, Martinez, and Teale (2004) note that while teachers show a commitment to using authentic children’s literature in their classroom, they “face an overwhelming number of choices when deciding what literature to use” (p. 75). This challenge is amplified by the thousands of books published each year. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison reviews many of the

children's books published each year. According to their most recent report, 3,400 books have been published on average each year for the past five years (CCBC, 2016). With these thousands of options available to teachers, it is important to understand how teachers make their decisions about which books to include in their classroom instruction.

Considering that most PreK-2nd grade teachers consistently conduct read-alouds in their classrooms (Baumann, et al., 1998), it is important to recognize that teachers are making critical curricular decisions when choosing books they will read. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published a position statement on *developmentally appropriate practice*. In their statement, NAEYC recognizes that “expert decision-making lies at the heart of effective teaching” (NAEYC, 2009, p. 5) and that children benefit from teachers with the knowledge, skills, and judgment to make good decisions. Book choice is an important decision that teachers make; yet there is little research detailing how teachers are making their decisions.

Much of the literature surrounding the implementation of read-alouds in the classroom focuses on best practices and offers suggestions to teachers on how to conduct these reading sessions in the classroom. Some literature offers suggestions to teachers on the kinds of texts they should choose to read (Galda et al., 2014; Lennox, 2013; Moschovaki & Meadows, 2005; Sipe, 2008), however very little attention has been paid to how teachers are selecting books to read aloud and if they are indeed considering the recommendations made by literacy experts. Choosing the right book contributes towards a successful read-aloud (Lennox, 2013) and understanding the decision-making process

that teachers engage in when selecting texts is a critical element that could be strengthened in current research.

A survey of teachers in grades K-12 revealed that 70% of primary grade teachers read aloud to their students everyday (Lacedonia, 1999). If a teacher reads aloud only one time per day, there would be an average of 180 books that have been chosen by the teacher each school year. This number creeps closer to 400 if a teacher reads aloud more than once per day. These important decisions represent a gap in the literature. The literature review that follows in Chapter Two showcases the existing literature on teacher decision-making in regards to book choices. The most recent of this research is over 10 years old. Considering that teachers make countless decisions in the course of a school day- not only those involving the choice of text for reading aloud- it is important to have up-to-date and informed information about how teachers make decisions, and specifically, how they make these particular book choices. The existing literature does address preservice and inservice teachers' book choices with an eye to the type of text selected. Less is known about what led teachers to make these choices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' decision-making when selecting books to read aloud to students. The specific focus of this study is to explore teachers' reasons for selecting the books they chose for reading aloud. To gain a better understanding of how teachers make decisions in regards to book selection, a mixed methods exploratory design will be employed in order to:

- 1) Explore the current use and frequency of read-alouds in K-2 classrooms across the United States,
- 2) Explore teachers' rationales for reading aloud,
- 3) Determine what type of book teachers read most often,
- 4) Determine what resources teachers report having access to when building a classroom library, and
- 5) Explore the reasons teachers provide for choosing the books they will read aloud in the classroom.

The collection and analysis of this data is especially important to reading educators and teacher education programs because the results of the analysis can inform those who are working in classrooms and making daily decisions about reading curriculum and materials. This study may also open up a needed dialogue about access to books and the diversity of books read in the classroom.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study in an effort to better understand how teachers make decisions when choosing books to read aloud in the classroom. The following questions were explored:

- 1) How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?
- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?

4) What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

To answer the four research questions this study employed a mixed methods approach through the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Through an exploratory, sequential design, qualitative data was first collected through Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and personal interviews with a small sample of teachers to understand the reasons why teachers choose specific books for their literacy instruction. A small sample of teachers was asked to complete a reading log for each book they read aloud in the classroom for a four week time period in the spring of 2017. Interviews took place following the collection of this data to further explore teachers' decision-making about the books they were reading aloud. Following the first phase of the study, quantitative data was collected through survey methodology to make generalizations about the population from a larger sample by employing a probability sampling method (Baumann & Bason, 2011). Using the analysis of the qualitative data, a survey instrument was developed to collect descriptive data about the decisions teachers make when selecting books for reading aloud in the classroom. The survey was disseminated to teachers across the country in order to explore the qualitative findings on a national scale.

The Researcher

The researcher currently works as a Reading Specialist with a national charter school organization. As the Reading Specialist, the researcher works with struggling readers who scored below the 10% percentile in reading. Prior to working as a Reading Specialist, the researcher taught in the elementary classroom conducting countless read-

alouds of her own.

The researcher first became interested in this topic after reflecting on her personal book selections in the classroom. When teaching at a new school with a different student population, the researcher became more aware of the books being read in the classroom, paying particular attention to the diversity presented, or lack there of, within them. The researcher brings to the inquiry process the practical experience of selecting books to read aloud and the passion for sharing literature with children.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study stems from the researcher's desire to better understand the decisions that teachers make when planning their read-alouds in the classroom. Much of the current literature on read-alouds focuses on the event of the read-aloud rather than the planning and decision-making that must occur beforehand. A successful read-aloud begins with the selection of a text. In order to gain a better understanding of the many cognitive and affective benefits to reading aloud, it is important to have knowledge of how teachers choose the books they read aloud that lead to those benefits.

This study is significant to current research in that it investigates a common practice occurring daily in our nation's schools. By understanding how teachers select books, educators and researchers will have more information about this common literacy practice.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following definitions are provided to further clarify and explain the purpose of this study.

Read-aloud describes a classroom reading technique in which teachers choose a book and plan critical stopping points throughout the read in order to ask questions and model reading strategies.

Decisions are mental processes in which one makes a choice after considering several options.

Chapter Summary

Given the limited research on teacher decision-making when choosing books to read aloud in the classroom, the purpose of this study was to explore the decisions teachers make in selecting curricular materials to read out loud to students. In addition, the study sought to examine the frequency with which teachers go through this decision-making process.

This study was designed to seek answers to the following research questions:

- 1) How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?
- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?
- 4) What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

The first chapter included an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the definition of key terms. This study aims to better understand the curricular decisions teachers make in regards to reading aloud in their classroom. Teachers make critical decisions throughout the day that impact student

outcomes and researchers can benefit from better understanding these processes. This research will reevaluate the decade old data on teachers' book selection and provide new insight into challenges teachers face in regards to access to books and curricular autonomy. The chapter that follows focuses on the theoretical perspective of the study and a review of the literature exploring teacher decision-making and book choice is shared.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a wealth of literature supporting the act of reading aloud to students in the classroom. Reading aloud to students is considered an essential foundation of a good language and literacy program (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006) and the cognitive and affective benefits are numerous. While there is much literature to support the use of read-alouds in the classroom, there is limited information about how teachers are selecting the books to use during these read-aloud sessions. As Fountas and Pinnell (2006) point out in their text on comprehending and fluency, if students heard one book read aloud each day from Kindergarten to the eighth grade, students would experience over 1,600 books; 3,200 if the teacher read aloud more than once per day. The thousands of books students listen to are the result of a decision made by the teacher. These decisions are worth exploring as they are made countless times per day in classrooms across the country.

The literature review that follows examines decision-making theory as well as the existing literature on teachers' decision-making in regard to book choices. The research included in this review is decades old, emphasizing the importance and relevance of this study and its ability to showcase current findings applicable to classroom teaching practices in our present society.

Theoretical Foundation

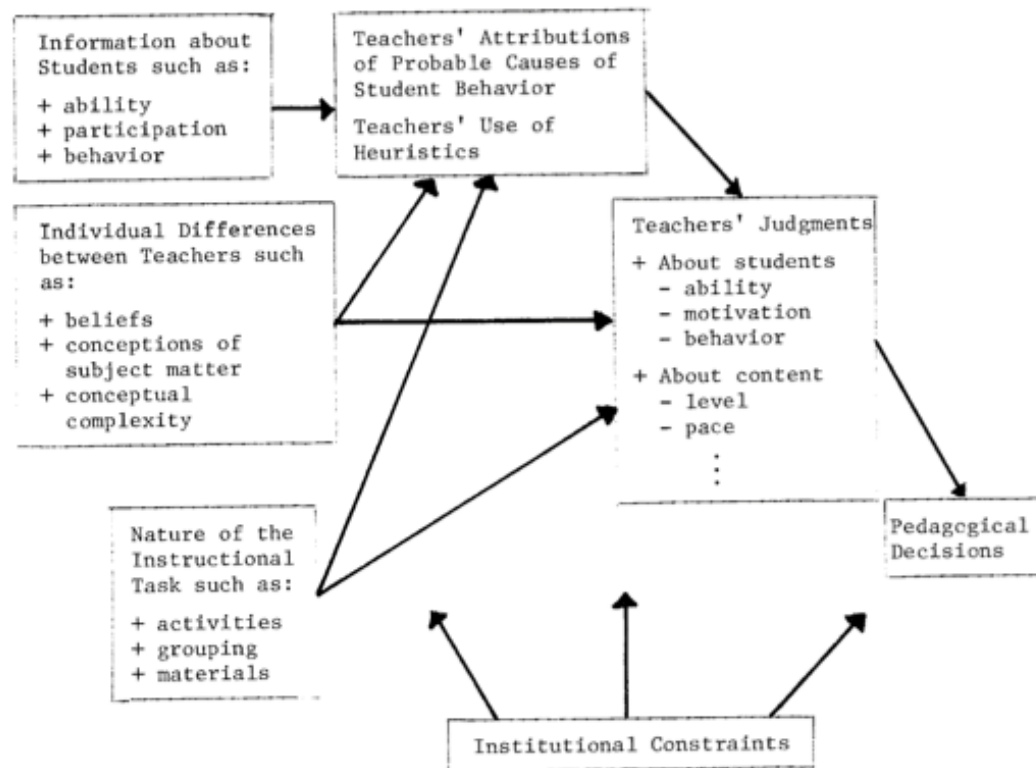
In order to better understand teachers' decision-making in regards to book choice, it is important to consider the background of decision-making theory. What teachers think before and during teaching has become an important focus for educational

researchers (Borg, 2006). According to Shavelson (1973), the most basic teaching skill is decision-making and “any teaching act is the result of a decision, whether conscious or unconscious, that the teacher makes after the complex cognitive processing of available information” (p. 149). A decision is a mental process in which one makes a choice after thinking. While decision-making theory applies to all humans who are making choices, the theoretical foundation of this study focuses specifically on teacher decision-making.

When making a decision, teachers integrate information about students, the subject matter, and the classroom or school environment in order to reach a judgment that directs their next action (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). When planning and carrying out instruction, teachers attend to a variety of information about students. Teachers consider their students’ ability, behavior, work ethic, attention and participation, and social competence (Clark & Elmore, 1979; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Teachers also consider the subject matter including the goals they have set and the methods used to accomplish the goals. In the case of the present study, the teachers are making decisions about what books to read aloud in order to accomplish an established reading goal. When making these decisions, teachers also include their understanding of the classroom and school environment in terms of class, socioeconomic status, racial demographics, and gender. All of these factors help the teacher arrive at a decision.

To showcase the various factors that influence a decision, Shavelson (1973) developed a cognitive model of teachers’ judgments and decisions. This model is pictured in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Shavelson's (1973) Cognitive Model of Teachers' Judgments and Decisions



As the figure shows, many factors influence the decisions teachers make in the classroom. An important piece of the model is recognizing the institutional constraints that often limit teachers' decision-making. These institutional constraints can include the standards and objectives teachers must use in their teaching, the curriculum that is assigned to them, and the schedules they are required to work within.

Amid the institutional constraints, teachers also draw on their experiences, instincts, and knowledge when making classroom choices (Miranda, 2014). The literature also suggests that teachers' beliefs play a role in shaping their decisions. In a study of two teachers' instruction, Aguirre & Speer (2000), attempted to understand the

connection between beliefs and goals. They found that the teachers' systems of beliefs played a large role in decision-making. The authors discovered that certain situations triggered the activation of closely related beliefs, which then contributed to the decisions that were made. Their study provided empirical evidence of the connection between teacher cognition, beliefs, and goals in decision-making. Schoenfeld (2011), however, argues that understanding a teacher's beliefs alone does not provide the whole picture of contributing factors to their decisions. Schoenfeld (2011) argues that a look at *how* teachers acquire these beliefs- their context and history- is of greater importance.

According to Schoenfeld (2011), the central components to decision-making theory are an individual's goals, resources, and orientation. The critical element that shapes the decisions made is the interaction between these three components. Individuals set goals both consciously and subconsciously. Teachers tend to be natural goal setters as they are trained to create each lesson with a goal or objective. Based on these goals, teachers select resources that will aid students in the process of reaching the goal. These may include the material resources available such as books, hands-on activities, or assessments (Schoenfeld, 2011). Less tangible, yet included in these resources, is also the teacher's knowledge base including content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Finally, the broad category of orientations "includes beliefs, values, preferences, and tastes" (Schoenfeld, 2011, p. 460). Schoenfeld (2011) discusses how teachers develop their orientations over time and how these shape their teaching practices. Teachers' orientations are developed slowly and are a product of their experiences and life course. Though much of Schoenfeld's (2011) work examines teachers' instructional moment-to-

moment decision-making, the big ideas of his work can also apply to the curricular decisions teachers make prior to instruction.

Teachers make important decisions at many times during the planning and executing process. Jackson (1968) distinguishes between preactive and interactive phases of teaching. Preactive teaching “refers to the period before teaching, when teachers are planning the lesson and evaluating and selecting teaching methods and materials” (p. 22). The interactive phase of teaching “refers to the time when teachers are interacting with students in the classroom” (p. 22). Of critical interest in the present study is teachers’ decision-making during the preactive phase when they are selecting the materials to use for their lessons.

Because it is impossible to observe directly the internal thought processes of teachers, researchers attempt to analyze teachers’ decision-making indirectly through their reflection on their practice (Gun, 2014). Studies that have previously examined teachers’ decision-making in regards to book choice will be shared in the following section.

Teachers’ Book Selection

The following section will discuss the existing literature on teachers’ selection of texts for their classroom instruction. First, a look at the suggestions on how to select books provided by literacy experts will be showcased followed by an overview of the research on teachers’ actual book choices for classroom use. Teachers hold great power in the decisions they make when choosing books for read-aloud. Careful consideration of the texts teachers select can lead to inclusion of diverse characters, content, and values.

Choosing the right books contributes to successful classroom instruction (Lennox, 2013). After an explanation of recommendations for text selection, a look at the past research on teachers' book choice will be presented.

Recommendations from the Literature. Literacy educators are encouraged to expose students to a variety of well-illustrated, quality literature including poetry and informational texts (Duke, 2000, 2004; Lennox, 2013). Different genres offer different learning experiences for students. Choosing high-quality picture books allows early childhood and elementary students to connect the texts to their lived experiences and the world around them (Galda, et al., 2014) while informational texts provide the opportunity to learn specialized vocabulary and content (Lennox, 2013). The literature also recommends that teachers consider the literary excellence of the books they choose to read aloud. This includes books that use “interesting language in creative ways, develop important ideas, are potentially interesting to children, and contain artistically excellent illustrations” (Galda, et al., 2014. p. 28). This leads teachers to examine award winning books, such as the Caldecott Medal, John Newbery Medal, Pura Belpre Award, or the Coretta Scott King Book Awards to find texts that have been recognized for their outstanding content.

As American classrooms continue to diversify, a need for more multicultural literature has been recognized. As Bishop (1990) describes, books can serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors as readers navigate their way through reading experiences that invite them learn about themselves and others. Books have the power to “transform the human experience and reflect it back to us, and in that reflection we can

see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience” (Bishop, 1990, p. ix). When books serve as mirrors to our students, they see themselves reflected in the characters. As Fountas and Pinnell (2006) discuss, this finding is linked to Rosenblatt’s (1978) idea that the transaction between the reader and the book results in an ongoing construction of meaning. Reading is both a cognitive and emotional experience and children respond and comprehend texts better when they can see themselves in the story or when the main characters share similar characteristics or life situations. In order to do accomplish this, teachers must think critically about the books they select to read aloud.

It has been argued that marginalized populations are often left out of mainstream literature (Bishop, 2003; Harris, 1994; McCreight, 2011) making it difficult for teachers to expose students to authentic texts that relate to their lived experiences. McCreight (2011) recommends that teachers should not only provide students with texts depicting diverse characters, but texts that also provide authentic representation of the culture and language usage of these characters. Educators regularly term books “multicultural” if they include other cultures than their own (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998).

Authenticity becomes a crucial element in finding texts that celebrate diversity. Children’s literature reflects sociocultural perspectives and provides students with a set of values or beliefs (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998), most of these reflecting that of the dominant values of middle-class, mainstream America. Some books that are considered multicultural simply insert people of color into the illustrations while the storylines and language clearly depict them in mainstream culture (Crowell, 1998). This contrasts greatly with the true lived experiences of many students in American classrooms.

Previously considered barriers to learning, local languages and literacies are gaining recognition as positive resources in the classroom (Yokota & Cai, 2003) and should be incorporated in the books students hear read aloud. Children can learn through reading that stories can be about people like them, rather than feeling that storybooks are worlds that they are not a part of (Baghban, 2007). Several literacy experts provide teachers with ideas on how to evaluate texts to be sure they include accurate representations of cultures other than their own. For example, Caldwell-Wood & Mitten (1992) provide teachers with an evaluative guide for selecting books about Native Americans. Similarly, Bishop (1993) discusses the need for cultural authenticity and recommends:

Reading the literature of insiders will help teachers learn to recognize recurring themes, topics, values, attitudes, language features, social mores- those elements that characterize the body of literature the group claims as it's own. It will also acquaint them with the variety and diversity to be found *within* the culture. No one book can represent the literature of an entire cultural group (p.46-47).

Similarly, experts suggest that a potential starting point for teachers is searching for texts that are written by and about people of color. Some argue that books written by people who are insiders within the culture they are writing about can provide more accurate depictions of that cultural group with authentic representation of the language, life, and experiences they portray through the characters. Some believe that anyone

outside of a cultural group cannot write with the knowledge of an insider and should not try (Galda et al., 2014). However others, including Bishop (1994), note that outsiders may have a more difficult time but a good book can contribute positively to understanding people and cultures whether the author is an insider or outsider to the culture. Moreover, teachers should look for books that avoid stereotypes, authentically depict the values of the cultural group, use language that accurately reflects its usage, and validate readers' experiences while also broadening their views and calling for reflection (Galda et al., 2014).

As Wollman-Bonilla (1998) stated "if every book reflects a set of values and beliefs, in choosing books for classroom use, teachers invariably select certain perspectives for presentation" (p. 288). The follow section explores the existing literature on teachers' book selection.

Studies on Book Selection. A group of 54 preservice teachers were selected for a study by Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986) to investigate their selection of children's literature. The authors' intent was to further explore the claim that the selection of children's literature is a model of the exclusion of literature by and about women and ethnic minorities (Taxel, 1981). The "selective tradition", a borrowed term from Williams (1977), is the intentional selection and exclusion of texts that shape the past and preshape the present social and cultural identification. Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986) began with the thought that without any systematic, critical criteria for selecting children's texts, preservice teachers would choose books that revealed a bias toward women and minorities.

To investigate their hypothesis, the 44 female and 10 male preservice teachers were asked to bring a book to their course seminars that only had to meet the following criteria: “Select a book you like” and “Select a book that you think primary school children would like and benefit from”. The goal was to explore the unmediated choices these preservice teachers made. The researchers reviewed the selections and determined characteristics of the texts such as: title, author, publication date, main character attributes (qualities, traits, gender, race), and a brief plot description.

After analyzing the data, the researchers found that males authored 59% (32 of the 54) of the selected texts. The authors acknowledge that this does not necessarily mean that males are incapable of accurately portraying the view of the opposite gender, but it does highlight the exclusion of the female literary voice (Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986). Results showed 74% (40 of the 54 selections) featured males as the primary characters who were described by the teachers using words like *brave*, *strong*, *sneaky*, *selfish*, and *disobedient*. Only 19% (10 of the 54) included female main characters that the teachers described as *happy*, *sensitive*, *cute*, *petite*, and *indecisive* (Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986). Whether a typically good or bad trait, the preservice teachers described the characters using what the researchers dubbed as stereotypical, sexist language.

In all of the selections, only two included representations of racial minorities: one young Black boy and an Arab prince. Interestingly, the stories that held males as the primary character depicted the men solving their own problems and moving along in the story. However, 70% of the stories that held female characters involved male intervention to solve problems (Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986). The authors argue for

more sensitivity to the values that are conveyed in the texts used in classrooms. When children read, they are always learning something. The authors argue that they should not be reinforcing stereotypes and producing negative ideas of themselves or others.

Though the study by Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986) produced interesting findings that did reflect the selective tradition of texts (Williams, 1977) the data only included 54 texts as the teachers were asked to bring one book choice to class. There isn't enough data to make claims that the preservice teachers were intentionally choosing or excluding certain types of texts. To strengthen the study, the authors could have reported more books by allowing their participants to choose a selection of texts rather than relying on one choice to draw conclusions from.

Hart and Rowley (1996) also investigated preservice elementary school teachers' decision-making for selecting specific types of children's literature for classroom use. Their goal was to investigate whether or not participation in a children's literature course that included multicultural perspectives impacted the way teachers made decisions when choosing classroom texts. The authors attempted to understand the reasoning preservice elementary teachers used when selecting books for classroom use. Forty students participated in the study, 39 females and one male. The authors acknowledged that this sample closely resembles the field makeup as teachers continue to come from backgrounds that are characterized as predominately white, middle class, and female (Howey, Matthes, & Zimpher, 1985; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McIntyre, 1997) as 38 participants were white, one was Hispanic-American, and one was Asian-American. The

students were enrolled in a Children's Literature course at their university, which warranted their participation in the study.

Hart and Rowley (1996) created a document they termed a "Page Packet". The Page Packet included one-page excerpts from thirteen different children's books typically used in first through sixth grades. Each page included excerpts from the books as well as sample illustrations. The thirteen selections included six excerpts from children's books that showcased minority cultures in the United States: two pages representing African Americans, one page each representing Asian, Hispanic, and Native Americans, and one page depicting individuals from Appalachian culture. The remaining seven pages showcased Euro-American culture (Hart & Rowley, 1996). The researchers used these excerpts in an attempt to gain insight into the impact the images might have on the teachers' literature selections.

