

**Influence of Exposure to Children's Literature on Teachers' and Students' Knowledge of  
and Attitudes Toward Reading**

by

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## Abstract

This study explored the influence of exposure to children's literature on both classroom teachers and their students. The investigation involved 21 teachers and 222 second grade students in an elementary school located in the Southeastern United States. Using a Title Recognition Test (TRT) and Reading Attitude Survey (RAS), three hypotheses were explored. The first hypothesis considered the relationship between teachers' knowledge of children's literature and the students' knowledge of children's literature. The second hypothesis considered how exposure to children's literature influenced teachers' and students' knowledge. The third hypothesis explored the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward reading and students' attitudes toward reading. While the study provided support for the second hypothesis and indicated that exposure to children's literature was positively associated with teachers' and students' knowledge of children's literature, it did not confirm the first or third hypothesis. However, additional analysis did indicate a relationship between reading attitudes and students' gaining in knowledge of children's literature.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Tables .....	viii
List of Figures .....	ix
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Background of the Problem.....	1
Theory Behind the Study.....	2
Statement of the Problem .....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Design .....	11
Definition of Terms .....	12
Limitations.....	15
Assumptions .....	15
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	16
Title Recognition Test .....	16

Parents' Knowledge of Children's Literature .....	19
Effects of SES on Reading .....	22
Benefits of Reading on Vocabulary, Comprehension and Grammar .....	24
Teachers' Affinity for Reading .....	27
Teachers' Literacy Knowledge .....	30
Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures .....	33
Overview of the Study .....	33
Field Study .....	34
Setting and Participants .....	35
Procedures .....	39
Control Group .....	41
Experimental Group .....	42
Statistical Methods .....	43
Data Analysis Procedures .....	45
Chapter Four: Results .....	47
Research Question 1 .....	47
Research Question 2 .....	50
Research Question 3 .....	53
Additional analysis .....	54
Chapter Five: Discussion .....	56
Introduction .....	56
Discussion of Findings .....	56
Educational Implications .....	59

Limitations of the Study .....	60
Recommendations for Further Research .....	61
References.....	67
Appendix A-TRT Pretest/Stars Represent foils which were not on the actual test .....	76
Appendix B-TRT Posttest/Stars Represent foils which were not on the actual test.....	77
Appendix C- Reading Attitude Survey .....	78
Appendix-D List of Book Titles Used For Experiment Group .....	79
Appendix E-List of Book Titles Read to Control Group.....	83

## List of Tables

Table 1	Simple Descriptive Statistics .....	48
Table 2	Breakdown of Popular Title Recognition .....	50
Table 3	ANOVA Using Group to Predict Posttest Score .....	51
Table 4	Regression Analysis of the Correlation between Student Reading Attitude and Teacher Reading Attitude.....	54
Table 5	Regression Analysis of Student PostTest TRT Using Attitude Scores .....	55



## List of Figures

Figure 1 Students' Pretest and Posttest score for each classroom.....	52
Figure 2 Teachers' Pretest and Posttest, plotted for each teacher/classroom.....	53

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go” (Seuss, 1990).

### *Background of the Problem*

The U.S. Department of Education commissioned a National Reading Panel (NRP) in 1997. The goal of this panel was to assess and summarize the different, scientifically-based approaches to teaching reading to children (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The panel identified five key building blocks for teaching reading; these blocks are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. According to the panel, the first two blocks, phonemic awareness and phonics, should be taught and well established by the end of second grade. Fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension should be the focus of reading instruction for students in third through twelfth grade (NICHD, 2000).

Cremin, Mottram, Bearne, and Goodwin (2008a) suggested that the emphasis the NRP put on phonics instruction is partially responsible for teachers and students moving away from reading for pleasure in the early grades. The authors did not say that phonics instructions is unnecessary, but they did point out that the emphasis on making curriculum comply with reading research summarized by the NRP may have diminished the time teachers have to share the pleasure of reading with their students. Cremin and colleagues took the position that pressure to cover an extensive phonics curriculum leaves little or no time to encourage independent reading and allow students to experience the joy of reading for pleasure.

Cremin et al. (2008a) also suggested that the teacher’s knowledge of children’s literature has become more limited due to the emphasis on assessing and teaching phonics and other

components of reading instruction identified by the NRP. These pressures leave little time and incentive for teachers to develop a familiarity with children's literature. Reading and knowing children's literature is the foundation from which teachers can model reading for pleasure and foster positive attitudes toward reading in their students. Cremin et al. (2008a) contended that teachers' familiarity with children's literature may be a significant moderator of children's familiarity with books and their interest in reading for their own purposes and enjoyment.

Unfortunately, there remains a gap in the research literature with regard to the link between teachers' knowledge of and attitudes toward reading and that of their students. Because this link has yet to be demonstrated in a controlled setting, the goal of this study was to address that gap in the literature. This was accomplished by assessing teachers' and students' knowledge of current titles for an experimental and a control group using the Title Recognition Test (TRT) at the beginning and end of the study and a Reading Attitude Survey (RAS) at the beginning of the study.

In the pages that follow, this chapter introduces the theoretical foundations that frame the research questions and establish purposes for the study. Following that is a chapter devoted to a review of the scholarly literature related to the research questions. The third chapter explains the design and methods used, and the fourth chapter presents the analysis of data and results. The fifth chapter of this dissertation concludes with a discussion of the findings, limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research.

### *Theory Behind the Study*

Neuman (1996) stated that literacy development and early language is especially important for young children. She went on to say that "as an intensely social activity, book reading provides an interactive context for children to acquire and practice developing verbal and

conceptual skills” (p. 496). This idea supports the premises of Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory. For Vygotsky (1978), “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people, and then inside the child” (p. 57). Newman (1996) followed this by arguing that Vygotskian views stress the importance of socially supervising children so they are given chances to go beyond what they can do on their own. In doing so with guidance, children increase their language growth and ability to solve problems and think independently. This application puts into action Vygotsky’s most popular construct, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is defined as the area between a child’s present actual level of functioning, what a child does without help or support, and their potential performance level, the level at which a child can perform with help and guidance (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Vygotsky (1978) stated that, for children to be operating within their ZPD, they must be supported by an adult when engaged in tasks they cannot perform on their own. This social interaction is key to learning and a precursor to the child moving on to task independence.

The ZPD further described by Hunt (1997), who identified this construct as occurring when a teacher allows students to read books that are obviously above the child’s reading level but of high interest to the child. The student’s high interest in the book, coupled with teacher assistance, allows the child to read a book above his or her immediate independent and instructional level. Hunt (1997) suggested that teachers frequently encounter students who struggle to read books because they are of such high interest to the children. However, building on the ZPD, Hunt (1997) asserted that when the teacher takes time to assist one of these children, the reader is likely to break through many conventional barriers and thus become able to surpass his current instructional level.

According to statements made by Dixon-Krauss (1996), exchanges between the student and the teacher are important because this “social interaction provides the context for guiding the child’s learning” (p. 15). The teacher’s role, therefore, is to act as a mediator and guide the child by providing support in the form of discussion and modeling (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Similarly Palincsar (1998) stated that from “social constructivist perspectives, interactions such as those achieved through classroom discussion are thought to provide mechanisms for enhancing higher-order thinking” (p. 357).

Scaffolding is one way a teacher targets the child’s ZPD. Wood, Bruner and Ross ( as cited in Pentimonti and Justice, 2010) referred to scaffolding as “the process of temporarily providing support to a learner and then gradually withdrawing this support as the learner becomes capable of independence in performing tasks” (p. 241). Bruner (1986) explains that scaffolding takes place during storybook reading between an adult and a young child in the home or childcare setting. According to Bruner, the classroom teacher uses scaffolding to gradually relinquish help they provide with reading and comprehending texts as the child’s capabilities increase. Cambourne (1995) supported Bruner’s point by arguing that it is important for the student to feel free of anxiety during the scaffolding process. If the child feels they will be able to do the task, they are much more likely to engage and ultimately learn. Additionally, Cambourne (1995) suggested that the child also needs to feel the task has some purpose or value. This type of scaffolding forms a bond between student and teacher that is highly conducive to learning (Cambourne, 1995). Modeling, a form of scaffolding, is a more specific technique where the teacher models reading in front of students (Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999). This technique is particularly effective in that it indicates to the students that their teacher values reading.

Adding to understandings about the teacher's role in modeling reading behaviors, this, Garrett (2002) described the importance of teacher attitude toward reading and argued that teachers need to realize that they, through positive role modeling, can change the negative attitudes students have toward reading. Along the same lines, Dreher (2003) contended that teachers who enjoy reading demonstrate this love of reading to their students and provide a role model for helping the children want to become readers. Dreher (2003) wrote:

In short, teachers who are engaged readers are motivated to read, are both strategic and knowledgeable readers, and are socially interactive about what they read. These qualities show up in their classroom interactions and help create students who are, in turn, engaged readers. (p. 338)

In *The Read Aloud Handbook*, Trelease (2006) discussed how reading aloud to students promotes the children's emotional development, imagination, interest, purpose, identity, and both verbal and listening skills to foster a desire for reading. Extending Trelease's points, Krashen (1993) stated that "reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, and adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers" (p. 23). Morrison et al. (1999) suggested that an additional benefit of teachers' reading with their students is that the teachers themselves become familiar with the titles of books and literature that are of interest to their students.

The goal of the research project described in this dissertation was to understand the relationship between teachers' and students' knowledge of and exposure to children's literature. Specifically, this research was undertaken to determine if a teacher's knowledge of books is positively associated with students' knowledge of books. At the same time, teachers' attitudes toward reading were compared to their students' attitudes toward reading. Addressing these

purposes, this study provided results that add empirical evidence to discussions about the importance of reading books aloud and its impact on students' reading. As was stated by Gambrell (1996), "teachers play a critical role in helping children develop into readers who read for both pleasure and information" (p. 15).

### *Statement of the Problem*

Several researchers have reported a decline in reading for pleasure and a rise in children's negative attitudes toward reading (Cremin, Bearne, Mottram & Goodwin, 2008a,b; Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004). These negative attitudes toward reading have steadily increased across all age ranges, and, correspondingly, there has also been a significant decline in positive attitudes toward reading (Cremin et al., 2008a,b; Sainsbury, & Schagen, 2004). Weber (2004) stated that "the nation is still caught in a tide of indifference when it comes to literature" (p. E1). Weber also noted that reading for pleasure, which he defined as the reading of plays, poetry, short stories and novels, is done by less than half of Americans over the age of 18 and that the pace at which the nation is losing readers, and particular young readers, is rapidly increasing.

Weber's claim that the nation is quickly losing readers was supported by research that was done by Cox and Schaetzel (2007). They found that only fifty copies of a book had to be sold in order for it to make the Top 20 list for popular books in Singapore (where English is typically the first or second language). For Cox and Schaetzel (2007), this suggested a limited amount of reading and reading resources are necessary to put a book on the Top 20 list, supporting Weber's claim that there has been a fast paced decline in reading for pleasure.

Cox and Schaetzel (2007) looked at the reading habits for pre-service teachers with the premise that teachers who are good at teaching reading are likely to be readers themselves. In the course of their study, they showed that their participants fell into three categories of readers:

functional, detached, and prolific. A functional reader is not likely to buy or read a book unless it is required for some research or recommended by a friend. A detached reader prefers to watch movies or videos over reading a book for pleasure. For the detached and functional reader, reading is not something they do for pleasure. These functional and detached readers are contrasted with the prolific reader who loves reading and does so for pleasure.

Cox and Schaetzel (2007) found that 76% of the teacher trainees in their study were functional and detached, with only 24% being prolific readers. In their study, one of the participants argued that Winnie the Pooh stories only exist in the format of videos and was shocked to find out they are actually from a book written by A.A. Milne. Cox and Schaetzel (2007) found this disturbing due to “research findings which link confidence in reading, knowledge of children’s literature and teacher’s reading lives as central to confidence in the teaching of reading and writing” (p. 311).

Applegate and Applegate (2004) asked, “what if a significant number of the teachers of the future had no love of reading themselves?” (p. 555). They found very similar results to those in the study done by Cox and Schaetzel (2007). In the Applegate study, the participants were categorized as unenthusiastic or enthusiastic readers based on a reading survey. Over half (54.3%) of the pre-service teachers were classified as unenthusiastic readers with many reporting having no enjoyment of reading at all. Like Cox and Schaetzel (2007), Applegate and Applegate (2004) found these findings disturbing and suggested that teachers who love to read are in a very good position to share this love with their students. Research reported by Applegate and Applegate (2004) suggests that negative experiences with reading have long-term harmful effects on children and that it is important to address the attitudes current teachers have toward reading so that they may be encouraged to create classrooms that promote engaged reading by students.



