

2023

Upper Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Using Audiobooks for Reluctant Readers

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Walden University

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Richard Michael Joseph

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

Upper Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Using Audiobooks for Reluctant

Readers

by

Richard Michael Joseph

MA, University of Illinois-Chicago, 1997

BA, University of Michigan, 1990

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2023

Abstract

The problem that prompted this study was that educators' perceptions were unknown regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. This lack of awareness represents a gap in practice that reflects a potential need for increased understanding about how the use of audiobooks in classroom settings may help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The purpose of this basic qualitative project study was to examine third through fifth grade educators' perceptions on the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits who attend a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. Research questions explored the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades, including how barriers and/or facilitators were perceived regarding the use of audio books to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. Purposeful sampling was used to select 13 educators serving students in third through fifth grades in separate one-on-one interviews. Thematic analysis and coding identified four major themes: access, engagement, reading while listening, and barriers. The participants expressed a need for professional development around the use of audiobooks which led to the development of a 3-day professional development project. The findings of this study may lead to positive social change as audiobooks could enhance students' independent reading habits, resulting in increased literacy, higher education opportunities, and higher paying job prospects, which could positively impact socioeconomic status and lower poverty levels.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my wife Mary Beth Seefelt, for her eternal and ongoing love and support. Thank you, Mary Beth, for providing the balance that I need to be my best self. We're a great team and I love you.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Dannett Babb, who advised me to consider audiobooks as a research topic. Your guidance has provided a significant shift in the way I approach, teach, and guide the readers I serve each day.

I would also like to thank Dr. Suzanne O'Neill, who directed me through the research phase of this project study and provided much needed support.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my students, past and present, who have inspired me to continue to find creative and innovative ways to instill in them a love of reading.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Educators have the ability to make a significant difference on student attitudes, especially for students who profess a profound dislike of independent reading (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020). The local problem that prompted this study was that educators' perceptions were unknown regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. The educators who are most influential in students' independent reading lives have relatively little practical knowledge of the usefulness of audiobooks (Merga, 2020). Educators serving students in Grades 3 to 5 at the local school site have not had the opportunity to examine the extent to which audiobooks may influence their reading pedagogy.

Librarians have not fully been able to explore the effect that audiobooks may have on the independent reading habits of upper elementary students. There have been times, however, when teachers in the local school district have had professional learning opportunities to redefine the way they conduct literature circles using digital tools. Educators in Grades 3 to 5 appear to possess a lack of awareness around the use of audiobooks. The lack of awareness represents a gap in practice that reflects a potential need for increased understanding about how the use of audiobooks in classroom settings may help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. In order to develop independent reading habits, students ought to spend 60 minutes each day reading independently between time in class and time outside of class (Merga, 2018). Data from

a 2020 - 2021 school year student reading survey administered to fifth graders at the local school site indicated that 28% of students are infrequent or moderately frequent readers, a percentage that may be reduced through the use of audiobooks (Pugh, 2020). Students need to be introduced to texts that captivate them and then given the flexibility to explore those books (Martinez & Woodley, 2019). Research shows that audiobooks can be a useful tool to engage reluctant readers, increase comprehension, and improve readers' self-perception (James, 2017; Jansen, 2019; Maher, 2019).

The lack of awareness around the use of audiobooks in Grades 3 to 5 demonstrates the need for increased understanding about how to assist reluctant readers in the development of independent reading habits and represents a gap in practice (Maher, 2019). The gap in the literature is the absence of research that articulates the impact that the use of audiobooks has, specifically on the independent reading habits of reluctant readers (James, 2017; Hartell, 2018). The regular use of audiobooks in classroom settings has the potential to increase the number of reluctant readers who read independently on a regular basis and thus develop independent reading habits.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Classroom teachers in Grades 3-5 are mindful of the students they serve who do not possess an independent reading habit. Educators have been aware of the profound dislike that reluctant readers possess for independent reading and are aware of the need to adjust their practice to help establish independent reading habits (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020). The problem was identified by Grades 3-5 educators as a gap in practice, which

was the lack of awareness around the use of audiobooks. The local school site administered the Upper Reading Survey (Pugh, 2020) which indicated that 28% of students are infrequent or moderately frequent readers. Additionally, a very small percentage of these reluctant readers was given the opportunity to use audiobooks in the classroom setting. Reluctant readers have not been provided with enough choice, time, or teacher guidance around independent reading. A significant number of students who may be classified as reluctant readers are completely unaware of the potential benefits of audiobooks (James, 2017). Furthermore, insufficient classroom time is available to deliver an effectively balanced literacy program that dedicates enough time to independent reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2018).

Twenty-eight percent of students who classified themselves as reluctant readers on an end-of-year student reading survey administered to 27 fifth grade students at the local school site were not consistently exposed to texts that they willingly selected to read independently. Infrequent or moderately frequent readers were not exposed to high-interest texts because teachers did not allocate enough time for students to read independently during language arts class. Furthermore, there was pressure to adhere to a district language arts curriculum that was not supported by the number of instructional minutes available per day. At the upper elementary level, an effective balanced literacy approach to instruction requires at least 120 minutes per day (Fountas & Pinnel, 2018). The current schedule at the local school site provides 60 minutes per day for all of the language arts curricula, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and word study. Consequently, not enough time is uniquely dedicated on a daily basis to independent

reading. Reluctant readers are not given enough opportunity to become exposed to print books or audiobooks that are of high interest. Reluctant readers are also not given enough time in class to read independently (Badrigian, 2017). Moreover, third through fifth grades educators are unaware of the benefits of contemporary audiobooks for engaging reluctant readers in new and motivating ways.

Library circulation records at the study site indicate that few students borrow audiobooks. The school librarian made a small number of audiobooks available on the library website so that students could listen to the audio versions of books on their computers or handheld devices. The limited use of audiobooks may be due to a lack of awareness on the part of teachers and students regarding the existence of these audiobooks. The extent to which classroom teachers are aware of the presence of these audiobooks is unknown. Educators' perceptions were unknown and were examined regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Classroom teachers who practice a workshop approach to balanced literacy instruction are aware of the importance of allocating time each day for students to read independently through the use of both print and audiobooks (Bright, 2017). Reluctant readers are more inclined to engage in independent reading if they are interested in the books they are reading and the books are matched to their ability level. Students' choice in the books they read independently is essential to maximizing their time on task (Williams et al., 2017). Sixty percent of reluctant readers avoid reading because reading

is a source of threat to them due to their feelings of inadequacy and incompetence as readers (Nielen et al., 2016). Reluctant readers appear to benefit from discussing the books they have read and audiobooks they have listened to. (Venegas, 2018). Reluctant readers learn best in a differentiated, small-group setting where the teacher meets students' needs within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) using both print and audio texts at individual, instructional reading levels (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020). Teachers require ongoing professional learning opportunities that enable them to create learning environments to bolster audiobook and print reading engagement among reluctant readers (Martinez & Woodley, 2019).

Audiobooks are able to engage reluctant readers in ways print books cannot, improve reading comprehension skills, and help develop self-perception (James, 2017). Furthermore, children do not lose reading comprehension when using audiobooks compared to print reading (Maher, 2019). Reluctant readers may be more interested in recreational reading materials delivered in audiobook format rather than through print (Jansen, 2019). Fifty percent of teachers indicate that they do not read graphic novels nor do they "read with their ears" using audiobooks (Lesesne, 2019). Studies of audio delivery of content are mixed, and great variability in reading fluency and comprehension outcomes has been reported, depending on the characteristics of the groups studied (Moore & Cahill, 2016). The characteristics of audiobooks for children and young adults vary widely in a number of factors. Students who do not have access to audiobooks lack the positive impact that audiobooks have on students' listening comprehension skills (Kartal & Simsek, 2017). Anxieties and concerns exist among educators around the use

of audiobooks and the ways different types of privileges held by professionals and social groups are governed by the limitations of access to information, which becomes particularly important when reluctant readers are endowed with decision-making power (Dali & Brochu, 2020). The purpose of this basic qualitative project study was to examine third through fifth grade educators' perceptions on the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits who attend a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan

Definition of Terms

The following terms associated with the problem are used in this study:

Audiobook: An audiobook is an electronic book format that is listened to instead of being read in the traditional sense. Increasingly, audiobooks are voiced by actors who create dynamic and engaging performances that appeal to a wide range of readers for a variety of reasons (Have & Pedersen, 2020).

Balanced literacy: A balanced literacy approach may be described as one that uses didactic instruction while engaging students in authentic learning experiences, being certain to incorporate an equitable combination of both reading and writing activities (Willson & Falcon, 2018).

Facilitators: The factors that enable the implementation of evidence-based interventions (Bach-Mortensen, et al., 2018).

Independent reading: During independent reading, students read books of their choosing for a sustained period of time. During a class session of independent reading, minilessons, brief conferences, and opportunities to share thinking support students'

engagement with books and increase their competencies. Texts are generally at a child's independent reading level during independent reading time. Children share their thinking through discussion and writing. Teaching occurs in brief conferences that support children's thinking (Fountas & Pinnell, 2018).

Reluctant reader: Reluctant readers are usually divided into three categories: ones who cannot read, do not read, or will not read. The reason for struggling is multi pronged. Some students have a specific learning issue that adversely impacts their ability to read, others have no interest and therefore do not gain the necessary practice they need to grow, while still others possess the skills to read independently but choose not to read (Bright, 2017).

Upper elementary school teacher: An individual who teaches students in third through fifth grades.

Workshop approach: A workshop approach to literacy instruction is characterized by the following components in a given lesson: an opening, a minilesson, small-group and independent work occurring simultaneously, conferring from teacher to student and student to student, sharing of work accomplished, and self-reflective debriefing (Ciampa, 2016).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): The ZPD is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with a more capable peer (Wang, 2017).

Significance of the Study

This project study could be significant because educator feedback on the use of audiobooks is necessary to promote effective practices around the development of students' independent reading habits. This study addressed a local problem by focusing specifically on educators' perceptions and the barriers and/or facilitators in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan - regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings - to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. This project was unique because it addressed the gap in practice around the use of audiobooks at the local school site. There is a lack of research that specifically addresses how the use of audiobooks may improve reluctant readers' independent reading habits at the third through fifth grade level (Hartell, 2018).

The results of this study could provide much-needed insights for educators who work to develop lifelong independent reading habits for reluctant readers at third through fifth grades. Results from this study should aid educators in their ongoing professional learning around the development of lifelong independent reading habits for reluctant readers. Consistent pedagogical approaches in the development of lifelong independent reading habits have been identified as a necessary condition for promoting equitable opportunities for personal and professional advancement (Fisher et al., 2017).

The findings of this study may lead to positive social change at the local school site which may impact students, teachers, and the larger school community. The use of audiobooks and the development of consistent independent reading habits may enhance student reading comprehension. The increase in reading comprehension may lead to

greater retention of facts and information, which may promote idea development in students. The increase in student comprehension and retention may then translate to higher academic achievement, student engagement, and increased scores on state-mandated assessments. Higher scores on assessments may increase higher education possibilities, job opportunities and, therefore, may change socioeconomic status - which may lead to lower poverty rates.

Research Questions

Educators' use of audiobooks in the development of lifelong independent reading habits for reluctant readers in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan was unknown. This study explored how the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings may help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The research questions that I used to guide this project study were the following:

RQ 1. What are the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

RQ 2. What are the barriers and/or facilitators educators perceive to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

Review of the Literature

Teachers must effectively model independent reading habits as lead learners and expert readers (Williams et al., 2017). Consistent pedagogical approaches are essential in the development of lifelong independent reading habits through the use of audiobooks (Martinez & Woodley, 2019). Students who lack independent reading habits typically have little experience with audiobooks (James, 2017). Teachers who use evolving audiobook technology are more inclined to embrace its use (Lesesne, 2019). The ability of teachers to introduce contemporary audiobook use to their students can significantly impact students' independent reading habits (Kartal & Simsek, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. Incorporated in Vygotsky's theory is the construct of the ZPD. Students are able to function in the ZPD when content is within their level of understanding. Students' ZPD varies according to the developmental readiness of individuals. Individuals are thought to learn best when working collaboratively with accomplished practitioners. Through collaborative work with educators who serve as lead learners, students understand and internalize new concepts and routines required to develop independent work habits (Wang, 2017).

Vygotsky (1978) expressed that learners can grow and learn best through the tutelage of a more experienced lead learner. Student-centered classrooms cultivate an atmosphere of academic freedom, inquiry and creativity (Serin, 2018). Students accomplish more with an experienced educator or peer than they can on their own.

Vygotsky also explained the ways in which a student's ZPD is better developed by the support of a more capable educator. The more capable mentor will guide the learner through a scaffolded approach in order to assist with learning a skill that the learner would not have the ability to complete independently without challenge. Vygotsky asserted that over time, students assume more responsibility for constructing and owning their individual learning experience in order to gradually develop higher levels of competency (Iyer & Ramachandran, 2020).

The role of the educator is central to help facilitate student learning within the student's ZPD as an independent reader (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020). As educators' use of audiobooks in the development of lifelong independent reading habits for reluctant readers in third through fifth grades is consistently informed by educators' perceptions and practice, Vygotsky's theory offers guidance for how these habits ought to be cultivated by educators (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020). Vygotsky's theory continues to significantly influence how educators establish reading instruction methodologies. Teachers' beliefs about student engagement and willingness to serve as a facilitator and guide has a direct impact on student self-efficacy (Howard et al., 2016). In order for students to read independently, reading material should be thoughtfully chosen to be within their ZPD, or confidence reading level (Smith, 2017). A student's ZPD range indicates text difficulty that is neither too challenging nor too facile (Vygotsky, 1978). Reading material is at a student's ZPD if the child can read the book with fluency and comprehend it without assistance. The student experiences a minimal amount of challenge when reading independently. Students ought to be able to read text within their

ZPD with minimal teacher intervention (Smith, 2017). Material that is above students' ZPD requires assistance in order to decode and comprehend it.

Social constructivist theory was an appropriate framework, as this study explored how educators' perceptions regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings may help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. Educators seek to construct a community of readers who are able to find books that are within their ZPD. Central to the establishment and maintenance of consistent independent reading habits is the role that the educator plays as the expert reader and lead learner in the classroom (Loh et al., 2017). Effective constructivist educators understand the primacy of student-teacher relationships in the development of meaningful learning practices. Students use of audiobooks represents an opportunity to promote independent reading habits in reluctant readers (Kartal & Simsek, 2017). As audiobooks enhance readers' fluency and comprehension, the awareness of educator perceptions around their use is essential.

Review of the Broader Problem

The problem at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan is that third through fifth grade educators' perceptions are unknown regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. Additionally, the barriers and/or facilitators for educators using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits is not known. The purpose of this basic qualitative project study was to examine third through fifth grade educators' perceptions on the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant

readers develop independent reading habits who attend a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan.

In this literature review, peer-reviewed journal articles of empirical research were relevant and current. Literature was selected based on its relevance to this qualitative project study. Current literature in the form of peer-reviewed articles was identified that contained research-based strategies from various databases such as ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and SAGE Journals Online. A search strategy emphasized the following themes: the pedagogy of independent reading, developing lifelong reading habits in reluctant readers and the use of audiobook technology at the elementary level. Search terms such as *independent reading*, *reluctant readers*, *audio books* or *audiobooks*, *reading habits*, *reading attitudes*, *reading motivation*, *independent reading choice*, *educators' perceptions*, *elementary grade teachers*, *audio books* and *comprehension*, *struggling readers*, *reading aloud*, and *oral reading* were used. There was a gradual realization that no additional research was forthcoming. At this point, saturation had been reached and all available research related to these search terms and the topic had been encountered. Vygotsky (1978) articulated that students' learning increases through social interactions and they ought to be engaged actively in the process of learning. This learning process helps students internalize information gleaned from audiobooks and print books and to construct knowledge through guidance from peers and adults to become independent readers (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020).

Independent Reading as Part of a Balanced Literacy Workshop Model

The establishment of a lifelong independent reading habit remains one of the most essential academic habits for any learner in a balanced literacy workshop (Badrigian, 2017). Independent readers possess a sense of agency that enables them to take ownership over their learning (Vaughn et al., 2020). Student motivation is central to establishing independent reading habits and an embrace of ebooks and audiobooks as different reading modalities (Brannan, 2016). Students need to know that they are valued by their teacher in a relationship of expert reader to apprentice reader (Drewry et al., 2019). The ability of a student to have maximum access and choice in the books they read independently is of paramount importance (Bright, 2017). Goal setting and regular student conferences enable educators to differentiate their reading instruction to meet the needs of reluctant readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 2018).

Through choice-based, interactive methods of reading instruction, learners' perception of their own reading ability improves slightly (Bright, 2017). Membership in a community of readers is essential for maximizing the development of independent reading habits, especially in reluctant readers (Iyer & Ramachandran, 2020). Students are most engaged when they activate prior knowledge and immerse themselves in meaningful learning via situated practice, experience opportunities to create meaning through multimodal discourse and develop shared meanings scaffolded within a community of practice (Drewry et al., 2019).

Schools with active librarians and even a small library can significantly impact the development of students' independent reading habits (Lamb, 2017). The partnership between school librarian and classroom teacher is essential to the establishment of a

culture of reading where books are constantly introduced and discussed from a variety of genre (Loh et al., 2017). The ability of students to see themselves in the stories they read and to witness the experiences of others is central to cultivating meaning in a reading workshop (Shaw et al., 2020). The affirmation that comes with self-reflection, referred to as mirrors, and new learning, referred to as windows, is central to the establishment of identity in readers (Vlach, 2019). The librarian, as the expert reader in a school, provides a constant stream of stories and information to cultivate a constantly evolving community of readers (Kordeliski, 2017). Librarians can provide time for students to browse and read, and can maximize choice through the availability of new titles (Merga, 2020). Librarians provide consistent lessons over time to foster a lifetime habit of independent reading (Grice, 2018). Teachers who maintain a collaborative relationship with their librarians utilize an indispensable resource that benefits all students (Henriksson & Laakso, 2020).

Types of Reluctant Readers

Donalyn Miller established that there are three types of readers: developing, dormant, and underground (Patrick, 2019). It was the developing, or reluctant, readers who were the focus of this project study. Reluctant readers may be unwilling to read due to issues with inattention, dyslexia or both (Dali & Brochu, 2020). The application of time, choice, and community and a reading relationship with a creative teacher have the potential to transform any reluctant reader into an independent reader, especially through the use of contemporary audiobook technology. (Cahill & Moore, 2017). Boys, in particular, are disproportionately represented in the numbers of reluctant readers

(DeNaeghel et al., 2016). The use of audiobooks challenges the prevailing stereotype of working-class masculinity and the working-class male's relationship to reading and texts (Asplund & Pérez Prieto, 2017).

Audiobooks and Reading Motivation

Sixty percent of reluctant readers avoid reading because reading is a source of emotional threat to them (Nielen et al., 2016). The use of audiobooks as a reading modality has an overall positive effect on students' attitudes toward audiobooks as audiobooks improve both reading fluency and reading comprehension (Botagoz, 2020). Unlike traditional text forms, digital readers in the form of smart phones, handheld devices, and tablets offer a range of reading formats, including hyperlinked text, audio, video, and animations (Jansen, 2019).

Audiobooks continue to carry a negative stigma for a significant number of educators and parents as "fake reading" (Knutson, 2019). In order to motivate students to use audiobooks in academic settings, Knutson's research suggests that students should internalize audiobooks as being a useful tool for all readers, not just reluctant readers (Knutson, 2019). The same titles ought to be presented to all students to ensure equal access to all literary offerings and reduce the possibility of students feeling set apart from their peers when using audiobooks (English, 2020). All students should be strongly encouraged to follow along with a print text while they listen to an audiobook, though this ought not to be a requirement (Wallin, 2020). As students get more comfortable with audiobooks, they often naturally begin following along as they find that this helps their comprehension (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020). However, coercing students to use

audiobooks can alienate them and may damage their identity as readers (Bobien-Blanton, (2020). Audiobooks can motivate students to read, and more research is required to validate these claims and better counsel educators on how to use audiobooks with reluctant readers. (Knutson, 2019).