The teachers in the study were asked to review the packets and choose the "five samples that most appeal to you as having value for use in the elementary classroom" (Hart & Rowley, 1996, p. 212) and to provide the rationale behind their choice. The researchers found the preservice teachers' decisions were primarily influenced by three reasons: instructional reasons, or how the texts could be employed in the classroom, personal reasons, how they connected to the texts, and production quality reasons, or their judgments of the literature's text and illustrations.

The authors found that the students who participated in the literature course that incorporated multicultural views were also influenced by affective values (Hart & Rowley, 1996), which led them to select texts that they deemed socially beneficial for the

students. The results also suggest that the teachers who had multicultural education backgrounds tended to think in “other centered” ways.

The results show changes in thinking due to the participation in a course that taught the value of multicultural literature. However, only providing the preservice teachers with one page of a text might not have given them the full opportunity to evaluate the text to make a decision about its “value for use in the elementary classroom” (Hart & Rowley, 1996). To strengthen the data, teachers could have been given the opportunity to grapple with the complete texts before they were asked to make a decision about its value. The results of this study could have been different if teachers were exposed to the complete text rather than just a one-page excerpt.

For a dissertational study, Bandré (2005) explored the selection and use of children’s literature in K-6 classrooms in rural Ohio. The study attempted to understand what books were being selected for read-aloud and literature discussion groups, why those books were chosen, how children’s literature was being integrated into the curriculum, and how the selected books were obtained.

Bandré (2005) conducted a survey asking teachers about the books they were currently reading aloud and followed up with interviews of primary and intermediate grade level teachers. Teachers were then provided with eight options and were asked to select from them the top three factors that influence their selection. These criteria included: (1) favorite book of past students, (2) personal favorite, (3) award-winning, (4) topic/theme matches or supports curricular standards, (5) author/illustrator recognized for

quality, (6) recommended in a professional publication, (7) colleague recommendation, or (8) presents multicultural perspectives.

Bandré (2005) found that the factors most influencing selection included personal favorites, favorites of past students, and books that supported curricular standards. Of the 452 books reported back that teachers were currently using in their classroom, only 6% were multicultural titles and only 3% were written by or about African Americans.

Jipson and Paley (1991) followed in the same line of thinking as Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986) when they attempted to understand whether or not the selective tradition still existed in elementary classrooms. The authors mention the work of Luke et al. (1986) and how they attempt to further their exploration with practicing teachers because they believed the preservice teachers in the former study “unfortunately lack actual classroom experience and practice- characteristics which may well inform and shape literary judgment, selection, and taste” (Jipson & Paley, 1991, p.149). Their research questions attempted to understand if practicing teachers would exhibit the same attitudes toward book selection as the preservice teachers.

To investigate these questions, 55 female teachers from three states agreed to participate in the study. The teachers were asked to report three texts that they used in the last year as well as their reasons for using the text. The researchers asked that teachers report the title, author, and main characters of their three book choices. Jipson and Paley (1991) state their goal was to gather a small sample of books from each teacher that would reflect their personal preferences.

The teachers offered 155 books, which included 104 different authors. Interestingly, the authors report that 59% (91 of the 155) of the selected books were authored by males- a percentage identical to the findings of Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986). Additionally, 95% of the authors were of Euro-American heritage. Of the 155 books, 123 of them included human main characters. The remaining texts were either informational, had animal characters with undetermined sex, or were from poetry collections. After an examination of the texts with human characters, it was found that 65% included male main characters. In a closer inspection of cultural diversity, only 6% of the texts included minority main characters of which four were Black, three include Native Americans, and one featured a Japanese-American main character. This finding is the same as Bandré's (2005) finding that came almost fifteen years later.

The teachers who participated in this study also provided their own rationale for why they chose each book. The authors found three common themes among their reasoning as teachers reported choosing books because (1) the text was appropriate within a larger instructional context, (2) there was a personal preference for the book because of the story, author, illustrator, or awards, and (3) the recognition of gender, race, and ethnicity were cited as important elements in the books, though only 9% of the responses revealed this finding.

The authors conclude that their findings support those of a selective tradition in elementary teachers' choice of children's literature for use in the classroom. With very similar findings to those of Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986) the conclusion is extended from preservice teachers to inservice teachers. The authors furthered the work by Luke,

Cooke, and Luke (1986) by investigating inservice teachers and by including more texts in their study. Jipson and Paley (1991) looked at nearly three times as many texts as the former study. An issue in this study could have been availability of texts. Teachers were asked to report three books they had used within the last year. Questions arise such as- Did these teachers have access to large quantities of books? Did these teachers work in schools with healthy libraries? The authors did not mention the access their participants had to high quality texts. Also, by only asking teachers to choose three books, there is a chance that teachers selected from their favorites. This could have resulted in skewed results that relied heavily on personal preference.

While teaching a university course on language arts methods, Smith (2002) sought to see her white, female education students examine their beliefs about literature and teaching. To do so, she organized group literature discussions around three novels with complex female and male characterizations. These books were strategically selected by Smith (2002) because of their cultural diversity as a means to “challenge previous beliefs and effect some change in students’ ideas about their practice and the histories and cultures of the children they would teach” (Smith, 2002, p. 58). Students read one of the novels they selected in conjunction with other assigned readings to support critical reading practices (Smith, 2002). Students were asked to keep a journal of their thoughts and ideas as they read the novels and other class readings. After critically reading the texts, the preservice teachers were asked to determine if they would bring any of these books into their classroom as teachers. Many of the teachers’ journals revealed that they enjoyed the books they read, learned from them, and explored other cultures but did not

believe they would use them in the classroom. Some teachers shared that they were fearful of bringing one of the books into the classroom because of the derogatory language used. A teacher who said they would consider using this particular text wrote,

This made us ask the question – ‘Would we bring this book into the classroom because this word is used?’ Two girls in the group said no. I do not agree with this. I will be uncomfortable if I have to read this to a class. But this book is very true to life. There is no reason why children should not know how life was only sixty years ago (Smith, 2002, p. 64).

The preservice teachers participating in this study were split on their rationales for including or excluding some of the books read. Smith (2002) does not explicitly share the results of her data; rather she shares specific qualitative journal entries teachers provided. It would have been very interesting to further explore these teachers’ ideas of the books they would choose to use in the classroom and the books they would choose to exclude.

The most current available research on teachers’ text selection is over 10 years old. The field is in need of more recent data on how teachers are selecting books for their classroom. In the 10-year gap, teachers have felt pressures from the Common Core State Standards, high stakes testing, and increasing classroom diversity. The present research could potentially shed light on the new challenges that teachers face when choosing materials for their classrooms. By conducting a mixed method exploratory design, this

study seeks to first understand what type of books teachers are currently using in their classrooms and how they are making their choices. The present research differs from the research presented in this chapter in that it will track multiple teachers' current classroom read-alouds. While this research will include a summary of the texts selected by teachers much like those of Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986), Jipson and Paley (1991), and Bandré (2005) the present research will take their work a bit further by not only investigate the titles teachers are selecting but also their thought process in making these choices.

The two studies examined in this review that dealt with preservice teachers did not provide enough data to support their claims. Each study had a relatively low number of participants (54 and 39). As preservice teachers, the participants are grappling with the many complexities of teaching. Making curricular choices is a skill that must be taught and developed. Making large claims about preservice teachers' decision making in regards to text may not provide the most accurate data that represents the larger population of teachers.

The present research attempts to combat these problematic issues by examining the selections made by teachers who are currently working in the field. This study also recruited a larger sample so that the data can better represent the larger population of early elementary teachers. Former studies gave participants parameters for their selection by asking them to choose texts they like, texts they thought children would like and benefit from, and texts that they believed had value in the classroom. The present study does not give teachers parameters by which to make their choices. Instead, teachers simply reported the books that they chose without being given a reason to make that

choice. This is an attempt to understand the pure choices teachers make for classroom books.

Chapter Summary

Reading aloud to students is a very common practice in classrooms across the country. Teachers are actively selecting books to read aloud to students daily. These decisions about what books to read have great impact on students' academic and sociocultural knowledge. The review of the literature revealed a need for further exploration of teachers' decision-making in regards to book choices for reading aloud in the classroom. The current literature surrounding this topic is decades old and in need of an updated review. Existing literature on teachers' book choice reveals a selective tradition (Williams, 1977) in the diversity presented in the texts.

The following chapter presents the research methodology of this study. Sections included in the next chapter will discuss the research design and its two phases, the participants, methods of data collection, and analysis and synthesis of the data.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Through mixed methods, the purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the choices teachers make when selecting books for reading aloud in their K-2 classrooms. Specifically the study sought to 1) explore the current use and frequency of read-alouds in K-2 classrooms across the United States, 2) explore teachers' rationales for reading aloud, 3) determine what type of books teachers read most often, 4) determine what resources teachers have access to when building a classroom library, and 5) explore the reasons teachers provide for choosing books they will read aloud. In seeking to better understand teachers' decision-making in regards to book choices the study addressed four Research Questions:

- 1) How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?
- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?
- 4) What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

Approach to Answering the Questions

The population of interest in this study was teachers in grades K-2 across the United States. The study employed a mixed method exploratory design occurring in two sequential phases, a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase, which will be detailed in this chapter. Through the two phases of the study, participants represented 33 of the 50

United States. Teachers in southwestern Tennessee constituted the initial sample for the first phase of the study. For the second phase of study, teachers from across the country were invited to participate through an online survey.

Both phases of the study were conducted in the spring of the school year 2016-2017. The first phase of the study was qualitative in nature and involved teachers recording the titles of the books they read aloud to their students each day for a four-week period as well as participating in semi-structured one-on-one interviews. An initial Interest Survey sent to 52 teachers resulted in 15 who volunteered to participate in the first phase of the study. These 15 teachers were asked to fill out a Read-Aloud Recording Sheet about each book they read aloud to their students over the course of four weeks. The sheet asked for the book's title, author, illustrator, and a brief description of why they chose this book. After the data collection period, one-on-one interviews were held with each participant. These on-site interviews served two purposes. First, it was to ask clarifying questions that arose from the analysis of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets. Secondly, it allowed for the opportunity to member check with participants to determine if the analyses served as an accurate interpretation of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). These interviews, combined with the data collected from the recording sheets, provided insight into the reasons teachers choose books for reading aloud.

The second phase of the study involved a nationwide survey that was derived from the findings of the first phase. In the survey, K-2 teachers across the country were asked to share their decision-making processes about choosing books to read aloud to their students. The survey provided quantitative data that further explored the initial

qualitative data. This mixed methods exploratory design provided a wealth of data to generalize to the larger population of K-2 teachers across the United States.

The first part of this chapter describes mixed methods and the rationale for an exploratory design. The section then shifts to the study's population of interest and sampling rationale. This is followed by an outline of the first phase of the study, the qualitative phase, which includes discussion of participants, the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, and the data analysis procedures used. Then a description of the second phase of the study, the quantitative phase, is provided and addresses survey development, its dissemination nationwide, and the data analysis procedures employed in this phase. This chapter concludes with possible limitations of the study and the steps taken to ensure legitimation and trustworthiness.

Research Design- Mixed Method Exploratory, Sequential Design

The mixed methods approach is “an intuitive way of doing research that is constantly being displayed in our everyday lives” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, pg. 1). There are many different definitions of mixed methods presented across the literature (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). After culling 19 definitions of mixed methods by 21 highly published mixed methods researchers, Johnson et al. (2007) created a composite definition that will be used to define mixed methods for the presented research:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use

of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (p. 123).

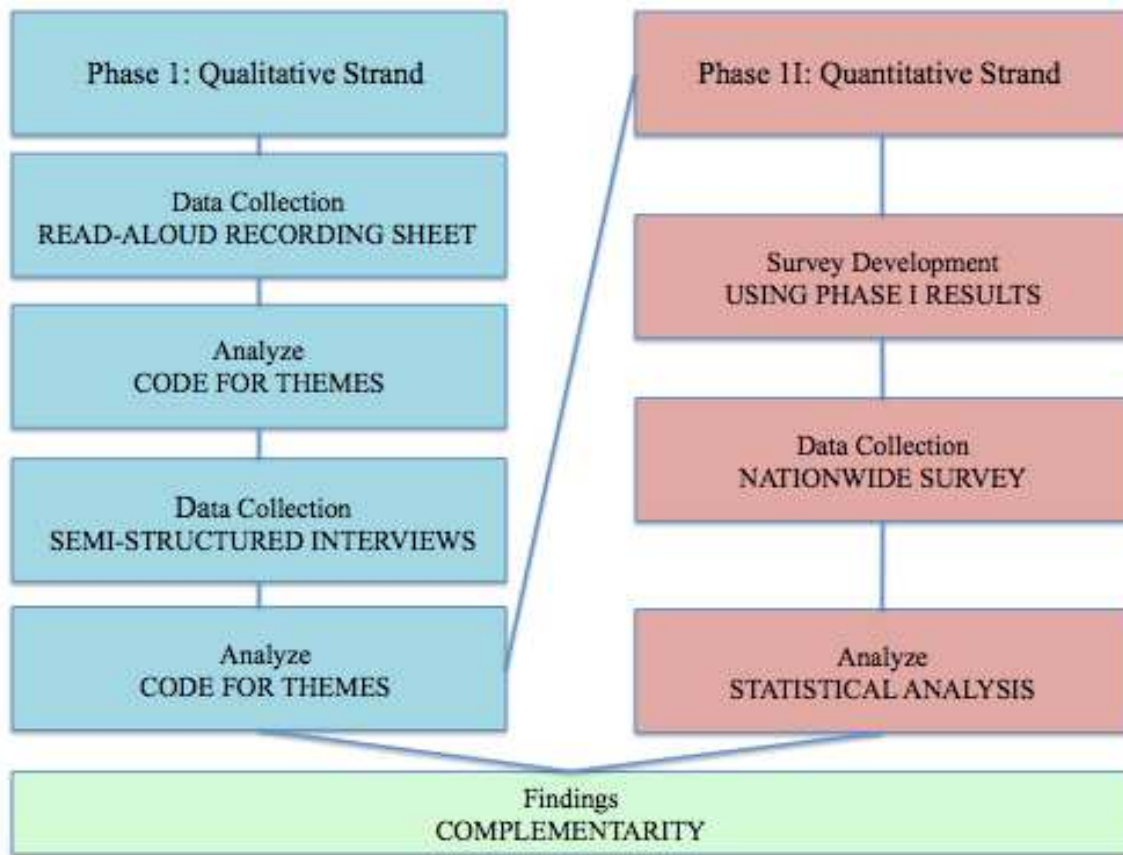
The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?
- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?
- 4) What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

In order to address these research questions, the presented study is an *exploratory, sequential mixed method design* (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). As Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) describe the kind of research problems that fit mixed methods, they explain that it is often “best to explore qualitatively to learn what questions, variables, theories, and so forth need to be studied and then follow up with a quantitative study to generalize and test what is learned from the exploration” (p. 9). This is a very clear description of the purpose of this exploratory study. This study is mixed method in that it includes both a qualitative strand and a quantitative strand. These strands are interactive because a “direct interaction exists between the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study” and through this interaction the two methods are mixed before the final interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 65). This sequential design follows what Morse (1991) outlined as sequential triangulation because the results of one approach are necessary for

planning the second method. The quantitative strand served to generalize the qualitative findings to the larger population. The exploratory design was selected to identify the unknown variables (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and generalize the qualitative results to the larger group (Morse, 1991). The qualitative results assisted the quantitative component by providing the data needed to develop an instrument to survey a larger sample of the population of interest. This analysis of the quantitative data facilitated the generalizability of the qualitative data. In accordance with Greene, Caracelli, and Graham's (1989) purposes or rationales for mixed methodological studies, this study attempted to attain complementarity by seeking elaboration, enhancement, and clarification of the results of one method with results from the other (Johnson et al., 2007). Figure 3.1 depicts the exploratory, sequential mixed method design of this study.

Figure 3.1. Exploratory, Sequential Mixed Method Design



Participants and Demographic Data

The population of interest for this study was early childhood educators in grades Kindergarten, first, and second in the United States. While early childhood education encompasses children from birth to age eight, teachers in grades K-2 were selected, as opposed to teachers of earlier ages, because these teachers work in elementary schools where they are trained to provide similar services. Younger children, ages birth to four, may attend local childcare or receive homeschooling that might conduct read-alouds differently. Additionally, Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers typically offer read-alouds on a daily basis (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998).

Due to location restrictions, the sample for the first phase of the study was K-2 teachers in southwestern Tennessee. The following two-stage sampling procedure was used to obtain a representative sample of teachers for the qualitative phase of the research after obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix A).

Selection of Schools for Phase I. The names and emails of nine principals in two school districts were retrieved from district websites and through recommendation from a community member who served a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper was a helpful resource for respecting the research site and gaining the trust of others (Creswell, 2012). Information about the study was shared with each principal by email in an attempt to secure school sites willing to participate in the study (Appendix B). The email asked for the principals' approval to contact teachers within their school building to invite them to participate in the four-week research study. The email also included the opportunity to meet in person to discuss the study in further detail. Of the nine principals contacted, three responded positively. First, meetings were set up with each principal to discuss the timeline of the study and requirements for teachers. Each of the three principals provided permission to contact their teachers after the initial meeting.

Selection of Teachers for Phase I. After principals provided their written permission to contact teachers, an email (Appendix C), which included an Interest Survey (Appendix D), was sent to the 52 K-2 teachers within the three schools. The Interest Survey remained open for one week with two reminder emails sent on day three and day six. Thirty teachers returned the interest survey at a completion rate of 58%. Of the 30 respondents, 15 agreed to participate in the first phase of the study. Onwuegbuzie and

Collins (2007) share the minimum sample size for some of the most common qualitative and quantitative research designs. Sharing the work of Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006), the authors suggest that 12 is the minimum number of participants for interviews. This study meets this minimum by recruiting 15 teachers to participate.

Individual meetings were set up with each of the 15 participants to discuss the protocol for the Phase I data collection period through the use of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet (Appendix E). At this time, teachers were provided with a copy of the Participant Information document required by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix F). During this initial face-to-face meeting, teachers were given the instructions for filling out the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet and asked to do so for a four-week period. Teachers were asked to submit their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets each Friday. Teachers provided their reminder preference, either emails or texts, and were reminded throughout the week to make timely entries. After the four weeks, all Read-Aloud Recording Sheets were collected. The 15 teachers were then contacted for personal interviews to discuss their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets.

Selection of Teachers for Phase II. After the data from Phase I were analyzed, a survey was created to be disseminated nationwide. A cluster sampling technique was used as one school district from each state was randomly selected through a Google search. An invitation email (Appendix G) was sent to a total of 817 principals from each of the school districts across the fifty United States. The elementary school principals in these districts were contacted and invited to share the survey with their K-2 teachers. The school districts in Florida (37 principals), Utah (26 principals), and West Virginia (15

principals) responded back denying the request to forward due to district protocols. It is not possible to determine how many of the other 739 principals chose to forward the survey on to their teachers. However because of the agreement of some principals from 33 different states, 259 K-2 teachers from across the country were invited to participate in the study and opted in to the survey. A rule of thumb in survey research is that there should be 8-10 participants for each survey item. In the case of the present research 240 participants would be needed to meet this accepted number. With 259 survey respondents, this study has met that standard.

Phase I: Qualitative Data Collection

As the first phase of this study began with a qualitative exploration, it is situated within constructivist principles that value multiple perspectives from teachers. The data gleaned from the first phase of this study showcase participants' views that are shaped by social interaction and their personal histories (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this case, the goal was to discover the considerations teachers make as they choose books to read aloud to their students. In order to collect data about the teachers and their selections of books without intentions of influencing them or being influenced by them (Sipe & Constable, 1996), teachers were asked to fill out the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet describing the books they read aloud to students in the classroom each day for the course of four weeks.

To begin, nine principals in southwestern Tennessee were contacted via email to participate in the study. The study was described briefly as well as the role teachers would play. Three principals responded positively and individual meetings were arranged

with each. One principal responded that her school used scripted curricula; therefore teachers do not make their own book selections in addition to the curriculum set before them. It was then determined that this school would not fit with the needs of the study to understand teachers' book choices. The other five principals did not respond. Table 3.1 illustrates the response rate of principals.

Table 3.1

Principal Responses

Population	Emails Sent	Responses Received	Responses Excluded	Schools Participating	Percentage Participating
Principals	9	4	1	3	33%

The principals who agreed to meet and discuss the study further ultimately agreed to allow their teachers to participate. The three schools are situated within the same school district in southwestern Tennessee. The demographics of the schools are relatively similar, but do reflect the range of schools within the district. A snapshot of the school demographic information is provided in Table 3.2. The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores, scores that the state of Tennessee uses to evaluate teachers and schools, were included to show where each school ranked according to academic student growth (a score of 1 being the least growth and a 5 being the most growth).

Table 3.2

Demographics of Participating Schools

School	Grades Served	Total # of students	% of students economically disadvantaged	% of students with disabilities	Student Ethnicity	Overall TVAAS scores (1-5)
School 1	Prek3 – 5 th	697	39.8	28.4	70% White 27.5% Black or African American 2.2% Hispanic	1
School 2	Prek- 5 th	962	55.8	20.5	55.9% White 42.6% Black or African American	1
School 3	Prek4 – 5 th	724	41.1	22.9	81.5% White 14.6% Black or African American 2.6% Hispanic	5

Interest Survey

The teachers in grades K-2 in each school were contacted via email asking them to fill out an online 10-question Interest Survey. A total of 52 teachers were sent the Interest Survey. Of the 52 teachers, 30 completed the online Interest Survey. This is a response rate of 58%. Of the total number, 16 were sent to Kindergarten teachers of which 12 responded at a rate of 41.3%. Seventeen first grade teachers received the survey

and 31%, or nine teachers, completed it. The survey was sent to 19 second grade teachers to which eight teachers responded at a rate of 28%. One respondent chose not to answer this question so his/her grade level is unable to be determined. Table 3.3 presents this data.

Table 3.3

Interest Survey Response Rates

Population	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Received
Kindergarten Teachers	16	12	41%
First Grade Teachers	17	9	31%
Second Grade Teachers	19	8	27%
Overall	52	29*	58%

*Note: One survey respondent left this answer blank.

It is important to note an outlying detail that could have influenced the return of the Interest Survey. At the beginning of the new calendar year 2017, this particular school district experienced a cyber-fraud attack. An outside hacker posing as the district superintendent sent an email to a human resource employee requesting the W-2's of all employees of the district. This hacker was given access to all employees' valuable information including: names, birthdates, addresses, phone numbers, and even social security numbers. The timing of this email survey was not ideal in that employees in this district were just learning about the cyber attack. They were likely leery to open emails from unknown accounts and likely unwilling to follow links in emails to unknown sites. It is possible that this situation impacted the response rate of the Interest Survey as it was coming from an email address unfamiliar to them. Had employees not been under the

stress of this situation, they may have been more likely to fill out the survey from an unknown email address.