### *Purpose of the Study*

The importance of reading to children has come to be an axiomatic component of American culture (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). There is much research that links higher reading achievement to the amount of reading done by individuals. Furthermore, this line of research has been used to suggest that the amount of reading an individual does results in a positive attitude toward reading, and this in turn develops a highly motivated reader (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich & Stanovich, 2004; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004). Research shows not only that highly motivated, engaged readers are able to achieve higher levels of reading but also that they typically achieve higher grades in school (Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998) and perform better on the reading section of standardized tests (Gottfried, 1990).

#### *Link between teachers and students.*

Guthrie, Dreher, and Baker (2000) proposed that if educators have a goal for students to be engaged readers, they first need to prepare teachers who are highly engaged readers. As Routman (1991) found, “we teachers need to demonstrate ourselves as ‘joyfully literate’” (p. 14). It seems then that teachers need to act as role models in the classroom and convey their love for reading to the students as doing so makes a difference in promoting a classroom community of readers (Dreher, 2003).

Cunningham et al. (2004, p. 142) and Dreher (2003, p. 338) have presented a prescriptive argument that can be summarized as follows: If a teacher is able to act as a reading role model and convey a love for reading in a way that creates an environment where children are engaged and motivated to read, then it is essential for the teacher to have a wide knowledge of children’s literature. Cremin et al. (2008b) contended that a classroom teacher’s knowledge of children’s literature is a prerequisite if the teacher is to “nurture positive attitudes and sustain and develop

young readers” (p. 450). In spite of the arguments of these educators and researchers, there has been a significant gap between this prescription for teachers and what has occurred in practice. In a study done by Cunningham et al. (2004), researchers looked at teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature in kindergarten and up to grade three classrooms and found that 90% of the teachers were not familiar with very popular children’s titles as measured by a Title Recognition Test.

Compounding this problem, research has indicated that teachers who do not have a broad range of knowledge about children’s literature are less able to support their students’ reading choices and to help develop students who read for pleasure (Cremin et al., 2008b). Collins and Safford (2008) echoed these findings by stating that teachers need to know what is available for children to read so they can help students find books of particular interest to them. Further supporting the need for teachers’ familiarity with children’s literature, Cremin et al. (2008b) found that while many teachers read for pleasure, they do not read children’s books. As such these teachers are not familiar or confident enough to be able to make book recommendations to their students. Cremin’s participants’ knowledge of children’s literature was restricted to their own childhood favorites, with most participants unable to name six children’s poets, authors, and picture book makers. These findings caused the researchers to question the teacher’s ability to plan rich, integrated literacy instruction as these teachers were quite unfamiliar with children’s literature. Cremin et al. (2008b) argued that more needs to be done to make teachers familiar with a wide range of children’s literature so these teachers can provide “wider and more engaging reading experiences” (p. 459) and consequently support a student’s quest for a more pleasurable reading experience.

Other researchers have also collected evidence that teachers' knowledge of children's literature is associated with the amount of literature to which students are exposed. Cunningham et al. (2004) demonstrated that the extent of teachers' knowledge of children's book titles is predictive of how rich the literacy environment is in the classroom. Similarly, McCutchen et al. (2002) stated:

If teachers are to create and maintain a literate environment for their students, we might expect teachers to be knowledgeable about children's literature. Such a knowledge base would likely include knowledge of current as well as classic titles of books for children. (p. 210)

*Title Recognition Test explained.*

To address questions about the impact of teachers' knowledge of literature on students, the researcher must be able to measure how much teachers know about children's books. In one line of reading research, a teacher's knowledge of literature is operationally defined and measured using an instrument that examines teachers' familiarity with children's book titles (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990, 1991; Senechal, LeFevre, Hudson, & Lawson, 1996; Stainthorp, 1997). The Title Recognition Test (TRT) was developed by Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) and has been shown to be a reliable and predictable measure of print exposure (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990; McBride-Chang, Manis, Seidenberg, Custodio, & Doi, 1993) and has been suggested by some to be "among the purest and the best measures of print exposure to date" (McBride-Chang et al., 1993, p. 237).

Senechal et al. (1996) created a children's TRT based on the Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) TRT. The results from this study showed that parents who were familiar with more children's book titles also had children who knew more titles (Senechal et al., 1996). If parents who are familiar with more children's book titles have children who are also familiar with more

children's book titles, might similar results also be true for teachers and students? These findings provided data and results that informed the research questions and purposes for this study. The purpose of the study was to determine if teachers who have higher scores on the TRT, an instrument measuring recognition of children's literature, also have students with higher scores on the TRT and therefore more familiarity with children's literature. Secondly this study sought to find out if teachers' with positive attitudes also had students with positive reading attitudes.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Do teachers' scores on the TRT (pretest) prior to a treatment that includes planned, systematic access and exposure to researcher-provided children's books correlate with their students' scores on the TRT (pretest)?
2. Do teachers and students in a treatment group with more exposure to children's books have more knowledge of children's book titles than teachers and students in a control group without researcher-provided children's books?
3. Do teachers who have positive attitudes toward reading have students with positive attitudes toward reading?

### *Research Design*

This study investigated the impact that exposure to children's literature had on second grade teachers and students. The study used current children books found in quality book lists put forth by the American Library Association (ALA) and International Reading Association's (IRA) Children's Choices from 2005 through 2010. The study examined the effectiveness of four weeks of exposure to thirty titles from these lists. Second grade teachers from the participating school were assigned to an experimental or control group. Students returning permission slips in

each class participated. The TRT and RAS were given at the beginning of the study and another TRT was given again at the end of the study. Data from the pretest and posttests were examined to see if exposure to books produced gains in scores on the TRT for students in the experimental group as compared to the control group.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Title Recognition Test:* Developed by Cunningham and Stanovich (1990), the TRT has been shown to be easy to use and a reliable instrument for measuring the amount of text one has read while controlling for the social desirability effect of reading is good. The TRT involves the selection of book titles from a list of popular and non-existent titles (foils).

*Peter Effect:* This terminology is derived from a biblical account of the Apostle Peter. Authors of “The Peter Effect: Reading Habits and Attitudes of Pre-service Teachers”, Anthony and Mary Applegate adopted the term, Peter Effect, and defined it “as the condition characterizing those teachers who are charged with conveying to their students an enthusiasm for reading that they do not have” (Applegate & Applegate, 2004, p. 556).

*Matthew Effects:* This terminology is derived from a biblical account from Matthew 25:29, “For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.” This has been applied to situations in which it appears that the rich get richer and poor get poorer. Keith Stanovich popularized this terminology in his 1986 article, “Matthew Effects in reading: Some Consequences of Individual Differences in the Acquisition of Literacy.” For Stanovich, Matthew Effects refers to the concept that over time, good readers get even better at reading, and poor readers become comparatively poorer at reading.

*Phonological Processing Abilities:* This terminology refers to understanding sounds used in language.

*Orthographic Processing Abilities:* This terminology refers to understanding the association between the visual form of letters and the sounds they make.

*Automaticity:* This terminology means being able to recognize words instantly and without effort while reading.

*Engaged Readers:* Dreher (2003) defined engaged readers as being highly motivated to read. Dreher found engaged readers to be strategic when reading and thus gaining substantial knowledge while reading. Engaged readers read a wide variety of material. These individuals find reading to be a social event and share what they read with friends and family.

*Enthusiastic Readers:* Readers with a very positive attitude toward reading are enthusiastic readers. They read often and a significant amount and include reading during the summer break. These readers completed at least one book other than a textbook or children's literature over the summer. They reported having a love for reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

*Unenthusiastic Readers:* Unenthusiastic readers do not find much enjoyment in reading. They do not read leisurely or for pleasure. These readers did not read a book over the course of the summer (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

*Functional Readers:* These readers do not necessarily look at reading as something to do for pleasure. They are unlikely to read a book unless it is for school or highly recommended by friends (Cox & Schaetzl, 2007).

*Detached Readers:* These readers only read academically, and then only because they have to. They have no emotional attachment to reading. They prefer videos, TV or movies over

reading a book for pleasure. These readers are inclined to consider reading a waste of time. For them, if a movie only takes two hours to watch, why would they spend a week or more to read the book? They do not choose to read outside of school- assigned texts (Cox & Schaezel, 2007).

*Prolific Readers:* These readers love to read. They have an emotional connection with reading. They will read anytime, anywhere, even if they only have a short amount of time. Reading is done in their spare time, and they consider reading to be a perfect weekend activity. These readers read for pleasure and wish for more time to read (Cox & Schaezel, 2007).

*Aesthetic Readers:* Based on Rosenblatt's (1978) aesthetic stance, Ruddell (1995) defined aesthetic readers as engaging in reading that is done for pleasure, and the reader becomes so absorbed in the text that they become part of the text and live through the experiences of the characters.

*Precocious Readers:* Scarborough & Dobrich (1994) defined these readers as children who learn to read at an especially early age (pre-school).

*Efferent Reader:* Based on Rosenblatt's (1978) efferent stance, Ruddell (1995) defined efferent readers as engaging in reading that is done to find facts and information. Pleasure is not the primary focus. This is often the type of reading one does when reading something required, like a textbook, or materials for information needed to perform a task or produce a product, like trade books.

*Influential Teachers:* Ruddell (1995) defined influential teachers as those special teachers that we recall and remember in a very positive light throughout school. These teachers oftentimes play a key role in not only our academic life but also in our personal lives.

*Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):* Dixon-Krauss (1996) defined the ZPD as the area between a child's present actual level of functioning (what a child does without help or support)

and his potential performance level (the level at which a child can perform with help and guidance).

### *Limitations*

As with any research project, this study is not without limitations. The findings in this study are limited and apply only to the second grade students and teachers in the school where the study took place in the southeastern United States. They may not apply to second grade participants in other settings. However, the findings from this study may provide significant insights that guide more generalizable research conducted in the future.

### *Assumptions*

This study was based on the following assumptions: The school followed the standard curriculum for all second grade students according to the Alabama Course of Study so the teaching goals and variables for each classroom provided the same curriculum and book exposure to all students whether they were assigned to an experimental group or a control group. At the request of the school reading coach, all students and teachers were assigned to either the control group or experimental group based on physical location of the classrooms along hallways at opposite ends of the school. It was also assumed that random assignment of which hall was the control or experiment was random. This assignment, along with use of a mixed effects modeling approach, controlled for home life and school background of teachers and students.



## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all” (multiple authors, Kennedy, n.d.).

This chapter focuses on literature that deals with the reading habits of teachers in the classroom, specifically with regards to their knowledge of children’s literature. The theoretical foundation of the study rests on the body of literature associated with parents’ and teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature. Specifically this section addresses the Title Recognition Test (TRT), parents’ knowledge, shared reading and society, teachers’ affinity for reading, teachers’ literacy knowledge, effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on reading, and lastly the benefits of reading.

### *Title Recognition Test*

The Title Recognition Test (TRT) developed by Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) has been shown to be a reliable and predictable measure of print exposure (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990; McBride-Chang, Manis, Seidenberg, Custodio & Doi, 1993), and McBride-Chang et al. (1993) suggested that “the TRT is among the purest and the best measures of print exposure to date” (p. 237). Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) based the TRT on the Author and Magazine Recognition Test for older readers developed by Stanovich and West (1989).

Developing the TRT for children’s literature involved selecting book titles from a list of real and non-real titles (Masterson & Hayes, 2007). The non-real titles act as foils and guard against the effects of social desirability to be a good reader that may influence the test taker’s responses. Research has shown that foils also effectively control for guessing by the teacher and students. This is exactly the same format used for the Author and Magazine Recognition Test

(AMR), except the book titles in the AMR list are comprised of popular, adult magazine titles. The TRT has been shown to be an excellent tool because it is not only reliable but it also takes a brief amount of time to administer and complete. The value of the TRT as a research tool is also bolstered by the fact that it requires low cognitive skills, meaning that those who read but lack other cognitive skills are not at a disadvantage (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990, 1991).

The fact that reading is a socially valued activity may lead to an inflated reporting of the test taker's actual amount of reading and knowledge of literature. The design of the TRT guards against the social desirability effect, which is what Stanovich and West (1989) had in mind when designing the test (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990, 1991, 1992; Echols, Stanovich, West, & Zehr, 1996; Karass & Braungart-Reiker, 2005; Stanovich & West, 1989). The link between familiarity with title and exposure to reading is supported by the work of Senechal, Lefevre, Hudson, and Lawson (1996) who suggested that familiarity with storybooks directly relates to exposure (how often one is read to); thus, performance on the TRT checklist should serve to indicate how much exposure children have at home to storybooks.

Senechal et al. (1996) looked at the effects of parents' shared reading on children's vocabulary acquisition, and their results suggested that parents who read more to their children may be familiar with more children's literature than parents who read less often. Prior to the research conducted by Senechal et al. (1996) studies of parents' reading to children and knowledge of children's literature included measures that made the results hard to interpret as they were not standardized, nor were they able to account for response bias. Parents view reading as good and thus are likely to inflate reports of the amount they actually read to their children (Senechal et al., 1996). Furthermore, asking parents how often and how much they read to their children is vague. One parent might classify all the books read during a reading session

as one, whereas other parents might count every book read to the child, totally confusing the data from the study (Senechal et al., 1996).