Contemporary audiobooks, with their use of large casts of talented voice actors and sound effects, are more engaging to students than ever before (Lange et al., 2020). The successful use of technology in educational settings largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards the use of the technology (Zaimeche & Boumezaid, 2020). Students with learning differences who use audiobooks demonstrate increased fluency and motivation to read. Modern learners require a shift from the outmoded focus on reading books in the form of paper-based print copies only (Maboe et al., 2018).

The portability of audiobooks on smartphones and their use in more settings than ever before has been a life-changing experience for readers (Rucker, 2020). The availability of audiobooks through subscription services such as Audible or public library-based apps such as Hoopla, Libby, and Overdrive provides readers with maximum access (Santos, 2020). Librarians and educators must realize the evolving nature of the audiobook format and the motivating impact that audiobooks can have on listeners of all ages (Toms et al., 2017). Research that explores the benefits of audiobooks is limited. Further investigation of the motivating potential of audiobooks would clarify effective practices (Cahill & Moore, 2017).

The features of contemporary audiobook technology have made access to audiobooks more convenient than ever. The ability to easily replay stories enhances

motivation and promotes audiobook use (Ivone & Renandya, 2019). The act of listening while reading provides a level of engagement that is unattainable for reluctant readers who otherwise would only utilize a print-based text (Maboe et al., 2018). Many audiobook listeners enjoy the format because it provides opportunities to enjoy audio-based content while performing mundane tasks such as exercising, housework, yardwork or cooking (Perks & Turner, 2019). The proliferation of Bluetooth technology has made audiobooks more universally available in schools, homes, and vehicles than ever before (Maboe et al., 2018) Listeners are drawn authentic voices in contemporary audiobooks that effectively represent the characters' accents and ethnicities (Pajupuu et al., 2019). While COVID-19 lockdowns resulted in decreased sales of printed books on a global scale, ebook and audiobook sales increased slightly during that period (Kovač & Gudinaičius, 2020).

The availability of the stories of people of color in audiobooks is a motivating component of why readers read independently (Cahill & Richey, 2017). Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's metaphor of stories acting as mirrors that reflect the lives of the people who read them and windows to look through to learn about people who are different is a key construct in motivating reluctant readers (Kuehl, 2021). Critically, librarians and educators must be urged to provide audiobooks that not merely reflect the race and ethnicity of their particular patrons (Brock, 2017). High-quality children's literature has to include as many faces and voices as exist in the literary canon (Kuehl, 2021).

Audiobooks and the Role of Librarians

School librarians play a critical role in the promotion and use of audiobooks (Young, 2019). As the availability of audiobooks has increased dramatically over the past decade, librarians are positioned to connect teachers, students, and parents with stories and information in audio format (Lamb, 2018). By tapping into specific reading interests, librarians offer students with dyslexia and other reading challenges audiobooks as an effective way to keep up with their classmates (Lamb, 2018). Students can comprehend at higher reading levels when using audiobooks (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020).

Librarians' awareness of the unique features of audiobooks provides opportunities for reluctant readers to interface with stories in highly engaging ways (Lamb, 2018). Music brings audio picture books alive for listeners (Kuklo, 2018). From regional music to local accents, audiobooks may provide readers with a useful and unique cultural experience (Howard, 2020). The voices shift accents as they move between cultures (Howard, 2020). The text and the aural representation contribute to the complete literary experience. Librarians typically know the resources better than any educator in a school setting, and are uniquely positioned to provide differentiated resources to meet the needs of individual learners (Kachel, 2018). Librarians can identify characters or themes in books that will connect the stories to the unique interests of the most reluctant readers (Lo et al., 2019).

Once the student has a positive experience engaging with text, there is a greater likelihood that the student will begin to identify as a reader (Venegas, 2018). Librarians can also help students consider how and when to listen to audiobooks (Best et al., 2020). Reluctant readers who like to run could listen to stories that feature runners while the

students themselves workout (Best et al., 2020). Other students who like to bake may listen to stories about baking while they prepare desserts. From suggestions for listening to stories in the car, on the bus, or before bed, reluctant readers require explicit suggestions on how to incorporate the disposition of a reading habit into their daily lives (Loh et al., 2017). Librarians are able to offer a variety of ways to utilize audiobooks that help reluctant readers see themselves as readers (Lamb, 2018).

As access to audiobooks is free with a library card, students require only internet access and the handheld devices they already possess to utilize the technology (Jones, 2020). Teachers and schools should work together with school and public librarians to enhance and sustain the active use of audiobooks for their learners (Povey, 2016). Currently, audiobook collections have been built primarily around the popularity of print titles, and librarians encourage input from users in the selection of popular audiobooks (Sanders, 2016). Students can even create audiobooks of both their own work and published authors' work for circulation in school libraries (Vroblick, 2020). Audio reading will only grow in popularity with the expanding use of mobile audio apps and the ongoing high quality of audiobook productions (Yushan et al., 2019).

Audiobook Reading Is Reading

There continues to be lingering debate around whether audiobook reading is, in fact, considered reading (Dali & Brochu, 2020). If reading in common terms implies visually “perceiving the content of written or printed texts” (Dali & Brochu, 2020) then a reader cannot say that they read an audiobook. If, however, reading is about “recreating mental images on the basis of identification of the text’s words” (Have & Pedersen,

2020) it is reasonable to deduce that listening to stories is reading. It relates in a similar fashion to the concept of reading in Braille (Wallin, 2020). It is important that educators insist that audiobook reading is reading in order to validate audiobook use for not only reluctant readers but all readers (Have & Pedersen, 2020).

There is a greater awareness that a new type of reading and reader has emerged who is not concerned with the difference between text-based, visual, and auditory experiences (Have & Pedersen, 2020). Yet, there still exist “print purists” who question whether listening to a story while multitasking affords the same experience as reading silently in a sedentary fashion (Dali & Brochu, 2020). Research shows how, for competent readers, there is essentially no difference between listening to a story and reading it (Valentini et al., 2018). The format does not adversely affect a reader’s ability to comprehend and recall information from a text. (Mikidenko & Storozheva, 2021).

Listening to certain texts might even increase comprehension, especially for challenging works like Shakespeare, where the intonation and interpretation of the text conveys meaning (Kartal & Simsek, 2017). When a person listens to a story they are more inclined to comprehend the essence of the story than when they read print because they cannot reread the story the way they reread printed text (Assiddiqhi & Rosa, 2021). There is scant research regarding the ways people comprehend content in audio form while doing laundry, cooking or riding a bike. It is the ubiquity of cell phones and an ability to multitask while listening to audiobooks that has driven their recent surge in popularity (Perks & Turner, 2019). Listening to an audiobook might be considered cheating if the act of decoding were the sole purpose of reading (Imawan & Ashadi,

2019). Far more components of the reading experience must be considered, however, such as an appreciation for the language and the story (Dali & Brochu, 2020). Print reading is not necessarily better than listening (Feng & Webb, 2020). They are different, and what a person gleans from each source is different (Feng & Webb, 2020). The patterns of stress and intonation in a spoken language – or prosody – explain why Shakespeare’s work is easier to comprehend through a performance than a reading of the text (Dali & Brochu, 2020).

A random sample of 95 participants from three groups who read the same text in different formats - audiobook, e-book, or both simultaneously - found no statistically significant differences on comprehension (Rogowski et al., 2016). Reluctant readers must be empowered to actively utilize audiobooks (Maboe et al., 2018). Audiobooks promote equity by stimulating motivation and offering another path to reading comprehension for reluctant readers (Joseph & Khan, 2020). Audiobooks offer the joy of story, information access, and understanding to an already vulnerable population (Best et al., 2020). The continuing debate around audiobooks and their legitimacy as real reading is an indication of arguments regarding what it means to be literate in our digital era (Cahill & Moore, 2017). The printed text continues to be, for many, synonymous with what it means to practice literacy (Toms et al., 2017). Our literary tradition, from before Homer, evolved from an oral tradition of storytelling. Furthermore, our brains are hard wired to be engaged by narrative stories by ear, rather than by eye (Dali & Brochu, 2020). The realization that reading a story for the joy of its problem, solution, characters, setting, drama and dialogue may spark the realization that the debate of audio versus text is

completely misguided (Dali & Brochu, 2020). The enshrinement of the printed word is essentially ableist and forgoes all of the benefits oral storytelling and audiobooks offer (Sterne, 2016).

Audiobooks and Fluency

When listening to an audiobook, the reader does not have to pronounce the words in the story. As the voice actor verbalizes the story, the listener can hear the words pronounced correctly. Listening to audio books allows the reader to hear correct expression and phrasing, skills a reluctant reader may not be able to demonstrate accurately if reading a print-based text (McGill, 2016). Reluctant readers need to hear how fluent reading sounds to be able to include unfamiliar words into their own vocabularies (Tusmagambet, 2020). The ability to hear the proper pronunciation of words is one way that audio books help reluctant readers (Assiddiqhi & Rosa, 2021).

Audiobooks permit students to listen to and comprehend the vocabulary, phrasing, and expression of stories above their ZPD (Mohamed, 2018). Active listening to audiobooks offers a scaffold that facilitates fluent, independent reading (Assiddiqhi & Rosa, 2021). In a study where the participants listened to audiobooks for 20 to 30 minutes a day, Esteves and Whitten indicated that the experimental group reported greater gains in the number of words read per minute on the posttest, indicating an increase in reading fluency (McGill, 2016).

Audiobooks offer models for how to read accurately, with proper intonation and pitch (Kurniati, 2019). Since a more experienced, expert reader reads the text, fluent reading is internalized by the reader (Kurniati, 2019). The emotions and feelings of the

characters are expressed, which reluctant readers hear and understand (Lange et al., 2020). One study indicates growth in word count per minute of reading in an experimental group that used audiobooks consistently over a 30-day period. (Friedland et al., 2017).

Listening to audiobooks while reading printed text, repeated reading with text features, and continuous reading with the support of an educator are approaches that improve the oral reading fluency of reluctant readers (Hudson et al., 2020). Fluency connects to readers' auditory systems in the brain which provides a sense of hearing the print that is seen (Lam et al., 2017). In order to develop from halting reading toward reading fluency, reluctant readers need aural input (Isozaki, 2018). Repeated reading, multidimensional interventions, and audiobook reading facilitated gains in reading fluency and comprehension (Stevens et al., 2017). In a study where readers who read silently with audiobooks were compared to those who only read silently, the experimental group was found to outperform the control group in reading speed while also maintaining comprehension (Tusmagambet, 2020). Learners at various reading fluency levels can benefit from bimodal options to enhance their fluency (Isozaki, 2018). The ability to discuss engaging stories with peers also improves reluctant readers' attitudes toward reading (Isozaki, 2018). Through the use of audiobooks, reluctant readers gain perceptive auditory skills that help them realize how words sound, build vocabulary, and further their desire to read (Hover, 2018).

Audiobooks and Comprehension

Audiobooks reduce the frustration reluctant readers experience when books are chosen that are at or slightly above a child's ZPD (Hartell, 2018). Students are more readily able to understand emotionality, vocabulary and phrasing when they are spoken (Stevens et al., 2020). As the language is pronounced for the student, the reluctant reader is able to dedicate energy focusing on the text, which increases comprehension (McGill, 2016). Audiobooks provide a reading model that induces active listening and accesses prior knowledge (Baylan et al., 2018). As audiobooks help improve vocabulary, they demonstrate how oral language is used, which increases comprehension. (Hover, 2018).

Students in an experimental group who listened to an audiobook were compared to two classes who read a print-only copy of the same book. After completing the story, students took the same comprehension test. The results showed that the class that listened to the story in audiobook form outscored the two classes that read print versions of the story (McGill, 2016).

Audiobooks strengthen the connection between oral and written literacies (Joseph & Khan, 2020). Students who utilize audiobooks demonstrate significant growth in reading accuracy and reductions in off-task behavior, which may be a result of increased focus (Moore & Cahill, 2016). Maher (2019) shows that in no way do students lose comprehension when using audiobooks compared to print reading (Maher, 2019). Students report that they enjoy the text more when listening to it in audiobook format (English, 2020). Audiobooks have a positive impact on students' listening comprehension and improve pronunciation (Martinez & Plevyak, 2020). Audiobooks provide reluctant readers with motivation to read (Kartal & Simsek, 2017). As audiobooks improve reading

comprehension skills they engage reluctant readers and help them develop their self-perception and self-awareness as readers (James, 2017).

Implications

The purpose of this basic qualitative project study was to examine third through fifth grade educators' perceptions on the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits who attend a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. As the literature review documents, the use of audiobooks to promote independent reading habits in reluctant readers will likely increase readers' fluency, comprehension and motivation to read independently (Hover, 2018). Educators at the study site developed new realizations about the potential audiobooks have to transform the independent reading habits of reluctant readers. The implications of this basic qualitative project study are that elementary classroom teachers and librarians gained new insights into the pedagogies and practices that will motivate reluctant readers to develop and sustain an independent reading habit.

The findings of this basic qualitative project study could be beneficial to educators who would like to understand the perceptions about use of audio books and the barriers and/or facilitators for using audio books to motivate reluctant readers at every academic level. The results of this qualitative project study could potentially help and guide school and district administrators in developing professional learning experiences around the use of audiobooks in classroom and wider academic settings. Additionally, professional learning may be developed to support novice teachers in their use of audiobooks and digital technologies to effectively engage all readers. The implications of

this basic qualitative project study may influence and redefine the role that reading plays in the lives of students who otherwise would have an aversion to the disciplined practice of daily independent reading.

Summary

This basic qualitative project study is designed to examine third to fifth-grade educators' perceptions in a suburban school district in Southeast Michigan regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. As evidenced from the literature, independent reading is a lifelong discipline that is sustained and grown by effective instructional practices. Audiobooks have grown in popularity with the ubiquitous use of handheld devices. Effective partnerships between librarians and classroom educators are very helpful in the development of independent reading habits in reluctant readers. Audiobooks increase student fluency, comprehension and motivation to read independently.

A qualitative approach is one that is best suited for this project study as qualitative research is framed by capturing the essences of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular problem. A variety of themes were elicited as the research was conducted and the results of the findings were analyzed. In Section 2, a description of the methodology for this basic qualitative project study, which includes data collection and analysis, is presented.

Section 2: The Methodology

Specific information about the type of qualitative methodology that was used for this project study is contained in this section. Aspects of the participant sample and access procedures, the approaches and methodology for data collection, and my role as a researcher are discussed. Both my findings and the themes that emerge, including limitations are discussed. The findings will hopefully be used by educators to increase the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits.

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this basic qualitative project study is to examine third through fifth grade educators' perceptions of the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits who attend a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. The lack of awareness by educators around the use of audiobooks in third through fifth grades demonstrates the need for increased understanding about how educators should assist reluctant readers in the development of independent reading habits. The lack of awareness by educators around the use of audiobooks in third through fifth grades also represents a gap in instructional practice. Local site educators' perceptions around the use of audiobooks to establish independent reading habits in students in third through fifth grades was examined.

This research was a basic qualitative study. Qualitative research may be utilized to determine answers to questions of how and why phenomena exist. Researchers typically have no control over these phenomena (Yin, 2018). Qualitative research is also

used to gain a deeper awareness of a phenomenon through the experiences of those individuals who have had direct experience with the phenomenon in question.

The following research questions guided this basic qualitative project study:

RQ 1. What are the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

RQ 2. What are the barriers and/or facilitators educators perceive to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

A qualitative study is well suited to understanding the perceptions of participants (Kamal, 2019) using audiobooks to help reluctant readers. A basic qualitative study involves seeking understanding of experiences of participants by collecting data through in-depth interviews (Carl & Ravitch, 2018). I examined the perceptions of third through fifth grades educators around the use of audiobooks to establish independent reading habits in students.

Justification of Research Design

For the purpose of this basic qualitative study, I conducted interviews with 13 educators serving students in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. These interviews were guided conversations with the participants. I did not seek to determine if a relationship existed between a dependent variable and an independent variable. As I did not collect any numerical data and did not utilize research that involved dependent and independent variables, I did not regard quantitative

methodology to be appropriate for this study. Grounded theory is intended to generate a theory of action which provides a framework for additional research (Kamal, 2019). I did not establish a theory about the use of audiobooks to establish independent reading habits in students in third through fifth grades. Hence, I did not choose grounded theory for this project study. Furthermore, I did not select an ethnographic research design because the research focus did not center on an entire cultural group (Yin, 2018). A narrative study design expresses lived experiences through stories as told by individuals (Creswell, 2018). In regard to this study, I did not compile or interpret the stories of the participants.

Participants

Criteria for Selection of Participants

I used purposeful sampling as the participants were intentionally selected to participate in the study (Creswell, 2018). There were 13 educators serving students in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. These educators included teachers, the school librarian and the speech pathologist in separate one-on-one interviews. The one-on-one interviews were conducted via the Zoom online conferencing tool due to the likelihood of an ongoing threat from COVID-19. The participants were selected because they interacted directly with students and had the most significant impact on students' independent reading habits. The data was collected from an interview protocol of open-ended questions. The data were coded to identify themes and categories for patterns that emerged from the interviews. Permission to conduct the study and obtain data was sought and obtained from the principal.

Participant Justification

The selection criteria were important for gathering meaningful descriptions of the experiences of educators who interacted directly with students and had the most significant impact on students' independent reading habits at the target site. The goal was to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon. The intention was to use purposeful sampling as the participants were intentionally selected to participate in the study. The ultimate objective was to gain an in-depth understanding and deep insight on the experiences of educators in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan who interacted directly with students and had the most significant impact on students' independent reading habits at the target site.

Participant Access

Permission to conduct the project study was obtained from the study site's school principal as requested per the Permission to Conduct Study document contained (see Appendix C). This Letter of Cooperation contained necessary details and information regarding the purpose of the study, data collection method, and an overview of the basic qualitative study. The participants were informed about this basic qualitative study via email through the use of the Participation Invitation Letter (see Appendix D). The invitation letter asked the participants to respond directly to me. If potential study participants wished to be included in the study, those individuals had to sign and return the informed consent document via email. Each consenting participant was provided with information that included the purpose of the study, the time for each interview that was agreed upon with each participant, and a statement that their participation would be voluntary. Each participant was informed that the interview would be scheduled after

school hours and conducted over the Zoom online conferencing tool. The Informed Consent Agreement is found in Appendix E. Each participant was provided with a copy of the informed consent agreement which explained the way each interview was to be conducted.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

I established a trusting, collegial relationship with the participants in the study as I did not supervise any of the participants. I facilitated an atmosphere of ease and comfort with each participant as they shared their responses to the semistructured open ended questions during the one-on-one interview with me. I reminded the participants prior to the start of the interview that they would be able to withdraw from the study at any time with no consequence.

I explained to each participant that my role as a researcher was that of a listener. During the interviews, I was attentive to the participants to establish and maintain a rapport with them and to assure participants that the information they shared was most valuable to this basic qualitative study. Respect and gratitude were conveyed to every participant, and I thanked them for their commitment, time, and participation in the study. As the researcher, I ensured that my personal biases did not affect my judgment despite my interest in and passion for the use of audiobooks with reluctant readers. In order to portray the participants' perspectives, a researcher needs to develop an insider's point of view (Farghaly, 2018). I answered any questions the participants had about the study. During the interviews, I worked with the participants to develop a comfortable researcher-participant relationship.

Protection of Participants

Each participant was informed that participation was voluntary, and that their overall confidentiality was a priority throughout the course of this basic qualitative study. An alphanumeric code was assigned to each participant in order to protect each participants' identities in advance of, during, and after data collection. The letter "P" was used for the participant and a corresponding number for each interviewee was utilized to code the data to the transcribed text. The only person who knows the identities of each participant is me. No identifying markers of the participants were used in the findings or revealed at any time to district administration. The participants were asked to sign an informed consent form and were assured of the confidentiality of the research process. The participants were informed that the data I collected were protected and would only be used for this basic qualitative study. I am the only person who has access to the data. Alphanumeric codes were used instead of names to maintain the confidentiality of the study participants. Interview transcripts have been stored electronically in a password-protected file in my home office. All files containing the interview transcripts were encrypted. Data will be kept secure for 5 years, per Walden University's data collection protocol. After 5 years, I will destroy all the data that I have collected in relation to this basic qualitative study.