The Interest Survey was designed to collect participant demographic information, inform potential participants of the study, and request their agreement to participate. An email was sent to teachers briefly describing the study and included a link to a Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com) survey. The survey included ten questions and began with demographic information. Of the 30 teachers who completed the Interest Survey, 15 teachers indicated an interest to participate in the study. The 15 teachers agreeing to participate each identified themselves as white females. Their total years of classroom experience range from 2 years to 39 years. Five of the 15 teachers have advanced degrees in education with several holding additional endorsements certificates such as a reading specialist, family & consumer sciences, Prekindergarten, and highly qualified. Table 3.4 shows the break down of teachers by grade level.

Table 3.4

Teacher Demographic Information by Grade

Grade	Total Number of Teachers	Number with Advanced Degrees	Number Additional Endorsements	Range in Years of Experience	Average Years of Experience
Kindergarten	5	1	1 – PreK	11-39	26
First	7	2	3 – Reading Specialist, Family & Consumer Sciences, Highly Qualified	2-31	7.75
Second	3	2	0	7-20	11.7
Total #	15	5	4	2-39	15.2

Question eight of the Interest Survey asked teachers how often they read aloud to their students. The answer choices provided were *less than once a week*, *once a week*, *several times a week*, *every day*, and *several times a day*. The responses participants provided are showcased in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Frequency of Reading Aloud in the Classroom

Grade	Less Than Once a Week	Once a Week	Several Times a Week	Every Day	Several Times a Day
Kindergarten	0	0	0	3	2
First	0	0	2	2	3
Second	0	0	1	2	0
Total #	0	0	3	7	5

After the data were collected from the Interest Survey, individual meetings were set up with teachers who agreed to participate to explain the protocol and data collection procedure for Phase I of the study.

Read-Aloud Recording Sheets

During early February, initial meetings were held with the 15 participants. Each teacher was provided with instructions for filling out the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet as well as the participant information sheet approved by IRB. Teachers were instructed to fill out the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet for each book they read out loud to their students. The Read-Aloud Recording Sheet asked for five details about the book: 1) date the book was read; 2) the title of the book; 3) name of the author; 4) name of the illustrator; and 5) finish the sentence “I chose this book because...”. A sample of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet can be seen in Figure 3.2. This instrument was developed by the researcher in order to explore the reasons why teachers choose specific books to read aloud in their classroom. The final column, “I chose this book because...”, provided insight into how teachers made decisions about books they choose to read. This recording sheet sought to explore Research Question 2: the reasons teachers give for choosing books they read aloud in the classroom as a means of determining items for the national survey conducted in Phase II.

Figure 3.2. The Read-Aloud Recording Sheet

	NAME:	GRADE:	SCHOOL:	
Date	Title	Author's Name	Illustrator's name	I chose this book because...

A panel of literacy experts and graduate students reviewed the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet. They were asked to provide written feedback about the instrument's format, organization, and clarity of directions. After making adjustments based on their suggestions, a final draft was presented to the 15 participating teachers. Teachers were instructed to begin filling out the chart on the Monday following the meetings (Monday, February 13, 2017) and were asked to do so for a 4-week period. Teachers were asked to submit their Read-Aloud Recording Sheet each Friday via email. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays teachers received reminder emails or text messages based on their preference.

At the end of the four weeks, all but two of the participating teachers submitted their completed Read-Aloud Recording Sheets. A few days after the end of the data collection period, all 15 Read-Aloud Recording Sheets were collected.

Individual Interviews

After collecting and analyzing the data from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets, interviews were scheduled with each teacher. The interviews took place two weeks after the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets were collected due to the schools' Spring Break that occurred the week after the final Read-Aloud Recording Sheet was submitted. These interviews served as an expansion opportunity for the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets. The interviews provided a space for clarification of information presented on the recording sheets and allowed teachers time to elaborate upon their statements.

An interview protocol was developed and shared with a team of researchers. The researchers were asked to review the protocol and share their feedback about the clarity of the questions. The review panel was asked to keep in mind that the interviews served as a means to further explore the data collected from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and aimed to explore Research Questions Two, Three, and Four:

- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?
- 4) What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

The panel provided their written feedback and a final draft was established for the interview protocol (Appendix H).

All fifteen interviews took place over the course of an 8-day period. Teachers signed up for convenient times before school, after school, or during their planning

periods. The interviews explored themes that arose from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets as well as gathered more information about why reading aloud is a part of their day. The interviews were tailored differently for each teacher based on the information provided on her Read-Aloud Recording Sheet. Each interview began with requesting permission to tape record the interview. After teachers agreed, the recorder was turned on and teachers were given back their Read-Aloud Recording Sheet. This served two purposes: 1) it refamiliarized teachers with the information they filled in two weeks prior; and 2) teachers were asked to circle the book titles that they chose completely on their own and were not considered to be a part of a curriculum used by their school or grade level team. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Phase I: Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis began during the data collection process and was ongoing throughout the data collection through constant comparison analysis. As teachers submitted their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets each week, the researcher was able to identify emerging themes and compare them from week to week (Merriam, 1998). A spreadsheet was updated weekly with each new book included on the teachers' Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and the reasons teachers shared for choosing those books. Annotations were made in the margins of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets noting themes that presented themselves from week to week. These annotations were then used as the inductive codes for the first cycle of coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Descriptive coding was used to give a label to the data and to summarize it in a word or

short phrase (Miles et al., 2014). The data included on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets provided information to address Research Questions One and Four.

Each of the descriptive codes was entered into a spreadsheet to provide an “at-a-glance” format for the necessary analytical acts (Miles et al., 2014, p. 91). The descriptive codes from the first cycle of coding were then used to generate questions that would be used during the personal interviews. Each participant was asked the same seven interview questions designed to explore answers to Research Questions Two and Three. The interviews also consisted of an additional three to four questions designed specifically for each participant based on the descriptive codes from their Read-Aloud Recording Sheet. The interviews also served as a time to gain further clarification on unclear information from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets.

After interviewing the 15 participants, the audio recordings were transcribed. This resulted in 129 pages of transcriptions that were read and reread multiple times. Annotations were made in the margins of the transcripts as well as short field notes that were taken at the time of the interview. During the second cycle of coding, the codes from the Read-Aloud Recording sheets were compared with the codes from the interviews. These codes were then shared with three colleagues as a means to increase validity and reliability. To do this, the titles were removed from the coded themes and the codes were shared with colleagues. Colleagues were asked to review the codes, determine if they seemed appropriately grouped, and give the group of codes a title. The titles created by colleagues were then compared to the themes already developed by the researcher. Themes were compared across data sources, the interviews and the Read-

Aloud Recording Sheets. All of the data collected during this first phase of qualitative data collection were used to create the survey that would be used in Phase II to expand the findings to teachers across the country.

Phase II: Quantitative Data Collection

Phase II of the study sought to take the findings from Phase I and explore them with a larger nationwide sample with the intent of generalizing to a larger population of K-2 teachers. Using the coded themes developed from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet responses and the one-on-one interviews, a 24-question survey was created using Qualtrics survey software. Phase II served as a means to extend the findings of Phase I with a larger sample. This is the first of two points where the mixing of quantitative and qualitative data occurs. Through the strategy of connection, the qualitative results of Phase I are integrated into the collection of the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The “connection occurs by using the results of the first strand to shape the collection of data in the second strand by specifying research questions, selecting participants, and developing data collection protocols or instruments” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 67). In this case, the analysis of Phase I data led to the creation of the Phase II instrument.

Development and Validation of the Survey

A survey instrument was developed to further explore teachers’ decision-making when choosing books to read aloud in the classroom. The survey was administered online to enable a broad distribution to a large sample of teachers across the country as nearly all school districts assign faculty email addresses and expect routine checks of

these emails. Therefore an online survey addressed the issue of coverage error, which occurs when a sample does not cover the population of interest (Sue & Ritter, 2012).

The purpose of the survey was to further explore the aims of the research with a larger population of teachers from different geographical locations. The survey used the variables discovered in the analysis of the data from Phase I. The items on the survey reflected a variety of response choices: Likert scales (e.g., very likely to very unlikely), multiple choice, and a few responses with added space to elaborate. The variables of interest and the corresponding items developed are summarized in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

Survey Items

Variables of interest	Representative Question	Response type
Frequency of conducting read-alouds in the classroom	How often do you read aloud to the students in your classroom?	Multiple choice (3)
Autonomy over book choice	Do you choose the books you read aloud on your own?	Multiple choice (2)
Reasons for reading aloud	Which response best matches your primary reason for including a read aloud in your day?	Multiple choice, Extended response, Rank order (4)
Consideration of students	What kind of books do your students prefer to hear read aloud?	Multiple choice (3)
Reading aloud as a time filler	You have an extra 10 minutes before it's time for lunch! How likely are you to read a book aloud to your students to fill this time?	Multiple choice (1)
Classroom library acquisition	How have you gotten the majority of the books you read aloud over the course of your teaching career?	Multiple choice (2)

Note. Values in parentheses are the total number of survey items used for each variable.

Expert Review and Focus Group. The survey underwent three rounds of revisions by a panel of literacy experts and doctoral students. The panel was asked to critically review how well each item reflected the variable being explored and whether the wording would be clear to the target population. Suggestions were provided around the wording of questions and the order in which the questions flowed. Based on this

feedback, the initial items were revised and redistributed to the panel. The only recommendation from the second round of revisions was a small typographical error. Once the survey had been carefully revised, a panel of eight K-2 teachers was asked to pilot the survey in a focus group setting. The teachers took the survey independently and then as a group provided feedback on the clarity of the questions, the look and feel of the survey, and the ease of answering. Based on their suggestions, a few small improvements were made and the survey was completed after the fourth round of revisions. One suggestion from the teachers was to include a demographic question about age. This was added after this suggestion by including a question that asked participants to share their age within a designated age band (e.g., 20-30, 31-40).

The final survey (Appendix I) included 24 questions aimed at addressing all four of the Research Questions. Ten of the questions were designed to gather demographic information of the participants, one question invited respondents to participate in a prize drawing geared at increasing engagement with the survey, and the remaining thirteen survey questions attempted to understand more about their decision-making in regards to reading aloud in the classroom. The ten questions designed to gain insight into the demographic information asked the participants to share their (1) gender, (2) age range, (3) years of classroom teaching experience, (4) current grade level, (5) years at current grade level, (6) race/ethnicity, (7) highest degree earned, (8) if they possess additional endorsement or certificates, (9) the type of school they work in, and (10) in which state they teach.

Disseminating the Survey

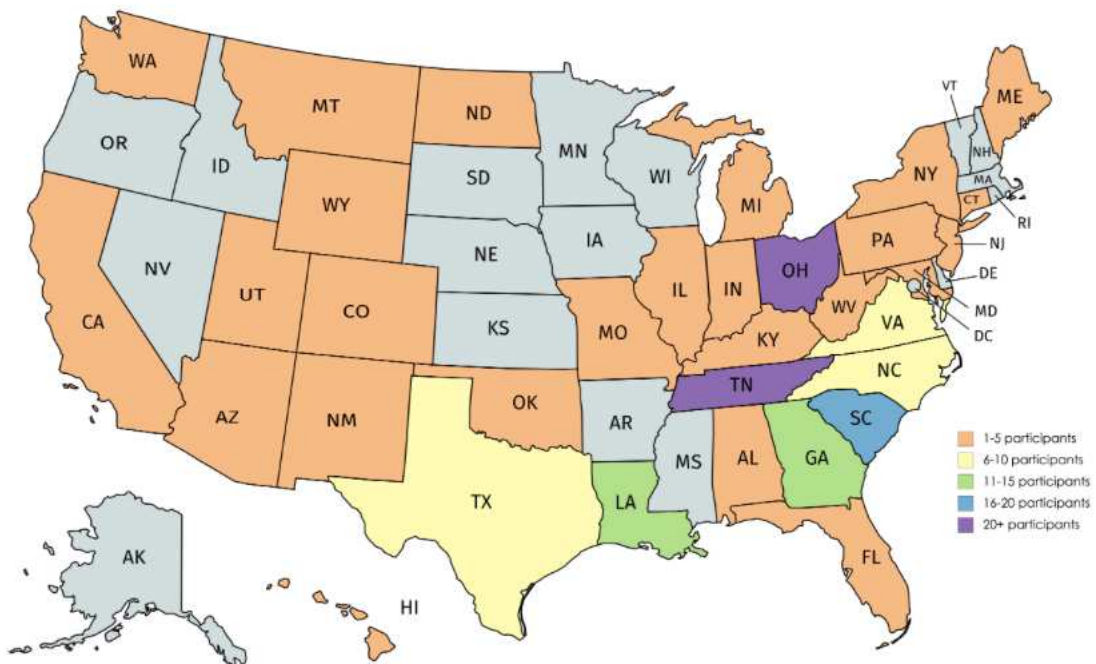
In an attempt to gather a sample that would be representative of the population, a cluster sampling procedure was used to make generalizations about the entire population of interest. When the population is large, it is difficult to identify all individuals in the population (Sue & Ritter, 2012). To combat this, a cluster sampling technique was used as clusters are randomly selected and then each individual in the selected cluster is invited to participate in the survey. This approach is appropriate because the population of K-2 teachers is large and a cluster can easily be identified, as in this case, one school district within 45 different states.

The process began by generating a list of principals from one school district in 45 different states across the country. Doing a search on the Internet generated the list and school districts were chosen that provided easy access to principals' email addresses. Five states were not included because of the difficulty of locating principals' emails from the districts that were retrieved during the search. These five states were Hawaii, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, and Nevada.

The survey was sent to 817 principals across 45 school districts (one per state) within the United States in an email asking them to disseminate the survey to the K-2 teachers in their schools (Appendix J). Of these 817 principals, three responded by stating their districts have research protocols requiring additional paperwork filed through their central office or research compliance office. These principals were located in Florida, Utah, and West Virginia. Because of the time sensitive nature of data collection these sites were not further explored and the data was collected from the remaining 42 school

districts across the 42 other states. It is not possible to determine which of these 739 remaining principals decided to forward on the survey to their teachers. It is possible to assume, however, many principals shared the survey as 33 of the 40 states are represented in the data. Figure 3.3 shows a map of the United States highlighting which states are represented in this study.

Figure 3.3. States with Participants in Phase II



The survey remained open for a three-week period allowing participants ample time to complete it. Including surveys with some missing data, 259 participants responded. The participant demographics are summarized in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

Demographics/Background Characteristics of Survey Participants

	<i>n</i>	%
<u>Grade</u>		
K	58	24.4
1	68	28.6
2	112	47.1
<u>Years of Experience in Grade</u>		
1-5	131	55.3
6-10	39	15.1
11-15	25	10.5
16+	42	17.7
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	4	1.8
Female	219	98.2
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
American Indian/Alaskan	2	.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	1.8
Black/African American	10	4.5
Hispanic American	8	3.6
White/Caucasian	199	89.2
<u>Highest Degree</u>		
BA/BS	103	46.2
MS/MA/M.Ed.	107	48

Specialist	12	5.4
Doctorate	1	.4
<u>Additional Endorsements</u>		
Yes	103	47.7
No	113	52.3
<u>Total Years of Experience</u>		
1-5	69	31.2
6-10	42	19.0
11-15	29	13.1
16+	81	36.7
<u>School Type</u>		
Public	195	88.6
Private	7	3.2
Charter	17	7.7
Magnet	1	.5
<u>State (Top 3)</u>		
Ohio	48	21.9
Tennessee	47	21.5
South Carolina	18	8.2

Phase II: Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using the data analysis software SPSS version 24.0 (IBM Corp, 2016). The analyses of this data included descriptive statistics and comparisons of descriptives by demographics. The descriptive statistics in this study were aimed to

explore the characteristics of the sample and, with the random cluster sampling method, were able to be generalized to the larger population of K-2 teachers across the United States. Comparisons were used to explore differences between demographics (e.g., teachers with more experience, first grade teachers, or teachers who read aloud most often).

The first step in the analysis process was to prepare and clean up the data. Nominal measures were assigned to all data without clear numerical meaning. All data with rankings or Likert scale responses were assigned ordinal measures. Some of the Likert items were recoded to reflect 1 as the lowest scale score and increase from there (e.g., unlikely, somewhat unlikely, more likely, very likely). This needed to happen for questions 11, 16, 23, and 26. To test the assumption that data were “missing completely at random” (MCAR), the current study employed Little’s MCAR test, which has a null hypothesis that the missing data is MCAR. This test resulted in a chi-square= 15.56 (18), $p=.62$, indicating that the missing data is in fact MCAR, insofar as no identifiable pattern existed in the missing data. This supports listwise deletion, or the full removal of these cases, however it was decided that for the purposes of this research the analysis would involve pairwise deletion, or deletion on a case-by-case basis, so each analysis could use all available data. Data from the two open-ended questions with responses were coded so that percentages could be assigned.

SPSS was used to generate descriptive statistics, which describe how all teachers responded across all items. Frequency tables were created based on the responses teachers provided in the questions in which they were asked to rank their responses. The

mean rankings across these items will be discussed in the chapter that follows. Finally, comparisons were made across demographics using non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests to compare groups.

Ethical Considerations

As in all social research, ethical considerations must be made to protect participants. This study was carefully designed to avoid serious ethical risks and to protect the rights of participants in both phases of the research. First, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received for the completion of the study. Participants in both phases of the research were provided with informed consent documents. Teachers serving as participants in Phase I were given the opportunity to create a pseudonym so their identities would be protected throughout the reporting and dissemination of data. Their names and other significantly identifying information were kept confidential and all data from both phases of the study were kept securely on a password-protected computer.

Generally, survey research involves voluntary participation. As it is “a basic premise of ethical survey research that respondents should be informed about what it is they are volunteering for” (Fowler, 2014, p. 141) respondents in Phase II were given information about the study on the first page of the survey while participants in Phase I were given a hard copy of the informed consent documents. Participants were free to exit the study at any time through both phases of study. Survey research shares many similarities with other methods of social research in terms of ethics. The basic approach of working with participants in an honest way with detailed attention to the aspects that will maximize benefits and avoid costs to the respondents were at the heart of this study

(Fowler, 2014).

Validation and Legitimation

Mixed research such as this involves the mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods and characteristics. The goal of this mixture of two methods is to utilize the strengths of each method while attempting to minimize the weaknesses therein (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Through this mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers must also consider the validity and reliability associated with those methods. Mixed research views these issues in a slightly different frame through representation, integration, and legitimation. According to Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006), the issues of representation refer to the difficulty of representing, or capturing, the lived experiences of participants using words and numbers. The problem of legitimation refers to the difficulty of making inferences about findings that are “credible, trustworthy, dependable, transferable, and/or confirmable” (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006, p. 52). In their discussions of legitimation, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) present the term *inference quality* to take the place of validity, commonly discussed in monomethod research. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) attempt to further their colleagues’ discussion by introducing nine types of legitimation. Detailed here are a few of the ways this study attempted to minimize many of these threats to legitimation.

While many argue that quantitative research seeks the objective outsider’s view, or the etic viewpoint, and qualitative research seeks the insider’s view, or emic viewpoint, mixed research seeks a balance of the two (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). This study attempted to maintain this insider-outsider balance by seeking participants’

uninfluenced decisions in regards to book choice. In many of the studies that came before this one, participants were provided with reasons why they may have selected a book and were asked which reason best matched their own (Bandré, 2005; Hart & Rowley, 1996; Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986). The participants in Phase I of this study were not given any influencing considerations and were asked, rather, to share their own reasons for selecting books. This took the etic stance in order to better understand their choices from the outside rather than providing insider considerations. The researcher sought a justified etic viewpoint by enlisting the help of colleagues to review the data analysis codes and themes at several different points in the study. Also, by member checking with participants during the one-on-one interviews, the researcher sought a justified insider viewpoint to assess the interpretations that were being made (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006).

Multiple validities legitimation refers to the “extent to which all relevant research strategies are utilized and the research can be considered high on the multiple relevant validities” (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006, p. 59). This requires reviewing the quantitative strand and examining the validity issues within while also addressing the trustworthiness issues within the qualitative strand. The first phase of the study included two data sets: the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and the one-on-one interviews. The purpose of the interviews was the gain further insight into teachers decision-making as well as member check with participants that the interpretations being made were representing their ideas accurately (Glesne, 2011) thus increasing the trustworthiness of the data and interpretations. The survey then attempted to minimize the threat to external

validity by extending the research beyond a small area in Tennessee. The survey invited the insight of teachers in 39 other states to share their rationales and decision-making processes and expanded the exploration of the findings to a much larger group of K-2 teachers. Throughout the data collection process, the help of other literacy experts, doctoral students, and colleagues was requested as a means of externally auditing the coding themes emerging within the data analysis process. These attempts to minimize threats to validity and trustworthiness were taken to strengthen the legitimation of the research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter details the two phases of this study: Phase I, the qualitative strand, and Phase II, the quantitative strand. Each of the data sources collected sought to answer the four Research Questions driving this study:

- 1) How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?
- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?
- 4) What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

This chapter also discussed the analysis process for each phase of the research and how the instrument in the second phase was designed from the findings of the first phase. The chapter concluded with a discussion of validity and trustworthiness and the steps taken to ensure legitimation in the study.

The chapter that follows presents the findings from this exploratory, sequential mixed method research to describe how K-2 teachers are choosing books to read-aloud in the classroom and what influences those decisions. Through the discussion in the next chapter, teachers' rationales for reading aloud, the type of books teachers read most often, what resources teachers report having access to when building a classroom library, and the reasons teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud will be further explored.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this exploratory, sequential mixed method study was to better understand the decisions teachers make when choosing books to read aloud in the classroom. The aim of the study was to explore the current use and frequency of read-alouds in K-2 classrooms across the United States; explore teachers' rationales for reading aloud; determine what type of book teachers read most often; determine what resources teachers report having access to when building a classroom library; and explore the reasons teachers provide for choosing the books they will read aloud in the classroom. This study occurred in two sequential phases: The qualitative phase in which fifteen K-2 teachers participated by recording the books they read aloud each day on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet and by engaging in one-on-one interviews, and a quantitative phase that used the findings of the first phase and expanded them through a national survey with a larger sample of 259 K-2 teachers. The researcher believed that a better understanding of teachers' decision-making in regards to book choice was needed and worthy of being explored. Literature supports the regular use of read-alouds in the classroom and provides insight into the many benefits that reading aloud provides, but studies seldom examine how teachers make choices about which books they will share aloud with children. As these teacher decisions impact a student's educational journey an average of 1,600 times (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006), the decision should hold a valued place in research.