In order to avoid these confusions and create greater fidelity for parents' responses, Senechal et al. (1996) created a TRT for parents and children based on Cunningham and Stanovich's (1990) TRT. The TRT for parents and children was used along with an attitude survey about reading. Parent scores on the TRT were compared to their children's scores on several vocabulary assessments. Results showed a significant positive correlation between high scores on the TRT and the children's vocabulary scores. In the second experiment, the parents were once again given a TRT; however the children were also assessed on book titles along with vocabulary assessments. Interestingly, results showed that parents who were familiar with more children's book titles also had children who knew more titles (Senechal et al., 1996).

Results produced by Senechal et al. (1996) on effects of parents' shared reading on children's vocabulary acquisition suggested that parents who read more to their children may be familiar with more children's literature than parents who read less often. Their findings also led to speculations that relationships between parent's and children's knowledge of children's literature and children's language and literacy learning may be possibilities to be explored for teachers and students in classroom settings.

It can be argued that just being familiar with titles does not promise that a teacher will be able to engage in reading in such ways that help children find reading enjoyable (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). It is also true that knowledge of children's titles does not necessarily mean having the ability to guide children through literary concepts in a meaningful way (Tharpe & Gallimore, 1989). However, it is highly unlikely that teachers who possess knowledge of how to do these things would, at the same time, be lacking in

their knowledge of children's literature (McCutchen et al., 2002). Thus, there is likely a connection between a teacher's knowledge of children's literature and his or her ability to guide children to explore meaning and develop understanding of the literature they hear read aloud or read on their own. This possibility for teachers was suggested by results from a study with parents and children conducted by Senechal et al. (1996). They looked at the effects of parents' shared reading on children's vocabulary acquisition, and their results suggested that parents who read more to their children may be familiar with more children's literature than parents who read less often. Works reviewed in the next few sections examined connections between parents' and children's engagement with reading and familiarity with children's literature and provide the background for research questions that guided the study on teachers' and students' reading and familiarity with children's literature that is reported in this dissertation.

### *Parents' Knowledge of Children's Literature*

Is it important for parents to read to their children? According to Morrow (1983), the answer is a resounding yes; when parents enjoy reading, they are more likely to have children who also enjoy reading. Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) suggested that reading to children provides a foundation of general knowledge. Parents play a significant part in helping to develop their children's literacy before schooling through interactive storybook reading (Neuman, 1996). Modern reading research extols the benefits of shared book reading between parent and child.

Along these lines, research shows there to be a strong relationship between storybook reading done by the parents and child at an early age and the child's later reading achievement (Bus et al., 1995; McCutchen et al., 2002). When parents read to their young children, an emotional bond is formed, and the positive affect for books and reading is established. The

parent is able to share important information with the child about the world, as cued through the reading experience, that the child might not otherwise know (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994).

Books provide imaginary worlds for children that allow them to discover their feelings and experience a secondary world of fantasy. In other words storybooks provide an amazing way for children to express and understand their emotions as well as issues they encounter in their everyday lives (Collins & Svensson, 2008). Weinberger (1996) agreed and emphasized the value of children knowing and being able to name their favorite book or story and explained that these personal connections to children's literature were important first steps in their reading journeys.

In their review of three decades worth of reading research, Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) found significant correlations between the extent of early literacy development for precocious readers and their early attitudes toward reading. They also found that these precocious readers engaged in private reading daily, whereas their average peer readers reported reading about two times a week. The same held true for adults in their study. Parents who said they enjoyed reading reported that they read more to their children and promoted literacy in the home by taking their children to the library. In addition these parents had more children's books in the home than those who did not respond that they enjoyed reading. In the study done by Collins and Svensson (2008), the parents reported that their precocious readers began reading at a very early age, that they started reading to their children before the age of nine months, and that reading was just part of the "social and family culture" (p.88).

Shared reading at home before children go to school is associated with advanced reading achievement for the children. Collins and Svensson (2008) found that parents engaged in shared reading held to the belief that their children had the potential to understand more complex stories when read together during story time than if the children were to read them independently.

Similarly this shared reading experience allows children to acquire a rich vocabulary from the books they read, one not often found in everyday language. For example, in Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit, children encounter words such as sobs and gooseberries. Senechal et al. (1996) found that storybook reading serves to introduce children to complex vocabulary that is not commonly used in conversations between children and their parents. In addition, they reported that "the language used by mothers during shared book reading is richer and more varied than that used during mealtime, toy play, or dressing" (Senechal et al., 1996, p. 17).

Based on work by Wells (1987), Collins and Svensson (2008) wrote:

This regular experience of an adult reading aloud expressively allows the child to develop a greater understanding of language in action and acts as a scaffold for the child's developing language and introduces her/him to new varied vocabulary. (p.89)

#### *Shared Reading as a Societal Norm*

Reading to children has become a positive cultural symbol for parents; modern American society considers, and even idealizes, reading to your children as something that is socially desirable (Phillips, Norris, & Anderson, 2008; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). Unfortunately the reading experience may be less beneficial than it is portrayed in media and resources popular in our culture. When parents read to their children at home, many do not focus on directing their children's attention to the print. Instead they are passive in their reading and forego many of the benefits of being explicit about the functions of print and content of the book. They do not take the time to make reading interactive by using the story to teach the names of the letters and their corresponding sounds or numbers. They do not focus on the meaning of the story or take the time to have discussion or ask questions that would further the child's understanding or peak interest in the story. As a result, the children do not pay attention to print, and there is a lost opportunity

for developing their concept of alphabet and associated sounds and for developing literacy (Phillips et al., 2008).

Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, and Jared (2006) suggested that it is important for parents to be enthusiastic in teaching nursery rhymes and songs and use these verses to actively teach letters, names, sounds and numbers. Philips et al. (2008) points out that a parent's reading to their children helps promote an interest in reading and facilitate oral language due to all the rich vocabulary encountered in storybooks. They also cautioned that passively reading aloud is not necessarily enough to develop emergent literacy skills (Phillips et al., 2008).

In many of the families with children who enjoyed reading, research shows there was a regular routine pattern of reading in the home for promoting literacy (Collins & Svensson 2008). These findings indicate both positive and negative aspects of parent-child shared reading that may have a silver lining if extended to applications. The positive impact of shared reading when it is done even passively suggests that a more structured, teacher-led program may have the potential to generate positive results in a short amount of time (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990; Phillips et al., 2008; Senechal & LeFevre, 2001). This idea is eloquently stated in Ruddell (1995) when he says "Influential teachers are those special teachers whom we recall in a vivid and positive way from our academic experience- kindergarten through college years- and who had a major influence on our academic or person lives" (p. 454).

### *Effects of SES on Reading*

Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, and Fischel (1994) reported that "35% of children in the United States enter kindergarten unprepared to learn, with most lacking the vocabulary and sentence structure crucial to school success" (p. 679). These and other researchers have questioned why there are such a large numbers of students coming to school

lacking critical school readiness skills and found that many of these unprepared children are from low-income families and lack the experiences with books that are common for most middle class children. Middle class children typically enter into first grade with around 1000 to 1700 hours of one-on-one shared book reading compared with 25 hours for low-income children. Whitehurst et al. (1994) reported that in some neighborhoods where the children scored poorly in reading there was not a single book in the entire neighborhood. This was disturbing because in neighborhoods where children scored well in reading and school, households had an average of 54 books per child (Whitehurst et al., 1994). There simply was and is a resource disparity between children in the lower and higher income communities.

Neuman (1996) concluded that the low level of parent involvement in these communities was not always because a lower value was placed on education but because the parents did not know what to do. When they were provided with information on how to help and given access to resources, they too were able to significantly contribute to the language and literacy development of their young children. Book reading and access to books play very important roles in early language and literacy development. As stated by Neuman (1996):

Vygotsky and neo-Vygotskian views of development emphasize that social guidance assists children with opportunities to participate beyond their own abilities, and to internalize activities practiced socially, advancing their capabilities for language development, independent thinking, and problem solving. (1996, p. 496)



### *Benefits of Reading on Vocabulary, Comprehension and Grammar*

Researchers demonstrated that reading performance is strongly correlated to educational success. Collins and Svensson (2008) found that children who read at an early age had a very positive attitude toward reading and knew many different books. The early readers had a deep understanding of the connection between letters and sounds, which is predictive of reading success. The children also were able to write their names and were able to recognize and name the letters associated with their name, thus making the connection between reading and writing. The parents of the children were very active and started reading with the children at a very early age. Most reported beginning reading to their children as early as nine months. These active parents not only read but also interacted with the text and the child. Additionally these children had access to many books in the home, and they themselves showed a great love for reading. Collins and Svensson (2008) found that, for this parent-child dyad, reading was just part of their everyday routine and this was echoed in the children's habits and attitudes toward reading. The researchers suggested that there is significant benefit to literacy learning when reading takes place at a very early age.

This body of research on emergent literacy demonstrates that it is important to give children an early start with literacy because reading to and with children positively impacts their literacy and language development (Collins & Svensson, 2008; Neuman, 1996; Ortiz, Stowe, & Arnold, 2001; Seneschal et al, 1996; Wasik & Bond, 2001). Parent-child reading has a positive impact when the children are actively engaged and encouraged to pay attention to the print, context, letters and sounds, questioning, word meanings, elaboration, and reading strategies (Phillips et al., 2008).

While active and engaged reading is shown to be highly effective, the mere act of reading can also be beneficial (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990; Phillips et al., 2008; Senechal & LeFevre, 2001). The undivided language-centered attention between the child and adult helps to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Repetition of words encountered when a story is read over and over also contributes to the child's learning of new vocabulary. The language used during book reading is much richer than language that is used when adults just speak to children. There are 50% more rare words found in children's books than are heard on television or even in the conversations of college students (Duursma et al., 2008; Karrass & Braungart-Reiker, 2005; Senechal & LeFevre, 2001; Senechal et al., 1996). For example, in Beatrix Potter's book *Peter Rabbit*, children hear and learn about words such as sparrows, excitement, implored, and exert, and that list just names a few of the rich vocabulary words in this little book (Senechal et al., 1996). The rich language found in books is a natural scaffold as children develop language (Collins & Svensson, 2008). As Martinez, Roser and Dooley (2003) stated about child and book interaction, these students are "building bridges between their personal experiences and the stories they read" (p. 225).

Continuing with this theme, Senechal et al. (1996) reported that "many researchers also have argued that reading aloud to young children serves as an introduction to new and more complex syntactic and grammatical forms" (p. 520). Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, and Morrison, (2008) suggested that during the read aloud experience children acquire skills such as vocabulary, ABC's, and sound awareness well before they themselves become readers. These skills then become the foundation for higher level literacy skills that will form a foundation for their educational success. Without these skills the children are likely to struggle as they develop as readers. According to Roberts, Jurgen, and Burchinal, (2005) children with good reading

skills remain good readers while those without these skills continue to struggle with reading throughout their school years.

This idea that readers who struggle early will continue to struggle and those that do not will continue to flourish is in keeping with the Matthew Effects as applied to reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). Similar to the biblical account where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, children who struggle with reading find it very unrewarding and as a result spend less time reading, thus widening the gap between themselves and good readers (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). In fact, research has shown that children with language delays and corresponding reading struggles will exit school earlier than their peers that read well (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Snowling, Adams, Bishop, & Stothard, 2001).

Reading not only enhances language skills and vocabulary but also comprehension. Reading research demonstrates the association between a teacher actively engaging the child in reading and comprehension skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich, & Welsh, 2004; Stanovich, 1986; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990; Wasik & Bond, 2001). When children have rich collections of reading materials, they are able to explore genres of reading that are unfamiliar, yet still of interest to them. This then builds comprehension as they work to bring meaning of the story from their own perspective. Describing this effect, Collins and Svensson (2008) suggested that these readers are able to bring in their own personal experiences from life and other stories and link those to the unfamiliar story. Sainsbury and Schagen (2004) stated “Thus involvement in books allows children to experience through imagination other worlds and other roles, and this involvement contributes to their personal and social development as well as to their reading abilities” (p. 375).

Positive attitudes and being highly motivated to read are associated with reading success and more frequent reading (Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004). Exposure to print is linked to higher reading ability, and there is an enormous difference in the volume of reading experiences between good and poor readers (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990). Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) said that children's phonological and orthographic processing abilities are also affected positively by the volume of reading. Stainthorp (1997) suggested there's truth in the belief that the more you read, the better you read, because the amount of exposure to print increases your interaction and exposure to words, this leads to reading with automaticity.