Data Collection

The data collection process for this basic qualitative study consisted of one-on-one interviews to determine educators' perceptions, barriers and/or facilitators regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings in third through fifth grades to help reluctant

readers develop independent reading habits at the study site. The Interview Protocol in Appendix B was used to inform participants of the questions that were asked during the one-on-one interviews (Yin, 2018). The participants were also informed that they could refuse to answer questions that may have made them uncomfortable or withdraw from the interview without repercussions. The interviews were the primary sources of data collection for this basic qualitative study. The interview questions did not include demographic or personal information such as the age or gender of the participants.

The interviews occurred at a mutually agreed-upon time and took place outside of school hours via the Zoom online conferencing tool. Recordings of the one-on-one interviews were kept with the permission of each participant by using my smartphone. One-on-one interviews afforded me the opportunity to ask open-ended questions. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes per participant. Transcripts of all interviews were maintained and interviews were transcribed immediately upon completion to ensure accuracy. I maintained ethical standards and minimized researcher bias through the review of the interview transcripts with each participant.

Role of the Researcher

My professional role as a classroom teacher and direct peer of the participants in third through fifth grades allowed me the opportunity to establish a trusting working relationship with educators at the study site. My current role did not affect the data collection, as no supervisory role existed over the potential participants. I was only interested in their professional experiences as they pertained to their ability to answer the research question.

Sufficiency of Data Collection

In order to properly conduct this basic qualitative study, I utilized a sample of 13 educators who served students in third through fifth grades. When participants shared with me the same responses repeatedly and no new information was discerned from the interviews, I knew that I had reached data saturation (Nascimento et al., 2018). The educator participants as teachers, school librarian and speech pathologist, engaged in separate one-on-one interviews. The participants were selected because they interacted directly with students and had the most significant impact on students' independent reading habits.

I transcribed, organized and analyzed the data to present a detailed description of the participants' responses. Temi, a transcription editor that allows users to edit transcripts online, was used to transcribe the data and Google Sheets was used to organize the data. A preliminary analysis was conducted to determine a general sense of the data, determine how best to organize the data, and identify that the data collected were, in fact, sufficient. Member checking was used to establish trustworthiness and credibility of the data that were collected (Creswell, 2018). I gave study participants the ability to conduct member checking, by which the participants reviewed transcriptions of their interviews to validate that their responses were recorded correctly and with accuracy. The provision of member checking offered credibility to the transcription and coding process (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). All 13 participants engaged in the member checking process. I sent follow-up emails to all 13 participants with the transcribed interviews attached and offered follow-up meetings with the participants to allow

participants the chance to further review the interview transcripts and discuss the themes that emerged. As the participants were granted the opportunity to review the transcription, I ensured through member checking and these follow-up meetings that my personal biases were not reflected in the collected data. Through a complete examination of interview transcripts and member-checking, I sought to ensure that the findings of this basic qualitative study were both valid and reliable.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of participant interviews, all participants received a transcript of the interview itself. Then, each of the participants reviewed the transcript to check for accuracy. The participants affirmed the accuracy of the transcript, which enabled me to continue to the data analysis. After participants approved the content of the interviews, I began to code all of the member-checked transcripts. Codes help a researcher detect patterns and categories in order to develop themes (Saldaña, 2016). Of the different methods of coding, the process of coding that was most appropriate for this study was structural coding. Structural coding is best employed by using the semistructured gathering of data and testing hypotheses or investigations to establish significant categories and themes (Saldaña, 2016). Structural coding encompassed reading and interpreting the transcripts, pattern coding, and thematic analysis.

Prior to beginning the first coding cycle, I read through the transcripts to develop a better understanding and contextual awareness of the participant responses. After discerning the components of the responses from the transcripts, I began my first cycle of

codes. Each data point was interpreted by assigning a short phrase or word that summarized each response. Each code was recorded on a Google Sheet.

After finishing the first cycle of codes, I began the second cycle, where I used the pattern coding method. Pattern coding was used to detect patterns and categories in order to determine themes (Saldaña, 2016). The summaries of the transcripts were organized into smaller categories and themes by analyzing the shared characteristics of the codes when I read through the first cycle codes. The second cycle codes were also recorded on the Google Sheet.

Thematic analysis was the final process of my analysis. Thematic analysis continues the pattern coding method (Saldaña, 2016). I created simple statements from phrases in the codes to summarize the major themes of the second cycle. The summaries of the major themes helped identify the conclusion. The final analysis stage enabled me to present the overall themes that describe the participants' perceptions in detail. The findings informed the project that is used in the study.

Accuracy and Credibility

Accuracy and credibility of a qualitative research study ensure both validity and reliability (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The research is credible when the researcher pursues an intricate design and offers authentic interpretations and findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A validation strategy that was utilized was member checks of the findings of the study. Member checking not only validates, but also provides credibility to the findings of a study (Creswell, 2018). In this study I asked participants to review interview transcripts to make sure that what was recorded was consistent with what the participants

shared. The participants had the opportunity to examine the interview transcripts with me over Zoom. Each participant was also asked to identify any misinterpretation of the specific participant's interview transcript. I responded to any concerns regarding interview transcripts as soon as possible.

Member checking was conducted outside of school hours to accommodate participants' scheduling needs. A transcript of the interview was completed within 48 hours of the interview and provided to the study participant for member checking. The study participant then had 48 hours to review the transcript to confirm its accuracy or provide updates where needed. Member checking also guarded against any personal biases that may have surfaced to ensure the data were an accurate reflection of the perceptions of each study participant.

Discrepant Cases

I considered all discrepant cases. Discrepant cases refer to any evidence that does not fit in a particular pattern or understanding of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interpretations of data are more complete the more the researcher challenges and questions the explanations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I actively looked for any evidence that disconfirmed the validity of the study. I did not find any discrepant cases assist in my analysis of the data as it related to the role that audiobooks play in the development of independent reading habits in reluctant readers.

Data Analysis Results

I investigated the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits and

interpreted the data through qualitative data analysis. There were a total of 13 study participants - Eleven third through fifth grade teachers, the school librarian, and the speech pathologist who participated in one-on-one interviews. Although the school librarian and speech pathologist serve other students beyond those in third through fifth grade, their responses to the interview questions focused on their experience working with students in third through fifth grade. The research questions that guided my study asked about the perceptions and the barriers and/or facilitators of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The themes that emerged from the interviews include access, engagement, reading while listening (RWL), and barriers. These were the four themes that occurred most frequently throughout the interviews. Theme 1, access, includes four subthemes. The first three subthemes are read aloud, independent reading, and content area reading, all of which speak to the process of reading text. Additionally, the fourth subtheme of the normalization of use emerged, which addresses questions around the reading culture in a classroom community. The use of both applications and hardware are mentioned as key considerations of access to audiobooks.

Theme 2 centers around the idea of engagement and the joy of listening to stories and learning new information. The subtheme of voices was mentioned frequently as the book narrator's tone, pace and accent are central to the quality of hearing text read aloud. Participants mentioned the love of reading and aural pleasure that is derived from a meaningful listening experience. The multisensory nature of reading with both eyes and ears is a core component of Theme 3, RWL. Central to the use of RWL is the skill

acquisition that drives the use of RWL in the form of increased vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension. The utilization of RWL for students who have trouble focusing, maintaining attention for sustained periods of time, and/or experience dyslexia was expressed. Theme 4 is barriers to the use of audiobooks. There are financial barriers to the acquisition of apps and hardware to utilize audiobooks both in classroom spaces and away from school. There are also professional learning and methodological barriers around building a culture of audiobook use which emerged as a subtheme. The question of overcoming stigma and the barrier of normalizing audiobook use in a classroom setting was also articulated. Themes, codes, occurrences and examples of participant responses are found in the table in Appendix E.

Themes

Theme 1: Access

Access refers to the extent to which audiobooks provide equitable opportunities for readers to consume stories and information. Twelve out of 13 participants used words or phrases that mentioned access in their interview. The subthemes within this theme include read-aloud, independent reading, content area reading, and normalization of use. Read-aloud refers to the use of audiobooks that are read aloud to students in whole-class settings. Independent reading refers to student's daily reading habit of self-selected books. Content area reading is the acquisition of information in subject area domains such as science and social studies. Normalization of use speaks to the incorporation and acceptance of audiobooks by students as legitimate forms of reading. All of these four subthemes were mentioned throughout the interviews as components of access.

Read-Aloud

Participant 1 described her experience using audiobooks as a component of her daily read aloud practice. She explained how she sensitizes students to different playback speeds to help them find a level of comprehensible input and to build fluency. Participant 1 shared,

If we have a read aloud I've actually taught my students some ear reading skills. So they're all looking at the book and we're listening. We start out at the regular speed and as we're going along I'm slowly speeding it up, so that when I started the next week, maybe after we've been doing it for a few days at a faster rate, if I were to slow it down, the kids get frustrated that it's going too slowly, so I have seen success in training kids to listen and read faster using audio in the classroom.

All four of the participants who explicitly mentioned the use of audiobooks as a feature of their read aloud practice shared how the class-wide use of audiobooks promotes universal access to stories and information to students. Educators discussed that audiobooks work equally well whether the content is a narrative in language arts or content area reading in science or social studies.

Participant 8 mentioned two key advantages of using audiobooks as a read aloud tool. The first is that the dramatic interpretations of character voices by the actors are very compelling for students, especially when sound effects and different accents are utilized. Additionally, teachers are able to circulate and monitor students while the audiobook is playing in order to maximize student focus and minimize distractions. Participant 8 explained,

If I can use an audio version then I'm able to circulate the room and listen along as well, but I'm also able to engage with kids who might be off task, or help kids get onto the right page, whereas I can't do that when I'm reading from the book myself. So, being able to use an audio version would just help me be able to multitask.

Participant 9 shared how the use of audiobooks for whole-class readings, specifically of graphic novels, can be a very effective teaching tool. The combination of the vivacity of the images contained in a graphic novel with the performative aspects of multiple voice actors interpreting characters provides an extraordinary literary experience for students. Furthermore, it may sometimes be challenging to effectively navigate a story written in graphic novel form as it departs from linear print. Participant 9 related, "I feel like an audio book is amazing, especially for graphic novels, because it could be hard to navigate graphic novels compared to a standard read aloud."

Independent Reading

Participant 3 explained how he assures his class that audiobook reading counts as authentic reading. He encourages students to utilize audiobooks during independent reading time each day both in class and at home. Furthermore, he asks parents of struggling readers who report that their child hates to read to consider using audiobooks. Participant 3 shared,

A lot of my students will ask me, "Am I allowed to count my audiobook as my 20 minutes of reading at night and 10 minutes of independent reading time to start each class?" and that is a definite yes for me. Parents have said, "You know my

child isn't really interested in reading,” or “They have trouble comprehending.”

So, a suggestion that I'll make is, “Have you tried audio books?”

Participant 8 discussed how if she were able to use audiobooks in the content area, students would have greater independence as readers. The accessibility to content is a key component of equitable educational opportunities. It is this type of access that audiobooks provide, especially to students who can't or won't read text. Participant 8 explained,

Students would have more of a sense of independence when we read out of textbooks, for instance. Sometimes there are audio versions, but I find that I read aloud because there's just a wide range of ability in the classroom. Yesterday, we read social studies, so I read it out loud, but if there was an audio version I could have the kids read independently.

Audiobooks also remove barriers to content acquisition when educators want students to have a shared reading experience. Barriers exist due to the variety of reading levels found in a given classroom.

Two participants mentioned how the use of audiobooks alleviates the frustration and anxiety that many reluctant readers experience when trying to read. Audiobooks promote an interest in reading because barriers to decoding are removed, which facilitates enjoyment of the story. Participant 10 explains,

I think audiobooks help encourage readers because since they are reluctant, it helps them be encouraged to use audiobooks as opposed to being frustrated or overwhelmed but instead reading independently, without that support.

Audiobooks provide the access to books which, in turn, makes an independent reading habit possible for reluctant readers.

Content Area Reading

Five of the participants specifically mentioned the importance of utilizing audiobooks in content area reading. They would like to use audiobooks more often to help students understand challenging nonfiction text in both science and social studies.

Participant 4 shared,

I always give kids the option with science and social studies textbooks to have the audio version available so they don't fall behind in the content areas. Because of this, I always give them an opportunity to have a book in front of them, and also to have the audio version.

Participant 5 mentioned how audiobooks help students to “stay focused on the content.”

Participant 6 expressed that audiobooks would seem to be helpful to enable students to recognize the main idea in nonfiction texts because they would be able to process the texts more easily. He related that he intends to find, “better ways of using the audio books with nonfiction reading.”

Participant 8 expressed how the use of audiobooks in content area reading provides her with the flexibility to circulate and assist more students. When students are able to utilize audiobooks, barriers to reading content area text are removed. Audiobooks provide an alternative approach to traditional whole-class round robin reading, which excludes students who cannot effectively comprehend the text. Participant 8 mentioned,

Oftentimes if I choose an audiobook feature, like the audio version of a *Scholastic News* magazine, that would most help me, because I would be able to go around the room to make sure that kids are engaged and listening. I can't do this if I'm not reading it aloud to students myself.

Participant 10 seeks to utilize audiobooks in ways similar to Participant 8. Participant 10 mentions the density and complexity of nonfiction text as a barrier to content acquisition. She also believes that the narrator's voice in audio format would provide an additional stimulus for understanding in her students as it is different from her own. Participant 10 shared,

Across subjects, I think I would like to integrate audiobook use more into social studies and science to interest readers as well, since those textbooks can be so hefty for them to read through. As opposed to me reading to the class, I think it helps them to hear a voice that isn't mine as well, so I would like to connect it in different subject areas, rather than only in reading workshop.

Normalization of Use

Participant 1 explained how her students are more likely to use audiobooks if she has created a culture where audiobooks are embraced. She attempts to normalize the use of audiobooks by beginning with introducing audiobooks to a small number of students and then attempting to spread their use. Participant 1 shared,

Audiobooks have been a great help for kids who are willing to try them out, or have access to them. I think it's one of those things that they're reluctant to do at

first because it might look different but, once you make it okay for one or two, then it seems to spread a lot faster and more people want to take advantage of it.

Participant 2 mentioned how part of normalizing the use of audiobooks relies on incorporating technologies and tools that students already use in their everyday life. In this way, reluctant readers who may benefit from the use of audiobooks don't appear different from their peers who are reading in classroom settings without audiobooks.

Participant 2 shared,

The reluctant readers who just don't love it or just can't find the right book they don't know what they want, yet I'm just offering it to them, showing them how to use it. I still sometimes think that they don't want to look different. I think that's where kids struggle with taking the audio book, but they have to listen to it with, you know, with air pods or whatever. I mean, I just always encourage it and try to show how other people are using it, regardless of their reading level.

Participants 3 and 4 talked about the important way audiobooks provide a whole new way of reading to students who have convinced themselves that they aren't readers and reading is not for them. It is this change of perception about reading through the normalization of audiobook use that shifts student thinking around audiobooks specifically and reading in general. Participant 3 explained,

It's important for reluctant readers that anything that we can do that's different from the norm, or anything that's different from how they already view reading is what needs to happen. You know, watching a bunch of their peers be able to sit quietly and look at a book and get the story and enjoy the story for a reluctant

reader it just doesn't seem to be working. So even just changing the perception for them might be powerful.

Audiobooks provide access when they are normalized and embraced by students.

Participant 12 shared how the role of the teacher is paramount in normalizing the use of audiobooks. She said that the teacher's ability to remind students that information is gleaned not only from reading but also from listening provides the necessary context for normalization to occur. Participant 12 shared,

I think that the teachers need to promote the audio book as room reading. I think that a big part of the teacher's role is to take away that stigma, that this is something that just helps reluctant readers. I think it needs to be promoted, as this is another form that we can get information, you know we get information and stories by reading, by listening, by watching and all of these different formats work better for different brains.

Participant 12 mentioned the importance of framing the use of audiobooks as tools to meet the needs of all learners, which promotes equitable access.

Theme 2: Engagement

Engagement refers to the extent to which audiobooks attract, interest and sustain students' attention as a learning tool. 7 out of 13 participants used words or phrases that mentioned engagement in their interview. There are principally two considerations for why students are engaged in the use of audiobooks. The first is the ease of interface of the technology itself. The second is the aural pleasure derived from hearing the voices of the characters brought to life and the narration of the story. Participant 9 explains how, "in

general, on a more daily basis, quite a few of my students prefer the audio book feature when it comes to reading on Epic.” Epic is a curated reading site that provides both fiction and nonfiction ebooks and audiobooks for children. Participant 11, provides additional evidence for the role that engagement plays in the use of online audiobook tools,

I think the programs that I’m using provide books that maybe aren’t available in print, as they have books that the students are very interested in, they’re engaging, and a little bit more up-to-date, with more interesting and current topics. So, I plan to use them both independently so that students are able to have access but also just to spark an interest in a new series or a maybe a new type of writing.

Participant 12 shared how both the very act of using audiobooks more consistently and the teacher’s attitude toward the use of audiobooks promotes student engagement. She explained,

The progression when they see that book getting read and when they see that time moving closer and closer to the end gives them that sense of accomplishment that they're really reading this book. A lot depends, too, on if a teacher is saying this is a real book, this is reading, the kids feel that sense of accomplishment and pride and engage with the audio book all the more.

Voices

The subtheme within this theme of engagement is voices. Voices refers to the ways in which voice actors bring character voices to life through their reading and interpretation of the printed text.

Participant 9 acknowledged the extraordinary quality of contemporary audiobook productions and their ability to captivate listeners. The use of multiple actors to bring character voices to life, sound effects, and expert dramatic interpretations captivates listeners and immediately transports them into the world of the story. Participant 9 related this dynamic in relation to the book *New Kid*, a Newberry medal-winning graphic novel by Jerry Craft. Participant 9 shared,

We chose to listen to the audio book version of Jerry Craft's *New Kid*, because of the voices. I felt like it was a much better way to experience that book, especially being that it was a graphic novel. It just made it a much richer experience and the kids really enjoyed it. I could tell that their engagement shot up because I originally had planned to read the book aloud since I love reading books aloud, but I was like, "No, this one I'm going to give to Jerry Craft." So it was really fun to do that as a class.

Theme 3: Reading While Listening

RWL refers to the practice of utilizing both the audiobook and printed text forms of a book simultaneously, hence reading with both "eyes and ears." 10 out of 13 participants used words or phrases that mentioned RWL in their interview. The subthemes within this theme include vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension. Vocabulary refers to the acquisition of new words through reading which facilitates more accurate and expansive oral and written expression. Reading fluency refers to the ability to read with appropriate speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Comprehension is the

understanding and interpretation of what is read. All three of these subthemes were mentioned throughout the interviews as components of RWL.

Vocabulary

Participant 1, 8, and 13 shared how students' use of multimodal, multisensory reading provides opportunities for vocabulary acquisition that do not exist when students read text only. The ability to see words as they are spoken helps students recognize and learn those words. Participant 1 explained,

When you are listening and reading along at the same time, I think that is super helpful for multiple reasons such as getting the information in the multimodal way. Seeing the words can perhaps help students recognize them and acquire the vocabulary a bit better.

Audiobooks remove barriers to students' ability to decode unfamiliar words. The ability to see and hear unfamiliar words promotes student engagement, as Participant 3 mentioned,

A lot of times reluctant readers have a high level of comprehension, they just maybe don't have the background knowledge with vocabulary, or they might not have the decoding skills. The use of audiobooks gets reluctant readers to participate more. I know, since I've had them do audiobooks, the participation of reluctant readers has increased.

Participant 6 shared how removing the barriers to unfamiliar words enhances students' reading skills in both literature and content area texts. Furthermore, the ability

to learn new vocabulary promotes confidence. This confidence leads to a love of reading.

Participant 6 explained,

Not just in reading, but even social studies and science that confidence level has gone way up because they feel so confident that they can read things and they can process vocabulary words. They have a deeper understanding of whatever skills I'm trying to teach. Their vocabulary increases, their spelling improves and their pronunciation, too. They really foster that love of reading, especially in the early elementary years.