This chapter presents the findings from each phase of the study. The first section of this chapter describes the major findings from the qualitative phase, which will discuss

the Read-Aloud Recoding Sheets and the personal interviews from the 15 participants in Phase I. The data presented at the beginning of this chapter is the data that was used to develop the survey instrument in Phase II. The chapter will then shift its focus to the findings of Phase II, the national survey that was created using the results of Phase I. Chapter Five will then discuss how the quantitative data explored in Phase II compared to the qualitative data in Phase I. In order to better understand teachers' decision-making in regards to book choices, the following Research Questions were investigated:

- 1) How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?
- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?
- 4) What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

The results discussed in the sections that follow will share the findings in regards to each Research Question.

Phase I: Qualitative Findings

The following section will share the results of Phase I in which 15 K-2 teachers in southwestern Tennessee participated in a four-week data collection period. During these four weeks, teachers filled out a Read-Aloud Recording Sheet (RRS) for each book they read aloud to their class. The Read-Aloud Recording Sheet asked for teachers to include the date, title of the book, author, illustrator, and a brief statement that finished the sentence, "I chose this book because" for the books they read out loud to students.

Following the collection of this data, teachers participated in one-on-one interviews to share more details on their decision-making in regards to the books they read aloud.

Read-Aloud Recording Sheets

The four-week data collection period took place over the course of 19 school days. Teachers and students observed Presidents' Day during week two of the data collection period reducing the collection time from 20 days to 19 days. Over the 19 days of the study, the teachers read 252 total books to their students, which is an average of 16.8 books per teacher. While 252 books were read to students, these readings happened during 368 different read-aloud events, meaning the 15 teachers read-aloud to their students an average of 24.5 times during the 19-day data collection period. It is important to note that several teachers read the same book over the course of multiple days as they were reading chapter books such as the *Junie B. Jones* series or *The Magic Treehouse* series or because they chose to revisit a text from a previous day. These books were only counted once even though they were read over the course of multiple days because the decision about which book to select was made once. Of the 252 total books read, 202 of those were different titles. While collectively the teachers averaged reading 16.8 books across the 19 days of the study, the teacher reading the fewest books read four different books to her students and the teacher reading the most read 34 books. These data are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Total Books Read By Grade

Grade	Total read-aloud events	Total books read aloud	Number of different titles
Kindergarten	117	105	82
First	183	105	84
Second	68	42	36
Total	368	252	202

Fourteen of the fifteen teachers (93.3%) in the study acknowledged reading aloud at least one time per day with several teachers reading more than one time per day. These results touch on Research Question One: How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud? As the 15 teachers choose to read 368 different times throughout the 19-day study, this means that teachers were making an average of 1.29 decisions about what books they would select each day. This equates to an average of 232.4 decisions for a 180-day school year.

Fiction and nonfiction. The data from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets also provided insight into the kinds of books teachers are reading aloud most often. Knowing more about the kinds of books teachers are reading can provide insight into why teachers choose the books they do. Of the 202 different books that were read aloud by the 15 teachers, only 25 were nonfiction. This means that teachers were only reading nonfiction books 12.4% of the time. Literature recommends that students are exposed to a variety of well-illustrated, quality literature including poetry and informational texts (Lennox, 2013) however, research continues to show teachers are most likely to limit their selection to narrative storybooks (Duke, 2004; Yopp and Yopp, 2006). The findings

from this study support the existing research. Table 4.2 further explores these data.

Table 4.2

Types of Books Read by Grade

Grade	Number of different titles	Number of nonfiction titles	Percentage of nonfiction titles
Kindergarten	82	8*	9.8%
First	84	13	15.5%
Second	36	4	11.1%

Note. All eight of the nonfiction titles were read by the same Kindergarten teacher; the other five Kindergarten teachers did not read any nonfiction during the 19 days of the study.

The percentages of nonfiction books remained relatively constant among the grade levels. The majority of the nonfiction books read during the 19 days of the study was topically aligned to Presidents’ Day and was read as a means of seeking information about U.S. presidents and the holiday. The only other nonfiction books that were read during the study were centered on the topic of using and understanding maps. These books were read in one first grade classroom as they studied maps during their social studies lessons.

The selective tradition. Several studies (Bandré, 2005; Hart & Rowley, 1996; Jipson & Paley, 1991; Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986; Taxel, 1981; Williams, 1977) examined the diversity represented in the books teachers chose to read aloud in the classroom. The authors of these studies were interested in examining the selective tradition (Williams, 1977); that is, the intentional selection and exclusion of texts that shape the past and preshape the present social and cultural identification. These aforementioned studies sought to explore the exclusion of literature by and about women and ethnic minorities. Investigating the sociocultural aspects of the books selected by

teachers to read aloud provides insight into their decisions.

The following data is reported on the 202 distinctive titles selected by the 15 teacher participants. The 202 different books were the works of 133 authors and 129 illustrators as several of the titles were by of the same author or illustrator. Of the 133 authors, 59% (79 of the 133) of them were female. This finding is interesting because it is the exact opposite of the findings presented by Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986) and Jipson and Paley (1991). These authors found that males authored 59% of the books chosen by teachers in both of their studies. Interestingly, their results were based on samples of 54 books and 155 books selected by participants respectively. The findings of the present study are based on a larger data set of 202 books.

While the authors of books selected in this study were primarily female, the illustrators presented a different dynamic. The 202 different books selected by teachers showcased the artistic works of 129 different illustrators, of which 64% (82 of the 129) were male. An examination of the illustrators was not reported in the previously discussed studies.

Also of interest is the number of books written by people of color. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison receives most of the books published each year and documents the number of books by or about people of color. In the most up-to-date statistics for 2016, the CCBC received 3,200 total books published in the United States. Authors of color contributed only 12% (386) of the 3,200 total books. Existing children's literature continues to be dominated by white authors and is reflected in the books that teachers read in the classrooms of this

study. Only four of the 133 authors (3%) of the books selected by teachers in this study are people of color.

Of similar interest are the characters portrayed in the books selected by the 15 teachers in this study. Human characters were represented in 84 of the 202 different books. The remaining 118 books (58%) featured main characters that were either animals, objects, or speakers whose gender was unable to be determined. Of the 84 books including human characters, 40 were female main characters, 30 were male main characters, and 14 books contained more than one main character, which included both genders. Within the 84 books with human characters, 20 included main characters of color. Nearly one-fourth of the books teachers read with human characters were books about people of color. This number is quite different, however, when compared to the overall number of books read. When considering that teachers read 202 different books, only 9.9% included characters of color. This number is slightly greater than the 4% found by Luke, Cooke, and Luke (1986) and the 6% found by Jipson and Paley (1991) and could be attributed to the fact that more books were considered in this study making it possible for more of the books to include characters of color. Similarly, Bandré (2005) found that of the 452 books selected in her study, 6% included multicultural characters. The findings of the present study continue to be line with studies within the last 30 years acknowledging a selective tradition within teachers' book choices.

Teachers' reasons for choosing books. The last column on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet asked teachers to complete the statement "I choose this book because". This column was designed to explore teachers' reasons for choosing the books they read

aloud in the classroom and directly address Research Question Four. As teachers read aloud on 368 different occasions, the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets contained 368 different reasons for choosing books. These responses were read over several times and were grouped into similar categories based on the themes that emerged during the coding process.

Eight themes began to emerge as the data were coded and grouped together.

Teachers were primarily selecting books for the following reasons:

- 1) It assisted in teaching or developing skills;
- 2) It correlated to a holiday or current event;
- 3) It was either a teacher or student favorite;
- 4) It connected to a current classroom theme or topic;
- 5) It was included a curriculum they adhere to;
- 6) It was because of the author, illustrator, or character in the text;
- 7) It was meant to promote a life skill or citizenship; or
- 8) It was at a student's request.

Table 4.3 showcases the frequency with which teachers reported these reasons in their decision-making about which books to read aloud.

Table 4.3

Teachers' Reasons and Frequencies for Choosing Books According to Read-Aloud Recording Sheets

Reason for choosing a book	Number of times included in teachers' RRS	% of total read aloud events
Skill building	127	34.5
Holiday or event	65	17.6
Teacher or student favorite	31	8.4
Theme or unit topic	30	8.2
Included in curriculum	26	7.1
Author, illustrator, or character influence	24	6.5
Citizenship or life skills	19	5.2
Student request	14	3.8

Eleven teacher entries were not included in this chart because teachers said they selected books at random, to fill a short gap of time in the day, or because they were reading the book “for pure enjoyment” with no other description included. These entries were not coded because the teacher described their reason for including a read-aloud as opposed to the reason for choosing the particular book they read. Also, it is important to note that one teacher entry could be coded into different categories if the teacher expressed multiple reasons for choosing a book. An example of this is seen in a first grade teacher’s entry when she wrote, “It is Read Across America Week so I chose this book because a lot of skills can be found in Dr. Seuss books. I chose *The Cat in the Hat* and used it as a quick rhyming review” [CS_2/27/17_RRS]. This entry would be coded into two categories: teaching skills and holidays and events. Dual codes were given to forty (10.9%) of the teachers’ entries on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets.

Skill building. The Read-Aloud Recording Sheets revealed that 34.5% of the

reasons why teachers selected specific books were to address skill building. Eleven of the 15 teachers (73%) mentioned choosing books in order to teach skills. Teachers in each grade level expressed teaching a skill as a reason they chose 127 of their 252 books. Many of their reasons for choosing books mentioned using the book to address more than one skill. An example of this is seen in this first grade teacher's entry when she wrote, "We read this book for the purposes of predicting, inferring, and discussing character traits this week" [CM_2/22/17_RRS]. This means that almost half of the total books selected by teachers were specifically chosen because of the ability to use the text to teach skills. Teaching a skill was the most commonly reported reason for choosing a particular book for reading aloud. Kindergarten teachers chose 39 books because they helped them teach skills and 78 times first grade teachers selected books to help them teach skills. Interesting, second grade teachers only mentioned choosing books to teach skills 10 times. Twenty different skills were specifically referenced 132 times throughout the data collection period. Table 4.4 summarizes the skills teachers were developing through the books they chose to read aloud and the number of times those skills were addressed.

Table 4.4

Reasons For Choosing Books Related to Teaching Skills

Skill being taught	Total number of reasons	Kindergarten reasons	First grade reasons	Second grade reasons	Example of teachers' reasons
Compare and contrast	17	3	12	2	<i>"Read for compare and contrast lesson. Compared to video of Three Billy Goats Gruff."</i>
Mathematical skills (addition, subtraction)	15	15	0	0	<i>"Introduce an addition lesson"</i>
Retell or sequencing	13	6	7	0	<i>"Retell the story using this format: Somebody-Wanted-But-Then."</i>
Making connections to self	11	0	10	1	<i>"Reading today to make a personal connection: Write about a time you had to persuade someone."</i>
Visualizing	11	2	9	0	<i>"Reading to visualize the pictures in our minds."</i>
Character traits or feelings	10	0	10	0	<i>"We focused on Arthur's feelings."</i>
Vocabulary	8	0	3	5	<i>"This books is perfect for vocabulary and context clues."</i>
Fiction vs. nonfiction	7	0	6	1	<i>"Our focus this week is fiction books and what makes them fiction."</i>

Inferencing	6	1	3	2	<i>“Students inferred what would have happened to the bird if the boy, Will, had not helped it.”</i>
Problem and solution	6	2	4	0	<i>“Read part of the book for problem and solution skill.”</i>
Cause and effect	5	0	5	0	<i>“We are working on the skill cause and effect.”</i>
Predicting	5	2	3	0	<i>“We read part of the book for prediction lesson.”</i>
Point of view	4	0	4	0	<i>“We are working on point of view and I thought this would be a good book to introduce the skill.”</i>
Rhyming	4	2	2	0	<i>“There are a lot of skills that can be found in Dr. Seuss stories, but as a quick rhyming review, I chose The Cat in the Hat.”</i>
Language arts	3	3	0	0	<i>“ELA lesson on verbs.”</i>
Jobs of the author and illustrator	2	0	2	0	<i>“We discussed the similarities of the authors and illustrators.”</i>
Opinion development	2	1	1	0	<i>“Read for opinion writing: What was their favorite part?”</i>

Listening	1	0	1	0	<i>“The theme goes along with our listening skill for the week.”</i>
Phonics	1	0	1	0	<i>“Touched on our weekly phonics skill.”</i>

Note. All books to teach mathematical skills were selected by one Kindergarten teacher.

Holidays or events. The second most common reason teachers reported for choosing books to read aloud was because the particular book related to a holiday or current event. Again, almost all teachers, 14 out of 15 (93%), reported choosing at least one book because it correlated to a holiday or event. Sixty-five books were selected because they were aligned to a current holiday or event. Only one first grade teacher did not explicitly share on her Read-Aloud Recording Sheet that she selected any books because of their relation to a holiday or event.

The data collection period took place in the months of February and March coinciding with Valentine’s Day, Presidents’ Day, Black History Month, and Read Across America Week, all holidays that were acknowledged as reasons for choosing books. Read Across America Week was a reason for choosing books written by Dr. Seuss on 29 different occasions. Nineteen different books by Dr. Seuss were read during the data collection window. This school-adopted event occurs each year over the course of five days in March. This means that an average of 5.8 books by Dr. Seuss were read each day during the Read Across America Week event. One teacher wrote, “Today began Read Across America week so we are going to read some Dr. Seuss books in addition to our book study in celebration of his birthday” [WJ_3/1/17_RRS]. Similarly, other

teachers simply noted, “It’s Read Across America Week” [CS_2/27/17_RRS] and “More Dr. Seuss birthday fun!” [HJ_3/2/17_RRS].

The days leading up to February 14th included teachers reading books specifically because they incorporated themes of Valentine’s Day. On 15 different occasions teachers included Valentine’s Day as the reason for choosing the book they read aloud. One teacher shared that she was reading a book because “It’s Valentine’s week and we are talking about being kind to each other” [CS_2/14/17_RRS]. Another teacher explained that she read *The Night Before Valentine’s Day* by Natasha Wing because she wanted to compare and contrast to another familiar text, “Today is the day before Valentine’s Day and I referenced *The Night Before Christmas*” [WV_2/13/17_RRS]. In these instances, the teachers are expressing a dual purpose for reading. The first teacher chose a holiday book to teach her students about being kind to one another and develop positive character traits. The other teacher chose a holiday themed book to engage in topical reading around Valentine’s Day and to assist in skill building by comparing and contrasting two familiar texts.

Presidents’ Day was observed during the data collection period as well. This holiday was the reason 13 books were selected for reading aloud. One teacher wrote, “We read this book on President’s Day to understand why we observed the holiday on Monday” [HJ_2/21/17_RRS]. Another teacher said she chose a book because of encouragement from her administration, “Presidents’ Day is next week and we are encouraged to incorporate social studies into our reading” [WJ_2/13/17_RRS].

While Presidents’ Day and Valentine’s Day are events that take place on only one

day during the month of February, Black History Month is honored throughout the entire month. Though multiple opportunities existed throughout the month of February to read books surrounding this topic and event, only three times books were read because they were topically aligned to Black History Month. Two teachers, one first grade and one second grade, mentioned Black History Month as their reason for choosing a particular book to read. This first grade teacher selected two books because they featured Black historical figures and showcased their notable contributions to society. The second grade teacher refers to reading *Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine prior to data collection but writes that she chose a book about Abraham Lincoln because "It's Black History Month and we just read about Henry "Box" Brown so this [book] ties into our discussion of slavery from that book" [WJ_2/13/17_RRS]. Books about Black History Month only accounted for 1.2% of the books (3 out of 252) read during the data collection period while the event was honored for 12 of the 19 days of the study.

The only other holidays or events that were included as reasons for choosing books were Groundhog's Day, St. Patrick's Day, and Book Character Day, an event taking place at one of the school sites. Each of these holidays accounted for only one read aloud event that occurred during the data collection period.

Teacher or student favorite. Eight teachers acknowledged selecting 31 books to read aloud because they were considered a student or teacher favorite. Many of the teachers used words like "best", "precious", "enjoyable", "love", "cute", and "fun" to describe the books they were reading aloud. The data was coded into this category if the teacher wrote that it was a class, student, or personal favorite or used words that showed

their approval or appreciation for the text. One book series- the *Junie B. Jones* series- accounted for 12 of these 31 books teachers chose because teachers said Junie B. is “hilarious and the kids always enjoy her” [WJ_2/16/17_RRS] and “the kids love Junie B. Jones books” [MC_2/13/17_RRS]. Of the 31 books that were chosen because they were favorites, 58% of the descriptions teachers wrote included phrases that deemed them teacher favorites. The remaining 13 reasons specifically mentioned the book was a favorite of the class or students. For example, a second grade teacher shares a teacher-driven statement when she wrote, “I just love this book. If I loved it, they wanted to hear it” [WJ_3/8/17_RRS]. Similarly, a first grade teacher writes, “I chose to read the Magic Treehouse books because they are my favorite children’s books to read and experience with my students” [CJ_2/16/17_RRS].

In contrast, 13 of the books were chosen because the teacher believed they were student favorites. One Kindergarten teacher writes about her decision to read a Pete the Cat book, “Pete is one of our classroom’s favorite characters” [SJ_2/13/17_RRS]. Characters appeared several times as a reason why teachers or students enjoyed particular books and is highlighted when one Kindergarten teacher chose to read a different Junie B. Jones book each day because “the kids love Junie B.” [MC_2/22/17_RRS]. Junie B. Jones books were read in each of the grade levels. A second grade teacher chose to read a Junie B. Jones book that she didn’t feel was seasonally appropriate but explained her reasoning, “It’s not Thanksgiving, but the kids loved the first Junie B. book I read to them so much that they said they didn’t care that this was a Thanksgiving book” [WJ_3/8/17_RRS].

Connected to classroom theme. Teachers also selected books because the theme of the book correlated to a topic or unit being taught in the classroom. Over half of the teachers (8 out of 15) mentioned selecting 30 books because they were related to the topics they were teaching in their classrooms. Three Kindergarten teachers chose nine different books that helped them teach their dental health, pets, and US symbols units. Three first grade teachers used read-aloud books to emphasize their units on animals, insects, weather, and maps. A first grade teacher showcases this when she explains her reasons for reading *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type* by Doreen Cronin, “We are working on point of view so I thought this would be a good book to introduce the skill. Also, it went with our big idea for Unit Four – all about animals” [CS_2/21/17_RRS]. Two of the second grade teachers developed their classroom themes by reading books that dealt with the topic of kindness.

Included in curriculum. Twenty-six times teachers explicitly wrote that the reason they chose to read a book was because it was included in their grade level curriculum. This could be a reason why some of the same books were read in multiple classrooms across the grade levels. This particular item was explored in greater detail during the one-on-one interviews.

Author, illustrator, or character influence. Six teachers also included the author, illustrator, or main character as the reason they chose to read that particular book. Two of the second grade teachers said they chose specific books because the books were written by the same author. These two teachers included reasons such as “I also chose this book because of our story last week – *Each Kindness* – shares the same author” and “we’ve

read two other books by this author and I chose this one because I like for the kids to know other books by the same author” [WJ_2/20/17_RRS]. A first grade teacher chose five specific books because of the “strange animal characters as the main character” during their study on fiction books [WV_Week of 3/7/17_RRS].

Citizenship and life skills. Over half of the teachers (53%) also read a total of 19 books to showcase citizenship and promote positive life skills to their students. Teachers used books as examples to show kindness, accepting and celebrating difference, following dreams, being good friends, and keeping the Earth clean. A second grade teacher read several books during the data collection period that were centered on the topic of kindness. Several of her entries discussed the reason she chose the book was to show her students to “love people even though they are different. We are all special and deserving of kindness” [HJ_2/16/17_RRS]. A first grade teacher also specifically selected a book because of the book’s anti-bullying theme. She writes, “I chose this book because some of our students are facing bullying. The book dealt with problem solving and getting along with others” [OJ_2/21/17_RRS].

Student request. Five teachers also reported they read books at the request of their students on 14 occasions. Since the data collection period occurred while the Scholastic Book Fair was at each school, five of the books teachers read were because students purchased them at the fair and wanted to share them with the class. Teachers also reported reading several books because the students were asking to read their library books or books about one of the classroom favorite characters such as Junie B. Jones or Pete the Cat.

Other entries on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet. The aim of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet was to capture the frequency with which teachers were actually conducting read-alouds in the classroom as well as the reason they chose the particular book they read aloud. Teachers included 368 reasons on their charts throughout the 19-day data collection period. Twenty-one of the entries on the chart included teachers' reasons for including a read-aloud rather than their specific reason for choosing the particular book they read. An example of this is seen when a Kindergarten teacher wrote that her reason for reading *Bark, George* by Jules Fieffer was "end of day quiet time" [PM_2/13/17_RRS]. This entry speaks to her reason for reading aloud, rather than her specific reason for choosing to read that particular book- *Bark, George*. Similarly, one first grade teacher wrote in six different entries on her Read-aloud Recording Sheet that she read books "just for fun before busses let out for the day" [CM_2/28/17_RRS] or "during afternoon snack for student entertainment" [CM_2/23/17_RRS]. These show her reasons for reading rather than her reason for the specific book choice.

A few teachers also noted that some of these books were selected at random or because of their familiarity with the text. The most common time for teachers to read a book at random appeared to be during a snack time, at the end of the day, or when there were a few extra minutes before lunch or similar activity. A Kindergarten teacher included two entries on her Read-Aloud Recording Sheet that pointed at her reason for including a read-aloud during a time gap when she said, "Had some down time before lunch and I randomly chose this book" [FL_3/8/17_RRS]. Another teacher wrote, "Today was picture day so we had a strange gap in our schedule. My go to activity is

always a read-aloud” [WJ_2/16/17_RRS]. These entries express the teachers’ reason for choosing to read aloud as opposed to their reason for reading that particular book.