### *Teachers' Affinity for Reading*

Teachers who love to read can share reading experiences, both personal and professional, that have a positive effect on their students (Cremin et al., 2009). Teachers who love to read provide a positive role model for their students. Dreher (2003) suggested that these teachers are able to express this love to their students, and that this demonstrated efficacy influences their ability to provide literacy instruction to their students. Research done by Morrison, Jacobs and Swinyard (1999) found that teachers who were prolific readers used more effective literacy practices in their own classrooms than teachers who were not such avid readers. Moreover, Garrett (2002) found that teachers do have the ability to share their positive attitudes toward reading in ways that change students' negative attitudes toward reading. As McKool and Gespass (2009) wrote:

Teachers who are readers read aloud to their students, engage in conversations about books, model specific reading strategies, give students greater choice in reading materials, and give students frequent time to read during the school day more than teachers who report that they do not read for pleasure regularly. It is

important to understand that our own personal reading attitudes and beliefs do influence our instructional practices in the classroom. Knowing this, teachers must make a greater effort to establish their own connection to and passion for reading. (p. 273)

The reading environment that the teacher established in the classroom influenced students' reading (Cunningham et al., 2004). Cunningham et al. (2004) posited that teachers should provide their students with plenty of opportunities to read books and to create a warm and inviting reading environment. This was especially true for the engaged reader. For the engaged reader, it was critical that the classroom teacher created warm, inviting environments for reading (Allington, 1994; Ruddell, 1995). Engaged readers are motivated to read, strategic in their reading, higher in reading proficiency, socially interactive, engaged in discussion and sharing, view themselves as readers, and chose to read (Dreher, 2003). Dreher (2003) argued that reading education needs classroom teachers who are engaged readers because then they share all these traits with their students and also help to create engaged readers. Instructional activities such as literature circles are more likely to be used by teachers who are enthusiastic about reading. This is important because these types of activities promoted engaged readers (Morrison et al., 1999). As Applegate and Applegate (2004) wrote:

Teachers who are engaged and enthusiastic readers are more likely to encourage and cultivate at least some kindred spirits in their classrooms. It is in the classrooms of such teachers that children are more apt to encounter teaching strategies that foster a love for reading and a high level of engagement in reading. (p. 555)

Effective, influential teachers shared a passion for the subjects they teach (Flynn, 2007). They provided ample time for their students to do silent reading in a classroom that was filled with books of all genres, and they had discussions together about the books they read (Collins & Safford, 2008). Influential teachers created a sense of excitement about reading and engaged their students with strategies for reading that were highly motivating (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). This suggested that it was critical for new teacher's to emote a joy for reading, an understanding of children's' literature, its benefits, and their role in the teacher-student reading dyad.

Ruddell (1995) suggested that teachers who are nurturing and more aesthetic than efferent in their instructional style are able to connect on an emotional level with their students, thus helping the students connect with the text in a more personal way. Rosenblatt (1978) explained that aesthetic readers are able to put themselves in the text and live through the experiences of the characters rather than reading from an efferent stance for information. Influential teachers in the study by Ruddell (1995) tended to take more of an aesthetic stance in their literacy instruction, while non-influential teachers tended to take a more efferent stance in their literacy instruction. Using an aesthetic instructional style is important because teachers model for their students and share their reading experiences which in turn motivate the students to relate to and share their own reading experiences (Gambrell, 1996).

Applegate and Applegate (2004) felt that the student's engagement and motivation was considerably affected by the reading habits and beliefs of the teacher. A teacher's predisposition to be an aesthetic and engaged reader was identified as a factor that may moderate the effects of the instruction provided by the teacher. The beliefs of the teachers drive classroom instruction. If a teacher does not use an aesthetic stance, either due to lack of experience or lack of love for

reading, then a love for reading may not be actively displayed or promoted. Applegate and Applegate (2004) call this the “Peter Effect,” which they refer to “as the condition characterizing those teachers who are charged with conveying to their students an enthusiasm for reading that they do not have” (p.556). This terminology is derived from a biblical account of the Apostle Paul from Acts 3:5. According to the account, a beggar, crippled from birth, asked Peter for money, and Peter responded by telling the beggar he cannot give what he does not have. Applegate and Applegate (2004) were not suggesting that teachers who do not use an aesthetic instructional stance for reading do not use best practices such as literature circles. They did, however, suggest that it is possible these best practices are being taught from an efferent stance, which does not bring about a deep, motivating love for reading.

### *Teachers’ Literacy Knowledge*

One would think that elementary school teachers would be experts in children’s literature; however, Cunningham et al. (2004) found teachers to be limited in their knowledge of children’s literature. Cremin et al. (2008a) also found that teachers’ knowledge of children’s books was not nearly as extensive as their personal reading choices. Further they found that these teachers were very narrow in the variety of books they chose for their classroom. This lack of teacher knowledge of children’s literature was an area of concern for these and other researchers. Knowledge of children’s literature has been deemed essential if teachers are to motivate and engage their students to read (Cunningham et al., 2004). Cremin et al. (2008a) found that teachers did not have a broad enough range when it came to knowledge of children’s literature and concluded that this would negatively affect their ability to motivate children to read for pleasure.

Similarly, a large body of research has suggested that it is important for teachers to have breadth of knowledge for a variety of genres in children's literature (Block et al., 2002; Cremin et al., 2008 b). McCutchen et al. (2002) added that teachers not only need to have knowledge of classic children's titles but also need to be familiar with of current titles, because that knowledge is the key to connecting a particular book to the taste and needs of a particular student. Teachers need to know which book to recommend to the child and be able to make suggestions of other books (Collins & Safford, 2008). This is especially critical during literacy instruction in the primary grades. Unfortunately, Cunningham et al. (2004) discovered that at least 90% of teachers of students in kindergarten through third grade did not have recognition or familiarity with even the most popular books for readers at their grade levels.

Cremin et al. (2008a) found that teachers play an important role in introducing literature to young children, but many of the teachers in their study mainly remembered books they were introduced to when they themselves were in school; this limited the books they could draw on to give students access to literature. Cremin et al. (2008a) found that these teachers reported reading for pleasure. However, when the teachers were asked to list six children's authors, poets, picture book authors, and illustrators, less than half could do so, and only 10% could name six poets and six illustrators. The most surprising finding was teachers' inability to name picture book authors as this is essential knowledge for teaching young children to appreciate and read the literature produced for them.

Obviously these findings were of concern because teachers need to be able to recommend books to their students with some authority and to introduce books that get their students excited about reading. In one study students did not look to teachers to help them choose books and instead relied on their mothers for this role (Cremin et al., 2008b). Given the amount of time



teachers spend in the classroom with students, they have the perfect opportunity to perform this role of helping students select books the teachers have read and in the process to pass on an enthusiasm for reading to their students (Dreher, 2003). It takes teachers who are engaged readers, who read because they want to, in order to help students become engaged, motivated readers who have a love for reading (Dreher, 2003).

Cremin et al. (2009) conducted an encouraging and substantial study in the United Kingdom that addresses these themes. They sought to improve teachers' knowledge of children's literature and, in turn, to motivate the students to become enthusiastic readers. Cremin and colleagues found that not only were teachers able to increase their own knowledge and enthusiasm of children's literature but to also increase the students' enthusiasm for reading along with book knowledge. While successful, this study did not use the TRT, and it was resource intensive. Yet Cremin et al. (2009) did find that student enthusiasm could be influenced, attitudes toward reading improved, and self-confidence as readers increased. The teachers and students began to share their reading experiences with others, and students even saw their teachers as fellow readers. Most importantly the students viewed themselves as readers and found pleasure in reading. Students' reading scores increased, which the teachers credited to the project, access to more reading material, and the teachers' changed attitude towards reading (Cremin et al., 2009). Cremin's study provides a foundation for the present study on the teacher-student reading dyad and its potential as a mechanism for improving students' knowledge of literature and attitudes toward reading. In chapter 3, which follows, I will present the methods and procedures used in this dissertation.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

“Ideal teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own” (multiple authors, Kazantzakis, n.d.).

This chapter provides the methods and procedures used in this study. It is organized into six sections: overview of the purpose and design, setting, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis.

### *Overview of the Study*

The study was conducted to determine if teachers who have higher scores on the TRT, an instrument measuring recognition of children’s literature, also have students with higher scores on the TRT and therefore more familiarity with children’s literature. Secondly this study was conducted to establish if teachers with positive reading attitudes also had students with positive reading attitudes.

This research question was grounded in untested theory that suggested that teachers who are readers of children’s literature and enjoy reading should be good teachers of reading and, correspondingly, should have students who are readers of children’s literature and enjoy reading (Dreher, 2003). More specifically, Dreher (2003) states:

In short, teachers who are engaged readers are motivated to read, are both strategic and knowledgeable readers, and are socially interactive about what they read. These qualities show up in their classroom interactions and help create students who are, in turn, engaged readers. (p. 338)

The following three research questions guided this study.

1. Do teachers' scores on the TRT (pretest) prior to a treatment that includes planned, systematic access and exposure to researcher-provided children's books correlate with their students' scores on the TRT (pretest)?
2. Do teachers and students in a treatment group with more exposure to children's books have more knowledge of children's book titles than teachers and students in a control group without researcher-provided children's books?
3. Do teachers who have positive attitudes toward reading have students' with positive attitudes toward reading?

### *Field Study*

A preliminary pilot project was conducted to field test and to refine the measurement instrument used in this study at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year in a large primary school in the Southeastern United States. This particular school served only first and second grade classes, and the field project involved second grade classes only. The school had 18 second grade teachers and classrooms and 298 second grade students. Each classroom had approximately 13 to 14 students. Approximately 72% of the entire student population was white, 24% were black and 4% were of other ethnic origins. 42% of the entire school population qualified for free and reduced lunch. The participants in the field project were from two of the second grade classrooms and included two teachers and a total of 27 students. The teachers had between 16 and 22 years of teaching experience, and they volunteered to be part of the field project.

The title recognition instrument tested was an adaptation of the TRT developed by Cunningham and Stanovich (1990). The field test TRT consisted of 20 real titles and 10 foils.

Each TRT was graded by hand to get a score with points awarded for each title known and points subtracted from that number for title foils that were marked. So if a TRT had 13 correct titles marked and 7 foils marked, they received a score of 6. The students' individual scores were all added up and divided by the number of students who took the survey to get a class average. This score was then compared to the classroom teacher's score. In class A the teacher received a score of six and her students' average score was six. In class B, the teacher received a zero because her foils equaled her correct answers. However, her students' average score was one. The TRT scores between the teacher and her class in the field study seemed to suggest an association between the classroom teacher's knowledge of children's book titles and her students' knowledge of children's book titles. The results from the field project indicated that the instrument would be an appropriate measurement of teachers' and students' familiarity with children's literature when used on a larger version scale in the actual study. However, the students' behaviors during administration of the field test suggested that second graders were struggling to complete the total of 30 items, so the title recognition instrument used in the actual study presented 14 real titles and 6 foils for a total of 20 items.

### *Setting and Participants*

The experimental study took place during the second half of the 2010-2011 school year in a large elementary school which housed only second and third grade classes and was located in a small town in the Southeastern United States. This study used a convenience sampling procedure to recruit participants from a large elementary school which housed 22 second grade classrooms. Participants in the study were second grade students recruited from the 22 second grade classrooms with 367 students. Each classroom had approximately 17 students. The numbers of students in different ethnic groups were: 277 white, 67 black, and 23 of other races. A majority

of the second graders were from lower SES homes, and 157 qualified for free lunch while 38 qualified for reduced lunch prices.

Actual participants in the study were from 21 of the 22 classrooms with second grade teachers along with 222 of the 367 students who returned permission slips giving consent for being included in the study. Teaching experience for the 21 teachers ranged from 1 to 26 years. The school's reading coach facilitated communication between the researcher and the teachers and worked between the researcher and teachers to schedule meetings and testing. She made sure the study was conducted in a timely manner and was key in getting the cooperation of the second grade teachers to participate in the study.

### *Instrument*

A version of the TRT developed by Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) was the instrument used to gather data. The title recognition measure used in this study was a version of the one used in the pilot field project. Other researchers, such as Senechal et al. (1996), also developed and used their own versions of this test with different numbers of items quite successfully, so the pilot instrument was reduced from 30 to 20 to make it more appropriate for second graders.

In other studies using different versions of the TRT, researchers found that it was important to make sure the books on the list reflected the times and ages of the children being studied, thus there have been several different versions of the original Title Recognition Test. This study was not interested in teachers' and students' knowledge of just any children's books, but rather in their knowledge of more current children's literature. As McCutchen et al. (2002) suggested, the proper knowledge base for books included not just classic titles, but current titles as well. Teachers in the classroom have a responsibility to keep up with current children's

literature so they can properly inform their students on what is available for them to read that will bring excitement to each individual child and create a desire in them to read (Cremin et al, 2008a).