Reading Fluency

Participants 1, 5, and 10 shared the benefit to reading fluency that comes from listening to audiobooks. The ability to hear stories and information spoken provides a model for readers to emulate in the students' own oral reading of text. The chance to imitate the pacing and intonation of auditory speech improves students' growth as fluent readers. Participant 5 explained,

Audio books really help with your fluency by giving them a copy of the text, while they're reading and then just hearing the narrator read it really just gives them some ideas on how to mimic a reader and to create their own style with their own voice.

Participants 3,7, and 11 discussed how readers' pacing and cadence improves when listening to audiobooks. Reluctant readers who listen to audiobooks are oftentimes able to listen to a story faster than they can read it with their eyes. The ability to read

while listening promotes fluency as barriers to pronunciation of unfamiliar words are removed. Participant 3 explained,

A lot of times if reluctant readers are struggling with their fluency, if they're struggling to read at a faster rate and there's a large amount of text, I'll recommend they use an audiobook. I'll say to them, "You know you can just listen. It'll read it to you faster." I always try to stress for them to follow along in the book.

Comprehension

Nine out of 13 participants mentioned the extent to which comprehension was enhanced by the use of audiobooks. The act of listening is inherently easier than decoding. Hearing stories told and read aloud is the first form of comprehensible input that all humans experience. As auditory processing typically requires less effort than decoding text, it facilitates comprehension, especially for reluctant readers. Furthermore, human brains are neurologically inclined to receive narrative input. Participant 12 explained:

Comprehension is deeper when students harness the power of verbal storytelling. Letting kids listen gives them all the tools and benefits of the story. Audio input facilitates comprehension that they might not get from sitting there trying to decode. Whether their reluctance is because of dyslexia, boredom or it's just hard, when you have a well-told story or an audiobook with a professional actor it can captivate students and draw them into that story.

The act of RWL stimulates comprehension as students are able to track the text and visually match print text to the spoken word. The combination of morphological and phonological elements into one reading experience maximizes comprehensible input.

This is most helpful for reluctant readers. Participant 13 mentioned,

Audiobooks take away the stress of the fluency of reading, and promotes a focus on the content, which aids comprehension. Audiobook use increases word exposure which improves vocabulary comprehension through a multi modal approach to learning. This helps all students if they can hear it and see it, as it activates different parts of their brain and it helps with memory retention and overall comprehension of material.

Additionally, when students utilize RWL, they can comprehend two grade levels above their reading level if they were to decode print alone. This aspect of the use of RWL and its impact on comprehension is transformational. Participant 13 continued,

Students can read two times above their reading level with audiobooks.

This reality helps keep struggling readers at grade level in terms of the content and the comprehension. Starting when you're really young, you know babies can understand things before they can see. Students are then able to understand more and higher-level material.

The sense of accomplishment students experience at finishing a book has a direct impact on reading comprehension. When reluctant readers enjoy the success of finishing a book, they internalize the identity of a reader and believe that reading is something they can do

when they realize they can comprehend the input. They begin to develop and embrace the habit of lifelong independent reading, which perpetuates itself. Participant 8 explained,

There is a wide range of ability in the classroom. Once reluctant readers feel success, just as much as a student who might be a high enough reader to read it all on their own, and comprehend it, they see how reading works. I like to use audio and text at the same time, to really help increase engagement and comprehension, especially for kids who are reluctant to listen to an audio book at first. Once they experienced RWL, especially if they're a struggling reader they begin to get it.

Theme 4: Barriers

Eight out of 13 participants mentioned specific barriers that inhibit the use of audiobooks both in and outside of classroom spaces. There are financial barriers that center around the need for schools, school districts, and families to prioritize resources to acquire audiobooks. Perceived barriers also represent a lack of educators' awareness of available resources that currently exist. There are also instructional barriers which not only reference the need to acquire devices for student use that play audiobooks, but also the professional learning necessary to enable educators to effectively incorporate the use of audiobooks into their reading curricula. Additionally, as the audiobook is in a different format and has different features than an ebook or paper book, there are specific instructional barriers that emerged as perceived by the participants.

Financial Barriers

Participants 2, 11, and 12 specifically mentioned financial barriers to the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. They all perceived that in order for students to utilize audiobooks, that students themselves, teachers, or schools must pay for both the book itself, the device on which the audiobook is played, and headphones or earbuds. All but one participant was unaware of free audiobook resources available through public library networks.

Participant 11 explained,

A financial barrier that exists would be, just the availability of the programs that have the audiobooks, and the availability of the equipment for the students to be able to listen or read the books online, I think both of those are probably two of the biggest barriers.

Instructional Barriers

Participants 3, 10, and 12 discussed the instructional barriers that are inherent with the use of audiobooks as a medium to deliver text. One of the concerns that emerged was the ability of the teacher to effectively monitor the reading progress of a student who is only listening to the audio version of a book. Additionally, if a teacher asks a student to create a claim about the story they are listening to and then justify the claim with evidence from the text, the teacher cannot see the text to corroborate the student's response unless the student also has a copy of the printed word in ebook or paper book form. Participant 3 explained,

There are some barriers like linking up to page numbers or if a student is reading an audiobook, being able to check in quickly with them about their book. If they

don't have a paper copy or a digital copy that shows the actual page that might be an issue. I would have to go get a paper copy of whatever they're reading.

The use of audiobooks only presents barriers that would limit the ability of a teacher to engage students in explicit text-based instruction around a given part of the story.

Additionally, Participant 10 mentioned the challenge of knowing whether a student is exclusively listening to audiobooks and nothing else during the course of a given independent reading session.

An instructional barrier that was articulated by Participant 12 involved the challenge of acquiring audiobook titles that are desirable by students. As a school librarian, Participant 12 seeks to provide engaging titles that match the interests of students and are readily available in a school library setting. Furthermore, sometimes stories that are popular in the print version are not enticing in audio form because the narration is dull or unappealing. Participant 12 explained,

In the library, building up an audio book collection is tricky because I can have an idea of what the popular books might be but you don't always know what's going to take off with the kids. Sometimes I do find a mismatch between a really popular book and the audio version. They only want to read it because the audio isn't well done or the voice doesn't sound good to the listener.

The quality of the narration is an important aesthetic component which contributes to the aural pleasure of audiobooks. Poorly produced audiobooks presented a barrier to access.

Discussion of the Evidence

Thirteen educators serving students in third through fifth grades participated in a one-on-one semistructured interview. The participants provided answers to the following research questions:

RQ 1. What are the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

RQ 2. What are the barriers and/or facilitators educators perceive to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

After reading through the interview transcripts multiple times to ascertain the information that emerged and using both structural coding and thematic analysis, I organized the findings into four themes. The four themes are Access, Engagement, Reading While Listening (RWL), and Barriers.

Salient Data and Discrepant Cases

Data were collected carefully then transcribed, coded, and interpreted. Raskind et al. (2019) indicated that discrepancies in data may potentially exist when conducting qualitative research. Throughout this data analysis process, any discrepancies that became evident were identified and then reported in the findings.

Evidence of Quality

One of the procedures I utilized in order to insure accuracy of the data was the use of member checks. The purpose of the member check was to provide participants with the opportunity to read the data and identify any potential biases or misinterpretations

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Member checks helped this study to be both more valid and accurate. All thirteen of the participants in the research were notified through the informed consent form, and the interview process itself, that one of their responsibilities was to read my interpretations of their responses so they could ensure the validity and accuracy of the analysis. I emailed the participants the transcript of their interviews and requested that each of the participants read it and inform me if I misinterpreted any aspect of their response. I also let the participants know that I would schedule a meeting if necessary to meet to discuss their responses. All 13 of the participants expressed that the interpretations accurately reflected their stated perspectives.

Outcomes

The problem at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan is that elementary school educators' perceptions are unknown regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. Additionally, the barriers and/or facilitators for educators using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits is not known. The data analysis provided in-depth responses from eleven teachers, the school librarian, and the speech pathologist serving students in third through fifth grades about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The data analysis answered the research questions of this study in a manner that was both thorough and exhaustive.

RQ 1 explored the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. All of

the 13 participants saw the benefit of using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. Twelve of the 13 participants mentioned the ways audiobooks promote equitable access to stories and information for reluctant readers through the instructional context of read alouds, independent reading, and content area reading. The normalization of the use of audiobooks helped shift the culture of reading in classrooms, which benefits reluctant readers. Participant 1 shared how some students receive information more effectively in audio form. She articulated that students who have strong auditory processing skills are very receptive to the medium of audiobooks. Six of the 13 participants discussed the engagement that occurs through the use of audiobooks, specifically as a result of hearing the character voices as interpreted by talented voice actors. Participant 12 mentioned that once a reluctant reader hears different character voices articulated by a talented voice actor, they can become hooked on the story. Furthermore, once reluctant readers see the progression of a story and experience the joy of finishing a story, they can become motivated to continue reading. Ten of the 13 participants shared how the practice of reading while listening was an effective strategy for utilizing audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers become more fluent readers, comprehend the stories and information they read, and acquire new vocabulary words. Participant 13 expressed how students pay more attention when books are read aloud, especially if they are struggling readers. The audiobook enables the reader to keep going and not get bogged down by unfamiliar text which often acts as a disincentive to reading.

In the literature, educators have expressed the transformative impacts of audiobooks on the dispositions toward reading and reading habits of reluctant readers. The establishment of a relationship between educator and student based on trust and motivation is central to the maintenance of an independent reading habit (Badrigian, 2017). The cultivation of an authentic reader-to-reader relationship in which educators take the time to get to know both the personal interests and reading skills of their students is central to fostering a lifelong love of reading (Drewry et al., 2019). Audiobooks provide a gateway to reading that, for many reluctant readers, had been hitherto significantly restricted. Reluctant readers require an approach to literacy instruction that enables them to develop and apply their reading skills within the context of authentic literacy (Venegas, 2018). The access that is manifest with the use of audiobooks is one of the components of what Pat Mora refers to as “bookjoy,” which is the feeling that emerges when an educator has connected a student with a book for the enjoyment of the story or information contained in the book (Grassel, 2020). While educators acknowledge the power and potential of the use of audiobooks in the classroom, they require training and support to implement the use of audiobooks consistently and systematically over time.

RQ2 explored the barriers and/or facilitators educators perceive to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. All of the 13 participants expressed concerns about a variety of barriers that exist that are both financial and instructional in nature. Participant 2 mentioned how the availability of devices for the use of audiobooks varies based on the income level of both

individual students and school districts. Similarly, Participant 10 mentioned that commercially available audiobooks require financial resources that are often in short supply. Furthermore, a variety of instructional barriers emerged in the course of the interviews. Participant 8 shared how the audiobooks aren't available and can't be offered to the whole class, which inhibits the use of audiobooks with all the students who may require them. Participant 9 professed a lack of understanding of the apps and websites that house audiobooks, which prevents her from using them. Participant 2 shared how she prefers print books to audiobooks, which prejudices the use of print media and perpetuates a barrier. Participant 13 mentioned how her inability to synchronize the print and audio versions of texts creates a barrier to audiobook use. The barriers that were articulated by the participants imply a need for training and professional learning around audiobook use in practical, day-to-day instructional contexts.

The literature reflects the fact that the barriers that exist are typically more of an instructional nature than a financial one. An increasing number of students utilize handheld devices for both ebook reading and audiobook reading (Yushan et al., 2019). Preadolescent audiobook listeners display certain characteristics such as the tendency to multitask while listening, a preference for story in multiple modalities and the ability to critically analyze both the printed story and narration (Toms et al., 2017). Once educators can conceptualize the use of audiobooks in their daily practice, the most significant barrier is the lack of professional awareness and practice (Meritt, & Spreer, 2020). While permanent collections of audiobooks in libraries is limited by budgetary constraints and audiobook selection is centered primarily around popularity, there are many free options

available (Sanders, 2016). Although paid subscription services exist, Povey explains that there are audiobook sources and tools that are mostly free and easy to use available to all, meaning there is no financial barrier of entry for educators and students beyond access to the Internet. The use of existing personal electronic devices facilitates the use of audiobooks in classroom settings (Povey, 2016). Additionally, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of audiobooks through free public library-based apps like Libby and Hoopla has increased (Santos, 2020).

The research findings relate to the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the need to maintain an awareness of the ZPD when developing effective instructional methodologies. Individuals are thought to learn best when working collaboratively with accomplished practitioners which represents a redesigning of the school environment to implement best practices in the classroom and schoolwide. The participants described their needs for training to gain new knowledge and strategies to utilize audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits.

Conclusion

Educators at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan have different perceptions of the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. However, the commonalities of the responses in regard to what they need to utilize audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits were consistent. The participants want more knowledge and professional learning opportunities around the use of audiobooks in order to overcome instructional barriers to the use of

audiobooks in both classroom settings and locations away from school. In section 3 the project is described, which is a 3-day PD training. The PD training includes details from the literature review to implement strategies that will assist educators in the implementation of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The strategies offered reflect those that the participants revealed in their responses, which relate to the themes.

Summary

This basic qualitative project study examined educators' perceptions and the barriers and/or facilitators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. This section demonstrated a qualitative approach to responding to the two research questions fully through an analysis of the responses from the participants. The perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades of audiobook use and procedures for data analysis are described. The findings from the educators at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan are examined - allowing for the development of the PD project that may promote positive social change as audiobooks could enhance students' independent reading habits, resulting in increased literacy, higher education opportunities, and higher paying job prospects, which could positively impact socioeconomic status and lower poverty levels.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative project study was to examine third through fifth grade educators' perceptions on the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits who attend a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. According to the findings of the study, educators perceived that audiobooks were underutilized due to a lack of awareness on the part of both educators and students. The study participants suggested incorporating more professional learning to provide resources and strategies to utilize audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. After listening to participants articulate their thoughts during the virtual face-to-face interviews, I designed a 3-day professional development experience to address the deficits identified by participants. The title of the professional learning experience is *Audiobooks for All: The Use of Digital Audio to Promote Independent Reading Habits* (Appendix A). The goal of this project was to provide training for third through fifth grade educators to incorporate effective practices in the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits.

Rationale

The project genre that was selected was professional development (PD). While there has been an increasing use in recent years of the term "professional learning" to emphasize the agency of andragogy as opposed to "professional development" which sometimes implies a more traditional passive reception of information, I

use the term “professional development” as most of the literature continues to use this term.

PD was the most relevant genre for the current project study based on the research findings. The results of this study indicated that PD is necessary to incorporate effective practices in the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. Participants indicated a compelling need for PD to provide strategies to consider how to incorporate the use of audiobooks into their daily literacy instruction. The results from this study align with Knowles’s (1975) theory of andragogy. The findings also indicated that teachers were eager to learn strategies to consider how to utilize audiobooks in their interactions with students. The PD project focuses on providing an overview of contemporary audiobooks, planning instruction for the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, and implementing effective strategies for the use of audiobooks specifically with reluctant readers. It is expected that educators in third through fifth grades would benefit from face-to-face PD that is intended to increase their pedagogical knowledge. This PD would provide strategies in delivering instruction for the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The PD supports the goals of this project, which are to provide training for third through fifth grades educators to incorporate effective practices in the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits.

Review of Literature

The data gathered from the project study indicated the need to develop PD. Participants felt additional PD was necessary to help reluctant readers develop

independent reading habits through the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. Due to the findings, I selected PD as the project genre. A 3-day PD workshop could provide teachers with the opportunity to increase their knowledge about strategies and pedagogy around the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. Professional development may also provide third through fifth grades educators with approaches to meet the diverse educational needs of all the students they serve who are not necessarily reluctant readers, effectively enhancing the skillsets of educators in ways that would promote sustainable independent reading habits for all the students they serve. The review of literature centered on the themes that follow: teachers' perceptions of effective PD, face-to-face versus online PD, PD and student achievement, job-embedded PD, and PD for teaching reluctant readers.

I searched both Google Scholar and the following Walden Library databases for literature: EBSCOHost, ProQuest, and Sage. The search terms of the literature review included: professional development, professional learning, teacher training, professional development and student achievement, significance of professional development, effective professional development, face-to-face training, face-to-face professional development, face-to-face versus online training, job-embedded professional learning, and audiobooks professional development. Each of the key terms that were searched produced a number of peer-reviewed sources. The review and use of a multitude of sources attained saturation of the literature as it pertains to PD.

Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Professional Development

The importance of understanding and implementing PD that is relevant and meaningful to educators' daily practice is essential. PD is most effective when it is collaborative, is content specific, draws on external expertise, has buy-in from educators, is performance-based, and is sustained over time (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2020). Teachers are most interested in professional learning that connects theory to the daily realities of their practice (Owens et al., 2018). Teachers who participate in well-planned and systematic programs of PD are able to best connect theory with everyday practice, resulting in effective instruction (Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). All teachers need ongoing PD to sustain the changes they make to their teaching practice, which are best manifested in collaborative settings (Mohan et al., 2017). Effective PD improves educators' professional practice, which ultimately enhances student learning (Mohan et al., 2017). The most effective PD is that which educators perceive to have a direct effect in supporting student learning (Abdul-Majied et al., 2017). Evidence-based PD that is high-quality is essential to ensure that teachers obtain the knowledge, strategies and skills necessary to impact student learning in positive ways (Erickson et al., 2017). PD personalized to the particular professional context of the participant encourages more reflective thinking, teamwork and higher performance (Welp et.al. 2018). The aspects of PD that are most helpful involve educators receiving feedback, working with colleagues to review student work samples, and pursuing follow-up after the completion of a directed session (Parsons et al., 2019). The best PD is that which incorporates the needs of teachers and seeks their active involvement in the planning and execution of the PD

experience (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). High-quality PD improves teachers' professional performance and student outcomes, (Tantawy, 2020).

Professional learning communities play a key role in teachers' professional development (Vangrieken et al., 2017) The conditions for success of a professional learning community are supportive leadership, group dynamics and composition, and mutual trust and respect (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Collaborative learning is a key component of effective PD, especially in regard to the use of student data (De Simone, 2020). The presence of a mentor, in which a more experienced colleague provides ongoing support to a new teacher is particularly effective in providing sustained PD (Abu-Tineh & Sadiq, 2018). Collaboration with a mentor provides confidence for both new and experienced educators, around a sense of belonging, communication abilities, and decision-making through practice with problem solving (Flushman et al., 2021). Collective reflection within a teacher-driven inquiry model is a key component of effective PD (Pratt & Martin, 2017). Teachers who receive PD that includes on-site coaching attempt more new instructional practices than those who do not receive on-site coaching (Snyder et al., 2018). Effective professional development frequently utilizes new technology to facilitate the acquisition of PD for teachers (Parsons et al., 2019). The use of massive online open courses or (MOOCs) is one vehicle for delivering effective PD for teachers (Sezgin, 2020).

Effective PD enhances student achievement and is a vital factor for the improvement of teaching quality (Tran et al., 2020). High-quality, evidence-based PD is essential for educators to obtain the knowledge, strategies, and skills required to

positively impact student learning (Erickson et al., 2017). The chance to improve the knowledge, skills, and awareness of educators, as mentioned by Balta and Eryilmaz (2019), affords a balance between professional and individual needs that impact school improvement. PD not only improves the knowledge and skills of educators but also encourages reflective thinking, which is associated with more effective teamwork and professional performance (Welp et al., 2018). The training practices that have the highest effect sizes involve the use of real-life application of knowledge and skills, use of role-play, reflection on improved performance, and personal assessment of strengths and weaknesses. (Erickson et al., 2017). The use of effective PD that involves peer collaboration and opportunities to share personal experiences through professional dialogue is consistent with the recommendations from participants in this study (De Simone, 2020).