Six out of the fifteen teachers also reported reading books “for student entertainment” [FL_2/23/17, 2/24/17_RRS], “enjoyment” [MC_2/23/17_RRS], or “just for fun” [JK_2/15/17_RRS] but did not explicitly say why the book they chose led to this enjoyment. Similar to the entries that shared the reason for reading aloud as opposed to the reason for choosing the specific book, teachers also included in the recording sheets that they read books to inspire their students or develop their love of reading. A second grade teacher shares that she read a book as “a promotional tool to get kids excited about buying books at the book fair and helping the school” [MC_3/9/17_RRS]. Some teachers also expressed that when they enjoyed a book, their students did as well. A second grade teacher writes, “Whenever I read something new to the kids, it usually inspires them to go to the library and check out other books in the series, like this one, or other books by the same author. After I read today, I told them about two other Junie B. books I love. I look for them to ask our librarian for them” [WJ_2/16/17_RRS].

This section described the findings of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets that teachers filled out for each book they read aloud during the four-week data collection period. The eight themes that emerged were used to develop the interview protocol used during the one-on-one interviews with teachers. The following section will discuss the findings of the interviews with the 15 participants.

Interviews

After the data were analyzed from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets, individual

interviews were scheduled for each of the 15 teachers. Teachers agreed to participate in a one-on-one interview before school, after school, or during their planning time. These interviews took place over the span of eight days, which began two weeks after the last Read-Aloud Recording Sheet was collected. This gap existed in the data collection due to the need to first analyze the data from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets as well as the schools' Spring Break schedule.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed. This resulted in 129 pages of typed transcriptions for the close to five hours of interview recordings. The fifteen interviews were a little over an average of 18 minutes each, the shortest interview being 13:24 and the longest being 39:35. The interview protocol (Appendix H) included seven questions that each teacher was asked as well as questions that were specifically designed for individual teachers based on the data from their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets. Some of these individual questions were intended to provide clarity to items from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets that may have been confusing or needed further exploration. The following sections will report on the findings from the fifteen personal interviews.

Independent selection. During the coding and analysis of the data from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets, it was noticed that the teachers were including books they were reading because they were included in a curriculum their school or team was using. Interview question one was designed to explore the frequency of teachers' independent book selection by asking:

Can you look over your chart and circle the entries that show books you chose on your own – books that are not a part of a curriculum your school uses?

This question was included because several of the entries indicated that teachers' were reading books that were from a curriculum they were following. A teacher wrote that she chose a book because "it is part of our adopted comprehension lessons by Deanna Jump and Dee Dee Willis. This book is a nonfiction book that focuses on developing new schema about the moon's changes. This was our introductory day" [CM_2/13/17_RRS]. This was an area that needed to be explored through the personal interviews to better understand teachers' independent book selection versus the use of school-arranged curricula.

To begin, each participant was asked to look back over their Read-Aloud Recording Sheet and circle any of the books they chose completely on their own; that were not apart of a curriculum they were using. Of the 252 books that teachers read aloud to their students, 194 of them were selected completely on their own and the remaining 58 were read because they belonged to an adopted curriculum the school was using. Although these 58 books belonged to a curriculum, the researcher believed that reading these books aloud in class was still the result of a teacher decision. The teacher chose to stick to the curriculum and read the book prescribed to them. As the interviews revealed, many teachers did not follow the exact lessons prescribed to them in their school-adopted curriculum, nor did they always choose the books the curriculum told them to read. Table 4.5 showcases the number the books independently selected by the teachers in each grade level that were not included in a curriculum.

Table 4.5

Books Independently Selected By Teachers

Grade	Books read aloud	Books included in curriculum	Books independently selected	% books independently selected
Kindergarten	105	20	85	81
First	105	21	84	80
Second	42	17	25	60
Total	252	58	194	77

Interestingly, 11 of the teachers mentioned in their interviews that they have purchased outside curriculum as opposed to using the school provided basal reading series. Four Kindergarten teachers at two different schools choose to use a program called *Reading Comprehension: Guiding Readers*, which is for sale online on Teachers Pay Teachers (teacherspayteachers.com). One veteran teacher explained in a whisper,

My [reading program] series is back here, it's in the closet with the plastic on it! We are lucky enough that our administration does not make us adhere to it. When I started teaching 33 years ago, there was no curriculum, there was not anything known to man as a teacher's manual in Kindergarten. So we pretty much had to come up with our own. We did our own thing so that's why I think you telling me now at this point in time that I have this book I have to follow, well that's hard for me because I've always done it on my own so to speak [SJ_4/5/17_Interview].

Four first grade teachers who all work together in the same school building also

adopted the *Reading Comprehension: Guiding Readers* series after their colleagues in Kindergarten saw success with the program. One first grade teacher said in her interview, “It was something Kindergarten started. And Mrs. [Principal] was like, “This is a big deal, we have to see some growth from this”. So once Kindergarten was, they were pretty set on for one year they were like, “This is what we need to do”.”

[CM_4/4/17_Interview]. Similarly, all three of the second grade teachers who participated in the study acknowledged adopting an outside program in place of the school provided curriculum. The curriculum the second grade team used, *Rooted in Reading*, also came from Teachers Pay Teachers. A second grade teacher shared her reasoning for this when she said, “My reading partner and I aren’t using the school’s curriculum this year. We are using a curriculum, but it’s one we chose.”

[WJ_4/3/17_Interview]. After a probe asking about what curriculum the school uses that their team chose not to use, the teacher continued, “They use these books [points to children’s cubbies] that I have put in my kids’ reading cubbies. These books haven’t been used all year [laughs]. They use [reading program].” [WJ_4/3/17_Interview].

Another second grade teacher shares more information about her ability to make curricular decisions when asked, “So what is your administrations’ view of that? Are they ok with you making those curricular choices?” she responded, “Oh yes, it was easy to get her onboard. But they’re real open to that too if you have something you want to try and see how it goes.” [TA_4/3/17_Interview].

Four teachers did not report deviating from the curriculum given to them by their school. Though following their school-adopted program, the four teachers still

independently chose to read aloud many additional books in their classrooms. These four teachers who adhered to their school's curriculum read a total of 68 books during the data collection period; 82% of those (56 out of 68) were books they chose independently and were not associated with the school's curriculum.

Purposes for reading aloud. The purpose of the second interview question was to understand teachers' purposes for reading aloud and address Research Question Two. Interview question two asked:

In your Interest Survey, you mentioned reading aloud to your students _____
(*less than once a week, once a week, several times a week, every day, several times a day*). Why is reading aloud a part of your day?

Three teachers expressed dual purposes for reading aloud while twelve teachers shared their primary reason for including a read-aloud in their day. Three of the teachers shared their primary reason for reading aloud is to expose students to literature. When asked why reading aloud is a part of her day, a Kindergarten teacher shared, "Well I think mainly just exposure for these children. A lot of them, at home, you know the parents might not be good readers or they just don't have the time nowadays. So just exposing them to literature, you know fiction, nonfiction, different vocabulary, that they might not have ever heard before." [FL_4/5/17_Interview]. Similarly, another Kindergarten teacher expressed the desire to read-aloud to her students because "so many children have never been read to. Since this is a high poverty school we've found, you know, the literacy of the parents, some of them, it just might not be there." [PM_4/4/17_Interview]. A first grade teacher at another school site shared similar thoughts when reflecting on her Title 1

school when she said, “We have a lot of economically disadvantaged students so their background [knowledge] is just not very wide and this group of children have language difficulties.” She goes on to explain that her class seems to be “taxed with extremely southern language” so she attempts to combat this with reading aloud. She notes, “Timewise, that is usually the first thing that goes is the read-aloud, but this year I will not let that happen, [reading aloud] happens everyday.” [WV_4/7/17_Interview].

While these three teachers expressed a desire to expose children to literature and language, six teachers said they read aloud as a means to develop a love of reading within their students. Each of these teachers expressed their own love of reading and the desire to share this love with their students. A first grade teacher captured this thought when she expressed, “I love to read and I want my kids to love to read. And with all these standards and so much is put on them and they have to work, personally I feel WAY too much than they should, that I want them to learn to love to read. I feel like if I show that emotion and that love of reading, that maybe it will rub off on them and they will also love it.” [CJ_4/6/17_Interview]. Another first grade math teacher who chooses to read aloud to her class despite being a “different subject as a whole” shared a similar sentiment when she said, “I want my kids to love to read more than anything because I love to read.” [OJ_4/5/17_Interview]. One of the second grade teachers shared her ultimate goal when she said, “If they get nothing else, I want them to like to read.” [WJ_4/3/17_Interview].

Another reason teachers expressed as their purpose for reading aloud was to establish a quiet time or provide a refocusing activity. Four teachers, at least one teacher in each grade level, mentioned that creating quiet time was a purpose for reading aloud.

A Kindergarten teacher said she uses read-alouds as a means to wrap up an activity and move on to the next. This teacher added students are more likely to clean up fast because, “It kind of gets a little fire under them so they will hurry up because they love to be read to.” [FL_4/5/17_Interview]. Four other teachers also shared that they read books aloud during snack times and transition times to create a quiet and calm classroom atmosphere.

Two teachers said they choose to read-aloud to their class as a way to model successful reading behaviors for their students. A first grade teacher said she reads aloud “so that way they’re able to hear the story how they’re supposed to read the words and hear my fluency and things like that. They can hear that example and be able to replicate that.” [WS_4/5/17_Interview]. Another first grade teacher who also shared that she read aloud to promote a love of reading said reading aloud, “is a good model for students. They can hear what fluent, expressive reading feels like, sounds like.”

[CJ_4/6/17_Interview]. These two teachers were the only ones to mention modeling during their interview. Their mention of modeling only incorporated fluent reading and expression as opposed to including modeling of other comprehension strategies or word solving skills.

Finally, the other reason shared by two Kindergarten teachers was the ability to use books to tie together other content. One teacher said her read-alouds were always done “with purpose and to introduce instruction”. [JK_4/3/17_Interview]. She also said that she uses books to introduce more than just reading lessons. She uses books for math, science, and social studies lessons. Another Kindergarten teacher jokingly said she uses books to connect her content because “I’m old. A long time ago you see you had a theme

and you incorporated everything around your theme; your math, your science, your social studies and that part is so ingrained in me that I still incorporate so much stuff together.”

[SJ_4/5/17_Interview].

Several of these purposes for reading aloud appeared in the Read-Aloud Recordings Sheets and were further explored in the interview. These five purposes for reading aloud were used to develop two questions included in the national survey of teachers, which will be discussed in a later section. Table 4.6 summarizes these purposes for reading aloud and how often they were referred to in the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and one-on-one interviews.

Table 4.6

Purposes For Reading Aloud

Purpose for reading aloud	Number of times referenced
Develop a love of reading	6
Quiet time or refocusing activity	5 (10)
Exposure to literature	3
Introduce lesson or tie in content	2
Model fluent reading	2

Note. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of times teachers recorded reading for this purpose on their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets.

Reading aloud in action. The third interview question was geared at better understanding what reading aloud looks like in action. Interview question three asked:

Can you tell me what this time looks like in your classroom?

On the Interest Survey, all 15 teachers reported reading aloud several times a week or more with 80% reading aloud every day or several times a day. This question sought to better understand what these read-aloud events look like in their classrooms.

Though many of the teachers mentioned that they include read-alouds during other times throughout the day when time permits, 14 of the 15 teachers said they schedule a read-aloud at the same time each day. All of the teachers report reading aloud to the whole group but the teachers were split as to where students usually are during the read-aloud. Some teachers shared that their read-alouds typically happen while students are seated on the carpet, but they also occasionally read aloud to students while they sit at their desks. Three teachers mentioned having their own special place to sit while they read aloud. This shows that some of the teachers have developed an intimate reading space where students and teachers have designated places.

Book acquisition. Interview question four sought to explore teachers' access to resources and how teachers acquired most of the books they read aloud in the classroom. Question four asked:

I see you you've been teaching ___ (K/1st/2nd) for _____ years. Tell me how you've gotten most of your read-aloud books over those years.

Five of the teachers, some at each of the school sites, reported receiving a \$100 stipend at the beginning of each school year. They said their school district provides the stipend to buy classroom supplies. Since these five teachers work in the same district as the remaining participating teachers, it can be assumed that all of the teachers in this study receive this stipend whether they mentioned it explicitly or not. Those that did mention the stipend reported that they did not use the stipend to buy books but rather, as one second grade teacher put it, they use these stipends to buy "real stuff" meaning supplies such as pencils, paper, glue, etc. [WJ_4/3/17_Interview]. While all 15 teachers

reported spending their own money on books, they each shared more than one way they have acquired the books they use for reading aloud in the classroom. Table 4.7 shows a summary of the various ways teachers have acquired the books in their classroom libraries.

Table 4.7

Most Common Ways Teachers Acquire Books

Method of book acquisition	Number of times referenced
Scholastic Book Fair or Book Club	11
Given by another teacher or retiree	10
Thrift stores	7
Imagination Library Program	6
Amazon	4
Library	4
Traditional Bookstore	3

While many teachers have been gifted with books from a retiring teacher or from colleagues, an overwhelming number of responses showcase teachers spending their own money on books for their classroom. This means that teachers are limited in their book choices to what they can afford or what has been given to them by someone else.

Six of the teachers also mentioned that they frequently bring books from their home into the classroom. Several of the teachers said their children participated in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, a program for infants born in the state of Tennessee. Parents of children born in Tennessee have the option to enroll in the Imagination Library while they are at the hospital after birth. This program sends enrolled children one new book each month from birth to age five. Several of the teachers mentioned bringing in books that were given to their children through this program. This is a program that likely

only impacts teachers in the state of Tennessee, though there may be other programs like this in other states.

Important considerations when choosing books. The fifth interview question was designed to better understand what teachers report as the most important consideration they make when choosing books to read aloud. This question was designed to compare to the findings of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and the reasons teachers provided for reading the books they actually chose to read in the classroom. The interview question asked:

What would you say is most important to you when choosing books to read aloud in your classroom?

This question was followed up with a secondary question of:

After considering _____ what else would you say is important in your choice?

These two questions were included to gain insight into teachers' top reasons for choosing the books they read in the classroom. Eleven times teachers mentioned that the most important consideration they make when choosing a book is whether or not the book is fun, engaging, or interesting. Followed closely behind choosing books because of their potential for engagement and enjoyment was selecting books because that can help teach or develop a skill. Eight teachers mentioned this as a top priority for them when choosing books to read aloud in the classroom. Four teachers also consider whether or not students can make personal connections to the books they are choosing. A Kindergarten teacher remarked, "One of the most important things is to make sure it's not really above the child's head and they can connect it with their life experiences."

[PM_4/4/17_Interview].

Similar to this sentiment, several teachers also acknowledged making sure the book is in line with students' abilities. Three teachers mentioned being mindful of the grade level appropriateness of the book. The remaining reasons teachers shared included relating the book to a current theme or topic in the classroom, the writing style or illustrations, time permitted for the lesson, and if the book included a positive theme or moral lesson.

The data from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets revealed that teachers most frequently selected books to read in their classroom that assisted with teaching a skill. In the interview, teaching skills was only mentioned as the primary reason for choosing a book by four teachers, with four more sharing this as a secondary piece in their decision when asked what else they consider. More important to teachers, according to their interviews, was selecting books that students would enjoy. These two data points reveal that teachers are most likely to select books to read in their classroom that students will enjoy and that will also assist in developing needed academic skills.

Making connections was a skill that teachers were attempting to address on 11 different reading occasions according to their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets. These 11 instances came almost exclusively from first grade classrooms. However during the one-on-one interviews, four teachers mentioned that one of their main reasons for choosing a book is the ability for students to make personal connections to the book. Three of these four teachers are Kindergarten teachers. The interview assisted in shedding light on this important piece of their decision that was not captured on their Read-Aloud Recording

Sheets. Table 4.8 revisits the themes presented in the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and how those themes were expanded upon through interview question five.

Table 4.8

Interview Responses Compared to Read-Aloud Recording Sheet Themes

Themes from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet	Number of books selected	Number of references in interview	Example from interview
Skill Building	127	8	<i>It just depends on what I'm trying to teach. I try to choose books based on the skill that I'm trying to teach.</i>
Holiday or event	65	1	<i>I think about social pull at the time and what's going on right now. If it's springtime, winter, snowman and Santa Claus when we were leading into Christmas.</i>
Teacher or student favorite	31	12	<i>It is the best read-aloud book ever. I've read it to just about every class I've ever taught.</i>
Theme or unit topic	30	1	<i>Related to the topic I'm teaching at the time.</i>
Included in curriculum	26	0	
Author, illustrator, or character influence	24	2	<i>After that I think it has to be catchy with good pictures. It has to have</i>

			<i>appeal. It has to look good.</i>
Citizenship or life Skills	19	1	<i>I think if they have a good lesson. I'm all about encouraging them and remind them of like little morals and kindness.</i>
Student request	14	0	Not included in interview reasons

Note. Responses were coded into the teacher/student favorite category if the teacher expressed a desire to choose a book that students would enjoy.

The only two reasons included in the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet that were not explicitly named in the interviews were choosing to read a book because a student requested it and choosing a book because it was included in the reading curriculum. Though these are reasons why teachers said they chose to read specific books in their classrooms, these are not among the primary considerations teachers make when independently choosing books to read aloud.

According to the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets teachers in action most often chose to read books because they addressed specific skills or because they were related to a holiday or event. But when asked about what is most important to their decision of what books they will read aloud, more teachers reported considering students' enjoyment of the book than the specific skills the book could address. Teaching skills, however, was the second most common response when teachers were asked what was most important in their decision about what books to read aloud.

Consistency. A potential limitation to this study is that the teachers filled out the

Read-Aloud Recording Sheets for a 19-day timeframe at a fixed time during the school year. It is important to recognize there are 160 other days in the school year in which teachers are making decisions about books to read aloud. Interview question six attempted to explore this possible limitation by asking how their reasons for choosing books may change throughout the year. Question six was posed in this way:

I asked you to fill out your sheet at the end of February and beginning of March. But let's say I had asked you to fill this out in October or April. I realize that your books may change, but what about your reasons? Do you think your reasons for choosing books would look the same throughout the year or do you think they would change?

All fifteen teachers shared that while their charts would have contained many different books, the reasons for choosing those would remain constant throughout the year. A Kindergarten teacher's response showcases this thought when she said, "I think they are pretty much always the same. I can look back at my lesson plans from August to right now, I still always try to introduce every lesson with some kind of literature." [JK_4/3/17_Interview]. Another Kindergarten teacher said her chart would look similar throughout the year because "It's so seasonal and the skills. I go with that; what's going on in the season and what skills we're working on." [MC_4/7/17_Interview].

Interview question seven then asked teachers if their reasons would remain the same from year to year. Three teachers said their charts would likely look the same each year while the other twelve teachers shared several reasons why their charts may look different. The most common answer was because their students change from year to year,

so would their reasons for choosing books would also change. A first grade teachers says the “personality of the classroom” will change from year to year and impact her decisions about what books she will choose to read aloud [WV_4/7/17_Inteview]. Another first grade teacher recognizes that each year her students’ interests change which then impacts how she chooses the books she reads aloud. Similarly, one of the second grade teachers commented, “I think age and maturity matters. If I had a less mature group, we wouldn’t have been able to hit some of the deeper subject matters that we’ve hit this year.” [WJ_4/3/17_Interview].

Individual questions. The analysis of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets revealed a need to further explore a few of the entries teachers included about the books they chose to read aloud. Many of the teacher entries included phrases that showed their personal approval of the text. Teachers used words like “fun”, “cute”, or “hilarious” to describe some of the books they were reading aloud. To explore this, several teachers were asked to describe the kinds of books they find enjoyable. Four teachers expressed they believe the way they read the book aloud impacts the students’ enjoyment. When asked what students find most enjoyable in a book a Kindergarten teacher said, “I think it depends on how you’re reading it to them. My tone and how involved I get into the character is very important I believe.” [JK_4/3/17_Interview]. Similarly, a first grade teacher said, “You have to make a fool of yourself [laughs]. You act it out, you change your voice, you change your tone, you become like part of the book and when you do that you make the kids become part of it also” [OJ_4/5/17_Interview].

Other teachers said that if they personally didn’t like a book, they didn’t think

their students would enjoy it either. A first grade teacher said, “If I can’t be excited, I don’t expect them to be excited” in reference to some of the books included in her school’s curriculum that she chooses not to use [MC_4/7/17_Interview]. This was a common theme for teachers who said they chose not to use the school provided curriculum and instead sought out their own materials.

Qualitative Summary

The first two sections of this chapter describe the findings of Phase I of this exploratory, sequential mixed method study. Phase I sought to explore teachers’ decision-making in regards to book choice. The fifteen participants were asked to fill out a Read-Aloud Recording Sheet for each book they read-aloud in the classroom. The recording sheet asked their reason for choosing to read that specific book. These reasons were coded and themes emerged as to why teachers were choosing specific books. These themes were expanded upon in the one-on-one interviews. After collecting and analyzing this qualitative data from Phase I, a 24-question survey was developed using the findings of the first Phase. The themes that emerged from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and one-on-one interviews were used in the creation of the survey with the intent of expanding the findings through a larger sample of the target population of K-2 teachers in the United States. Table 4.9 showcases the themes that emerged from the Phase I data and how they were used to develop survey questions to be used in Phase II of the study.

Table 4.9

Themes From Phase I Used to Develop Survey Items For Phase II

Theme	Finding	Inclusion in survey
Frequency of reading aloud	93.3% read aloud at least one time per day	How often do you read aloud in your classroom? On average, how many minutes do you spend reading aloud each time? You have an extra 10 minutes before it's time for lunch. How likely are you to read a book aloud to your students to fill this time?
Curricular influence	77% of the books teachers read aloud were independently selected	Do you choose the books you read aloud on your own?
Purpose for reading aloud	Teachers read aloud to develop a love of learning, expose students to literature, introduce a lesson, model fluent reading, and create a quiet time	Which response best matches your primary reason for including a read-aloud in your day? A student brings a book from home and asks you to read it out loud. How likely are you to do this?
Selection of fiction and nonfiction	12.4% of books teachers read were nonfiction	What kind of books do you prefer to read aloud? What kind of books do your students prefer to hear read aloud?
Book acquisition	Teachers acquired books in five common ways: Scholastic Book Club, handed down by colleague or retiring teacher, Amazon, traditional book stores, or thrift stores	How have you gotten the majority of the books you read aloud over the course of your teaching career? When you purchase books for your classroom, where do the majority of the funds come from?