The Title Recognition Test used in this study consisted of current titles from the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), Children's Choices from the International Reading Association, and two popular titles for children in the primary grades that have been around for many years. These two titles are a separate test built into the TRT to compare the teachers' and children's' knowledge of older popular titles against new more current titles. The book titles were taken from the above lists from years 2005 through 2010. The two popular titles were *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff and *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes. They were chosen because they were written by two very popular children's authors and are well-known titles in the classroom. Both books and authors have received many awards. The Children's Choices is sponsored by the International Reading Association. Each year around 12,500 school children from many regions around the United States are exposed to over 500 newly published titles. The children voted for the titles of books they liked best, so the list of books are books that children from all over the United States should enjoy reading. In the same way it is the International Reading Associations' desire to provide a list of books to teachers, librarians, booksellers, parents, grandparents and caregivers that are engaging to children (International Reading Association [IRA], 2010).

The ALSC forms a committee each year with the sole purpose of identifying the best children's books published in the previous year.

This list of books is called Notable Children's Books, and the criterion used is as follows:

Each year a committee of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) identifies the best of the best in children's books. According to the Notables Criteria, "notable" is defined as: Worthy of note or notice, important, distinguished, and outstanding. As applied to children's books, notable should be thought to include books of especially commendable quality, books that exhibit venturesome creativity, and books of fiction, information, poetry and pictures for all age levels (birth through age 14) that reflect and encourage children's interests in exemplary way. According to ALSC policy, the current year's Newbery, Caldecott, Belpré, Sibert, Geisel, and Batchelder Award and Honor books automatically are added to the Notable Children's Books list.

(ALSC, 2009, "Notable Children's Books," para. 1)

The Title Recognition Test used in this study consisted of 14 real children's book titles and 6 foils. The foil titles were taken from previous TRTs developed by Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) and Senechal et al. (1996).

Choosing the titles for the pretest and posttest was done randomly. Titles were chosen that seemed interesting for second grade from the title list from the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Children's Choices from the International Reading Association from the years 2005 to 2010. Each title was looked up on amazon.com to make sure they were at an appropriate age level for second graders as some on the list are more appropriate for kindergarten or first grade. The titles that were not at an appropriate second grade level were discarded. The foil titles from previous TRT's were checked to make sure they were still not real

children's book titles. All the titles used for the TRT in the study were randomly selected for the pretest and posttests.

Additionally on the back of each TRT was a Reading Attitude Survey. This consisted of questions taken from the Reading and You Attitude Survey. The test was a 5 question Likert Scale ranging from 1 (not like me) to 4 (just like me). This survey was developed by Dr. Murray from Auburn University in 2009 and was based on the Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure developed by Mikulecky (1976). Both attitude surveys were designed for adolescent or adult readers, and they were field tested and found to be reliable (West, 2010). In this study, the 28 questions on the original survey were reduced to five questions due to the younger ages of the students and shorter attention spans of the second graders who took the survey. The 5 questions included in the survey were:

1. You enjoy reading.
2. You would be disappointed if you opened a present and it turned out to be a children's book.
3. While you are going on vacation, you look for something good to read to take along.
4. If you read a book, you pick a short one so you can finish it.
5. Sometimes you find yourself so excited about a children's book that you try to get your friends to read it.

### *Procedures*

Permission to do the study was given by the school system's superintendent and the school's principal. The school principal assigned the reading coach of the school to be the liaison between the school and the researcher. The reading coach and I (dissertation researcher) worked



closely together to gather permission from the 22 second grade teachers and their students. Letters went out to all 22 teachers, and they in turn sent home letters of participation with their students. All 22 teachers signed letters agreeing to be in the study; however 1 of the teachers received no permission slips back from her students, so she and her class were excluded from the study, bringing the number of teacher participants to 21. Eight of the 222 student participants were eliminated from the study due to unusable data on their TRT, bringing the number of participants to 214.

The reading coach and I worked together to assign teachers to either the control or the experimental group. The building is very large as it houses 22 second grade classrooms and 19 third grade classrooms as well as other classrooms for special education and other special classes. Half of the second grade teachers were located on one side of the building, while the other half were located on the other side. This made a natural divide to keep the teachers from the control group and experimental group from interacting during the study. The teachers were assigned to control or experimental, through convenience grouping, based on which hall they were in. One hall was experimental while the other was control. While the teachers were not randomly assigned, the hallways were randomly assigned to control or experimental group. Eleven teachers were assigned to each group, but as one was eliminated due to lack of student permission slips, leaving ten in the experimental group and eleven in the control group.

The reading coach assembled all the participating teachers together after school to meet with this researcher. At this time I, the researcher, introduced myself and thanked the teachers for being part of the study and presented the time line for the study and what they would be expected to do. The TRT and RAS were explained during this time. The control group was told in detail what was expected of them during the study. They were made aware that I would read to their

class on two occasions during the study. They were then dismissed, leaving only the teachers in the experimental group. The experimental group teachers were also told in detail what was expected of them during the study. They were showed how to give a book talk and reminded through e-mail throughout the study to continue to do this practice. The experimental group teachers were also reminded to not share what they were doing with control group teachers.

### *Control Group*

The TRT was administered to all 11 control group second grade teachers and their participating students in the first week of the study. The classroom teacher was asked to take the TRT while I gave the TRT to the whole group of students in the teacher's classroom. The directions were explained for completing the TRT to the students and then each title was read aloud. On the back of each TRT was the RAS. I gave students directions for doing the survey and read each question aloud. Then the surveys were gathered and placed in individual folders. Next the surveys were pre-coded to keep track of which surveys belonged with each teacher. Each teacher was assigned a letter of the alphabet. The surveys for each class were marked as follows: A-Teacher, A-1, A-2, B-Teacher, B-1, B-2, all the way through V. Letters L through V were used for teachers in the control group.

Teachers in the control group signed up for times when their classes would participate in read alouds conducted by this researcher. Each class in the control group was read to on two different occasions. The first reading included 3 books, and the second reading included 2 books. The books used for the control group were current book titles from the ALSC and Children's Choice book list 2005-2010; however, the titles were not included on the TRT posttest. The teachers and students in the control group did not have access to the books provided by this

researcher for the experimental group. However, they may have had access to the titles in their classroom library, school library, public library, and home.

At the end of the four weeks, the teachers and students in the control group were given another version of the TRT. Just as before, each title was read aloud. Surveys were gathered into individual class folders and coded exactly as they were for the first TRT.

### *Experimental Group*

The TRT was administered to all 10 experimental group second grade teachers and their participating students in the first week of the study. The classroom teacher was asked to take the TRT while I gave the TRT to the whole group of students in the teacher's classroom. The directions were explained for completing the TRT to the students and then each title was read aloud. On the back of each TRT was the RAS. I gave students directions for doing the survey and read each question aloud. Then the surveys were gathered and placed in individual folders. Next the surveys were pre-coded to keep track of which surveys belonged with each teacher. Each teacher was assigned a letter of the alphabet. Then the surveys for each class were marked as follows: A-Teacher, A-1, A-2, B-Teacher, B-1, B-2, all the way through V. The letter I class folder was omitted when the teacher did not get permission forms for students to participate in the study. Letters A through K were used for teachers in the experimental group.

The experimental treatment can be characterized as low resource in terms of cost and time. The 60 books represented the primary financial cost. I provided all the books used in the study. The books were stored in a book closet on the experimental hall side of the school. There were 60 books available to the teachers; 30 separate titles with 2 copies of each. Each teacher in the experimental group chose 5 books to read to her students each week. The books were displayed in the room all week so the students had access to them. This was done for four weeks

with a total of 20 books being read by each teacher to their students. To check for fidelity, each classroom teacher was asked to e-mail a list of the 5 books read to her class each week to this researcher. All 10 of the teachers in the experimental group communicated with this researcher weekly several times. Seven of the ten teachers e-mailed their weekly book list each of the 4 weeks. One teacher e-mailed the weekly book list for three weeks, and one teacher e-mailed the list for two weeks. One teacher never e-mailed her book lists, regardless of numerous e-mail reminders. E-mail was a very useful tool of communication between the teachers and this researcher, and teachers used it to ask questions and request clarification about procedures.

At the end of the four weeks, the teachers and students in the experimental group were given another version of the TRT. Just as before, this researcher read aloud each title. Surveys were gathered into individual class folders and coded exactly as they were for the first TRT.

Each of the 21 teachers' was given a \$10.00 gift card to Books-A-Million for participating in the study. The reading coach was given a \$25.00 gift card to Books-A-Million as she was especially helpful in getting the teachers' cooperation and helping this researcher to complete the study.

### *Statistical Methods*

All statistical analyses were conducted in SAS Version 9.2; see SAS (2009). The specific SAS procedures used for the data analyses were the ANOVA, MEANS, CORR, PLOT, MIXED and REG procedures (SAS, 2009; Little, Milliken, Stroup, & Wolfinger, 2006). Each of these SAS procedures correspond to the statistical analysis employed. These terms are defined below. All statistical tests with p-value < 0.05 ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) were considered statistically significant. In this study all significant p-values' were <0.0001.

ANOVA: Makes a comparison between two or more means. Within this study PROC ANOVA was used to test the difference in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups.

CORR: The correlation procedure uses the Pearson product correlation to judge the linear relationship between two variables. More specifically, the PROC CORR procedure computes the Spearman correlation by ranking the data and using the ranks in the Pearson product correlation formula. The CORR procedure using SPEARMAN correlation coefficients was used to evaluate the student and teacher pretest and posttest scores.

GLM: General Linear Model, or GLM performs an analysis of variance using least squares regression to fit general linear models. Within this study GLM method regression was used to test the relationship between student scores on the reading attitude survey and teacher scores on the same test. It was also used to explore the relationship between reading attitudes and TRT scores.

MIXED: A mixed model is a model that contains fixed and random effects. This procedure performs mixed model analysis and repeated measures analysis by way of structured covariance models. The mixed model directly addressed the research questions by controlling for the nesting effects which arose due to students being nested within their teacher's classroom.

MEANS: Determining if two classification groups are significantly different is done by comparing if the absolute value of their difference is greater than the critical value. The critical value depends on the number of groups as well as on the observed variation in the response. A means difference test was used to examine if teachers with positive attitudes toward reading also had students with positive attitudes toward reading.

PLOT: Plot is used to plot two variables graphically on an X and Y axis. Plot was used to create a scatter plot to evaluate student pretest and posttest TRT by classroom, and teacher pretest and posttest TRT scores.

REG: Regression models relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Within this study PROC REG was also used to explore the effect that the study's treatment had on students' posttest scores.

### *Data Analysis Procedures*

The following 3 research questions guided this study:

1. Do teachers' scores on the TRT (pretest) prior to a treatment that includes planned, systematic access and exposure to researcher-provided children's books correlate with their students' scores on the TRT (pretest)?
2. Do teachers and students in a treatment group with more exposure to children's books have more knowledge of children's book titles than teachers and students in a control group without researcher provided children's books?
3. Do teachers who have positive attitudes toward reading have students with positive attitudes toward reading?

The following procedures were run in SAS 9.2 to analyze the data for this study:

To answer question 1: A mixed model procedure in SAS was used to examine if teachers' scores on the TRT before exposure to the experimental treatment correlated with their students' scores on the TRT.

To answer question 2: An ANOVA was used to determine the differences in means between the experimental and control groups. In addition a mixed model procedure in SAS was used to fit various multiple linear regression models (with nested effects) for student posttest

scores onto student pretest scores, teacher pretest scores and teacher posttest scores, and group (control versus experimental). In addition, these findings were confirmed and demonstrated graphically through the use of a principal component analysis in SAS to determine if both teachers and students with more exposure to children's titles have more knowledge of children's book titles.

To answer question 3: The generalized linear modeling (GLM) approach to investigate the correlation between teacher attitude toward reading (based upon the reading attitude survey) and student attitude toward reading (based upon the same survey). The results of this analysis are found in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

“We shouldn’t teach great books, we should teach a love of reading” (multiple authors, Skinner, n.d.).

The objective of this study was to explore relationships among teachers’ and students’ knowledge of children’s literature, reading attitudes and to determine if exposure to children’s books influences teachers’ and students’ knowledge of children’s literature. More specifically, three questions addressed by the study were: 1) Do teachers and their students’ score on the TRT (pretest) prior to treatment correlate? 2) Does students’ exposure to recently published children’s books through read alouds and interactions with their classroom teacher increase their knowledge of current children’s book titles? 3) Is there a positive correlation between teachers’ and students’ reading attitudes?

### *Research Question 1*

Research Question 1 asked if teachers’ scores on the TRT prior to a treatment that includes planned, systematic access and exposure to researcher provided children’s books correlated with their students’ scores on the TRT before exposure to the experiment. More specifically, the following hypothesis was tested:

H1<sub>o</sub>: There is not a correlation between teacher score on the TRT (pretest) and student score on the TRT (pretest).

H1<sub>a</sub>: There is a positive correlation between teacher score on the TRT (pretest) and student score on the TRT (pretest).



To address this question, the mean values of the scores on the pretest for student and teacher was examined. These values are shown in Table 1. Of note was the high standard deviation (2.01, and 1.02) and the closeness of the means (2.19 and 2.22) for the students and teachers pretest scores.