Face-to-Face Versus Online Professional Development

The benefits of PD in an online environment include control of pace, flexibility, and continued access to resources, while lack of in-person social interaction, intrinsic motivation, and accountability are challenges for learners in a virtual setting (Wynants & Dennis, 2018). There are significant numbers of educators who prefer PD in online contexts (Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). Purveyors of online PD must be wary of too heavy workloads and technological issues which account for most of the reasons teachers dropped out of virtual courses (Luz et al., 2018). Voluntary participation is a key component in considering the effectiveness of online PD, as a majority of respondents in one survey who chose to participate found online PD helpful, though teachers who were

required to attend found it less beneficial (Parsons et al., 2019). In order to build community and a constructive learning space online, research suggests that instructors place their efforts on the design of facilitation and feedback components. The social nature of an online learning space is valuable to participants' learning (Parsons et al., 2019). Aspects of online PD that would be appealing to the teachers in the Parsons et al study included access to a video library, student profiles, an online children's book club, and an online community of practice. The ability to create both synchronous and asynchronous social spaces for collaborative learning in online spaces is important to maximize the success of online PD (Parsons et al., 2019).

Professional Development and Student Achievement

PD plays a vital role in enhancing student achievement and the quality of education offered by educators (Tran et. al, 2020). Research shows that teacher-led PD has a significant effect on students' achievement (Balta & Eryilmaz, 2019). PD regarding differentiation has the potential to enhance the achievement of all students (Prast et al., 2018). Around formative assessment practices, students whose teachers participated in PD outperformed students in control classrooms (Polly et al., 2018). Classes in a separate study regarding PD around formative assessment showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the classes in the control group (Andersson & Palm, 2017). In regard to reading achievement, a meta-analysis indicated that teacher PD has a moderate and significant, positive average effect on reading achievement. (Didion et al., 2020). Most students whose teachers participated in a site-based PD program saw an

improvement in their benchmark scores on the STAR reading test (Gupta & Guang-Lea, 2020).

An important consideration around PD is the extent to which the new learning opportunities take teachers away from their students and the potential impacts that the time away has on student achievement. There was no difference between the science achievement scores of teachers who were away from their students for PD and those of the comparison teachers who remained in the classroom every day (Nichol et al., 2018). Additionally, the student scores of teachers who had been participating in PD after 1 year were significantly higher than the scores of the students whose teachers did not participate in the PD. Teacher participation in PD is worth the time away from students and is a value-added experience (Nichol et al., 2018).

Basma et al. (2018), in a meta-analysis of high-quality intervention studies, indicated that only short teacher PD currently provides more evidence of an impact on student's reading achievement than PD that lasts for longer than 30 days. A PD experience designed to increase teachers' frequency in using language enhancement strategies with preschool children demonstrated mean gains for students in expressive vocabulary and overall language skills (Ascetta et al., 2019). Tele-health technology was used successfully to teach teachers how to personally use and then teach an anger management strategy to their students in a face-to-face school setting. Students were able to learn how to more effectively control their emotional reactions when confronted with rising anger and aggression (Singh et al., 2017). Teacher PD on differentiation strategies

has the potential to promote the achievement of all students based on the results of a 2-year study that compared two different cohort groups (Prast et al., 2018).

Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Job-embedded professional learning (JEPL), in which teachers learn by observing and debriefing each other's practice in structured, sustained ways, has a significant effect on student achievement (Balta & Eryilmaz, 2019). The successful implementation of JEPL indicates that this teacher-led PD both possesses effective characteristics of professional development and can improve student achievement (Balta & Eryilmaz, 2019). As JEPL incorporates the qualities of sustainability, collaboration and classroom-based research by and for teachers, this type of PD is not always considered by teachers themselves to be an attractive or meaningful model for PD. This is a result of the idea that teachers may be hesitant to engage in research due to a lack of time, weak motivation, a sense that it is a low priority, and the belief that research results are irrelevant to the immediate needs of day-to-day teaching and learning (Gutierrez & Kim, 2017). JEPL has three stages - sharing, improving, and spreading. Nguyen and Ng (2020) explain how in this process, affective support of educators themselves is critical in providing social reinforcement to keep the collective group motivated to consider and move a change initiative forward. Teacher collaboration and leadership in the professional learning process are essential to effect change in schools (Nguyen & Ng, 2020).

An advantage of JEPL over lecture-based approaches is the relationship between professionals that is established over time. Professional coaching programs are also more cost-effective than traditional "sit-and-get" PD, as coaches and teachers refine their work

together. Classroom-based research can improve teacher practice in local settings (Knight & Skrtic, 2021). Results of pre- and posttests of teacher knowledge and classroom observations indicate that teachers' knowledge of effective practices for teaching reading increased and that teachers used more evidence-based practices after engaging in JEPL. JEPL shows promise as an approach that accommodates teachers' disparate levels of knowledge and experience in preparing them to meet the diverse needs of their students (Cavazos et al., 2018). The personal, relational nature of JEPL is one of its enduring strengths as optimal learning occurs when even online PD is job-embedded, which provides the flexibility teachers need in order to experience meaningful interactions with colleagues, which promotes professional growth (Parsons et al., 2019).

Professional Development for Teaching Reluctant Readers

The foundation of effective instruction of reluctant readers is a close relationship between educator and student, reader to reader. Systematic professional learning that provides teachers with the ability to reflect on and adapt interventions to meet the needs of reluctant readers improves readers' ability to read effectively (Amendum & Liebfreund, 2019). Effective professional learning for teaching reluctant readers must instruct educators on ways to manage one-on-one intervention, observe and track student growth, and acquire knowledge about effective practices for teaching reading (Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). Repositioning the classroom teacher at the center of a reading intervention with support may be a beneficial form of PD. (Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). Teachers who work systematically and consistently over time with reluctant

readers in small group settings or one-on-one see the greatest gains in student reading achievement (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2018).

Educators who value, first and foremost, their relationship with the students they serve are most effective in addressing the needs of reluctant readers. When a student's relationship to reading is viewed as an ongoing experience that is co-created by both student and educator, the source of and responsibility for literacy struggles is relocated (Collins & Ferri, 2016). The shift in perspective from didactic to collaborative changes the relationship between teachers and students to a more reciprocal one. This reciprocity is essential for the development of independent reading habits in reluctant readers and must exist in professional learning around reading (Collins & Ferri, 2016).

PD for teaching reluctant readers must include practical instruction around the use of technology in order to maximize student engagement. Technology functions as a tool in reading instruction to increase reading motivation, present multi-modal stories and information, and promote collaboration (Yang et al., 2018). The use of technology-integrated practices, such as the embrace of audiobooks, is supported by the importance of cultivating genuine reader-to-reader relationships between educator and student (Yang et al., 2018).

Project Description

The proposed project was selected to address the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. The PD project will be presented to educators in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan.

Through analysis of the data, participants shared their perceptions regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, which included the need for more professional learning to gain new knowledge about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The educators in third through fifth grades will benefit from attending the 3-day PD training because they will have the opportunity to learn more about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings and ideas to implement them effectively. The results of the research interviews will be shared, including the themes present in the data. The themes are access, engagement, reading while listening (RWL), and barriers. The principal will also be invited to attend this 3-day PD training. Because two of the themes are access and barriers, the principal can learn more about what the educators may need to implement the use of audiobooks effectively.

Needed Resources

The resources that the participants need for the 3-day PD training include a large enough room to accommodate the participants comfortably, a digital display board to present the slides and play audio, online access, markers, pens, blank poster paper to jot down ideas, and paper copies of the slides with a section to take notes. There will also be an option for teachers to attend the PD training online on Zoom, if necessary.

Existing Supports

The suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan is a public school district, so the existing supports come from the curriculum director and principal at the local school site. A media center for general use is available for teachers to engage in ongoing training, collaborative meetings, and other sessions to discuss and make positive changes

that will be of benefit to both educators and the students they serve. No additional funding is required in order to provide the requisite professional development experience.

Potential Barriers

At the current time, the world is emerging from the evolving Covid-19 pandemic. The research participants mentioned that collaboration and discussions with other educators is an important component of any professional learning experience. An increase in the spread of new Covid variants may necessitate the use of Zoom as a communication tool in the event that in-person training sessions are not advisable. Online PD sessions, however, may make the connection and discussion between the teachers more challenging. Furthermore, the sustained amount of time sitting in front of a computer screen may be onerous for some educators. If participants are able to participate in face-to-face PD training, a potential barrier includes finding the necessary time to schedule the 3-day sessions. If all the educators in third through fifth grades in the same school attend a 3-day PD training during school hours, substitute teachers will need to be utilized, which may present challenges of availability for the school.

Potential Solutions to Barriers

One possible solution to PD training over Zoom is to allow longer breaks throughout the day. Due to the concern of the lack of discussion between the educators, small group break-out sessions could occur in order to have initial discussions. Then, educators could return to the whole group for larger group conversation. In the event that PD training were not available during school hours, a possible option would be to schedule the training a week or two before school starts or a week or two after school

ends, which would be during the summer break. The suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan also schedules days for full-day PD training at the beginning of the school year when students are not yet in attendance, so an additional option would be to schedule the days into the PD calendar before school starts. Most educators in the suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan have been vaccinated, which would increase the likelihood of the viability of in-person training.

Proposal for Implementation

The opportunity to attend PD sessions before the start of an academic year affords educators a better understanding of the use of audiobooks in classroom settings which may provide ideas for the implementation of newfound knowledge. Face-to-face sessions are always preferable to an experience over Zoom. If, however, the planned face-to-face PD days need to be postponed, online sessions may be offered. A planning meeting with school administration to prepare for possible PD dates before or during the academic year is essential to ensure both the school's and educators' commitment. An invitation email, which will include details about the PD sessions and the expectations of the sessions, will be sent to educators serving students in third through fifth grades. Both the objectives and learning outcomes of this training, presentation of results from the interviews, discussion of the role of audiobooks in a balanced literacy instructional framework, and completion of a reflection will be offered on the 1st day of this professional learning experience. The PowerPoint presentation on the research-based justification for the use of audiobooks, implementation strategies, and ideas for lesson integration, and reflections will be completed on day 2. On the final day of the training, the PowerPoint presentation will

conclude, and educators will collaborate and plan the ways in which they will initiate and/or refine the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. There will be much collaborative conversation, opportunities to examine various audiobook platforms, and activities designed to integrate the use of audiobooks across the curriculum throughout the three days of training.

Roles and Responsibilities

I assumed the role of a researcher. I initiated communication with building level administrators about scheduling the days for this professional learning experience. I also kept the invitees informed about any potential changes to the schedule or format of the training. My other duties and responsibilities include facilitating the 3-day PD training for the educators in third through fifth grades in the suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. The educators' responsibilities are to engage in the PD training and discussions by listening actively and considering ways to implement audiobooks in classroom settings, especially for reluctant readers. If the principal is unable to participate in this professional learning experience, I requested a follow-up meeting to discuss the data findings that include the essential administrative support educators believe is essential to implementing the use of audiobooks in new and innovative ways.

Project Evaluation Plan

The data gathered from the interviews presented four themes: access, engagement, reading while listening (RWL), and barriers. The educators expressed the need for more training and collaboration to enhance their knowledge of the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, especially for reluctant readers. The goal of the PD training project is

to equip educators with knowledge and skills to feel confident and excited to incorporate the use of audiobooks into their daily practice in purposeful, effective ways. A formative evaluation plan, which includes an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix F) for reflection throughout the 3 days of training, is the most appropriate evaluation choice. The questionnaire asks the educators in third through fifth grades about the effectiveness of the PD training. The first day of the open-ended questionnaire includes questions about the teachers' newfound knowledge about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, what the educators already knew, what they did not yet know, their most meaningful takeaway from the session, and if the session was helpful. The second day of the open-ended questionnaire includes questions about new strategies learned around the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, implementation strategies that educators learned and are interested in applying, their most meaningful takeaway from the session, and if the session was helpful. On the final day of the PD training, the open-ended questionnaire includes educators' perceptions of valuable information they have received, suggestions for improvement, and whether the 3-day sessions increased their confidence and motivation to utilize audiobooks in classroom settings more purposefully and effectively. The findings from the educators' questionnaires allow me to discuss potential plans for the future with the administration about scheduling sustainable training opportunities that provide teachers with quality information and skills from which they may benefit.

Project Implications

The PD training sessions equip educators with more knowledge and understanding of the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. The ability to provide

educators with the tools and methodologies that enable them to incorporate the use of audiobooks in their practice and allow collaboration time to plan for the sustained incorporation of audiobooks as pedagogical tools can make a positive difference for both educators and the students they serve. When teachers can specifically address the unique needs of reluctant readers more effectively, the independent reading habits and attitudes toward reading in general of reluctant readers may improve. The 3-day PD training sessions may also inspire educators to find time throughout the year to collaborate consistently which may enhance student access, engagement, and use of audiobooks. The opportunity to share the educators' perceptions of the use of audiobooks with administrators can motivate administrators to provide more resources toward the acquisition of resources to facilitate the use of audiobooks in classroom settings across all grade levels. Local stakeholders such as educators and administrators in other schools and districts may benefit from this study because discovering educators' perceptions around the use of audiobooks may impact the use of audiobooks in other settings. The opportunity to facilitate communication between the stakeholders is necessary to learn more about common needs, methodologies and shared concerns. The project can provide stakeholders with new ideas about the use of audiobooks in broader contexts. Other administrators may also reflect on and identify additional needs that may be addressed through the use of audiobooks. If other schools and districts would like to initiate or expand the use of audiobooks to facilitate independent reading habits in reluctant readers, the PD training can be used as a resource to inform the use of audiobooks in other contexts.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Through this study, I explored the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. Thirteen participants participated in a one-on-one interview. The data that were analyzed from the interview provided information to answer the research questions of the study, which inquired about the perceptions of educators and the barriers and/or facilitators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The themes that emerged from the interviews included access, engagement, reading while listening (RWL), and barriers. In Section 3, I explained the PD project, the rationale for the project, the literature review, the project evaluation plan, and the project implications. In Section 4, I discuss the project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches to the project, scholarship, project development, leadership and change, reflection, implications, applications, directions for future research, and the conclusion.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

The data from the interviews revealed the need to provide training around the use of audiobooks for educators serving students in third through fifth grades, which includes providing strategies that enable educators to differentiate their reading instruction through the use of audiobooks to meet the needs of reluctant readers. The 3-day PD training sessions focus on presenting in-depth information about effective practices around the

use of audiobooks, the benefits and challenges of the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, and ways to utilize audiobooks to help establish lifelong reading habits in reluctant readers. The PD training also encourages collaboration and discussion among educators serving students in third through fifth grades. Collaboration among educators helps manifest effective practices and allows educators the opportunity to share resources and ensure that they are utilizing developmentally appropriate standards and lessons that foster teachers' professional growth (Mowrey & King, 2019). Not only will educators gain new ideas through collaboration, but educators may also provide support and reassurance to each other through the training. This training may help establish sustainable professional learning communities which continue to inform effective literacy practices in the future.

Project Limitations

A limitation of the project may be the cost and availability of laptops, headphones, and chart paper. The school budget may not contain funding for the cost of what is required for the 3-day PD sessions or provide compensation for the trainers. Another potential limitation of the project could be the commitment from the educators to attend the training. Educators require a considerable amount of time outside of class to prepare for the school year and plan daily lessons. It may be problematic for educators to commit to three full days outside of school to attend the training. Additionally, the data gathered from the interviews do not represent the overall perceptions of educators' use of audiobooks building wide. The presence of more participants in the study may have

provided other perspectives on the use of audiobooks that could have helped develop the PD training.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The 3-day PD training was the most appropriate project that became apparent from the findings of this study. There are, however, alternative approaches to this study. One alternative approach may be writing a program plan. The educators in the study expressed the need to have information about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, so the program plan could conceivably provide guidelines, resources, activities, and other essential aspects of the use of audiobooks that could help teachers incorporate their use more thoroughly and effectively into their lessons. This plan, however, may not reach educators who possess limited information about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. Furthermore, educators would also not have the opportunity to discuss effective practices and the implementation of audiobooks with each other. An additional alternative approach may be a white paper report, which could conceivably be beneficial for this project. Drafting a white paper from the perspective of the educators in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan that contained descriptions of their need for ongoing training, administrative support, and sustainable opportunities for professional learning may be presented to the school administrators. A further benefit of the white paper is that the report would conserve educators' time and hence provide a more convenient way for them to glean information. The white paper report, however, would not provide the necessary in-person learning experiences that the PD training offers. The white paper report would also not offer the

discussion and collaboration opportunities that the educators in third through fifth grades sought. The 3 days of PD training can provide the most in-depth experience regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. The 3-day PD training best addresses educators' learning needs and gives educators the opportunity to share the outcome of the training with administrators that centers around next steps for the effective use of audiobooks. The implementation of strategies learned during the training will hopefully promote positive change within the school district.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

As I have proceeded through the research and development of this project, I have learned and grown as both a scholar and a practitioner. I have a better understanding of identifying evidence-based practices around the teaching of reading, which has enhanced my sensitivity toward differentiating instruction for reluctant readers. I have learned to interpret data and more effectively utilize research to inform my practice. It was challenging to set aside my biases to ensuring neutrality through the interview process and data analysis. I had to constantly remind myself to maintain the dispassionate stance of a researcher.

The process of reviewing the literature was a challenging yet very meaningful experience. As I progressed through the literature review process, I realized that there are no absolute answers to a problem. The encounter of academic journals that contain conflicting results and findings also allowed prompted me to remain neutral in my position as researcher. The need to consider similar studies and conclusions is certainly clear, but I am more aware of the extent to which results may be influenced by a range of

variables. As the number of influencing variables is significant, I am reminded of the need for the researcher to have a nuanced understanding of the problem. The awareness of data that conflicts enables a researcher to make more informed decisions about the study itself to ensure that the research is trustworthy, reliable, and valid.

The execution of interviews and data gathering about the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings provided me with insight into the importance of communicating effectively with stakeholders. The critical importance of actively listening to each educator's views around the use of audiobooks regardless of the extent to which those perceptions differed from my own, helped me better sense what is needed to improve outcomes for both the educators themselves and the students they serve.

The opportunity to develop a PD training in response to the stated needs of educators has been a most meaningful and edifying experience. I have long enjoyed the opportunity to teach colleagues in both formal and informal settings, and this project has been an evolution of my role as an educator of adult professionals. The chance to utilize the information gathered in the literature review, which explained the characteristics of an effective PD experience, as well as my experiences as both a consumer and provider of attending PD sessions, guided my planning process. One of my central concerns for the PD sessions is to ensure that the training is meaningful and relevant to the daily practice of my colleagues. If the sessions are not relevant, the teachers will not apply the skills gleaned and/or knowledge acquired. Feedback from participating educators is critical in order to promote professional buy-in and maintain a high level of motivation to

promote continuous improvement. The effective design of PD is critical in order to maximize the benefit for all constituents concerned - students, families and the educators themselves.

I set out on this doctoral journey to advance my own professional learning in order to become a more skilled and effective educator. Through this experience, I have refined my ability to observe and apply information pertinent to my practice. I realized the importance of living into my identity as a stronger leader who can identify a problem of practice, research the issues, collect evidence, and plan approaches to lead and guide colleagues in the service of our communities. I have learned what is required to be an effective researcher and scholar who utilizes what is needed to promote positive social change.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Audiobooks have their origin in the invention of the phonograph in 1877. Modern audiobook creation and dissemination began in the early 1950s and their popularity has continued to grow with the advent of digital media and smartphones. The evolution of the use of audiobooks has provided lifesaving opportunities for nontraditional readers to access stories and information in ways they never could before. As such, educators in school settings require opportunities to maximize the introduction and use of audiobooks in ways that promote lifelong literacy habits.

Before the beginning of this study, educators in third through fifth grades at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan had never had the opportunity to express their perceptions around the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. As such, I

was not aware of the extent to which colleagues had or had not utilized audiobooks as part of their pedagogy. The information gained from this study gave me a sense of commonalities and differences in educators' practice, which is a necessary first step in creating meaningful PD. I hope that this study can provide important insights for both educators and administrators to improve the quality of literacy instruction for all students, but especially for reluctant readers who may benefit from the use of audiobooks.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The responses to the research questions guided the project study to discover the training that the teachers require to effectively implement audiobooks in their practice. The ability to present the results of the data analysis to both the educators and the administrators provides awareness of the educators' needs. The implementation of the three full days of PD training may impact social change by providing educators with new awareness of pedagogical practices that will enable students to embrace the use of audiobooks as powerful tools for literacy. Students will benefit from the project because educators will have the opportunity to collaborate, learn, self-reflect, and implement audiobook use in ways that best meet the needs of each individual learner.