Student engagement and enjoyment	Teachers believe their students enjoy hearing books read aloud.	How many of your students do you believe enjoy hearing you read aloud? The following are ways to get students engaged while reading aloud. Please click and drag the responses to rank them from (1) occurs most often in my classroom to (5) occurs least often in my classroom.
Reasons for choosing specific books	Because the book assists in developing skills, is related to a current holiday or event, is a teacher or student favorite, is connected to the classroom or unit theme, it is part of a curriculum, it is because of the author, illustrator, or main character, it promotes positive life skills or citizenship, or it was requested by a student	The following are some reasons why teachers choose a book to read aloud. Please click and drag the following reasons to rank them from (1) MOST to (8) LEAST likely reason that you would choose to read a book out loud.

Phase II: Quantitative Findings

The following section will share the results of Phase II in which 259 K-2 teachers from across the United States participated in an online survey developed from the analysis of the data presented in Phase I of the study. Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers were invited via email to participate in a 24-question online survey designed to explore their decision-making in regards to book choice. The results of this exploration will be shared in the following sections.

Frequency of Read-Alouds in K-2 Classrooms

One of the aims of this study was to explore the frequency of read-alouds in K-2

classrooms. Survey question three asked participants how often they read aloud to students in their classrooms. According to the results of the survey, 74.9% of teachers reported reading aloud in their classroom every day or several times a day, 49.4% and 25.5% respectively. Of the 235 responses, only 10 teachers (4.3%) reported reading aloud once a week or less than once a week. Table 4.10 presents the frequency of read-alouds by grade level according to the results of the survey.

Table 4.10

Frequency of Read-Alouds By Grade

Grade	n	Less than once a week	Once a week	Several times a week	Every day	Several times a day
Kindergarten	56	1	0	10	26	19
First	66	0	0	14	33	19
Second	110	0	9	24	56	21
Total	232	1	9	48	115	59

Length of read-alouds. Question four then asked teachers about the length of their read-aloud sessions. Teachers were asked to share the average time spent on each of these read-aloud events. These data are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Average Time Spent Per Read-Aloud

Number of minutes	n	%
0-15	111	47.6
16-30	106	45.5
31-45	15	6.4
46-60	1	.4

Over half of the respondents who teach Kindergarten (57.1%) and first grade

(50%) indicated they spend an average of 0-15 minutes on their read-alouds.

Interestingly, over half of the second grade teachers (54.5%) indicated they spend an average of 16-30 minutes on each read-aloud event. Of the 230 respondents, only one first grade teacher indicated that the average read-aloud event in his or her classroom is between 46 and 60 minutes. These results are further explored by grade level in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Average Time Spent Per Read-Aloud By Grade

Grade	n	0-15 minutes	16-30 minutes	31-45 minutes	45-60 minutes
Kindergarten	56	32	22	2	0
First	64	32	23	8	1
Second	110	46	60	4	0

Impromptu read-alouds. Data collected during Phase I of the study indicated that teachers often conduct read-alouds when there are spare moments in the day or they need an activity to fill a gap in their schedule. One survey question was designed to explore this with the larger sample of teachers. When asked if they would fill a 10-minute time gap with a read-aloud, 94.8% of survey respondents said they were likely or very likely to read aloud to fill this time. Of the 228 respondents, only 4.8% (11 teachers) indicated that reading aloud is not an activity they would look to in order to fill a time gap in the schedule.

Curricular influence. The results from the analysis of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets also revealed that teachers were reading some books that were given to them in a school or grade level adopted reading curriculum. However, the majority of the

books they were reading aloud to students were self-selected. The survey attempted to explore teachers' autonomy when it comes to book choice by asking teachers if they choose the books they read aloud or if they are required to follow a strict curriculum. Teachers were given three options: *Yes, I independently select all of the books I read aloud in my classroom;* *Sometimes, I follow a specific curriculum but I also choose some of my own books to read aloud;* and *No, I follow a strict curriculum and I do not add any extra books.* Similar to the findings from Phase I, the majority of teachers use a school-adopted curriculum while also perceiving the autonomy to add in some of their own books. Only 3% of respondents said they do not read any additional books besides the ones included in their curriculum. The majority of teachers (61.6%) report following a school-adopted program but having the freedom to add books of their choice into the literacy block. While some teachers have the ability to add in books of their choosing in addition to their school's curriculum, 35.3% of teachers indicated they make all of the curricular choices in their classroom about which books they will read aloud.

These data were analyzed according to school type to determine if there were any differences between public, private, and charter schools when it comes to strict curricula. There was no significant difference between school types regarding whether they choose the books they read aloud on their own.

Rationales for Reading Aloud

The analysis of the data in Phase I revealed that the most common reasons for teachers reported for reading aloud were to introduce a lesson or skill, model fluent reading and expression, develop a love of reading and expose children to literature, and

as a way to refocus students after another activity. These were common themes that emerged at several stages of analysis from Phase I. This was an area that needed to be explored on a larger scale. Survey participants were asked which of these responses best matched their primary reason for including a read-aloud in their day. They were also provided with a space to include another answer if their primary reason did not match any of those already shared. Almost half of the respondents (46.3%) shared that their primary reason for reading aloud in the classroom is to develop a love of reading. This response was the primary reason expressed in each grade level. Responses were then even at 21.4% for teachers who said their primary reason for reading aloud was to introduce a lesson or teach a skill and to model fluent reading and expression. Only 2% of respondents revealed their primary reason for reading aloud as a way to refocus students after another activity. Twenty teachers selected the option to write in their own response because their primary reason did not match one of the four listed. Table 4.13 highlights the primary reasons for reading aloud in the classroom these participants chose to write in.

Table 4.13

Respondents' Additional Reasons for Reading Aloud

Reason	n
All of the above	12
All of the above except modeling	1
All of the above except refocusing	1
Because it's part of a curriculum	1
To scaffold student learning	1
Other selected but left blank	4

Many of the participating teachers in Phase I, shared they were often asked by

their students to read books aloud they brought from home, purchased at the book fair, or checked out from the library. Fourteen of the fifteen teachers in Phase I said they would usually always read the books that students brought to them. When surveyed, 99.6% of teachers said it was possible that they would read the book their student brought to them. Almost half of the teachers (46.9%) said they would prefer to read the book first themselves, while 25% said they would likely read it if time permitted. The remaining teachers (26.9%) said they were likely to read it right away.

Types of books selected. Also of interest in this study were the types of books being read-aloud in the classroom. The survey asked teachers whether they preferred to read fiction or nonfiction as well as the preference of students. Ninety-four percent of teachers said they prefer to read fiction. Also, 87% of teachers believe their students prefer to hear fiction books read aloud to them. Table 4.14 highlights reported teacher and student preferences when it comes to reading fiction or nonfiction.

Table 4.14

Teacher and Student Preference for Fiction and Nonfiction by Grade

Grade	n	Teacher fiction preference	Teacher nonfiction preference	Student fiction preference	Student nonfiction preference
Kindergarten	55	50	5	45	10
First	63*	59	4	56	6
Second	110	104	6	96	14

Note. * One first grade teacher did not answer the question about student preference so n goes down to 62 for student preferences.

Perceived student enjoyment. When asked if teachers believed their students enjoyed being read aloud to in general, teachers shared they believe the majority of their students enjoy hearing books read aloud. Teachers were asked if all students, most

students, some students, or few students enjoyed hearing books aloud. Of the responding teachers, 51% believe all of their students enjoy hearing books read aloud and 48.4% believe most enjoy being read to. Only one respondent indicated that only some students enjoyed being read to and none of the responses indicated that few students enjoy hearing books read aloud.

Methods of engaging students in read-alouds. Many of the teachers shared in their interviews that students would become more engaged in the read-aloud when the book was fun and exciting and when the teachers themselves were invested in the book. To further explore this, survey question thirteen asked teachers to read over several methods for engaging students during read-alouds. Teachers were then asked to evaluate the statements and rank them from (1) most common tactic they would use in the classroom to engage students in reading to (5) least common tactic used to engage students in reading. These engagement strategies were uncovered during the one-on-one interviews with teachers during Phase I: choosing a books that will interest students; changing voices and inflection to match characters; allowing students to act out pieces of the story; pausing to ask questions about what is happening in the story; and asking students to predict what will happen next. The teacher participants in Phase I reported these as the main ways they engage students in reading and attributed these tactics to why students enjoy being read aloud to. Table 4.15 showcases teachers' rankings of the ways to engage students while reading aloud.

Table 4.15

Teachers' Rankings of Ways to Engage Students During Read-Aloud

(1= most common tactic, 5= least common tactic)

Way to engage students	Mean	Standard deviation
You believe the book you have chosen will interest them	1.99	1.345
As you read you change your voice and inflection to match characters or actions	2.04	.978
You pause to ask questions about what is happening	2.89	.938
You ask students to predict what will happen next	3.34	.857
You ask students to act out pieces of the story	4.74	.747

These data were analyzed across demographics to determine if any significant differences existed. These rankings were compared using non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to compare groups. In terms of educational degrees, teachers with specialist degrees ranked “As you read you change your voice and inflection to match characters or actions” as a tactic that is more often used on average than those with a master’s degree. Interestingly, it was almost significantly more common for teachers with a bachelor’s degree than a master’s degree ($p=.051$) as well showing that this reason was least common for those holding master’s degrees. Table 4.16 showcases these data.

Table 4.16

Mean Rank and Comparisons for Ways to Get Engaged by Degree

Item	Mean Rank			Kruskal-Wallis Test Stat	Test df
	BA/BS	MS/MA/M.Ed.	Specialist		
1	107.30	110.40	110.96	.17	2
2	102.41	118.33	82.29	6.45*	2
3	108.80	109.58	105.58	.13	2
4	115.08	101.03	128.12	4.26	2
5	111.98	105.13	118.00	1.01	2

Note. * indicates significance at alpha <.05

Also, when attempting to engage students in reading aloud, teachers with 16 or more years of classroom teaching experience ranked “You believe you’ve chosen a book that will interest your students” as something that occurs more often than teachers with 1-5 years ($p=0.4$) or 11-15 years ($p=.002$) of experience. These data can be seen in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

Mean Rank and Comparisons for Ways to Get Engaged by Years of Experience

Item	Mean Rank				Kruskal-Wallis Test Stat	Test df
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+		
1	116.55	112.55	128.09	90.16	13.55**	3
2	99.52	105.85	110.52	114.09	2.42	3
3	104.93	108.24	102.26	111.08	1.69	3
4	107.72	100.48	90.24	116.85	5.04	3
5	106.52	102.45	101.80	112.90	1.29	3

Note. ** indicates significance at alpha <.01

Book Acquisition and Access to Resources

An aim of this study was to gain insight into the resources teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books they read aloud in the classroom. Teachers

were surveyed about how they have acquired the majority of the books they read-aloud. Participants in Phase I shared in their interviews that they are typically buying books with their own funds. The teachers shared they often utilized the Scholastic Book Club and Amazon.com when shopping for new books. Many teachers also shared their classroom libraries were stocked with books that had been passed down to them from colleagues and retiring teachers. Teachers also purchased new books from traditional bookstores and used books from thrift stores. The resources teachers have access to impact their book choices. For this reason, the survey sought to explore these themes with the larger sample of teachers.

Using the themes from the analysis of Phase I data, teachers were asked to select one of the top five places teachers reported getting books from to indicate where the majority of the books they read aloud have come from. Scholastic Book Club continues to be a top provider of books for teachers, with 43.2% of teachers indicating this is where the majority of their books have come from. Only 8.3% of teachers said they used traditional bookstores to purchase books for their classroom libraries. The remaining responses were almost evenly split between Amazon or other online retailer (14.9%), thrift stores or resale shops (17%), and retiree or passed down from another teacher (16.6%). These data are summarized in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

Most Common Ways Teachers Report Acquiring Books

Method of book acquisition	n	%
Scholastic Book Club	99	43.2
Thrift stores or resale shop	39	17
A retiree or other teacher gave them to me	38	16.6
Amazon or other online retailer	34	14.8
Traditional Bookstore	19	8.3

Similarly, when asked about the funds used for purchasing books for their classrooms, 86.5% of teachers said they were using their own money to purchase books. Almost ten percent of respondents (9.6%) indicated that their school provides money to purchase books and 3.9% said they usually rely on donations from others when it comes to acquiring books for their classroom libraries. These data were also analyzed by school type to explore resources available to teachers in private, public, and charter schools.

Table 4.19 shows the highlights of these data.

Table 4.19

Teachers' Access to Funding for Books by School Type

School type	n	My school provides money to purchase books	I use my own money to buy books	I rely on donations from others
Public	195	14	172	9
Private	7	1	6	0
Charter	17	5	12	0

Reasons for Choosing Books

Another primary aim of this study was to better understand how teachers are

choosing books to read aloud in the classroom. The data from Phase I of the study presented eight primary reasons why teachers were choosing the books they read aloud. These eight reasons were explored with the larger population of teachers. The survey provided teachers with six of the eight reasons teachers provided in the first phase of the study. The only reasons that were not included in the survey were “because a student requested it” and “because it is included in the curriculum”. These two options were replaced with “because the book is entertaining” and “because the book relates to students’ lives and experiences”. “Because it is included in the curriculum” was not provided as a response because the intent of the question was to explore teachers’ independent book selection. “Because a student requested it” was also left off because this response seemed to be driven by the students rather than the teacher’s deliberate choice to independently select a text themselves. Teachers were then asked to rank the provided reasons from (1) most to (8) least likely reason they would choose a book to read aloud. These eight reasons were: 1) the book is about a current holiday or event; 2) the book is entertaining; 3) the book is a personal favorite; 4) the book can help teach a skill; 5) the book promotes life skills or citizenship; 6) the topic of the book matches a unit theme; 7) the book relates to students’ lives and experiences; and 8) the book is by an author or illustrator of interest. Table 4.20 showcases teachers’ rankings of these top eight reasons for reading aloud.

Table 4.20

*Teachers' Rankings of Reasons to Choose a Book to Read Aloud**(1=most likely; 8=least likely)*

Reason to choose a book to read aloud	Mean	Standard Deviation
The book can help me teach a skill	3.19	1.957
The topic of the book matches a unit theme	3.78	2.255
The book is entertaining	4.23	2.282
The book is about a current holiday or event	4.31	2.140
The book relates to my current students' lives and experiences	4.36	2.141
The book is one of my personal favorites	4.45	2.211
The book promotes life skills or citizenship	5.20	1.984
The book is by an author or illustrator who interests me	6.48	1.807

The survey results indicate that the most important factor influencing teachers' decisions about which books they will select to read aloud is if the book can be used to help them teach a skill. This was ranked as the number one or two reason for choosing a book by 24.5% and 21.8% of teachers respectively. The second highest ranked reason for choosing to read a book aloud to students is because the book matches a unit theme or topic. This category was ranked one or two by 18.5% and 19.4% of teachers respectively.

The survey indicated that the two least common reasons for choosing a book were because the book promotes life skills or citizenship or because the book is by an author or illustrator of interest. Choosing a book because it promotes life skills or citizenship was ranked seven or eight by 18.1% and 19.4% of teachers respectively. Choosing a book because it is by an author or illustrator of interest was ranked seven or eight by 16.7% and 44.4% of teachers respectively.

These rankings were compared using non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to compare groups. Interestingly, when these data were analyzed and grouped by teachers who read at least once a day and those who do not, there was a significant difference in the mean ranks for selecting a book because it is by an author or illustrator who interests me. Those who read less than once a day had a significantly higher mean rank than those who do ($p=.04$). This indicates that choosing a book because it is by an author or illustrator of interest is slightly less important for teachers who do not read more than once per day. Table 4.21 highlights this difference.

Table 4.21

Mean Rank and Comparisons For Reasons to Choose a Book to Read by Reading Frequency

Item	Mean Rank		Kruskal-Wallis Test Stat	Test df
	Less Than Every Day	Every Day or More		
1	104.09	109.74	.27	1
2	104.42	109.83	.30	1
3	115.73	106.15	.96	1
4	99.96	111.28	1.36	1
5	102.30	110.52	.71	1
6	105.61	109.44	.15	1
7	114.30	106.61	.62	1
8	123.09	103.75	4.24*	1

Note. * indicates significance at alpha <.05

The data were compared across other demographic data to see if there were significant differences in teachers' reasons for choosing books to read aloud. There were a few significant differences for how some items were ranked for three of the other demographic data points. Teachers with additional endorsements or certificates ranked "The book is one of my personal favorites" as a more likely reason to choose a book on average than those who do not have any additional endorsements ($p=.006$). Table 4.22 showcases these data.

Table 4.22

Mean Rank and Comparisons for Reasons to Choose a Book to Read by Additional Endorsement

Item	Mean Rank		Kruskal-Wallis Test Stat	Test df
	Yes	No		
1	102.33	108.32	.52	1
2	105.97	105.08	.01	1
3	117.55	94.75	7.50**	1
4	104.52	106.37	.05	1
5	103.44	107.33	.22	1
6	109.23	102.17	.72	1
7	97.92	112.26	2.97	1
8	102.19	108.45	.61	1

Note. ** indicates significance at alpha <.01

When compared across grade levels, it was determined that first grade teachers ranked “The book relates to my current students’ lives and experiences” as a more likely reason to choose a book than those that teach Kindergarten ($p=.01$) or second grade ($p=.007$). These data are captured in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23

Mean Rank and Comparisons for Reasons to Choose a Book to Read by Grade

Item	K	Mean Rank		Kruskal-Wallis Test Stat	Test df
		1	2		
1	97.75	104.40	112.64	2.11	2
2	116.22	115.19	98.26	4.32	2
3	115.77	106.95	103.06	1.43	2
4	91.72	108.08	113.32	4.22	2
5	108.14	121.21	98.58	5.25	2
6	94.59	115.18	108.07	3.09	2
7	119.40	87.61	112.18	8.69*	2
8	110.47	96.73	111.15	2.52	2

Note. *indicates significance at alpha <.05

Similarly, teachers' years of experience also showed a significant difference in regards to selecting a book because "The book relates to my current students' lives and experiences". Teachers with 1-5 years of experience ranked this as a more likely reason to choose a book on average than teachers with 6-10 years of experience ($p=.002$).

Other comparisons across years of experience revealed that teachers with 16 or more years of teaching experience ranked "The book is entertaining" as a more likely reason on average than teachers with 1-5 years of experience ($p=.01$) or 6-10 years ($p=.01$). These data can be further explored in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24

Mean Rank and Comparisons for Reasons to Choose a Book to Read by Years of Experience

Item	Mean Rank				Kruskal-Wallis Test	
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Test Stat	df
1	114.12	109.46	107.33	101.22	1.84	3
2	115.32	120.50	115.88	90.01	9.89*	3
3	107.85	106.33	115.90	103.70	.80	3
4	102.11	98.18	98.48	118.53	4.58	3
5	105.24	93.01	107.98	115.43	3.74	3
6	111.91	95.73	87.00	115.27	6.09	3
7	87.71	124.82	116.00	111.15	11.10*	3
8	113.82	108.90	104.44	101.07	1.82	3

Note. *indicates significance at $\alpha < .05$

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the data collected during the two phases of this exploratory, sequential mixed methods study. The chapter opened with a report of the findings from the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets that were filled out for four weeks by fifteen K-2 teachers as they read books aloud in the classroom. The findings of these

Read-Aloud Recording Sheets were used to develop interview questions for each of the fifteen participants. The findings of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets is followed by a report of the findings from the almost five hours of one-on-one interviews. The interviews were designed to further explore teachers' rationales for reading aloud, how they make their choices about what books to read in the classroom, as well as what resources they have access to when making their decisions.

The analysis of the combination of these two qualitative data sources informed the development of an online survey which was sent to 259 K-2 teachers across the country. The survey sought to further explore the themes that emerged from the data analysis of Phase I. The results from descriptive analyses of the national survey are presented in the last section of this chapter. Chapter Five will discuss key findings from the results of this study and implications related to teachers' book selection are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this exploratory, sequential mixed method study was to better understand K-2 teachers' decision-making in regards to the books selected to read aloud in the classroom. The study aimed to explore the frequency of read-alouds in K-2 classrooms across the United States in order to emphasize the importance of understanding the decisions teachers make before conducting these read-aloud experiences. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, this study examines teachers' rationales for reading aloud, the type of books teachers read most often, what resources teachers report having access to when building a classroom library, and the reasons teachers provide for choosing the specific books they read aloud.

This study employed an exploratory, sequential design that occurred in two phases. The first phase involved the collection of qualitative data through Read-Aloud Recording Sheets and one-on-one interviews with fifteen participating K-2 teachers. The qualitative data was then analyzed and coded into themes that were used to develop the national survey used in Phase II of the study to collect quantitative data to expand upon the findings from the first phase. The two phases occurred sequentially in order to address the four Research Questions driving this exploratory investigation. The study was designed to answer the following four Research Questions:

- 1) How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?
- 2) Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?
- 3) What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what

books to read aloud?

- 4) What reasons to teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

The previous chapter presented the findings from each of the three data sources: the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets filled out by the fifteen K-2 teachers for the 368 read-aloud events that took place over the course of four weeks, one-on-one interviews with the fifteen participating teachers, and the 259 responses to the online survey sent to K-2 teachers across the country. This chapter seeks to provide interpretive insights into the findings shared in the previous chapter.

This chapter will first connect the findings of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets with other research on teachers' book selections to provide an updated look at the type of books teachers are most frequently reading aloud in the classroom. The chapter will continue with a discussion of how the interviews provided more insight into teachers' book choices and how these findings led to the development of the national survey. The results of the survey will be compared to the findings from the first phase in an attempt to showcase their complementarity (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006) or how they elaborate, enhance, and clarify the findings from the first phase. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the possible limitations of the study and ideas for future research.

Discussion of the Findings

The following discussion will be presented by each research question and the findings connected to them. While the study occurred in two sequential phases, the discussion shared here will be through the integration of the findings of the two phases.

After careful analysis of all three data sets, themes emerged about teachers' book selection in the classroom that led to a greater understanding of teachers' decision-making.