Table 1

*Simple Descriptive Statistics*

Simple Statistics						
Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Student pretest	214	2.18692	2.01465	2.00000	0	12.00000
Teacher pretest	214	2.22430	1.02374	2.00000	1.00000	5.00000

To determine the statistical significance, the MIXED procedure in SAS was used to fit a linear regression model to account for the nested effects (student scores nested within teachers/classroom). This approach therefore allowed all of the students' scores (214) to be included into the model as opposed to a more limited approach in which the students' scores are simply represented by the class mean and standard deviation. The MIXED procedure was used to test if the teacher pretest score on the TRT significantly predicted the students' TRT pretest score. The results of the linear regression mixed procedure indicated the independent variable (teacher TRT pretest score) was not significant with a  $p=0.55$ ,  $F(1,193)=0.36$ ,  $\beta=0.099$ , and a Standard Error of the Estimate (SEE)=0.1658. Furthermore, a Spearman Correlation test was performed and the correlation between teacher and student pretest score was not significant,

$p=.538$ , and a correlation coefficient of 0.042. There is no sample evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

It was noted that two titles from the TRT pretest were overwhelmingly recognized by the teachers and the students. Keeping in mind that the TRT contained 14 books and 6 foils, and the mean score was 2.18 and 2.2 titles recognized for students and teachers respectively, this was an interestingly low result for the teacher and student average. However, even these scores may be inflated in favor of the pretest.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3 under *Instrument*, a test within a test was built in using two very popular titles from two very popular children's authors. Table 3 provides an overview of student and teacher recognition of these popular titles. Due to random assignment of titles, both of these classic titles ended up on the pretest. The two titles recognized the most by both teachers and students were *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff (1985) and *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes (1996). Of these two titles, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* was by far the most recognized. 100% of the teachers recognized *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, and 82% of the students recognized this title. 62% of the teachers recognized *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* while only 12% of the students' recognized this title. If you break these numbers into experimental and control groups, the control group students score higher than the experimental group students score on these two titles, but group does not matter for teachers with *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. In the experimental group, scores for *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* were 11/96 (11%) for the students and 5/10 (50%) for the teachers. Scores for *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* were 76/96 (79%) for the students and 10/10 (100%) for the teachers. In the control group, scores for *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* were 14/118 (12%) for the students and

8/11 (73%) for the teachers. Scores for *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* were 100/118 (85%) for the students and 11/11 (100%) for the teachers.

Table 2

*Breakdown of Popular Title Recognition*

Book	Student	Student	Student	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
	Control	Experimental	Overall	Control	Experimental	Overall
<i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i>	100/118	76/96	176/214	11/11	10/10	21/21
<i>Lily's Purple Plastic Purse</i>	14/118	11/96	25/214	8/11	5/10	13/21

*Research Question 2*

Research Question 2 is targeted toward increasing the understanding that exposure to children’s book titles has on teachers and students. This aspect of the study investigates if teachers and students with more exposure to children’s book titles will have higher knowledge of children’s book titles as measured by the TRT. More specifically the following hypothesis was tested:

H2<sub>0</sub>: Mean TRT scores are the same for those in the control and experimental groups.

H2<sub>a</sub>: Mean TRT scores are not the same for those in the control and experimental groups.

To answer this question an ANOVA (PROC ANOVA procedure in SAS) was used to determine significant differences between the student groups’ (control versus experimental) posttest scores. As shown in Table 3, this resulted in an R-Square of 77.423%. A TUKEY Test

was used to account for differences in sample sizes between the two groups. The ANOVA demonstrated a significant difference between the posttest scores for the experimental and control groups with an F-value of 727, p-value <0.0001. This leads us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the alternative is true.

Table 3

*ANOVA Using Group to Predict Posttest Score*

R-Square	F Value	P Value
0.77423	727	<.0001

In addition a regression analysis was also performed to identify the estimated beta coefficients and confirm directionality. This analysis resulted in an adjusted R-Square of 0.7732 and an estimated beta coefficient of 8.7449 that was statistically significant  $p < 0.0001$ . This means assignment to the experimental group increased the students' average scores by an estimated 8.7 points (on a 14 point scale), with a confidence interval of 7.4 to 10.03 at  $p < 0.0001$ .

To determine significance of the results using a model that controlled for the influence of student class assignment on students' posttest scores the MIXED procedure was used (with nested effects) for student group (control versus experiment) on student posttest scores. The nested effects accounts for any sampling bias with regard to class assignment. The mixed procedure model, using the independent variable (group), resulted in an  $F(1,193)=196.36$ , and a  $p < .0001$ . This rejects the null hypothesis.

To illustrate the effect of the experiment as a treatment, scatter plots were created. Figure 1 provides a comparison of student pretest and posttest scores by classroom. The posttest scores are represented by stars, and the pretest scores are represented by squares. When pretest and

posttest scores overlap, they are represented by squares with stars. The symbols represent which scores occurred in each classroom. In some cases the scores overlap and thus accounts for their being less symbols than participants. The results show significant clustering by treatment group. It is clear that the students' scores cluster by treatment and by pretest and posttest. Thus, as teacher exposure goes up, so does the student's knowledge of book titles.

Figure 1

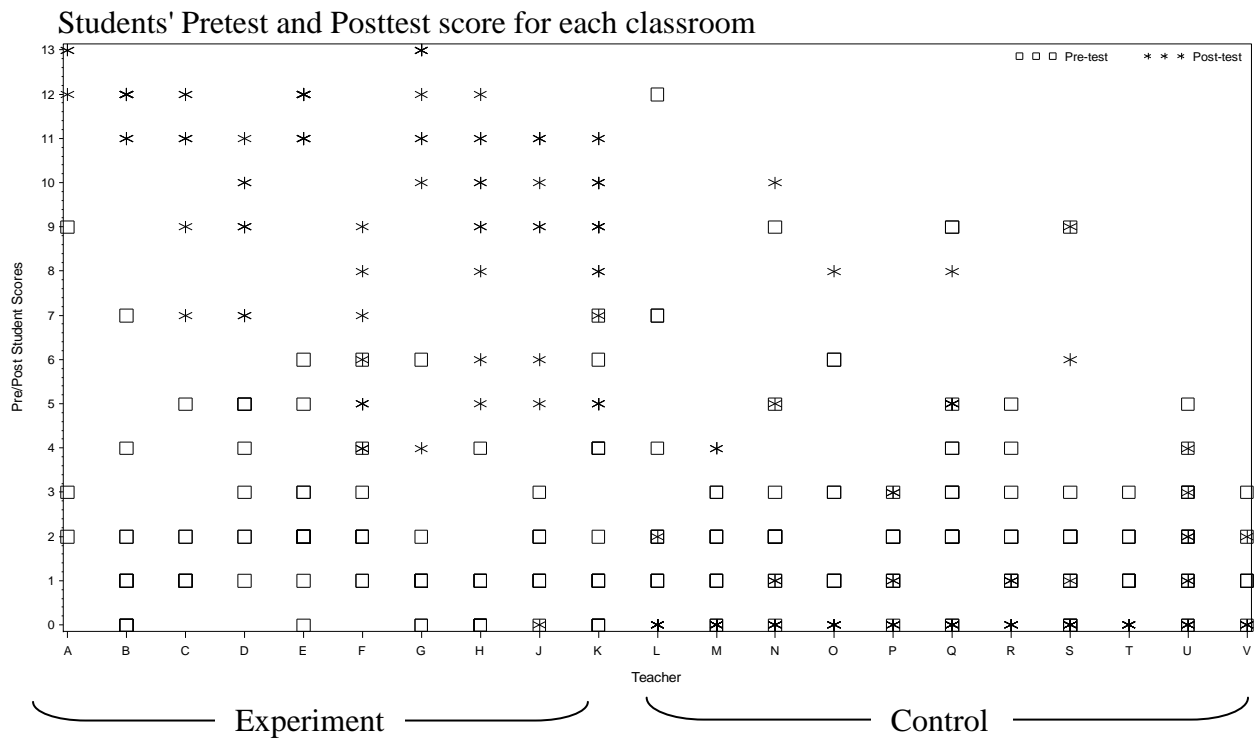
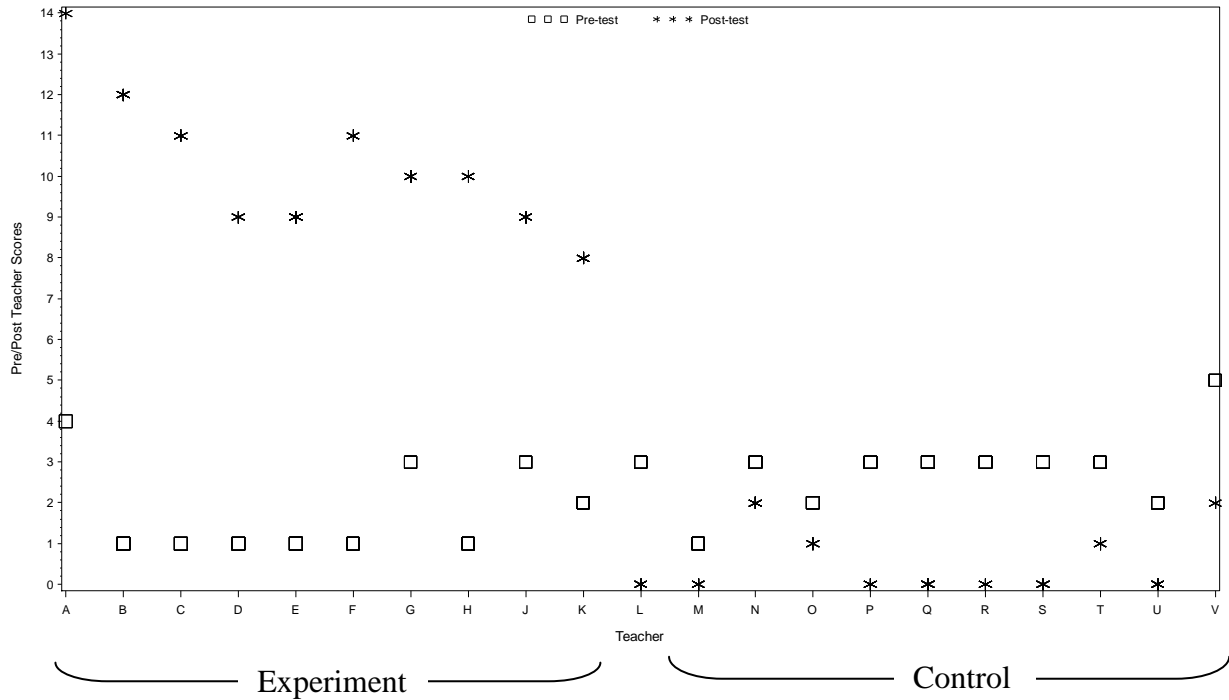


Figure 2 provides a plot of teachers' pretest and posttest scores by teacher. This plot shows that the experiment group scores increased. Interestingly, the plot also shows that for most of the teachers in the control group their posttest scores decreased. The fact that the two most recognized books, *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* and *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, both ended up on the pretest due to random assignment explains why the control group teachers' and

students' scores were lower on the posttest than on the pretest. Yet even with higher scores on the pretest, the experimental treatment was strong enough to affect the posttest scores of the experiment group as is evident in the analysis for Research Question 2.

Figure 2

Teachers' Pretest and Posttest, plotted for each teacher/classroom



*Research Question 3*

Research Question 3 asked if teachers who have positive attitudes toward reading have students with positive attitudes toward reading. More specifically the following hypothesis was tested:

H3<sub>0</sub>: There is no correlation between teacher attitude toward reading and student attitude toward reading.

H3<sub>a</sub>: There is a correlation between teacher attitude toward reading and student attitude toward reading.

This question was answered using the generalized linear modeling (GLM) approach to investigate the correlation between teacher attitude toward reading (based upon the reading attitude survey) and student attitude toward reading (based upon the same survey). Specifically the PROC MIXED procedure in SAS was used to fit a linear regression model between student scores on the reading attitude test and teacher scores on the same test. As shown in Table 4, no statistically significant correlation was found between the teachers' and students' scores on the reading attitude survey, as demonstrated by an R-Square of 0.000159 and a p-value .8543. The lack of statistical significance fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 4

*Regression Analysis of the Correlation between Student Reading Attitude and Teacher Reading Attitude*

R-Square	F Value	P Value
0.000159	0.03	0.8543

*Additional analysis*

An additional analysis was completed to explore the overall relationship between reading attitudes and TRT scores. This was accomplished by using regression to see if there was a significant relationship when students and teachers attitude scores are regressed on student posttest scores without regard to group. As shown in Table 5 this model resulted in an adjusted R-square of 0.2653  $p < 0.0001$ . This is not surprising as the research in this study connects reading attitude with amount of reading, which translates to knowledge of titles on the TRT.