This project study has the potential to impact positive social change due to the way in which the third-through fifth-grade educators expressed significant perceptions about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. Social change will begin initially at the local sites in which the educators work. The project study provided third-through fifth-grades educators with a platform to discuss their perceptions about the use of audiobooks in classroom settings, particularly in regard to the development of

independent reading habits in reluctant readers. The findings of this study may lead to positive social change as audiobooks could enhance students' independent reading habits, resulting in increased literacy, higher education opportunities, and higher-paying job prospects, which could positively impact socioeconomic status and lower poverty levels. The problem presented in this study was that educators' perceptions were unknown regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. The third-through fifth-grade educators will be provided with time for professional learning and collaboration time through the PD project. The opportunity for educators to come together in order to examine effective practices around the use of audiobooks and consider strategic ways to implement the use of audiobooks will likely provide meaningful professional change. Hopefully, practitioners in other settings may learn about the significance of gathering educators' perceptions and utilize these perceptions to drive and create meaningful PD around the use of audiobooks.

Future research may seek to examine the perceptions of educators beyond third through fifth grades in order to determine the differences and similarities that may exist. It would also be interesting to compare the utilization of audiobooks beyond classroom settings with practices that occur within a school. Another recommendation would be to conduct a study that examines the perceptions of students themselves around the use of audiobooks to develop their own independent reading habits. The examination of data directly from students as users of audiobooks themselves may present fascinating ways to compare and contrast the perceptions of educators with those of the students they serve.

Conclusion

In this project study, I examined the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. After conducting interviews, I organized the findings into four themes. Participants mentioned the need for access to audiobooks and expressed the engagement that occurs when a student utilizes audiobook technology. The participants also shared the significance of reading while listening as a learning tool and discussed the inherent barriers present in the use of audiobooks. All of the educators described how they utilized audiobooks to varying degrees.

The project generated from the findings of the study was a 3-day PD training for educators in third through fifth grades. The sessions provide detailed information, effective practices, and collaborative conversations around the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. The project equips educators with the opportunity to establish sustainable professional learning around the use of audiobooks to improve the independent reading habits of students.

I am certainly grateful that I have had the opportunity to engage in this project study process. I have acquired the disposition of a researcher and have grown in my ability to remain objective as I compare and contrast different points of view in the literature. Furthermore, I have improved my skills as a disciplined scholar, which include my ability to set daily goals, work assiduously towards those goals, and achieve them. I have been able to more directly apply research findings to meet and address the needs

posed by a local problem in my classroom practice. Ultimately, this project study has motivated me to continue to promote positive social change through ongoing research and practice that benefits the local community through the use of audiobooks to enhance students' independent reading habits for life.

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Appendix A:

The Project

The project for this basic qualitative study is a 3-day PD training for third through fifth grades educators at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. The results of the data analysis indicated the need for training around the use of audiobooks in classroom settings. The first goal of this PD training is to equip educators with knowledge and strategies to successfully and sustainably implement audiobooks in classroom settings. The second goal centers around the need to increase educators' motivation and confidence regarding the use of audiobooks. The third goal focuses on facilitating collegial communication and collaboration among educators to develop consistent and effective use of audiobooks over time. The final goal is to present the outcomes of the 3-day PD training to building administrators to prioritize teachers' needs around the use of audiobooks and provide necessary resources for ongoing PD training.

3-Day PD Training: Audiobooks for All: The Use of Digital Audio to Promote Independent Reading Habits

Target Audience:

Third through fifth grades educators at a suburban elementary school in Southeast Michigan. Local site and district-level administrators will be invited to attend to listen to results of the data analysis, which include the needs of the educators.

Purpose:

The purpose of the 3-day PD training is to provide educators with knowledge and strategies to successfully and sustainably implement audiobooks in classroom settings

with a particular emphasis on developing lifelong independent reading habits for reluctant readers.

Goals:

1. Equip educators with knowledge and strategies to successfully and sustainably implement audiobooks in classroom settings.
2. Increase educators' motivation and confidence regarding the use of audiobooks.
3. Facilitate collegial communication and collaboration among educators to develop consistent and effective use of audiobooks over time.
4. Present the outcomes of the 3-day PD training to building administrators to prioritize teachers' needs around the use of audiobooks and provide necessary resources for ongoing PD training.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Educators will possess a deeper understanding of the unique literacy needs of reluctant readers at the third through fifth grades level.
2. Educators will acquire specific strategies for the implementation of the use of audiobooks in individual, small group and whole-class instructional settings.
3. Educators will develop greater familiarity and fluency with the use of audiobook resources that may be utilized in classroom settings.
4. Educators will establish reasonable and attainable instructional goals for the incorporation of audiobooks into their practice over the course of the school year

5. Educators will establish and sustain a collaborative professional learning network to provide ongoing professional learning and accountability around the use of audiobooks to help establish independent reading habits in reluctant readers.
6. Administrators will realize the professional learning needs of educators around the use of audiobooks and prioritize resources to sustainably support educators' professional learning

Timeline:

The PD sessions from this study may be presented before the start of the school year during the summer. An additional option would be to schedule the PD sessions with the building principals to plan for possible PD dates during the school year. At the conclusion of the PD sessions, a meeting will be scheduled with the school administrators to prepare for sustainable, ongoing training around the use of audiobooks.

Materials:

1. Breakfast, lunch, and snacks for all 3 days
2. Technology setup for audio and video projection
3. Post-it notes
4. Blank paper inside binders for notetaking
5. Chart paper
6. Markers, pens and pencils
7. PowerPoint slides printed out for participant use
8. Green and yellow dot adhesive labels
9. Laptop cart

10. Headphones/Earbuds

Day 1 (8:00am-3:00pm)

8:00-9:00 - Breakfast, welcome, introductions of participants, icebreaker, purpose and outcomes of PD (slides 1 & 2)

Notes: As participants arrive they will sign in, then they may proceed to help themselves to breakfast. The printed PowerPoint slides will be available for the day, along with pens, pencils, markers, and a binder with blank paper for notetaking. Welcome all participants and do the icebreaker, “My Favorite Photo.” Participants will complete the icebreaker in pairs and then share favorite photos with the whole group. After the icebreaker, we will discuss the importance and power of non-print media. We will then discuss the purpose of the 3-day PD session: to provide insights and sustainable professional learning around the use of audiobooks to promote independent reading habits, especially for reluctant readers. We will co-create our professional learning expectations, which will likely include the need for all participants to pledge to maintain an emotionally safe space where everyone is encouraged to actively participate, share, take intellectual risks, learn, grow in collaboration and enjoy each other’s company.

9:00-9:30 - Presentation of the results of data analysis, goals, and outcomes (slides 3 & 4)

Notes: Present the four themes that emerged from the data analysis - access, engagement, reading while listening (RWL), and barriers. Explain the goals of this PD experience and the learning outcome of the day one session - that educators will possess a deeper understanding of the unique literacy needs of reluctant readers at the third through fifth

grades level and will acquire specific strategies for the implementation of the use of audiobooks in individual, small group and whole-class instructional settings.

9:30-10:30- KWHL chart on the use of audiobooks with reluctant readers in partners, present posters (slides 5)

Notes: Educators who do not already work on the same teaching team will pair up. Each partnership will receive a piece of blank chart paper. On the chart paper, the pairs will write K, for what they know, W, for what they would like to know, H, for how they will find out what they would like to know, and L for what they learned. They will write down what they know, would like to know, and how they will find out about the use of audiobooks with reluctant readers. After the participants complete their KWHL charts, each partnership will present. The participants will review their charts at the end of the PD sessions, where they will complete the L column.

10:30-10:45- Break (slide 6)

Notes: Dismiss participants for a break. Remind them of the location of the bathroom. Have participants return at 10:45 to resume the PD.

10:45-12:00- Examination, discussion and gallery walk of a successful lifelong independent reading habit (slides 7-10)

Notes: Welcome the educators back. Tell educators to form a group of four with their previous partner from the KWHL activity. Begin by asking these essential questions: “Why is the cultivation of an independent reading habit important?” and “What are the key components of a successful lifelong independent reading habit?” Display these essential questions on the screen. Participants in the groups of four will write their

responses to each essential question on a separate sheet of chart paper. Each group will then hang their chart paper on the wall. Participants will be given a sheet of five green and five yellow adhesive dots. Each participant will be asked to walk around the room and examine all of the charts. They will be asked to place their green adhesive dots next to responses to the question, “Why is the cultivation of an independent reading habit important?” that particularly resonate with them as practitioners. They may place their dots on the same chart or distribute them on different charts. The participants will be asked to do the same with their yellow dots for the responses to the question, “What are the key components of a successful lifelong independent reading habit?” After the gallery walk has concluded, participants will be encouraged to share aloud what they notice about the responses and why they believe certain responses had more or fewer green and yellow dots placed next to them.

12:00-1:00 - Lunch break (slide 11)

Notes: Dismiss participants for lunch. Ask them to return by 1:00.

1:00-1:45 – Characteristics of independent readers and independent reading (slide 12 & 13)

Notes: Ask participants to consider the independent reading lives of their students by listing behaviors that they have observed students demonstrate in class. Have them find a new partner and then share their responses. Next, ask the participants to attempt to classify the behaviors into categories. Have each partnership report out what they’ve established. After each partnership has shared, ask participants to read an excerpt from Donalynn Miller’s *The Book Whisperer*. Ask participants to affirm or challenge the

categories of developing readers, dormant readers, and underground readers that Miller establishes in the book. Then, ask participants to consider what would need to occur in order for all students to maintain an independent reading habit that they practiced willingly on a daily basis, both in class and away from school. Have the participants consider the notions of time, choice, community, and support through a reader-to-reader relationship that Miller articulates. Would they add anything else? Finally, have participants consider the notion of disciplined habits in general and the example embodied in #SEWTRI for Life specifically. Have each participant develop their own reading slogan that embodies the importance of a daily discipline of independent reading.

1:45-2:00 - Break (slide 14)

Notes: Dismiss participants for a break. Have participants return at 2:00pm to resume the PD.

2:00-2:45 - Exploration of Hoopla, Libby, YouTube, Epic and Audible (slide 15)

Notes: Ask participants if they are aware of Hoopla, Libby, YouTube, Epic and Audible as audiobook platforms. Create a three-column chart on chart paper that contains the following categories at the top: cost, ease of use, availability of resources. On the left side of the chart, create rows that each contain the names of the five platforms. Have participants count off by fives. Assign a different platform to each numbered participant. Have participants access the platform that matches their number on both their phone and their laptop in order to complete the categories on the chart paper. Ask participants to report out on the aspects of each platform and record the information on the chart.

2:45-3:00- Reflection and mentimeter (slide 16)

Notes: Ask participants to use mentimeter to write three words that characterize their experience today. Display the resulting word cloud and ask if anyone would like to further articulate their thoughts. Assign homework: “Choose one children’s or YA audiobook from Hoopla or Libby and begin listening to it.” Thank everyone for a great first day. Remind everyone that we will begin promptly tomorrow morning with breakfast at 8am.

Day 2 (8:00am-3:00pm)

8:00-8:30 - Breakfast, welcome, review purpose and outcomes of PD, qualities of a compelling audiobook (slides 17-19)

Notes: Welcome everyone back. Encourage everyone to avail themselves of breakfast. Have them scan QR codes on table to go to a survey which asks them to consider and select the qualities of a compelling audiobook. Review charts from Day 1 on the following topics: “Why is the cultivation of an independent reading habit important?” and “What are the key components of a successful lifelong independent reading habit?”

8:30- 9:00 - Time, choice, community, and support through a reader-to-reader relationship (slide 20)

Notes: Ask participants to consider the one children’s or YA audiobook that they selected from yesterday’s homework. Have them reflect on the decision-making process they used in order to select the book that they chose. Ask participants to indicate by show of hands whether any of the following considerations were a factor: did they have enough time to select and examine the potential titles (time), did they value the ability to have a choice, as opposed to being required to read a book chosen for them (choice), did they

consult a friend, a booklist or some other resource that influenced their decision to choose the book that they ultimately selected (community), and knowing that there was an expectation and that they would be accountable for selecting something (reader-to-reader relationship). Next, have them find a new partner in the room and discuss the extent to which the considerations of time, choice, community, and support through a reader-to-reader relationship mattered. Encourage participants to share their realizations aloud with the whole group and the extent to which these realizations may impact their practice.

9:00-10:00 The use of audiobooks and ebooks to track the text (slide 21)

Notes: Ask participants if they have ever required their students to own their own public library card. Share the power of library card use, especially in regard to Libby and Hoopla. Show images of library card selfies. Encourage educators to consider the way the use of audiobooks is normalized through read aloud. Encourage participants to share the ways they may have use audiobooks in read aloud contexts. Play an excerpt from the audiobook version of *When Stars are Scattered* by Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson and project the ebook. Demonstrate the use of the cursor to visually track the text. Ask participants to rejoin their immediate past partner and share what they noticed about the production of the audiobook and the experience of both listening to the audiobook and tracking the projected text. Share out and record responses on chart paper. Ask participants to turn and talk again and now consider how and when they may use the track the text technique with their whole class.

10:00-10:15 - Break (slide 22)

Notes: Dismiss participants for a break. Have participants return at 10:15am to resume the PD.

10:15-11:00 - IR reading surveys (slides 23 & 24) - “Knowing who a kid is and what they do are necessary preconditions to helping support their IR life”

Notes: Have participants locate the most recent independent reading survey they have administered to their students at the beginning of the school year. Ask them to find a new partner in the room and to compare the components of their independent reading surveys. What aspects of the surveys are most helpful in getting to know the reading habits of their students? Next, ask each partnership to share both what these aspects are and why they are important with the whole group. Note these components on chart paper. Finally, project three different beginning of the year reading surveys that may be of use to educators.

11:00-12:00 Teacher-student conferencing (slides 25 & 26)

Notes: Have participants complete the Teacher-Student Conferencing survey. Ask them to rejoin their previous partner and discuss this question: “What is the power of putting a book in a kid’s hands?” Display the results of the survey on the screen. Discuss trends and patterns. Project a conference protocol sheet and pass out hard copies. Explain the process and rationale behind the use of conferencing individually and in small group settings with students. Discuss conference scheduling. Consider how conferencing yields formative assessment data to inform instruction and the reader-to-reader relationship.

12:00-1:00 - Lunch break (slide 27)

Notes: Dismiss participants for lunch. Ask them to return by 1:00.

1:00- 1:45 – Realizing who our reluctant readers are: “*That kid*” (slides 28 & 29)

Notes: Ask participants to envision three students from the previous academic year who presented the most challenges around the development of an independent reading habit. Have the participants write the names and at least three characteristics that exemplify each of their three students’ perceived identity as reluctant readers. What did they say and do habitually over time that manifest their reluctance to read independently? Next, have participants join together with a new partner and share the qualities and characteristics of their reluctant readers. On chart paper, have each partnership write down commonalities. Have each partnership share these characteristics with the whole group. Finally, ask everyone to articulate common concerns that have emerged.

1:45-2:00 - Break (slide 30)

Notes: Dismiss participants for a break. Have participants return at 2:00pm to resume the PD.

2:00-2:55pm RWL with both print and ebook (slide 31)

Notes: Ask participants to keep in mind the three students who are reluctant readers that they previously considered. Have participants envision how the use of the RWL approach - with both print and ebook – may help each of the three students. Each participant should answer the following questions: 1. What hardware would need to be in place in order to facilitate the use of RWL with this student? 2. What protocols would have to be taught and agreed upon in order for the RWL protocol to be effective over time? 3. How would you approach each student individually to convince them that the RWL approach would be an effective way for them to read independently? 4. How would you continue to

support each student over time to insure that the student is actually reading and engaging constructively with the text? Next, each participant will join with their previous partner and share their responses to the questions and consider their commonalities.

2:55 – 3:00 Exit ticket (slide 32)

Notes: Have each participant answer this question with their current conversation partner in two minutes: “How has your thinking around the use of audiobooks to support reluctant readers develop independent reading habits shifted after today?” Ask three people to share their thoughts aloud in one sentence.

Day 3 (8:00am-3:00pm)

8:00-8:30 - Breakfast, welcome, review purpose and outcomes of PD, Goodreads (slides 33-36)

Notes: Welcome everyone back. Encourage everyone to avail themselves of breakfast. Ask how many people have heard of Goodreads. Have those who don't already have it to download the Goodreads app onto their phone. Show my own Goodreads account focusing on lists of books currently reading, read, and books to read. Show participants examples of students' Goodreads accounts and share how I use Goodreads as an independent reading management system. Ask participants to find a partner with whom they have not yet worked, and discuss the following questions: 1. How could I potentially utilize Goodreads as a record keeping tool with my students? 2. To what extent would Goodreads inform the use of my students' current independent reading management system? Ask participants to share their responses with the whole group.

8:30-9:00am – Building a community of readers with book commercials (slides 37-40)

Notes: Conduct a book commercial of a book I am currently reading by offering the title, author, summary without spoiling, reason why people should read this book and score on a five-star scale. Ask each participant to return to their previous partner and take turns conducting their own book commercial about any book of their choosing. Ask three people to share theirs with the whole group. Now, ask participants to consider the extent to which they could conduct book commercials for their class and how they could empower their students to also regularly conduct book commercials. Discuss the similarities and differences between book commercials and book reports and the utility and authenticity of book commercials for creating a genuine community of enthusiastic independent readers. Talk about the rationale behind the importance of student choice and the idea that we should all be reading four and five-star books because “life’s too short to read boring books.” Discuss the power of peer-peer suggestions and have the group consider how this dynamic functions in our human behavior through other aspects of daily life, especially around the consumption of various media.

9:00-9:45am Ongoing Book Clubs (slides 41 & 42)

Notes: Ask participants to think about how, why and with whom people create social organizations and clubs. Have them again return to their previous partner to discuss. Next, have each partner report out and record their responses on chart paper in a three-column chart. Ask participants to consider and discuss the role that an ongoing book club may play in developing and sustaining the independent reading life of a reluctant reader. Have participants consider the way that the positive peer pressure of a book club in which a reluctant reader has the opportunity to choose the members of their own book club of 4-

5 members. Also, ask participants to consider how a book club that is sustained over an entire school year, and which meets on a regular basis, could provide an affinity group for reluctant readers that provides ongoing support for the cultivation and growth of their independent reading habit. Share images and work samples from book club activities that showcase both the processes and products that have been part of ongoing book clubs.

9:45-10:00am - Break (slide 43)

Notes: Dismiss participants for a break. Have participants return at 10:00am to resume the PD.

10:00-11:00am Reading Response journals (slides 44-47)

Notes: Share a letter that I've written to all participants in Schoology in which I articulate the title, author, summary without spoiling, and thoughts on the book I am currently reading. Ask participants to write a letter in response to me in which they share their thoughts on my letter and share information about their own independent reading book by providing the title, author, summary without spoiling and thoughts on their book. Tell participants that they may incorporate noticings, connections, wonderings, and questions. Show participants examples from student reading response letters. Ask participants to consider the power of the reader-to-reader relationship that is established when teacher and student maintain correspondence around the books they are reading. Share scheduling protocols and ask participants to think about the extent to which reading response journals may be incorporated into their practice.

11:00-12:00 Literacy night and sustained family involvement (slides 48-50)

Notes: Ask participants to consider the extent to which a supportive parent/guardian and family play in fostering a successful independent reading life in all readers, especially those who are reluctant to read independently. Share slides of Family Literacy Night and ask participants to consider how they may design a similar experience as a kickoff to parent and family involvement. Share images of students reading independently in class and away from school in favorite spots. Share videos of students reading to their animals and stuffed friends and the rationale behind these initiatives. Share library card selfies. Share photos of guest readers. Next, have participants find a new partner and brainstorm a list of ways they can encourage and support independent reading that incorporates parents and families to maximize identity development as a reader. Have each partnership share out their ideas with the group.

12:00-1:00 - Lunch break (slide 51)

Notes: Dismiss participants for lunch. Ask them to return by 1:00.