Research Question One: Frequency of Reading Aloud

One of the aims of this research was to explore the current use and frequency of read-alouds in K-2 classrooms across the United States. Literature supports the regular use of read-alouds in the classroom and provides evidence of the many cognitive and affective benefits to reading aloud to children (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2014; Gambrell, Palmer, & Codling, 1993; Hoffman, Roser, & Battle, 1993; Johnson, 1992; McGee & Richgels, 2012; Sipe, 2008; Snow, 1983; Sulzby & Teale, 2003). In a national survey of Prekindergarten through fifth grade teachers, Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, and Duffy-Hester (1998) found that teachers are committed to using children's literature in the classroom. The results of their study indicated that 97% of teachers in grades PreK-2 report regularly reading aloud to students. In a similar study on teachers' book choice, Bandré (2005) found that 89% of primary grade teachers reported reading aloud daily. These studies suggest teachers read aloud in the classroom frequently. The present study attempted to explore this through Research Question One, which asks:

How often do teachers make decisions about choosing books to read aloud?

The present study attempted to provide an up-to-date exploration of the frequency with which teachers select books to read aloud in the classroom. During Phase I, the fifteen participating teachers were asked to indicate how often they read aloud in the

classroom: *Several times a day; Every day; Several times a week; Once a week; or Less than once a week.* Eighty percent of teachers reported reading aloud every day (7 out of 15) or several times a day (5 out of 15). Three of the fifteen teachers (20%) reported reading aloud several times a week. None of the participants in Phase I indicated reading only once a week or less.

The Read-Aloud Recording Sheet was developed to explore these reports in action. Teachers were asked to enter each book they read aloud into their Read-Aloud Recording Sheet for the course of four weeks totaling 19 school days. During these 19 days, the teachers read a total of 252 books throughout 368 different read-aloud sessions. This indicates that the teachers each read an average of 24.5 times during the data collection period. This reveals that on average, teachers were reading at least once per day.

On the Interest Survey used in Phase I, 80% of the teachers reported reading aloud every day or several times per day. According to the entries on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets, however, only five teachers (33.3%) actually recorded reading aloud every day. Of those five teachers, only one recorded reading aloud more than one time per day. Seven out of the 15 teachers (46.6%) recorded reading aloud several times a week; some of them reading multiple times in one day but then would skip a day of reading aloud according to their records on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet. The day with the most recorded readings was Tuesday, March 28th with twenty-four read-aloud events occurring among the 15 teachers. Friday, February 17th was the day with the least amount of recorded read-alouds with only 13 read-aloud events taking place. Close

examination of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets revealed that Fridays typically included the least amount of read-aloud events each week. This could be attributed to several factors. Fridays could potentially present schedule changes for teachers making their read-aloud events less frequent due to the differences in schedules. Fridays could have also been a day teachers were less focused on filling out their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets, though frequent reminders were sent to them. It could also be that Friday is a day designed for testing or for making up any missed material throughout the week therefore teachers do not have the time to include read-alouds.

Overall, the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets indicated that teachers were reading aloud less in their classrooms than they originally reported in their Interest Survey. This finding was expanded with the larger sample of teachers when they were asked how frequently they read-aloud in their classrooms. Of the 232 respondents on the national survey, 49.5% reported reading aloud every day and 25.4% said they read aloud several times per day. These numbers align with the findings of the Interest Survey in which 46.6% of teachers in Phase I reported reading aloud every day and 33.3% reading aloud several times a day. Table 5.1 compares the data from Phase I and Phase II in regards to frequency of reading aloud in K-2 classrooms.

Table 5.1

Comparison of Data Sources for Frequency of Read-Alouds in K-2 Classrooms

Data source	n	% reading less than once a week	% reading once a week	% reading several times a week	% reading every day	% reading several times a day
Interest Survey	15	0	0	20	46.7	33.3
Read-Aloud Recording Sheet	15	0	6.7	46.7	20	13.3
National Survey	232	.43	3.9	14.9	49.6	25.4

In their national survey of teachers almost twenty years ago, Baumann et al. (1998) found that 97% of teachers reported regularly reading aloud to students. When defining *regularly reading aloud* as reading aloud several times a week or more, the findings of the present study support the conclusions of the aforementioned research. The present study indicates that 95.7% of teachers surveyed nationally report reading aloud several times per week in the classroom. The present study also revealed 93.3% of teachers read aloud regularly during the 19-day study according to their documentation of their actual classroom read alouds. These findings are also similar to the findings of Bandré's (2005) study in which 89% of teachers reported reading aloud daily.

The present study reveals that when asked about how frequently they read aloud in the classroom, 77.5% of teachers report reading aloud every day or several times a day.

However, when asked to document their read-aloud experiences, the findings of Phase I reveal that teachers are reading less frequently than they initially report, with only 33.3% of teachers reading aloud every day or several times per day. This could be attributed to a number of factors. Teachers may not have included every read-aloud on their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets because they simply forgot to enter them. On the other hand, teachers may have believed they read aloud more frequently than they actually do. The teachers may also have reported in the way they thought the researcher wanted since the research was designed around reading aloud in the classroom.

Independent selection. The Read-Aloud Recording Sheets filled out by participants during Phase I of the study revealed that teachers were reading aloud books that were included in school-adopted curricula while also including read-alouds of books of their own choosing. Over the course of the 19 days of Phase I data collection, teachers read a total of 252 books of which 76.9% were selected independently. This means that teachers were independently selecting and reading aloud three times as many books as the curricular books they were expected to read. The one-on-one interviews explored this idea further by asking teachers about the curriculum their schools use.

Eleven out of the fifteen teachers (73.3%) reported opting out of the school prescribed curriculum and instead using their own independently selected outside resource for their primary literacy instruction. Many of the teachers who opted out of the school-adopted programs shared similar laments about the basal reading series and their students' noticeable lack of engagement. When asked in her interview about which she preferred, the basal or her outside curriculum, a second grade teacher said,

I really like what we're doing now better. Although there are some really good books inside of the basals. I just prefer it being a separate, stand alone book that they have access to. Even though everyone has them [points to basal] I didn't see kids love books as much when it was trapped inside of there. They just didn't [WJ_4/3/17_Interview].

A first grade teacher shares how her team arrived at the decision to adopt an outside program when she shared,

So last year we were just using the [reading program] series. And we would do comprehension through that but we didn't feel it was as powerful as it could have been or should have been. A lot of the stories in their basals are so basic. There's not much that you can do with them comprehension-wise or activity-wise. Kindergarten had already been using the *Guiding Readers* series and they raved about it. So we kind of observed a little bit of them doing that and looked at their packet of activities and things and we were like, 'This is awesome! Let's do it!' And the kids love the books too. It's something different for them. [CJ_4/6/17_Interview].

The majority of the teachers in Phase I (73.3%) shared in their interview that they have selected to use a program other than the one given to them by their school. No matter what curriculum teachers were using- the school-adopted curriculum or their

independently selected curriculum- 100% of teachers in Phase I were still selecting and reading aloud additional books in the classroom that were not associated with any of their curricula.

The survey sought to expand this finding to the larger population of teachers. The survey asked about teachers' independent book selections by asking them to indicate: *Yes, I independently select all of the books I read aloud in my classroom; Sometimes, I follow a specific curriculum but I also choose some of my own books to read aloud; or No, I follow a strict curriculum and I do not add any extra books.* Similar to the findings of Phase I, the majority of teachers (61.6%) report following a school-adopted curriculum but exercise some autonomy by also adding in books of their own choosing. The comparison of results from Phase I and II is displayed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Comparison of Teachers' Independent Book Selection

Sample	n	Independently select all books read aloud	Independently select some books read aloud	Do not independently select any books
Phase I	15	0	15	0
Phase II	232	82	143	7
Total %	247	33.2	63.9	2.8

These results indicate that the majority of teachers in these K-2 classrooms perceive some curricular autonomy in which they are able to make their own decisions about what books to read aloud. With increasing pressures in the classroom to meet standards and prepare for testing, strict curricula drive many classrooms today. These results-driven mindsets can sometimes decrease teachers' ability or perceived ability to

modify and adapt the curriculum as they see fit. Speaking to these pressures, one teacher shared in her interview, “Timewise, [the read-aloud] is usually the first thing that goes” [WV_4/7/17_Interview], however it is evident by the frequency of read-alouds that teachers find value in reading aloud to students and continue to do so even when they have curricula assigned to them. The curriculum teachers are required to follow can impose restraints on their time for other activities, however, the teachers in this study still specifically selected books to read aloud in addition to the ones in their curriculum.

As discussed previously, 93.3% of teachers report regularly reading aloud in their classrooms. During these regular read-aloud sessions, 97.1% of teachers report independently choosing some of the books they read. As few studies have sought to explore their decisions in the past, the present study attempts to shed light on these important curricular decisions teachers make daily. These decisions are made as a result of having a purpose for reading aloud. These purposes will be explored in the following section.

Research Question Two: Purposes of Reading Aloud

Literacy research suggests there is value in reading aloud (Baker, Santoro, Chard, Fien, Park, & Otterstedt, 2013; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Lennox, 2013). Teachers approach reading aloud with purpose and with a desired outcome. Research Question Two was designed to explore these purposes:

Why do teachers choose to conduct read-alouds?

The Read-Aloud Recording Sheets were designed to explore teachers’ reasons for choosing specific books to read, however 17 of the 368 entries (4.6%) teachers included

on their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets were directed at the purpose for reading aloud as opposed to the reason why teachers chose the specific text. Many of the 17 entries included teachers' reasons for including a read-aloud such as for "end of the day fun" [JK_2/15/17_RRS] or because "we had a few extra minutes before lunch so we read this book" [CM_3/1/17_RRS]. These entries point at the teachers' purpose for including a read-aloud at that time. Even though these read-aloud events could be considered time-filling activities, reading aloud was specifically selected as opposed to another activity. Even these read-aloud sessions have a desired outcome.

Teachers mentioned in their interviews and on their Read-Aloud Recording Sheets that read-alouds are a "go-to activity" [WJ_2/16/17_RRS]. When asked in her interview to share about what "reading for enjoyment" [FL_2/24/17_RRS] looks like in action in her classroom, a Kindergarten teacher shared:

Well I mean, so I say for fun but I mean they're still gaining comprehension and vocabulary. I definitely still stop and you know make sure they understand. If I get to something that I don't think they will understand, I'll stop and ask questions so they will understand.

[FL_4/5/17_Interview].

While these entries on some of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets gave insight into teachers' purposes for reading aloud, an interview question was designed to further explore teachers' primary reasons for choosing to read aloud. Interview question two asked teachers why reading aloud was a part of their day. This led to the discovery of five

main reasons teachers read aloud in the classroom:

- 1) To develop a love of reading;
- 2) To establish a quiet time or refocusing activity;
- 3) To expose students to literature;
- 4) To introduce a lesson or tie in other content; or
- 5) To model fluent reading.

These findings were expanded to the larger sample of teachers in Phase II through a survey question asking teachers to select an answer that best matches their primary reason for including a read-aloud in their day. Teachers were provided with four of the themes presented in the data from Phase I as well as a fifth option of *other*, in which they were able to write in their own reason. The only theme from Phase I not included in the provided survey responses was “to expose children to literature”, though it could have been a response that teachers chose to write in. The line provided for teachers to write in their own response was intended to give a space for teachers to reflect on their practice and include their primary reason even if it wasn’t one of the options provided for them. This option attempted to not limit teachers to the responses given by participants in the first phase as the researcher recognized that there could be more than five reasons for reading aloud. This question sought to expand the themes from Phase I or potentially add to them.

Of the 233 respondents, 8.5% (20 out of 233) chose the *other* option and wrote in their own response. None of the respondents who added their own reason for reading aloud included “to expose children to literature” as their reason for reading aloud. The

majority of those who opted to write in their own response (12 out of 20) wrote a form of “all of the above” as their reason(s) for including a read-aloud in their day. Four of the responses were left blank and the remaining four were a combination of the responses already provided as answer choices. Table 5.3 compares the findings of the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets, one-on-one interviews, and the online survey in terms of teachers’ primary reasons for reading aloud.

Table 5.3

Teachers’ Primary Reasons for Reading Aloud

Source	n	Introduce a lesson or teach a skill	Model fluent reading	Develop a love of reading	Refocus students after another activity	Expose students to literature
Interview	15	2	2	6	5(10)	3
Survey	233	50	50	108	5	0
Total %	248	20.9	20.9	45.9	4(8)	1.2

Note. The number in parenthesis is the number of times this reason for reading aloud was included on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheet; the only reason for reading included in this data set.

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers’ primary reason for reading aloud to students is to develop a love of reading. Many times the entries on the Read-Aloud Recording Sheets indicated that books were selected because students enjoyed them or the teacher enjoyed them. Enjoyment was a reoccurring theme throughout each of the interviews with teachers as well. This finding was confirmed with the results of the survey in which nearly half of the teachers from across the country also shared their primary reason for including read-alouds in their day is to help their students develop a love of reading.

As many teachers shared in their interview, choosing the right book led to student enjoyment. But teachers' book choices are limited to the resources they have available to them. The following section will explore teachers' access to resources and the acquisition of the books in their classroom libraries.

Research Question Three: Teachers' Access to Resources

According to the findings of this study, 93.3% of teachers regularly read aloud in their classrooms. While some teachers follow strict curricula that determines the titles they will read aloud, 97.1% of teachers report independently selecting some or all of the books they read aloud in the classroom. With these high percentages of read-alouds and the frequency with which they occur, teachers must have access to a wealth of books that they can make decisions about. Research Question Three attempted to explore teachers' access to resources when choosing books to read aloud. It asked:

What resources do teachers rely upon when making decisions about what books to read aloud?

Only 2.8% of teachers who participated in this study indicated that they do not independently select any of the books they read aloud in the classroom. These teachers report that they follow a strict curriculum that drives their book choices for them. The remaining 97.1% select some or all of the books they read aloud. If these teachers are reading aloud everyday, they would need access to about 180 books. This number inches closer to 400 if they are reading aloud multiple times per day. The aim of Research Question Three was to determine what resources teachers have access to when building their classroom libraries.

In Bandré's (2005) study on teachers book choices, the findings indicated that the 40% of K-2 teachers relied on personal funds to obtain books for read-aloud. The second most common means of acquiring books was purchasing through a book club (20%). What is not specified in the data Bandré (2005) presented was whether or not the book club purchases were also made with personal funds. The present study attempted to separate these items to gain a clearer picture of teachers' access to resources. In order to do so, the participants in both the interviews and the national survey were asked two questions in regards to book acquisition:

- 1) How have you gotten the majority of your books over the course of your teaching career?
- 2) When you're buying books for your classroom, where do the majority of the funds come from?

When asked in their interviews about where the majority of their books have come from, teachers shared multiple sources of acquiring books. The two most common means of acquiring books were through Scholastic Book Fair and Book Club or by way of a retiring teacher or colleague passing down books. Teachers also shared a mixture of responses including purchasing from used bookstores, purchasing on Amazon, visiting traditional bookstores, and utilizing their school library. Aside from utilizing the school's library, each of the other sources indicate the action of purchasing books. This led to a follow up interview question in which teachers were asked where the funding for book purchases comes from. The teachers who participated in Phase I of the study were all from the same school district in Tennessee. This school district provides every employee

with a \$100 stipend at the beginning of each school year. Teachers have the ability to use this stipend towards any classroom purchase. As the interviews revealed, teachers did not report using this stipend to purchase books; rather they used this stipend to purchase needed classroom materials and supplies. All 15 teachers shared in their interviews that they were purchasing books out of their own personal funds.

These findings were then expanded through the national survey. The teachers reported very similar means for acquiring books in both data sets. Table 5.4 compares the data from Phase I and Phase II in regards to how teachers report acquiring books for their classrooms.

Table 5.4

Teachers' Acquisition of Books Compared Between Data Sets

Source	n	Scholastic Book Fair or Book Club	Thrift store or resale shop	Retiree or colleague	Amazon or other online retailer	Traditional bookstore
Interview	15	11	7	10	4	3
Survey	229	99	39	38	34	19

Note. Interview participants shared multiple means of acquiring books, while survey participants were asked to indicate their primary source.

Survey participants were then asked to indicate the primary source of funding for their books. Of the 229 respondents, 76.4% indicate primarily purchasing books with their personal funds. The remaining participants share that their school provides money to buy books or they rely mostly on donations from others, 8.5% and 3.5% respectively.

These findings indicate that in order to have books to read aloud in addition to their curricular texts, the majority teachers must spend their own money to build their libraries.

Fourteen of the teachers in Phase I shared in their interview that they are always looking to buy new books some even sharing they “buy new texts every month” [WV_4/7/17_Interview]. Many shared their reasons for purchasing through Scholastic was because the books could be “practically free” [WJ_4/3/17_Interview] and because they sometimes “offer \$1 books and it makes it so much more affordable” [WV_4/7/17_Interview]. Purchasing books can be expensive for teachers, especially if they are purchasing through traditional bookstores.

The *School Library Journal* generates a list of the average list prices for all books including children’s books, young adult books, paperbacks, and hardcover editions that have been sold each year. These averages are calculated by the total number of all book sales divided by the number of books sold. In the year-to-date data shared for 2017, the average hardcover children’s book costs \$17.85, the average trade paperback book costs \$12.02, and the average mass-market paperback costs \$6.59 (<http://www.slj.com/2017/03/research/sljs-average-book-prices-for-2017>). If a teacher purchases one new hardcover children’s book each week for the nine months of school, she could potentially spend up to \$650 on books in one school year. This price fluctuates depending on the kind of book purchased and the number of books purchased. These expenses are a reality for teachers in the classroom and are an important finding of this research. Teachers are encouraged to read high-quality books in the classroom. In order to access these high-quality texts, the majority of teachers must be willing to use their own funds to purchase them and build their own classroom library.

The discussion in this section focused on the acquisition of texts. While teachers

may have a fully stocked library with books they purchased or books given to them by a colleague, an important choice occurs when a teacher selects a book from her shelf to read-aloud to students. The following section discusses the choices teachers make when selecting a book to read aloud.

Research Question Four: Teachers' Reasons for Choosing Books

While there is much literature to support the many benefits of reading aloud to children, the majority of the research focuses on the read-aloud event itself. This study sought to explore the lesser-studied half of the read-aloud equation- the book selection process. The following section will discuss how the findings of each phase provided insight into teachers' reasons for choosing books to address Research Question Four:

What reasons do teachers provide for choosing the books they read aloud in the classroom?

This question sought to determine what types of books teacher read most often and explore teachers' reasons for choosing these books.

Book Characteristics. The data collected in Phase I provided insight into the books teachers reported actually reading in the classroom. During the 19 days of the data collection, the fifteen participating teachers read 252 books over the course of 368 read-aloud events. These 252 books consisted of 202 distinctive titles. Chapter Four explored these titles in great detail in terms of book type (fiction and nonfiction) and in accordance with Williams's (1977) selective tradition (books by and about women and minorities).

The findings of this study support existing research that teachers mostly limit their book selections to fiction (Duke, 2004; Yopp & Yopp, 2006). The Read-Aloud

Recording Sheets indicate that teachers were only reading nonfiction during 12.4% of their read-aloud events. Since teachers are making the choice about what kind of book to read, this would indicate that teachers prefer to read fiction or they believe their students prefer to hear fiction read aloud. This was a finding that was extended to the larger sample of teachers in the survey. Teachers participating in Phase II were surveyed through two questions related to fiction and nonfiction. The survey asked which type of book they prefer to read aloud and which type they believe their students prefer to hear. Of the 228 responses, 93.4% of teachers indicated they prefer to read fiction aloud while 87% indicated they believed that students prefer to hear fiction read aloud. It is interesting that when reflecting on students' preference, more teachers considered their students prefer to hear nonfiction read aloud even though they themselves enjoy reading fiction.

Several studies (Bandré, 2005; Jipson & Paley, 1991; Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986) explored the characteristics of the books teachers selected to read in the classroom in terms of the diversity within the texts. These studies range from 12-30 years old and examined variations of diversity within texts. With the age of these studies, it is worth providing an updated and comprehensive look at their findings. Table 5.5 compares the findings of the aforementioned studies with the present study. The table showcases aspects of each study that were investigated here.

Table 5.5

Comparison of Current Findings to Previous Studies about Teachers' Book Selection

Study	Number of books	% Female authored	% Female illustrated	% Author of color	% Female main character	% Main character of color
Luke, Cooke, & Luke (1986)	54	41	Not reported	Not reported	19	4
Jipson & Paley (1991)	155	41	Not reported	5	35	6
Bandré (2005)	394	58	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	6
Present study	202	52.3	36.1	3.5	19.8 (47.6)	9.9 (23.8)

Note. Numbers inside parenthesis represent the percentage of books when only books with human characters were considered.

The present study attempted to strengthen the findings of these previous studies by providing an up-to-date look at the characteristics of texts teachers are choosing to read aloud in the classroom. The present study attempted to close the gaps between the aforementioned studies by including a look at each of the aspects of the texts shared in the previous studies. Even though the oldest of these studies is 31 years old, the data from the present study continue to be in line with those that came before.

One finding unique to this study is the slight increase in the selection of books with diverse characters. When considering only the books with human characters that were selected by teachers in Phase I of this study, 23.8% of the books teachers selected showcased main characters of color. Even when considering all of the 202 books read,

nearly 10 percent of those included main characters of color. This is slightly larger than the percentages of texts included in the previous studies on teachers' book selection.

Factors Influencing Book Choice. An aspect of this study that sets it apart from previous studies that have examined teachers' book selection is the uninfluenced nature of developing the themes studied. For example, in Bandré's (2005) study of teachers' book selections, teachers were surveyed and asked to select the top three factors that influence their decisions about what books to read in the classroom. Bandré (2005) provided teachers with eight options and they were asked to choose their top three reasons. These criteria included: (a) favorite book of past students, (b) personal favorite, (c) award-winning, (d) topic/theme matches or supports curricular standards, (e) author/illustrator recognized for quality, (f) recommended in a professional publication, (g) colleague recommendation, or (h) presents multicultural perspectives. These were factors Bandré (2005) created and provided to teachers without first exploring that these themes actually existed. The present study attempted to explore themes as they naturally occur and then use those themes to survey a larger sample of the population.

When considering the criteria Bandré (2005) presented to teachers, the present study reveals that award-winning books were never mentioned in any phase of data collection as a factor that might influence teachers' decisions about what books to read. Similarly, recommendations from professional publications or from colleagues were not mentioned by participants either. Instead, this study was designed in an exploratory nature in order to first understand teachers' uninfluenced considerations when choosing books and then use those themes to expand the findings to a larger sample of teachers.