Table 5

*Regression Analysis of Student PostTest TRT Using Attitude Scores*

Adjusted R-Square	Student Post Test Mean	F Value	P Value
0.2653	4.718593	8.15	<.0001



## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

“There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate’s loot on Treasure Island”

(multiple authors, Disney, n.d.).

### *Introduction*

This study examined teachers’ and students’ knowledge of current children’s book titles prior to and after exposure to several current titles chosen from a list of books chosen by children in different settings across the United States. It also examined the reading attitudes of teachers and students. The results in this study support the hypothesis that teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature as measured by the score on the TRT posttest positively influences their students’ knowledge of children’s literature as measured by the students’ score on the TRT posttest. This final chapter will include a summary of the findings, implications, and limitations of the study. Lastly it will look at recommendations for future research in helping future teachers, current teachers, students, librarians, and administrators figure out the best ways to help increase knowledge of children’s books and positive attitudes toward reading children’s books.

### *Discussion of Findings*

The first research question asked if teachers’ scores on the TRT pretest prior to the study correlated with their students’ scores on the TRT pretest. Teachers and students scores on the pretest did not show a correlation. What was interesting was the low number of titles recognized by both teachers and students. The results do not indicate that teachers have no knowledge of children’s books, but they do show that teachers do not have a wide range of knowledge of current, quality children’s titles that have been recognized and recommended by both the

American Library Association and the International Reading Association. Of interest are two titles that were recognized the most on the pretest by the teachers and students, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* and *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. While *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* was recognized by 100% of the teachers and 82% of the students, only 62% of the teachers and a very low 12% of the students recognized *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. This was surprising since Kevin Henkes is a very popular and well-known author of books for younger children. Second grade is the perfect opportunity to do an author study, especially with an author such as Kevin Henkes who writes books that are loved by children at this age. The different reading levels of the many books he has written for young children make them perfect selections for book or literature circles in second grade classrooms.

The second research question asked if the teachers' and students' knowledge of recently published children's books after four weeks of exposure to current children's literature was, as measured by scores on the TRT posttests for teachers' and students', positively correlated. The experimental treatment in this study was effective for increasing teachers' and students' knowledge of current children's titles in a remarkably short period of time. Students had access to only five of the books each week. So by the end of the four-week period they may have been given access to 20 books. However the actual access students had to books was completely dependent on the teacher. Although teachers in the control and experimental groups received training and instructions before the study began and again in weekly e-mails, how much exposure students got in the experimental group from the book readings was dependent on the classroom teacher. The teachers in the experimental group were asked to present books in a way that would make the titles and content memorable for children so they would have recollection at the end of the study, even for books that were read in the first weeks of the study. The

statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups scores on the posttest indicate that the teachers did what was asked and read in such a way that the students were highly engaged within the experimental group and had access to the books during the four weeks of the treatment.

The third research question asked if the teachers' attitudes toward reading were positively correlated with his or her students' attitudes toward reading. As was shown in the statistical analysis chapter, no relationship was found. These findings are possibly due to the students' confusion on how to relate their feelings to numbers on a scale of 1 to 4. Responses might have been better if the survey only involved 2 choices, such a smiley or frowning face. As mentioned under the additional analysis, an interesting finding was that a Regression model of TRT posttest student scores with teacher and student attitude scores had a significant ( $p < .0001$ ) adjusted R-square of 0.2653. This suggests that attitude influences student achievement, as measured by the student posttest scores on the TRT.

At the end of the study, many teachers in the experimental group stated that they appreciated being introduced to new books they had not encountered before. Some of the shared quotes from the teachers are as follows: "We really enjoyed being part of the experiment. I haven't seen my class so excited about reading all year!!! The books were great- even I was really excited to read a new one each day, Thanks" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 7, 2011). "My class enjoyed the books so much. The gift card was totally unnecessary! If you ever want to come back and do more, please know we would love it and no gift card please" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 9, 2011).

My class thoroughly enjoyed the books! Many, if not all, of them were Accelerated Reader titles they had never seen. So several of my students reread

the books and took the AR test. They always had mixed feelings at the end of the week—hating to see the books go, but looking forward to seeing new ones!

(Anonymous, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

### *Educational Implications*

The results of this study provide data that should be of great interest to administrators, teachers, and librarians. The findings indicate that exposure to children's books even over a very short amount of time greatly increases the teachers' and students' knowledge of children's literature that has been published recently. With money for professional development in public schools becoming more limited, administrators may want to find other inexpensive and effective ways to increase teachers' and their students' knowledge of children's books.

When teachers have access to current children's book titles and expose their students to the titles through book talks, reading, and giving students' access to the books, their students' knowledge of books increases. Teachers and administrators working with the librarian can easily increase their and their classroom's knowledge of quality, current children's book titles. The librarian can access the ALA and Children's Choice book list each year and make a TRT based on that year's book titles that are popular with children. Teachers can self-test themselves to see what their knowledge is of the books based on the TRT's created by the school librarian. Working closely with the principal and librarian, these books can be added to the library so teachers can share them with their students and encourage their students to check out these books and explore them themselves. As shown in this study, the teachers can easily administer a TRT to self-check their students to see how much knowledge of the books they are gaining. A great deal of information can be gathered for self-improvement with such a simple, quick, inexpensive measure as the TRT.

### *Limitations of the Study*

As with any study, this one was not without its limitations. First, while the sample size was adequate to address the main objectives of the study, there was not enough statistical power to detect potentially significant positive correlations with regard to reading attitude and, more specifically, the attitude between teachers and their students. In this study, the 28 questions on the original survey were reduced to five questions due to the younger ages of the students and shorter attention spans of the second graders who took the survey. Shortening the survey to five questions may have not provided enough data to detect potentially significant positive correlations between the students' and teachers' scores on the RAS.

Second, while the experiment provided significant results with regard to the main objectives, the study might have benefited from an increased length of time. The actual study was conducted over a period of four weeks in the second semester of the school year. This is a significant amount of time to be invited into a school to work with students and conduct research for a dissertation. The time commitment on the part of participants also included an additional two weeks of preparatory time for familiarizing the teachers with the study, getting permission slips from the teachers and having them send and collect consent forms for the students, assigning to groups, and giving the TRT prior to the study. Additionally there was a week after the study ended that was needed to administer the TRT posttest. The study's control and experimental treatments lasted only four weeks. Given more time, it would have been interesting to discover how long the effect lasted after the last exposure. Additionally, it would have been interesting to understand what effect additional exposure time would have had on the results. While the study did turn out to show effects with regard to exposing teachers to children's

literature, other interesting and statistically significant effects may have occurred if the study had lasted for a longer period of time.

The third limitation also relates to the study's limited amount of time, but in a different way than above. The students in the experimental group had access to five books for one week, and then the books were taken away and five new books were brought into their classroom. While the posttest scores were high on the TRT for the experimental group, one has to wonder how much TRT scores would have increased if the students did not have the books removed each week and were allowed to keep them in their classroom. It is possible that titles from the first and second week were not as highly recognized on the TRT as those they had in their classroom during the third and fourth weeks.

The fourth limitation is related to the restricted participants group. This study was limited to second grade students in one public school in the southeastern United States; therefore, the results are not generalizable even to all second grade student populations. In addition these results cannot be generalized to other grade levels, schools with different demographics, and teachers who did not volunteer to participate.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

Results of this study revealed that many classroom teachers are lacking in their knowledge of current children's literature. The teachers' low scores on the TRT pretest suggest a need for future research that examines ways to increase teachers' knowledge of contemporary children's books that have been recognized as high quality, engaging literature for readers. Research on reading methods and media courses taught at the university level also need to be conducted in ways that increase book knowledge and foster a love for reading and determine if

teacher preparation programs may be improved for beginning teachers' before they go to the classroom.

Research on professional development that helps in-service teachers update their knowledge of recently published children's literature is also needed. If teachers are to excite their classroom students about reading and cultivate in students a desire to read, these same teachers need to have a wide range of knowledge of not only children's authors but also actual book titles and contents (Cremin et al., 2008a). This study confirmed previous findings reviewed in Chapter 2 which indicated that teachers rely heavily on their own childhood favorites or children's favorites that have been around for quite some time. This was evident in the TRT pretest scores in this study, which showed that the two most recognized titles were old classroom classics.

While ongoing professional development is needed to support teachers continued growth of knowledge about new children's books, administrators need to learn how they may take advantage of a much underused commodity: the school librarian (Cremin et al., 2008b). Programs to increase teachers' knowledge of children's literature can benefit from active engagement and expertise contributed by the school librarian. Dillingofski (1993) said, "Being familiar with books helps teachers to appreciate children's literature more and to request a greater selection of books for the school library" (p.32). This suggests that teachers with a wide range of knowledge of books are more likely to not let the librarian and media collection go unused.

Both researchers and practitioners engage in debate about whether or not most teachers have enough knowledge of children's books to recommend books to their students who have different interests and instructional reading levels and needs. According to Cremin (2008a) "the

lack of professional knowledge and assurance with children's literature and the minimal knowledge of global literature has potentially serious consequences for all learners" (p 458). Minority groups and emergent readers are particularly affected when a teacher's repertoire of book knowledge is lacking (Cremin et al., 2008a). McCarthy and Moje (2002) say the involvement of teachers in helping choose books of interest for students not only enhances reading development, but also has a deep effect on how these students see themselves as readers. Maynard, Mackay, Smyth, and Reynolds (2007) study (as cited in Cremin et al., 2008b) found that unfortunately most students do not see their teachers in the role of readers who know and can recommend books they want to read. Instead, students view their mothers as the primary person who can help them choose books to read for pleasure.

The findings in the Cremin et al. (2008a) study were also echoed in the Applegate and Applegate (2004) study. They found that the soon-to-be teachers in their study felt their grade school teachers' reading attitude was very evident in their classroom. However, 17 of the 18 reported grade school teacher attitudes were negative. The pre-service teachers felt their grade school teachers had read dull books and failed to make reading interesting or engaging. If this negative trend with regard to teachers' knowledge of children's literature continues, future teachers who have a limited love for reading will have a difficult time promoting a love of reading to their students. The end result will be perpetuated by the cycle put forth in the Applegates' article called the Peter Effect, which states the difficulty of promoting something you yourself do not have, in this case a love for reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

Although the analysis with regard to attitudes supported the null hypothesis, there was an interesting interaction effect as mentioned in the additional analysis that used student and teacher attitude scores to predict student posttest scores on the TRT. The additional analysis provided



support for the idea that attitude has some type of influence on reading achievement. This suggestion is consistent with previous literature which stated that teachers who have good attitudes toward reading are more able to create students who are engaged readers, and that this experience strongly impacts readers well after they have finished school (Cox & Schaetzel, 2007). Cox and Schaetzel (2007) suggested there are those teachers who:

Prefer to watch movies and videos rather than read a book for pleasure [or who think] good books are produced into movies and it only takes 2 hours or so to finish the story, but it would take at least a week to finish reading a book for its story [or who are] unlikely to go and search for a book or buy a book voluntarily unless it is a “must” book and is “highly recommended by friends”.  
(pp. 306-308)

This study showed that having a positive impact on TRT scores can be accomplished in a short amount of time and at little cost by introducing teachers to current children’s literature and encouraging them to share those books with and make them accessible to students. These findings should be expanded upon in order to develop and encourage teachers such as those who stated in Cox and Schaetzel (2007):

There’s always a pile of books by the bedside... I read for information, to educate myself. It is a relaxing, an escape from how chaotic, complex, and complicated life can be. I even read to fall asleep at night. I read for lots of reasons! (p. 311)

Acting on these findings, teacher educators should consider discovering more effective ways to help pre-service teachers increase their knowledge of children’s literature and use available choices and awards lists to continuously upgrade their familiarity with content and

titles of new books to show students that they enjoy reading (Cox & Schaetzel, 2007). Teacher education programs should be reviewed and perhaps revised in light of recent research on the curriculum's success for increasing pre-service teachers' reading enjoyment and quantity of reading. During the current dissertation study, the teachers in the control group provided strong and encouraging words with regard to the shared read alouds done by this researcher. Along these lines, incorporating more enjoyment of reading into the reading methods class by bringing in personal reading may be one way to increase student teacher reading engagement.

Professional development focusing on children's literature should be the goal not only for teachers in elementary school but also for pre-service teachers at the university level in reading methods classes (Cox & Schaetzel, 2007). One approach I have taken has been to begin class with the reading of a current children's book chosen from a list of books from the International Reading Association's Children's Choice books. After the book was read by the teacher, the book was passed around the room, and the students were asked to write down the title and author in case it was a book they would like to have in their classroom as a future teacher. Extra credit was also offered to students to bring in current children's books from 2007 to 2010 and present them to the class. This was done in an effort to increase their knowledge of current children's book titles and to demonstrate the teacher's love of reading in hopes that this love of reading would trickle down to their classroom one day.