1:00-2:00 - Planning with grade-level teams (slides 52 & 53)

Notes: Ask participants to sit with their grade-level team members to create a plan for the incorporation and use of audiobooks in their reading workshop with specific attention paid to the needs of reluctant readers. Ask participants to locate and retrieve their existing curriculum scope and sequence for the upcoming academic year and ask them to copy and paste it into the template Google doc to facilitate collaborative planning. Post the following essential questions on chart paper, which are also written on the planning document: How will you engage students in the independent reading component of your practice by strategically increasing the presence and use of audiobooks? List the

following components we have discussed in this PD training on chart paper so educators may incorporate their use in their planning: Exploration of Hoopla, Libby, YouTube, Epic and Audible, the use of audiobooks and ebooks to track the text, IR reading surveys, teacher-student conferencing, RWL with both print and ebook, use of Goodreads, book commercials, book clubs, reading response journals, literacy night and sustained family involvement, reading identity development. Ask participants to indicate on the planning document when they will introduce each component, how they plan to utilize it, how frequently, and for how long throughout the academic year. Additionally, ask participants to schedule PLC meetings throughout the year to reflect on the progress of their plans, evaluate progress, make adjustments and continue to plan.

2:00-2:50 Report out and complete KWHL chart (slide 54)

Notes: Have participants report their plans to the whole group. Ask for noticings and wonderings from the listeners. Have participants complete the L column of their KWHL charts and report out their learning.

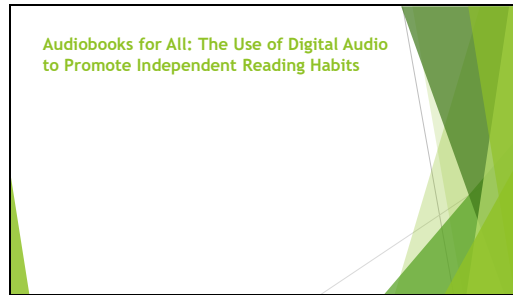
2:50 – 3:00 One word evaluation and exit survey (slide 55)

Notes: Ask participants to share one word that encapsulates their experience in this 3-day PD training. Finally, ask participants to complete a Google form evaluation survey.

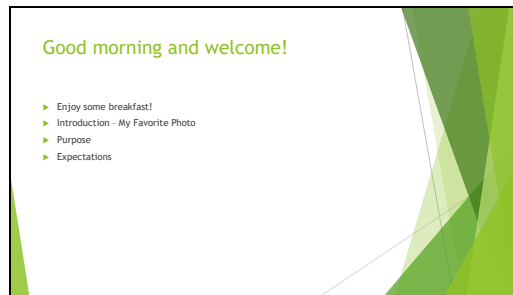
Thank everyone for their involvement and participation and let them know they are free to go upon completion of the evaluation.

3-Day Professional Development PowerPoint

Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3

Data Analysis Results

- ▶ Themes:
 - ▶ Access
 - ▶ Engagement
 - ▶ Reading while listening (RWL)
 - ▶ Barriers

Slide 4

Goals and Outcomes

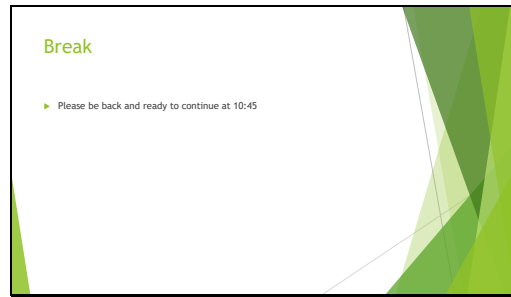
Goals	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Equip educators with knowledge and strategies to successfully and sustainably implement audiobooks in classroom settings. ▶ Increase educators' motivation and confidence regarding the use of audiobooks. ▶ Facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration among educators to develop consistent and effective use of audiobooks over time. ▶ Present the outcomes of the 3-day PD training to building administrators to promote teachers' needs for the use of audiobooks and provide resources for ongoing PD training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Educators will possess a deeper understanding of the unique learning needs of reluctant readers at the grade 3-5 level. ▶ Educators will create specific strategies for the unique and varied needs of reluctant, read, and struggling learners in their classrooms. ▶ Educators will develop greater fluency and literacy with the use of audiobook resources that they will utilize in classroom settings. ▶ Educators will establish measurable and attainable instructional goals for the implementation of audiobooks into their practice over the course of the school year. ▶ Educators will establish the unique collaborative professional learning network to provide ongoing professional learning and collaboration among the use of audiobooks to help maximize subsequent learning needs in reluctant readers. ▶ Administrators will address the professional learning needs of educators for the use of audiobooks and provide resources to sustainably support educators' professional learning.

Slide 5

KWHL chart on the use of audiobooks with reluctant readers

- ▶ Partner up
- ▶ List what you know about the use of audiobooks with reluctant readers in the "K" column
- ▶ List what you would like to know about the use of audiobooks with reluctant readers in the "W" column
- ▶ List how you will find out what you would like to know about the use of audiobooks with reluctant readers in the "H" column
- ▶ Present thoughts on chart paper

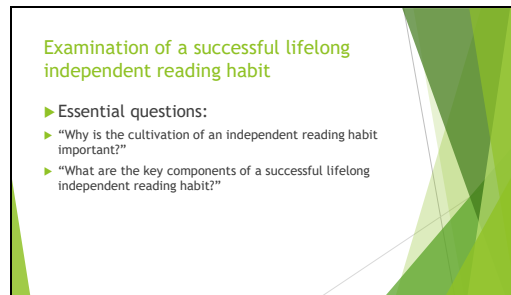
Slide 6



Break

- ▶ Please be back and ready to continue at 10:45

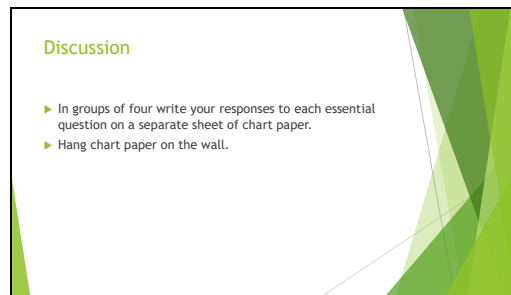
Slide 7



Examination of a successful lifelong independent reading habit

- ▶ Essential questions:
 - ▶ “Why is the cultivation of an independent reading habit important?”
 - ▶ “What are the key components of a successful lifelong independent reading habit?”

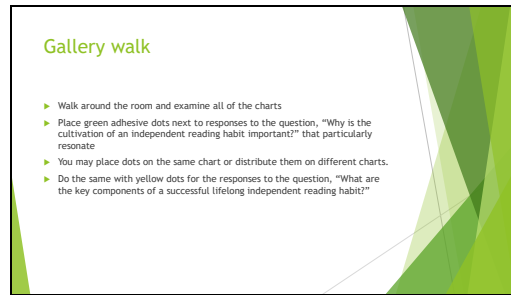
Slide 8



Discussion

- ▶ In groups of four write your responses to each essential question on a separate sheet of chart paper.
- ▶ Hang chart paper on the wall.

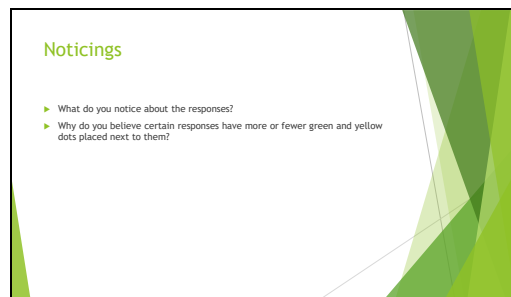
Slide 9

The slide features a white background with a decorative green geometric pattern on the right side. The title "Gallery walk" is in green. Below it is a list of four instructions, each preceded by a green right-pointing triangle.

Gallery walk

- ▶ Walk around the room and examine all of the charts
- ▶ Place green adhesive dots next to responses to the question, "Why is the cultivation of an independent reading habit important?" that particularly resonate
- ▶ You may place dots on the same chart or distribute them on different charts.
- ▶ Do the same with yellow dots for the responses to the question, "What are the key components of a successful lifelong independent reading habit?"

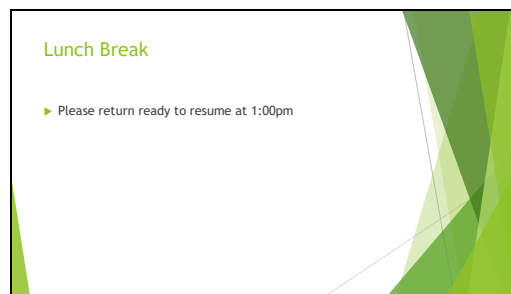
Slide 10

The slide features a white background with a decorative green geometric pattern on the right side. The title "Noticings" is in green. Below it are two questions, each preceded by a green right-pointing triangle.

Noticings

- ▶ What do you notice about the responses?
- ▶ Why do you believe certain responses have more or fewer green and yellow dots placed next to them?

Slide 11

The slide features a white background with a decorative green geometric pattern on the right side. The title "Lunch Break" is in green. Below it is a single instruction, preceded by a green right-pointing triangle.


Lunch Break

- ▶ Please return ready to resume at 1:00pm

Slide 12

Characteristics of independent readers

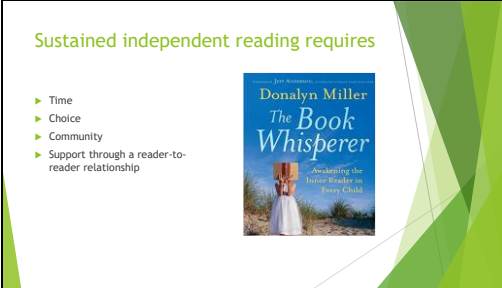

- ▶ What behaviors do independent readers demonstrate in class?



Slide 13

Sustained independent reading requires


- ▶ Time
- ▶ Choice
- ▶ Community
- ▶ Support through a reader-to-reader relationship



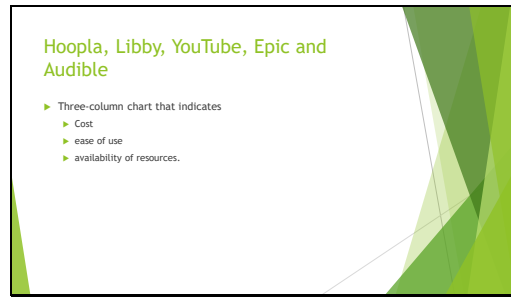
Slide 14

Break

- ▶ Please be back and ready to continue at 2:00



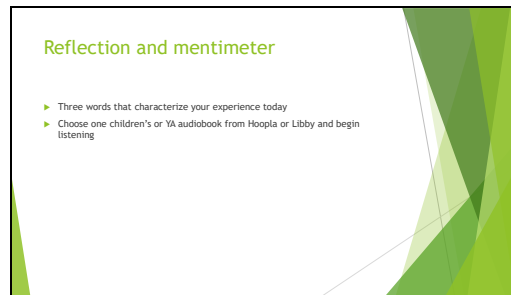
Slide 15

The slide features a white background with a decorative green geometric pattern on the right side. The title is in green text, and the list items are preceded by green arrowheads.

Hoopla, Libby, YouTube, Epic and Audible

- ▶ Three-column chart that indicates
 - ▶ Cost
 - ▶ ease of use
 - ▶ availability of resources.

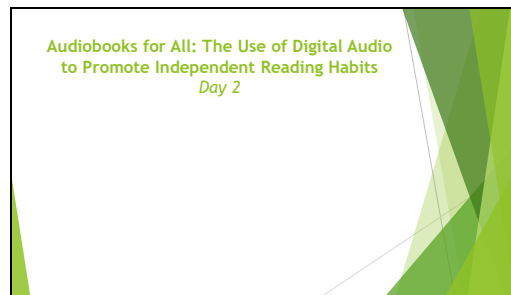
Slide 16

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Reflection and mentimeter

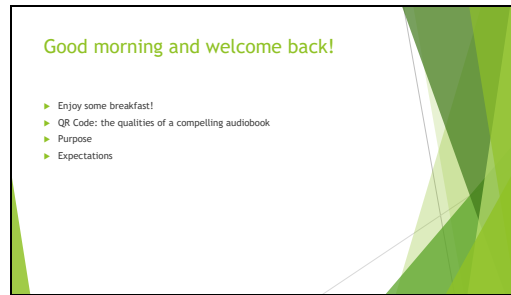
- ▶ Three words that characterize your experience today
- ▶ Choose one children's or YA audiobook from Hoopla or Libby and begin listening

Slide 17

The slide features a white background with a decorative green geometric pattern on the right side. The title is in green text.

Audiobooks for All: The Use of Digital Audio to Promote Independent Reading Habits
Day 2

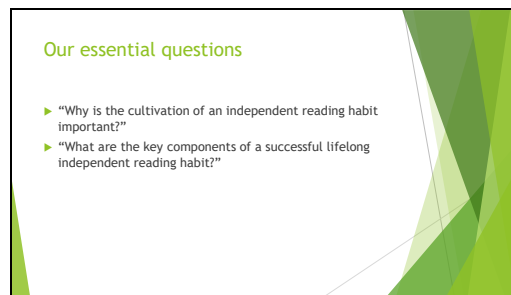
Slide 18

A presentation slide with a white background and a green geometric pattern on the right side. The title is "Good morning and welcome back!". Below the title is a bulleted list with three items: "Enjoy some breakfast!", "QR Code: the qualities of a compelling audiobook", "Purpose", and "Expectations".

Good morning and welcome back!

- ▶ Enjoy some breakfast!
- ▶ QR Code: the qualities of a compelling audiobook
- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Expectations

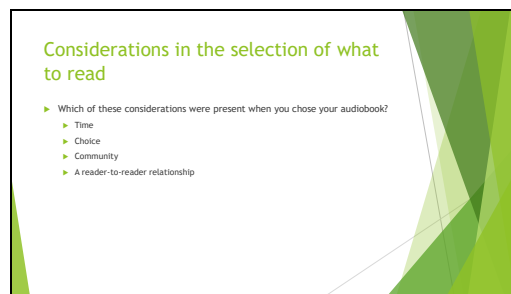
Slide 19

A presentation slide with a white background and a green geometric pattern on the right side. The title is "Our essential questions". Below the title is a bulleted list with two items: "Why is the cultivation of an independent reading habit important?" and "What are the key components of a successful lifelong independent reading habit?".

Our essential questions

- ▶ "Why is the cultivation of an independent reading habit important?"
- ▶ "What are the key components of a successful lifelong independent reading habit?"

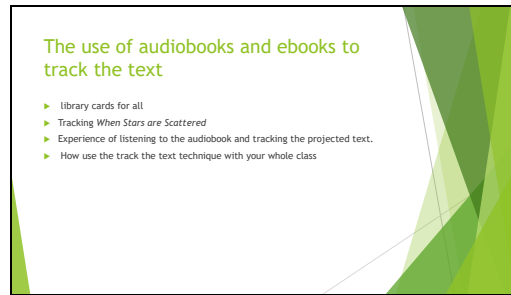
Slide 20

A presentation slide with a white background and a green geometric pattern on the right side. The title is "Considerations in the selection of what to read". Below the title is a bulleted list with one main item: "Which of these considerations were present when you chose your audiobook?". This main item has four sub-items: "Time", "Choice", "Community", and "A reader-to-reader relationship".

Considerations in the selection of what to read

- ▶ Which of these considerations were present when you chose your audiobook?
 - ▶ Time
 - ▶ Choice
 - ▶ Community
 - ▶ A reader-to-reader relationship

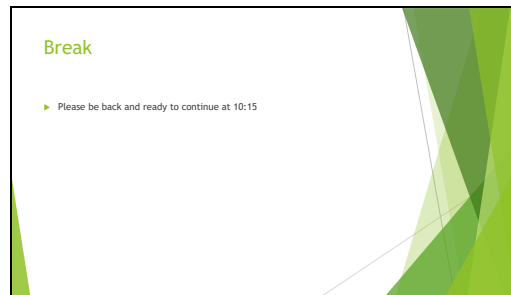
Slide 21

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The use of audiobooks and ebooks to track the text

- ▶ library cards for all
- ▶ Tracking *When Stars are Scattered*
- ▶ Experience of listening to the audiobook and tracking the projected text.
- ▶ How use the track the text technique with your whole class

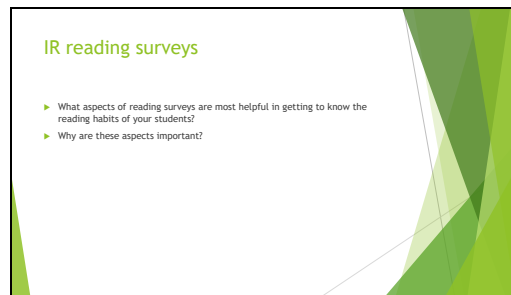
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Break

- ▶ Please be back and ready to continue at 10:15

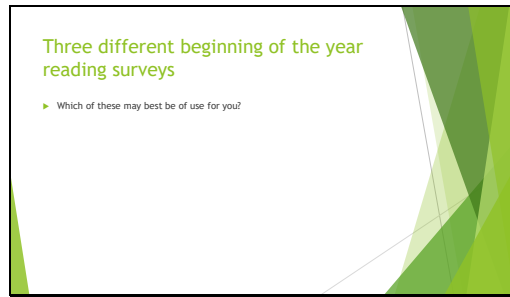
Slide 23

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IR reading surveys

- ▶ What aspects of reading surveys are most helpful in getting to know the reading habits of your students?
- ▶ Why are these aspects important?

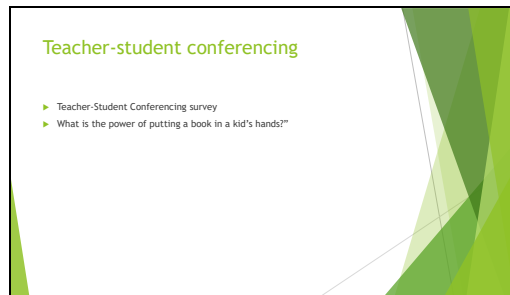
Slide 24

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Three different beginning of the year reading surveys

- ▶ Which of these may best be of use for you?

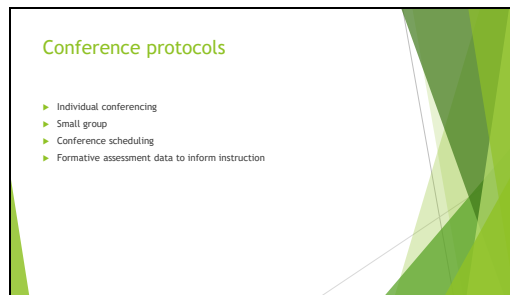
Slide 25

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Teacher-student conferencing

- ▶ Teacher-Student Conferencing survey
- ▶ What is the power of putting a book in a kid's hands?

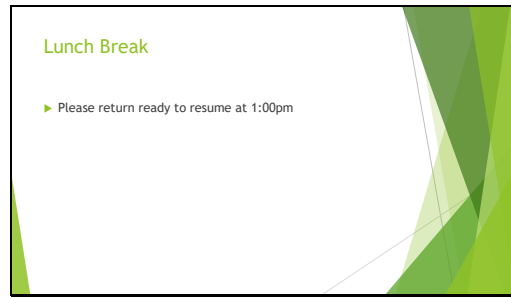
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Conference protocols

- ▶ Individual conferencing
- ▶ Small group
- ▶ Conference scheduling
- ▶ Formative assessment data to inform instruction

Slide 27

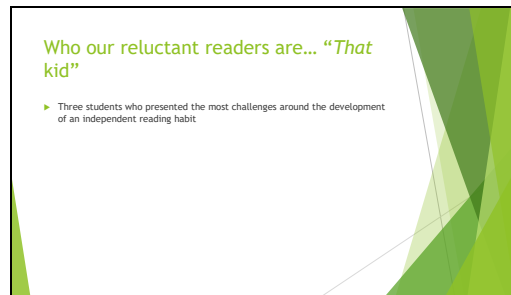


Lunch Break

- ▶ Please return ready to resume at 1:00pm

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Slide 28

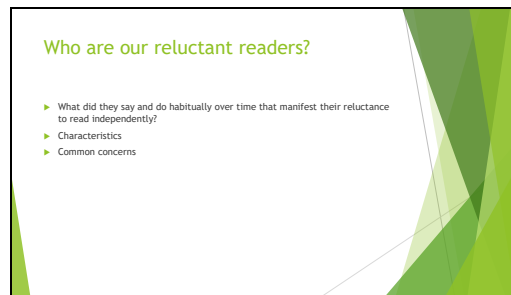


Who our reluctant readers are... “*That kid*”

- ▶ Three students who presented the most challenges around the development of an independent reading habit

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Slide 29

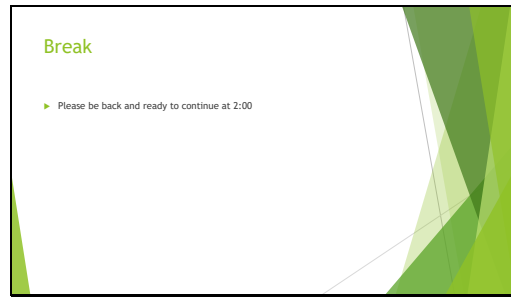


Who are our reluctant readers?