Through this exploratory investigation, eight themes were revealed in regards to the considerations teachers make when choosing books to read aloud. The following eight factors were the most commonly reported reasons why teachers chose to read specific books:

- 1) The book could introduce a lesson or develop skills;
- 2) The topic of the book matched a unit or classroom theme;
- 3) The book is entertaining;
- 4) The book is about a current holiday or event;
- 5) The book relates to the current lives and experiences of students;
- 6) The book is a personal favorite of the teacher;
- 7) The book promotes life skills or citizenship; and
- 8) The book is by an author or illustrator of interest.

These eight factors influence teachers' decision-making about what books to read aloud in the classroom. Reading aloud is a highly valued practice occurring daily in classrooms across the country. This study sought to better understand the decision-making that teachers engage in when choosing books to share with students. These decisions directly impact the educational outcomes for students. Understanding teachers' decision-making in their book choices is an important element of the read-aloud equation.

Limitations

As with any research study, there are certain limitations that must be shared. Consideration was given to these limitations throughout the study and attempts were made to minimize their influence. These limitations will be discussed in the following

section.

One limiting factor of the research design was the reliance on teacher report. Each of the data sources relied on teachers' accurate reports of their practice and ideas. Teachers could have produce reactive self-report changes by responding in ways they believe the researcher desired. To avoid this threat to construct validity, Phase II participants were informed that the survey was anonymous and their responses would not impact their careers in any way. Similarly, teachers participating in Phase I were given anonymity as their names, school sites, or school district was not named in the reporting of the study. Participants in both phases of the study were provided with the ability to exit the study at any time. This may have been a reason why some survey questions were left blank from the 259 total responses.

The location restrictions of the researcher provided another limitation to the collection of data in Phase I. The sample size was small due to the limitations in location. This limitation was recognized and was a driving reason for the need for Phase II. Phase II expanded the findings of Phase I by surveying teachers across the country. This attempted to ensure that the findings were not strictly due to the climate of education in the location of teachers in Phase I.

A potential threat to statistical conclusion validity could come from the instrument developed for this study. The instrument could have produced unreliable scores. In order to minimize the threat of a flawed instrument, the researcher piloted the survey with a sample of eight teachers after careful review by several literacy experts, doctoral students, and colleagues. The questions on the survey were edited through

several rounds of revision in order to minimize the internal validity threat of ambiguous temporal precedence.

A sampling limitation must also be acknowledged in Phase II of the study. Teachers were invited to participate by their principals in an email, which briefly described the study and the desire to learn more about their read-aloud practices. Because of this description, teachers who do not engage in read-alouds may not have opted to participate believing their lack of reading aloud was not applicable to the survey. This possibility is consistent with the finding that 93.3% of participating teachers report reading aloud daily. This percentage could have been impacted if all teachers receiving the invitation to participate opted in.

Directions for Future Research

The present study provides a look into teachers' decision-making when choosing books to read aloud in the classroom. The findings of this study could be further explored with additional research on teachers' book choices. One way to strengthen the findings of this research would be to conduct classroom observations in which the researcher carefully examines the books that teachers are actively reading aloud in the classroom rather than relying on teachers' reported readings. An interesting way to investigate this could be through holding pre-conversations with teachers asking them to share their reason for choosing the specific book(s) they plan to read aloud. The researcher could then observe the read-aloud event(s) and take notes about how the specific book selection decisions impacted the read-aloud event. This could further the findings of the present study and provide deeper insight by gleaning an inside look at read-alouds in action that

are the result of a book selection decision.

Another need is to broaden the lens by also studying the use of read-alouds in higher grade levels. Teachers in third-sixth grades also make decisions about reading aloud to students. These decisions also include book choices that are worthy of exploration. Exploring the use of read-alouds throughout the elementary journey can provide a look at teachers' practices and decision-making that impacts the literacy learning of students in each grade level.

Future studies could also include an exploration of how teachers' selection of books impacts students' selection. Some of the teachers participating in Phase I noted that their students often sought out the books they read aloud to them in the classroom. An investigation of how often this occurs and what type of books cause this phenomenon could be an interesting area of exploration for future research.

Conclusion

This study explored teachers' decision-making in regards to the books selected to read-aloud in Kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms. This exploratory, sequential mixed method study collected data through qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the current use and frequency of read-aloud in K-2 classrooms across the country. It attempted to explore teachers' rationales for reading aloud and determine the types of books teachers read most often. The study also aimed to determine what resources teachers have access to in order to understand their reasons for choosing specific books to read aloud.

The findings indicate that teachers across the country are making these important

book choices in their classrooms on a regular basis. Almost 94% of teachers report reading aloud at least several times a week. This finding supports the research on the frequency of read-alouds that has been done to date (Bandré, 2005; Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, and Duffy-Hester, 1998). Teachers conduct these read aloud sessions for many reasons but are primarily concerned with developing a love of reading within their students. Teachers use read-alouds in the classroom for a number of purposes and select the majority of the books they read aloud with intention.

The books teachers selected to read aloud in this study continue to indicate a selective tradition (Williams, 1977). While the participating teachers did demonstrate an increase of selecting books with main characters of color, these books were only selected 10% of the time. This number is an increase, however, from the findings of previous studies on teachers' book selection (Bandré, 2005; Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986; Jipson & Paley, 1991). In order for teachers to choose diverse books for use in their classroom, these texts need to be available to them. If more books including diverse characters are published in the future, it is hopeful that the inclusion of these texts will continue to increase in the classroom.

The books teachers read-aloud in the classroom are primarily purchased out of their own pocket. While many have been gifted with books from fellow teachers or retirees, most teachers continue to use their own money to purchase the books they use in the classroom. Considering that 97% of teachers read-aloud many books in addition to the books prescribed in their reading curriculum, it can be assumed that teachers are spending a lot of money to grow their classroom libraries. Teachers report relying heavily

on the Scholastic Book Club in order to purchase affordable books.

When choosing books to read aloud, teachers are most often considering the skills the book can assist in developing. Teachers are also looking for books that are fun and engaging that will lead students to develop a love of reading. The present study investigated teachers' book selections in order to gain insight into their decision-making. Teachers make many critical decisions throughout the school day that impact student outcomes. Research benefits by further exploring these countless decisions, including the decisions about what books to read aloud. This research provided insight into the curricular autonomy of classroom teachers and their access to resources. These are important findings that can be further explored through future research.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

Dear Dr. Malloy,

The Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the protocol referenced above using exempt review procedures and a determination was made on **January 24, 2017** that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as **Exempt under category B1** in accordance with federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101. **Your protocol will expire on August 31, 2018.**

Please note that Rachael Ross was not added to the protocol. Please let us know when she has completed the CITI training course "Group 1 Investigators Conducting Social and Behavioral Science Research (SBR) at Clemson University" available at www.citiprogram.org, and we will update the file. More information on the CITI training is available at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/training.html>.

If an extension is necessary, the PI should submit an Exempt Protocol Extension Request form, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/forms.html>, at least three weeks before the expiration date. Please refer to our website for more information on the extension procedures, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/guidance/reviewprocess.html>.

All team members are required to review the IRB policies "Responsibilities of Principal Investigators" and "Responsibilities of Research Team Members" available at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html>.

No change in this research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or informed consent form(s). Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, complications, and/or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title when referencing the study in future correspondence.

Good luck with your study.

Sincerely,

Belinda G. Witko
IRB Assistant
Clemson University

Office of Research Compliance - IRB
391 College Avenue, Suite 406
Clemson, SC 29631
Phone: 864-656-3918

This message and any attachments contain information which may be confidential and privileged. Unless you are the addressee (or authorized to receive for the addressee), you may not use, copy or disclose to anyone the message or any information contained in the message. If you have received the message in error, please advise the sender by reply e-mail and delete the message.

Dr. Malloy,

I just wanted to let you know that Rachael Ross has been added to IRB2017-011.

Regards,

Belinda G. Witko
IRB Assistant
Clemson University
Office of Research Compliance - IRB
391 College Avenue, Suite 406
Clemson, SC 29631
Phone: 864-656-3918

This message and any attachments contain information which may be confidential and privileged. Unless you are the addressee (or authorized to receive for the addressee), you may not use, copy or disclose to anyone the message or any information contained in the message. If you have received the message in error, please advise the sender by reply e-mail and delete the message.

Appendix B

Initial Email to Principals

Hello _____,

My name is Rachael Ross and I am a graduate student at Clemson University. I am beginning my dissertation study on teachers' read-aloud book selections here in the Memphis area. I'm looking for teachers who will share their thoughts with me about the books they choose for their classroom.

I'm emailing to request permission to contact your teachers. I am looking for K, 1st, and 2nd grade teachers who are willing to participate in my study. I want to learn from these teachers how they select books for their classroom read-alouds.

Teachers will be asked to:

Fill out a chart about the books they read in class (see attached) for a 4 week period

Participate in a follow-up interview about their chart

I am prepared to give each teacher who participates will receive a book for their classroom library as an incentive.

May I have permission to contact your teachers about participating in this study? I would be happy to meet with you in person to discuss this study further if you would like. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachael Ross
423-650-5446

Appendix C

Email with Interest Survey

Good morning teachers!

My name is Rachael Ross and I am a graduate student at Clemson University. Your principal, _____, gave me permission to contact you about participating in my dissertation research study. Please take a few moments to fill out this quick 1-minute survey! If you decide to participate, you will receive a book for your classroom library. If you have any questions please call/text me at 423-650-5446 or email: rachaeh@clemson.edu.

THANK YOU!

Follow this link to the Survey:

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails: [\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

Appendix D

Interest Survey

Q1 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q2 What race/ethnicity best describes you?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native (1)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Hispanic American (4)
- White or Caucasian (5)
- Multiple Ethnicity or Other (please specify) (6) _____

Q3 What is the highest degree you have earned?

- BA/BS (1)
- MS/MA/M.Ed. (2)
- Specialist (3)
- Doctorate (4)

Q4 Do you have any additional endorsements or certificates?

- Yes (please describe) (1) _____
- No (2)

Q5 How many years of classroom teaching experience do you have?

- 1-5 years (1)
- 6-10 years (2)
- 11-15 years (3)
- 16+ (4)

Q6 What grade level do you teach?

- Kindergarten (1)
- First Grade (2)
- Second Grade (3)

Q9 How long have you taught at this grade level?

Q7 How often do you read aloud to your students in your classroom?

- Less than once a week (1)
- Once a week (2)
- Several times a week (3)
- Every day (4)
- Several times a day (5)

Q11 Do you choose the books you read aloud on your own?

- Yes (1)
- Sometimes (please explain) (2) _____
- No (please explain) (3) _____

Q8 Are you willing to participate in a 4-week research project? You will be asked to record the books you read aloud to your students in a simple chart (see below). This should take no longer than 2 minutes of your time per day. You will be asked to participate in an interview at the completion of the 4 weeks.

NAME: GRADE: SCHOOL:

Date Title of book Author's name Illustrator's name I chose this book because...

- Yes (4)
- Maybe, but I need more information (5)
- No (6)

Q10 Please enter your email here:

Appendix E

Read-Aloud Recording Sheet

My Daily Read-Alouds

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. I am interested in learning about how you choose books for reading aloud in your classroom. As a participant you will be asked to fill out this read-aloud matrix daily. Please enter the information for each book you use for read-aloud each day.

Please include the title, author, illustrator, and a description telling me why you selected this book. Please complete this matrix each day for four weeks. I will collect this from you **each Friday**. The final copy will be collected on **Friday, March 10th**. Please submit via email each week. If you have any questions please contact me at rachaeh@clermson.edu or 423-650-5446. Thank you!

	NAME:	GRADE:	SCHOOL:	
Date	Title	Author's Name	Illustrator's name	I chose this book because...

Appendix F

Participant Information Document

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

Exploring Teachers' Read-Aloud Book Selections

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Doctoral student Rachael Ross is inviting you to take part in a research study. Rachael is a graduate student at Clemson University, conducting this study with the help of Dr. Jackie Malloy, professor at Clemson University. The purpose of this research is to better understand how teachers select books for their classroom read-alouds.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a matrix for 4 weeks that details what book you used each time you did a read-aloud and why you chose that book. Rachael will meet with you to explain how to use the matrix and will be available to you via email and phone during the weeks that you are completing the matrix. After the matrix is collected, Rachael will contact you for an interview to ask any clarifying questions. With your permission, we would like to audio record your interview.

You will have a month to complete the matrix, although it will only require a few minutes each day for you to enter your responses. Another two to three weeks will be required for interviews. The interview will only take about 30 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you as a result of participating in this research study.

Possible Benefits

We do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this research may help us to understand how teachers make decisions regarding the books they read aloud in their classrooms.

Incentives

Each participant will receive a book that would be appropriate for reading aloud for his or her grade level.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular.

When you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym. This pseudonym will replace your name anywhere it can be read. Any interviews that are conducted will be audio recorded so that a transcription of the interview can be created for analysis. Once the transcripts are created, the audio recording will be deleted. Reports of our findings will not include information that could identify you or the school. Rachael will keep all files on a password-protected computer.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Rachael Ross at 423-650-5446 (rachaeh@clemson.edu) or Jackie Malloy at 864-650-4581 (malloy2@clemson.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Appendix G

Email with Reading Survey

Hello,

My name is Rachael Ross and I am a doctoral student in education at Clemson University. I am requesting your help with my research study.

To better understand the decisions teachers make about the books they read in the classroom, I am asking for K-2 teachers to take a 5-minute, multiple-choice survey.

INSERT LINK HERE

If you're willing to participate, please forward the above link to all K-2 teachers in your district. If you have any questions, please email me at rachaeh@clemson.edu.

This study has received IRB approval (IRB2017-011).

Thank you for partnering with me in my research!

Rachael Ross
PhD Candidate
Literacy, Language, & Culture
Clemson University

Appendix H

Interview Protocol

I have made 1-hour appointments with each participant. I plan to ask each participate the same set of questions as well as some individualized questions based on their responses on their read-aloud matrix. The following are the questions that I will ask **ALL** participants:

1. Can you look over your chart and circle the entries that show books you chose on your own – books that are not a part of a curriculum your school uses?
 - a. NOTE: I noticed that some participants listed books that were a part of an adopted curriculum. This will help me differentiate between the books they **MUST** read and the books they **CHOOSE** to read.
2. In your initial survey, you mentioned reading aloud to your students _____ (*depending on answer from survey: once a week, several times a week, everyday, several times a day*). Why is reading aloud a part of your day?
3. Can you tell me what this time looks like in your classroom?
 - a. PROBE: Where are students during this time?
 - b. PROBE: Do you read more out loud whole-group or small-group?
4. I see you've been teaching _____ (K/1/2) for _____ years. Tell me how you've gotten most of your read aloud books over those years.
 - a. PROBE: What resources do you have for getting books? Scholastic book club? Stipends? Good librarian?
5. What would you say is most important in choosing books that you will read aloud to your students?
 - a. PROBE: After considering _____, what else would you say is important in your book selection?
6. Would you say your read aloud chart would look similar if I had asked you to fill this out in say October or April? How would it change?
7. Does your book selection look similar from year to year? How does it change?
 - a. PROBE: What causes those changes? Are your students a reason for change? How? Does your book selection change based on the students you have each year?
8. What else should I know about how you choose books in your classroom?

Teachers will then be asked questions that relate specifically to their charts.

Appendix I

Reading Survey

Information About Being in a Research Study Clemson University

Rachael Ross is inviting you to participate in a research study. Rachael is a doctoral candidate at Clemson University and is conducting this study with the help of Dr. Jackie Malloy. This study has received IRB approval (IRB2017-011). If you agree to participate, you will be asked to fill out an online survey. The survey will only require about 5 minutes of your time. There are no foreseen risks or any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study, however, this study may help us better understand how teachers make decisions regarding the books they choose to read aloud in their classrooms. At the end of the survey you will be invited to submit your email address in order to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card. This is only so that we can contact you if you win. If you have any questions about this study or if any problems arise, please reach out to Rachael Ross (rachael@clemson.edu). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll free number, 866-297-3071. For most of the following questions, you will be asked to select the answer that BEST describes you and your decision making about reading aloud in the classroom. There are two questions that will ask you to click and drag responses to rank them in order. By clicking to the next screen, you are agreeing to participate in the study. Thank you!

Q1 What grade level do you teach?

- Kindergarten (1)
- First Grade (2)
- Second Grade (3)

Q2 How long have you taught at this grade level?

- 1 - 5 years (1)
- 6 - 10 years (2)
- 11 - 15 years (3)
- 16+ years (4)

Q3 How often do you read aloud to the students in your classroom?

- Less than once a week (1)
- Once a week (2)
- Several times a week (3)
- Every day (4)
- Several times a day (5)

Q4 On average, how many minutes do you spend reading aloud each time?

- 0 - 15 minutes (1)
- 16 - 30 minutes (2)
- 31 - 45 minutes (3)
- 46 - 60 minutes (4)

Q5 Do you choose the books you read aloud on your own?

- Yes, I independently choose ALL the books that I read in my classroom. (1)
- Sometimes, I follow a specific curriculum but I also choose some of my own books to read aloud. (2)
- No, I follow a strict curriculum and I do not add any extra books. (3)

Q6 Which response best matches your primary reason for including a read aloud in your day?

- As a way to refocus students after another activity (1)
- To develop a love of reading (2)
- To introduce a lesson or skill (5)
- To model fluent reading and expression (3)
- Other (explain) (4) _____

Q7 How many of your students do you believe enjoy hearing you read aloud?

- All students (1)
- Most students (4)
- Some students (5)
- Few students (2)

Q8 You have an extra 10 minutes before it's time for lunch! How likely are you to read a book aloud to your students to fill this time?

- Very likely (1)
- Likely (3)
- Unlikely (4)
- Very unlikely (5)

Q9 What kind of books do you prefer to read aloud?

- Fiction (1)
- Nonfiction (2)

Q10 What kind of books do your students prefer to hear read aloud?

- Nonfiction (1)
- Fiction (2)

Q11 How have you gotten the majority of the books you read aloud over the course of your teaching career?

- Scholastic Book Club (1)
- A retiree/other teacher gave them to me (2)
- Amazon/other online retailer (3)
- Visiting a traditional book store (4)
- Thrift stores/resale shops (5)

Q12 When you purchase books for your classroom, where do the majority of the funds come from?

- My school provides money to buy books (1)
- I use my own money to buy books (2)
- Donations from others (3)

Q13 The following are ways to get students engaged while reading aloud. Please click and drag the responses to rank them from (1) occurs MOST often in my classroom to (5) occurs LEAST often in my classroom.

- _____ You believe the book you've chosen will interest your students (1)
- _____ As you read you change your voice and inflection to match characters or actions (2)
- _____ You ask students to act out pieces of the story (3)
- _____ You pause to ask questions about what is happening (4)
- _____ You ask students to predict what will happen next (5)

Q14 A student brings a book from home and asks you to read it out loud. How likely are you to do this?

- Very likely. I'll read it today! (1)
- Possibly, but I want to read it myself first. (2)
- Possibly, it depends on if we have time. (3)
- Not likely at all. (4)

Q15 The following are some reasons why teachers choose a book to read aloud. Please click and drag the following reasons to rank them from the (1) MOST to (8) LEAST likely reason that YOU would choose a book to read out loud.

- _____ The book is about a current holiday or event. (1)
- _____ The book is entertaining. (2)
- _____ The book is one of my personal favorites. (3)
- _____ The book can help me teach a skill. (4)
- _____ The book promotes life skills or citizenship. (5)
- _____ The topic of the book matches a unit theme. (6)
- _____ The book relates to my current students' lives and experiences. (7)
- _____ The book is by an author or illustrator who interests me. (8)

Q16 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q17 What race/ethnicity best describes you?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native (1)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Hispanic American (4)
- White or Caucasian (5)
- Multiple Ethnicity or Other (please specify) (6) _____

Q18 What is the highest degree you have earned?

- BA/BS (1)
- MS/MA/M.Ed. (2)
- Specialist (3)
- Doctorate (4)

Q19 Do you have any additional endorsements or certificates?

- Yes (please describe) (1) _____
- No (2)

Q20 How many total years of classroom teaching experience do you have?

- 1-5 years (1)
- 6-10 years (2)
- 11-15 years (3)
- 16+ (4)

Q21 Which category best describes the school in which you work?

- Public School (1)
- Private School (2)
- Charter School (3)
- Magnet School (4)

Q22 Where does your age fall?

- 20 - 30 (1)
- 31 - 40 (2)
- 41- 50 (3)
- 51 - 60 (4)
- 60+ (5)

Q23 In which state do you teach?

- Alabama (1)
- Alaska (58)
- Arizona (59)
- Arkansas (60)
- California (61)
- Colorado (62)
- Connecticut (63)
- Delaware (64)
- Florida (65)
- Georgia (66)
- Hawaii (67)
- Idaho (68)
- Illinois (69)
- Indiana (70)
- Iowa (71)
- Kansas (72)
- Kentucky (73)
- Louisiana (74)
- Maine (75)
- Maryland (76)
- Massachusetts (77)
- Michigan (78)
- Minnesota (79)
- Mississippi (80)
- Missouri (81)
- Montana (82)
- Nebraska (83)
- Nevada (84)
- New Hampshire (85)
- New Jersey (86)
- New Mexico (87)
- New York (88)
- North Carolina (89)
- North Dakota (90)
- Ohio (91)
- Oklahoma (92)
- Oregon (93)

- Pennsylvania (94)
- Rhode Island (95)
- South Carolina (96)
- South Dakota (97)
- Tennessee (98)
- Texas (99)
- Utah (100)
- Vermont (101)
- Virginia (102)
- Washington (103)
- West Virginia (104)
- Wisconsin (105)
- Wyoming (106)

Q24 Please enter your email here if you would like to be entered into the drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card:

Appendix J

Survey Email to Principals

Hello,

My name is Rachael Ross and I am a PhD candidate in education at Clemson University.

To better understand the decisions teachers make about the books they read in the classroom, I am asking for K-2 teachers to take a 5-minute **online** survey.

If you're willing to participate, please forward the following link to all K-2 teachers in your school. If you have any questions, please email me at rachaelh@clemson.edu.

Follow this link to the

Survey: https://proxy.qualtrics.com/proxy/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fclmson.qualtrics.com%2Fjfe%2Fform%2FSV_7X4s4DsX4FBYJ0h&token=7BFeSi7LXqvIMSk%2BnaYnq0vNGY1%2BrH5NRWwoMzaiXlo%3D

This study has received IRB approval (IRB2017-011).

Thank you for partnering with me in my research!

Rachael Ross
PhD Candidate
Literacy, Language, & Culture
Clemson University

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