Lastly the results of this study suggested that a low-cost, low-resource program introducing teachers and students to current children's literature could positively impact knowledge of children's literature, even when implemented for a short period of time. The study also provides a strong, evidence-based foundation for future research that may replicate and extend this study on a larger scale. The results of this study have shown that teachers and

students do not have knowledge of current book titles and that a little exposure can significantly affect this deficiency. These results, on a larger scale, may provide the justification for federal funding to support greater exposure to contemporary literature in public schools. A simple first step would be to provide current children's literature to classroom teachers through the school's libraries and media collections with funds that create ongoing programs for teacher and student exposure to current children's literature.

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Appendix A-TRT Pretest/Stars Represent foils which were not on the actual test

BOOK TITLE	KNOW	DON'T KNOW
Fancy Nancy		
If I Had a Dragon		
Cootie Catchers *		
Deep in the Swamp		
Grumpy Bird		
The Clock with No Hands *		
Don't Be Afraid Little Pip		
Mouse Was Mad		
Lily's Purple Plastic Purse		
Backyard Safari *		
Stick Man		
The Daddy Mountain		
FairyTale News		
Martha Rabbit's Family *		
Super Sam!		
Truck Duck		
The Blueberry Kazoo*		
If You Give A Mouse a Cookie		
My Friend the Mailman *		
The Donut Chef		

Appendix B-TRT Posttest/Stars Represent foils which were not on the actual test

BOOK TITLE	KNOW	DON'T KNOW
The Birthday Pet		
Ginger Bear		
Down by the Sea *		
The Gingerbread Pirate		
Let's Do Nothing		
What Rhymes with Orange? *		
Lulu the Big Little Chick		
Our Principal Promised to Kiss a Pig		
Beware of the Frog		
Down by David's Pond*		
Millie Waits for the Mail		
The Hair of Zoe Fleefenbacher Goes to School		
Those Darn Squirrels		
Backyard Safari *		
I Lost My Tooth in Africa		
Katie Loves the Kittens		
Blame it on Billy *		
You Can't Go to School Naked		
Wacky Wendell *		
Which Puppy?		

Appendix C- Reading Attitude Survey

Reading Attitude Survey

1. You enjoy reading.

NOT LIKE ME ..... JUST LIKE ME

1                    2                    3                    4

2. You would be disappointed if you opened a present and it turned out to be a children's book.

NOT LIKE ME ..... JUST LIKE ME

1                    2                    3                    4

3. While you are going on vacation, you look for something good to read to take along.

NOT LIKE ME ..... JUST LIKE ME

1                    2                    3                    4

4. If you have to read a book, you pick a short one so you can finish it.

NOT LIKE ME ..... JUST LIKE ME

1                    2                    3                    4

5. Sometimes you find yourself so excited about a children's book that you try to get your friends to read it.

NOT LIKE ME ..... JUST LIKE ME

1                    2                    3                    4

## Appendix-D List of Book Titles Used For Experiment Group

Children's favorites (reported by a few teachers) are marked with 3 stars.

1. The Perfect Nest by Catherine Friend

This is a story about Jack, a cat who builds the perfect nest to attract the perfect egg for his omelet. However, Jack winds up with more than he bargained for. Students will enjoy making predictions about what they think will happen next.

2. Beware of the Frog by William Bee \*\*\*

Living alone in the forest, Old Mrs. Collywobbles needs protection from the Greedy Goblin, the Smelly Troll, and the Giant Hungry Ogre. Her pet frog jumps out of folklore to come to her rescue and give Mrs. Collywobbles more than she anticipated.

3. Good Enough to Eat by Brock Cole

When the villagers sacrifice a scruffy street-girl to a terrible ogre, she must use all her considerable wits not only to survive but also to come out a winner.

4. Sally and the Some-Thing by George O'Connor

One boring morning, Sally decides to go fishing and meets a slimy, slithery "some-thing." Sally is thrilled, and together they do things like make mud pies and have burping contests. Unexpected and beautifully illustrated, this book is a sure delight.

5. Those Darn Squirrels! By Adam Rubin \*\*\*

Children are mesmerized and laugh out loud at the antics these contriving squirrels go through to reach birdfeeders. Whimsical and entertaining are two words that describe the illustrations and story that put man and squirrel at battle over feeders.

6. Millie Waits for the Mail by Alexander Steffensmeir

Millie the Cow loves to scare the mailman every day. When Millie's tricks leave the mailman in a mess, she learns to love something new. Children make many text-to-self connections to Millie and her silly tricks and hiding places.

7. Katie Loves the Kittens by John Himmelman

Katie's exuberance for the three new kittens at home is almost too much to handle. Being a dog gets her into trouble as she howls and chases the kittens. She even lets them sleep on her.



8. *'Twas the Day Before Zoo Day* by Catherine Ipcizade

In this clever adaptation of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, all the animals are preparing for Zoo Day—they burp, they spit, and they act like animals. What will Zoo Day bring?

9. *Ginger Bear* by Mini Grey

This is a humorous tale of a young British boy, Horace, who makes a gingerbread bear. Ginger Bear has adventures as he makes new friends and escapes the family dog. The story comes alive through the detailed illustrations.

10. *You Can't Go to School Naked!* by Diane Billstrom \*\*\*

Naturally the idea of someone going to school naked attracts a lot of attention. In this wildly funny story, the author puts forth all the pros and cons of going to school without clothes. Many times adults just say no without an explanation to a child's request.

11. *The Birthday Pet* by Ellen Javernick

Danny wanted a turtle for his birthday, but his family had other ideas. They got a dog, a cat, a rat, and a bird before finally getting him a turtle. Like Danny, readers know what they want and will be happy when he gets his turtle.

12. *The Gingerbread Pirates* by Kristin Kladstrup

This swashbuckling tale combines a pirate encounter with Santa and the magic of the night before Christmas. The combination of cookies and pirates makes your mouth water, your imagination soar, and provides another fun pirate party idea.

13. *The Hair of Zoe Fleefenbacher Goes to School* by Laurie Halse Anderson\*\*\*

Zoe was born with a head of wild hair. Her hair had always been an asset until she went to first grade. Protecting a child's self-esteem by emphasizing her strengths is a lesson that teachers and students can learn from this book.

14. *Sneezy Louise* by Irene Breznak

Louise battles a terrible case of the sneezes on a troublesome day. This lovable character learns some valuable lessons—tomorrow can be a better day, and cover that sneeze!

15. *Trouble Gum* by Matthew Cordell

Ruben and Julius are stuck in their house on a rainy day. When their grandmother arrives with bubble gum, the two young pigs quickly break their mother's rules about gum in the house. Children will love the young pigs' adventures and the black-and-white drawings punctuated by bright pink bubbles of gum.

16. Which Puppy? By Kate Feiffer

President Obama promised his girls, Sasha and Malia, a pet in the White House. Many animals, including puppies, want to be that pet. Children can identify with the animal theme and with wanting to be chosen.

17. I Lost My Tooth in Africa by Penda Diakite

Amina loses her tooth while on vacation in Mali, but instead of a visit from the Tooth Fairy, she gets a chicken!

18. Lulu the Big Little Chick by Paulette Bogan

Lulu doesn't want to be little anymore and decides to go far away. She meets the pigs, sheep, cows, and horses—who all say she should stay—but she keeps going. The close-up illustrations and Lulu's startled reactions will grab readers' attention.

19. Lizette's Green Sock by Catharina Valckx

Lizette is delighted to find a green sock. The other characters tease Lizette and make her sad for not having a pair. Readers will celebrate the innovative way that Lizette solves the problem.

20. Scaredy Squirrel by Melanie Watt \*\*\*

Scaredy Squirrel's safe life in his nut tree is insured by his emergency kit, which includes antibacterial soap, bug spray, and sardines (in case of sharks). When he loses the kit while evading a killer bee, something amazing happens.

21. The Hinky Pink by Megan McDonald

Until the young seamstress Anabel finds the perfect bed for the Hobbledygob Hinky-Pink, she will get no sleep and the Princess's dress will never be ready in time for the ball.

22. Who Ate All the Cookie Dough? by Karen Beaumont

Rhyming, repetitive text makes this book an instant favorite among young readers. Mother kangaroo is trying to make cookies, but someone ate all the cookie dough. She asks all the animals only to discover that it was Baby Kangaroo. A good book for guided and choral reading.

23. Frankie Stein by Lola M Schaefer

Frankie Stein is a cute baby, but his parents fear he will never be as scary as they are until they learn to see him for the unique Stein that he is in this humorous story.

24. How Many Panda Babies? By Sandra Markle \*\*\*

This counting book uses actual photographs of baby pandas and includes much information that can be used by a teacher to show how a baby giant panda lives and grows.

25. Stinky by Eleanor Davis \*\*\*

Stinky, the swamp monster, is at first determined to rid his beloved “muddy, slimy, smelly swamp” of Nick, only to realize that this dreaded “kid” is not the appallingly clean intruder he supposes him to be.

26. Being a Pig is Nice: A Child’s Eye View of Manners by Sally Lloyd – Jones

Children are enticed by a little girl's imagination as she wonders how having the manners of a pig (or other animals) is less troubling than the expected manners for a child.

27. Our Principal Promised to Kiss a Pig by Kalli Dakos and Alicia DesMarteau\*\*\*

A principal promises to kiss a pig if students read 10,000 books. But Hamlet, the chosen pig, wants nothing to do with the big smooch. Young readers relate to promises from enthusiastic principals and enjoy the pig's point of view.

28. Let’s Do Nothing by Tony Fucile

Young Frankie and Sal feel like they have done everything there is to do in life. In their sincere and hilarious effort, Frankie and Sal discover that it is impossible to do nothing. Boredom is a feeling kids will connect with.

29. What Really Happened to Humpty? From the Files of a Hard-Boiled Detective by Jeanie Franz Ransom

Joe Dumpty meets many Mother Goose characters as he tries to prove that his brother Humpty's fall wasn't an accident. The clever parodies add to the fun.

30. Silly Tilly by Eileen Spinelli

The silly barnyard pranks of Tilly the goose are sure to be enjoyed. Bold illustrations guide children to think about why Tilly is so loved by her animal friends.

## Appendix E-List of Book Titles Read to Control Group

Children's favorites are marked with 3 stars

1. Twelve Terrible Things by Marty Kelley

This book is filled with 12 terrible things. Each one is sure to make little children moan, groan, or stutter with fear. Every child can relate to terrible things. This is a great book for engaging children in conversations.

2. Ducks Don't Wear Socks by John Nedwidek

A serious girl learns to loosen up after meeting a dapper duck with a wacky wardrobe and a penchant for delivering deadpan retorts. She first sees him wearing socks, and then a tie, a cowboy hat, and the always-giggle-generating underwear. The seemingly coincidental meetings follow a pattern that children will appreciate. When straitlaced Emily questions Duck's attire, he is always ready with a succinct (and silly) reply that requires him to continue on his merry way. As the story progresses, his outfits and reasons become more outlandish, causing Emily to lighten up and ultimately find a way to make Duck himself laugh in return.

3. Burger Boy by Alan Durant \*\*\*

What happens when a boy eats so many burgers that he turns into one? Children will enjoy reading about the adventures the boy has as a burger. The colorful and imaginative illustrations will hold readers' attention.

4. Stinky Smelly Feet: A Love Story by Margie Palatini

Douglas Duck's stinky feet are a barrier to his romance with Dolores. Whenever he takes his shoes off, nearby critters drop like flies from the smell. True love succeeds when baths, powders, and spray fail our wacky beaked and web-footed couple.

5. Goldilocks and the Three Martians by Stu Smith

This fractured tale is about a girl who does not like the rules at home and decides to move to another planet. Children relate to the storyline of things not always being pleasant and the occasional desire to escape.

6. The Sandman by Ralph Fletcher \*\*\*

This fantasy tale reveals who the Sandman is and what is sprinkled into your eyes to help you sleep. Tor, the Sandman, grinds down dragon scales and travels the town sprinkling it into the eyes of the wakeful young.

7. Dear Tooth Fairy by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Claire is anxiously awaiting her first loose tooth, and she's getting impatient. She writes to the Tooth Fairy, and miraculously, the Tooth Fairy writes back -- providing Claire with some helpful advice!

8. Trosclair and the Alligator by Peter Huggins

A spicy Louisiana tale about a boy and his dog as they search for turtle eggs. Trosclair and Ollie are drawn to forbidden Bee Island Swamp, home of Gargantua, the notorious, omnivorous, enormous alligator, because it also affords the tastiest turtle eggs. Trosclair's father had warned him to stay away: "That alligator eat you and Ollie so fast," Père said, "he won't even stop to burp." Stepping on a log that's really Gargantua, the two flee up the nearest tree where a buzzing hive presents the means for their clever escape.

9. Prancing Dancing Lily \*\*\*

Lily's passion for dance jeopardizes her future as the Bell cow. She leaves Mamoo (and the herd too) to hoof it as a square dancer, Rockette, and ballerina, always sending messages home. A drum and a conga line solve Lily's leadership quandary.