- ▶ What did they say and do habitually over time that manifest their reluctance to read independently?
- ▶ Characteristics
- ▶ Common concerns

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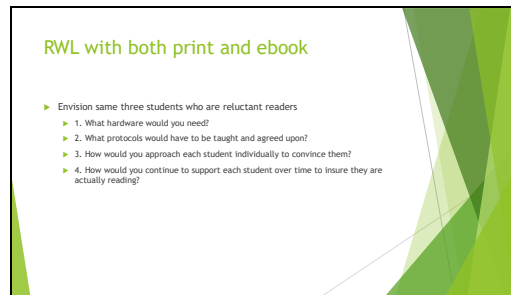
Slide 30



Break

- ▶ Please be back and ready to continue at 2:00

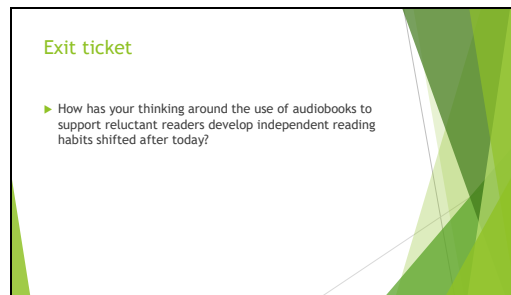
Slide 31



RWL with both print and ebook

- ▶ Envision same three students who are reluctant readers
 - ▶ 1. What hardware would you need?
 - ▶ 2. What protocols would have to be taught and agreed upon?
 - ▶ 3. How would you approach each student individually to convince them?
 - ▶ 4. How would you continue to support each student over time to insure they are actually reading?

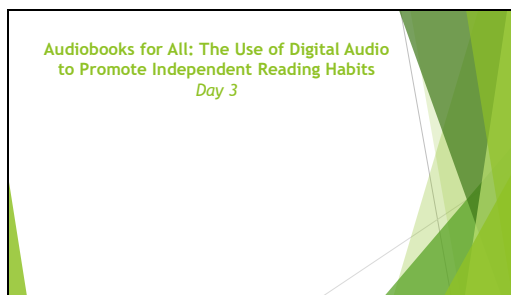
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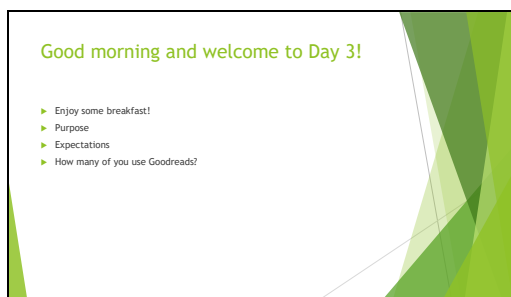
Exit ticket

- ▶ How has your thinking around the use of audiobooks to support reluctant readers develop independent reading habits shifted after today?

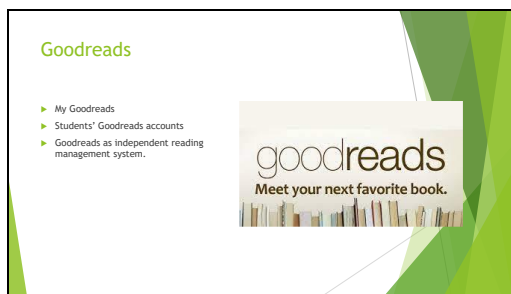
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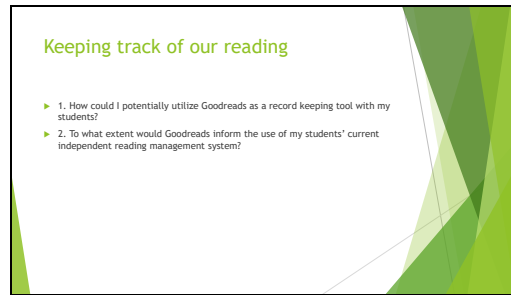
Slide 34



Slide 35



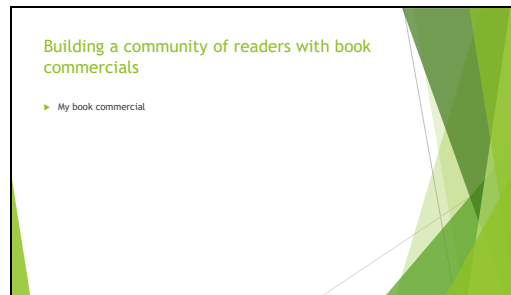
Slide 36



Keeping track of our reading

- ▶ 1. How could I potentially utilize Goodreads as a record keeping tool with my students?
- ▶ 2. To what extent would Goodreads inform the use of my students' current independent reading management system?

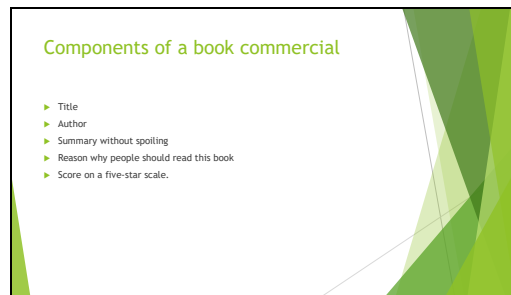
Slide 37



Building a community of readers with book commercials

- ▶ My book commercial

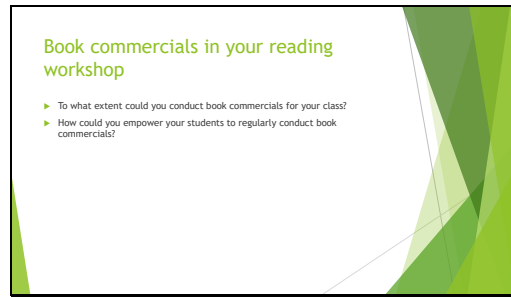
Slide 38



Components of a book commercial

- ▶ Title
- ▶ Author
- ▶ Summary without spoiling
- ▶ Reason why people should read this book
- ▶ Score on a five-star scale.

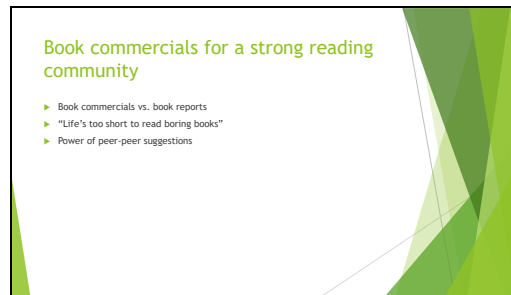
Slide 39



Book commercials in your reading workshop

- ▶ To what extent could you conduct book commercials for your class?
- ▶ How could you empower your students to regularly conduct book commercials?

Slide 40



Book commercials for a strong reading community

- ▶ Book commercials vs. book reports
- ▶ "Life's too short to read boring books"
- ▶ Power of peer-peer suggestions

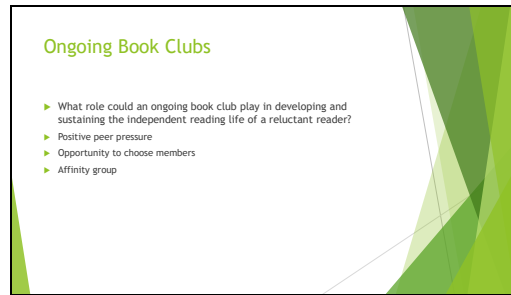
Slide 41



Social influences

- ▶ How, why, and with whom do people create social organizations and clubs?

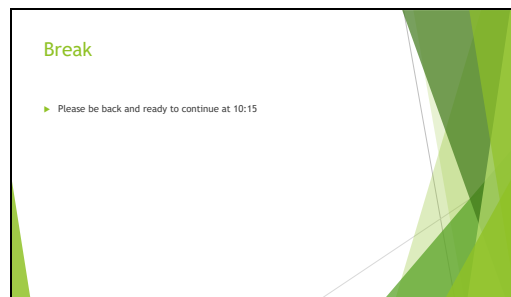
Slide 42



Ongoing Book Clubs

- ▶ What role could an ongoing book club play in developing and sustaining the independent reading life of a reluctant reader?
- ▶ Positive peer pressure
- ▶ Opportunity to choose members
- ▶ Affinity group

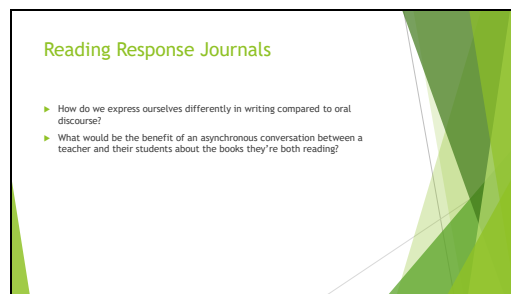
Slide 43



Break

- ▶ Please be back and ready to continue at 10:15

Slide 44



Reading Response Journals

- ▶ How do we express ourselves differently in writing compared to oral discourse?
- ▶ What would be the benefit of an asynchronous conversation between a teacher and their students about the books they're both reading?

Slide 45

Reading Response Journals (cont...)

- ▶ Letter to students
 - ▶ Title
 - ▶ Author
 - ▶ Summary without spoiling
 - ▶ Thoughts on the book I am currently reading

Slide 46

Reading Response Journals (cont...)

- ▶ Write a letter in response to me
 - ▶ Share thoughts on my letter
 - ▶ Share information about their own independent reading book
 - ▶ Title
 - ▶ Author
 - ▶ Summary without spoiling
 - ▶ Thoughts on their book
 - ▶ Noticings
 - ▶ Connections
 - ▶ Wanderings
 - ▶ Questions.

Slide 47

Reading Response Journals Schedule

- ▶ Scheduling protocols
- ▶ Extent to which reading response journals may be incorporated into their practice.

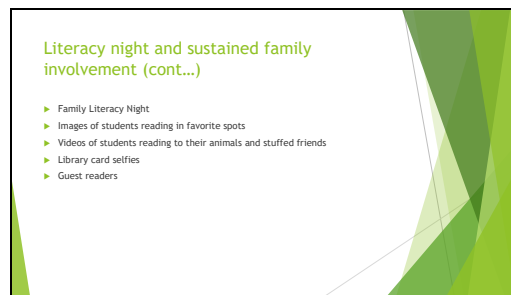
Slide 48

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Literacy night and sustained family involvement

- ▶ To what extent would a supportive parent/guardian and family play in fostering a successful independent reading life in all readers?

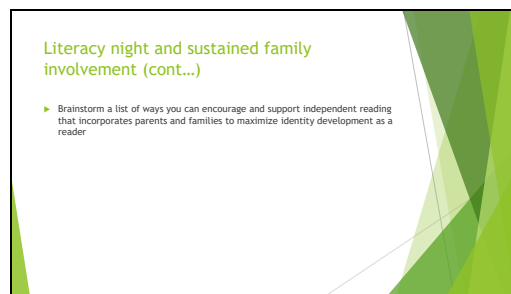
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Literacy night and sustained family involvement (cont...)

- ▶ Family Literacy Night
- ▶ Images of students reading in favorite spots
- ▶ Videos of students reading to their animals and stuffed friends
- ▶ Library card selfies
- ▶ Guest readers

Slide 50

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Literacy night and sustained family involvement (cont...)

- ▶ Brainstorm a list of ways you can encourage and support independent reading that incorporates parents and families to maximize identity development as a reader

Slide 51

Lunch Break

- ▶ Please return ready to resume at 1:00pm

Slide 52

Planning with grade-level teams

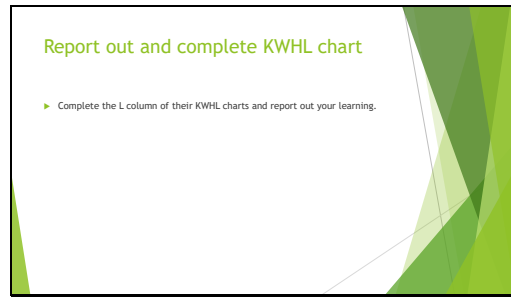
- ▶ Create a plan for the incorporation and use of audiobooks with specific attention paid to the needs of reluctant readers.
- ▶ How will you engage students in the independent reading component of your practice by strategically increasing the presence and use of audiobooks?

Slide 53

Planning with grade-level teams

- ▶ Consider the use of Hoopla, Libby, YouTube, Epic and Audible
- ▶ Audiobooks and ebooks as read-alouds to track the text
 - ▶ IR reading surveys
 - ▶ Teacher-student conferencing
 - ▶ RWL with both print and ebooks
 - ▶ use of Goodreads
 - ▶ Book commercials
 - ▶ Book clubs
 - ▶ reading response journals
 - ▶ Literacy night and sustained family involvement
- ▶ When will you introduce each component
- ▶ How will you plan
 - ▶ to utilize each component?
 - ▶ how frequently?
 - ▶ for how long throughout the academic year?
 - ▶ Schedule PLC meetings throughout the year

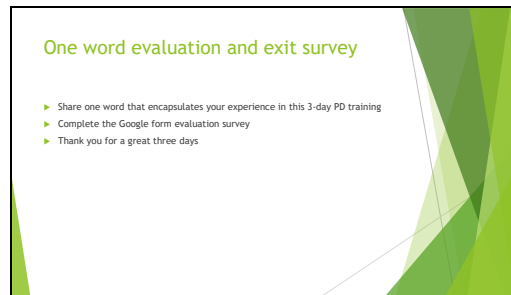
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Report out and complete KWHL chart

- ▶ Complete the L column of their KWHL charts and report out your learning.

Slide 55

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One word evaluation and exit survey

- ▶ Share one word that encapsulates your experience in this 3-day PD training
- ▶ Complete the Google form evaluation survey
- ▶ Thank you for a great three days

Appendix B:

Interview Protocol

Title of Study: Upper Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Using Audiobooks for Reluctant Readers

Date: _____ Time start _____ end _____ Participant # _____

Interviewer: Rick Joseph

Interviewee: Assigned numbers

Greeting:

“Thank you very much for your presence and for agreeing to participate in this interview for my doctoral study. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have experiences and insights that may be helpful to my study of the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades using audiobooks for reluctant readers.

Checklist:

____ Participant submitted consent via personal email.

____ Participant is interested in continuing with the interview. (If not, stop at this point, thank participant, and follow stated procedures to destroy participant information.)

Interview Norms:

- Speak from the “I” perspective.
- Please do not disclose others’ personal information, including the names and roles of other individuals at the school site.
- Please ask clarifying questions.
- Please remember you may cease to participate in this study at any time.

“Do you have any questions before we begin? Would you like to proceed?”

Background/Purpose:

This interview is constructed to help me gain a better understanding of your perceptions around the use of audiobooks for reluctant readers. I would ask that you share your thoughts freely, providing as much information as you can. I will be taking notes and this interview will be recorded automatically. I will be reading questions I have prepared in advance. At some points, I may also ask follow-up questions if I'd like you to clarify something you said.

Do you have any questions? Do I have your permission to continue with this interview and to record it?

Number of years of teaching:

Highest degree:

Age:

Race:

Gender:

General Questions:

How long have you taught in your current position? What grade(s) do you currently teach?

Interview questions to address RQ 1: What are the perceptions of educators in third through fifth grades regarding the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

1. How would you describe your experience with the use of audiobooks in the classroom?
2. What examples can you provide of how you have used audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits in third through fifth grades?
3. What examples can you provide of how you would like to use audiobooks in the future to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits in third through fifth grades?
4. What do you perceive as potential benefits to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?
5. What do you perceive as the main challenges to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

Interview question to address RQ 2: What are the barriers and/or facilitators educators perceive to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

What do you perceive to be some barriers and/or facilitators to using audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits?

Closing Questions: Do you have any additional thoughts or information that you would like to share with me to help me understand your perception of the use of audiobooks to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits in third through fifth grades? Is there anything you would like me to explain about this research before we end our interview session?

Closing:

Thank you so much for your taking time to share your thoughts with me today. I deeply appreciate your involvement in this study. Thank you for providing me with your direct and sincere feedback. I would like to remind you that all of your responses will be kept completely confidential, and you are welcome to withdraw your participation at any time. I will follow up with you via email within a week to give you the opportunity to review my notes and transcription for accuracy. May I have your permission to contact you with a follow-up email? Thank you again and enjoy the rest of your day.

Appendix C:

Permission to Conduct Study

From: Oscar Harrison OHarrison@birmingham.k12.mi.us (a pseudonym)

Sent: Mon 6/21/2021 8:34 AM

To: Richard Joseph <richard.joseph@waldenu.edu>

Good morning,

Yes, you have my permission to conduct your study.

Best of luck—I look forward to learning more about what you learn! 😊

Sincerely,
Oscar

Dr. Oscar Harrison
Principal
Clarmont School (a pseudonym)

Appendix D:

Participant Invitation Letter

Dear Invitee,

My name is Rick Joseph. I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: Upper Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Using Audiobooks for Reluctant Readers.

The purpose of this basic qualitative project study is to examine educators' perceptions regarding the use of audiobooks in classroom settings to help reluctant readers develop independent reading habits. The study involves participating in a private interview which includes seven questions and which will last approximately 45 minutes. It will also involve an additional 10 minutes or so to review the accuracy of the interview transcript. The total time of participation should be about one hour. Your participation would be completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Please be aware that all collected data will be kept private and confidential.

If you would like to participate in the study, please read, complete and return the Informed Consent letter, which is attached.

Your participation in the research will be of great significance and has the potential to inform effective practices around the use of audiobooks for reluctant readers. Your thoughts may lead to positive social change for students who are particularly challenged around reading.

Thank you for your time and consideration to this invitation.

Sincerely,

Rick Joseph, NBCT
Doctoral Student
Walden University

Appendix E

Major Themes and Codes

Major theme	Code/phrases	Number of occurrences in interview	Example
Access	access	12	Participant 12 mentioned how students can download and access audiobooks on their own devices in their own time from apps like Libby and Hoopla.
	read-aloud	4	Participant 1 expressed how audiobooks may be used as a whole class read aloud.
	independent reading	4	Participant 3 mentioned how he encourages students to use audio books during their independent reading.
	content area reading	5	Participant 4 shared that she seeks to give students, the option to use audiobooks as much as possible in every subject area.
	normalization of use	5	Participant 2 expressed how she

			<p>makes audiobooks available to all her students to destigmatize the use of audiobooks.</p>
Engagement	engagement	7	<p>Participant 7 mentioned the significant level of engagement, especially in reluctant readers from audiobooks.</p>
	voices	9	<p>Participant 5 expressed how character voices expressed in audiobooks transforms students' love of story.</p>
RWL	RWL	10	<p>Participant 7 described the benefits to students of reading while listening.</p>
	vocabulary	5	<p>Participant 6 mentioned how students' vocabulary increased with the use of audiobooks.</p>
	reading fluency	7	<p>Participant 10 expressed how students improved their reading fluency through hearing audio books.</p>

	comprehension	10	Participant 8 shared how auditory processing that occurs with audiobook use increases reading comprehension.
Barriers	barriers	8	Participant 9 mentioned a number of barriers to audiobook use.
	financial barriers	5	Participant 11 expressed that the cost of accessing audiobooks could be a financial barrier.
	instructional barriers	7	Participant 12 shared how a lack of awareness of the features of audiobooks presents a barrier to access.
