

# Reluctant Readers- From "Books are Boring" to Buzzing Book Groups

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**Please Note-** All names have been changed to protect the privacy of the students and staff involved.

## **A. Background Information**

### ***1. Teaching Context***

As an intern at Boalsburg Elementary School in the State College Area School District, I have had the opportunity to learn an immeasurable amount from my full year classroom experience. My self-contained classroom is made up of twenty-two fourth grade students. A large number of my students have special needs in the classroom. Two students receive emotional support, six students receive Title I reading and/or math services, three students receive Learning Support services, and two students are English Language Learners.

Reading level is a major issue I am confronted with every day. Twelve of my students read on grade level, five of my students read at a level above fourth grade and, unfortunately, five others read below a fourth grade level. This creates struggles in planning, grouping, and teaching language arts curricula.

### ***2. Why This Inquiry Project?***

Roy, a fourth grader in my class, hated reading. Anything associated with reading was a struggle and a bore for him. Even going to library class was a chore. He claimed there were no good books to read. “You know what they should have? (Sigh) A book about a president who’s not famous,” Roy said to me as he thumped down in a library chair at the computer catalogue. “A president who’s *not* famous?” I asked him curiously. “Yeah, ya know, like Warren G. Harding. Now that would be

interesting,” he continued disappointedly after finding nothing in the library catalogue matching his query. (Appendix A) From this conversation, I realized that all I had ever seen Roy read were quick fact books about presidents. There had never been a chapter book in his hands that I could recall. I approached him about this, to see if there would be an interest in finding a chapter book on presidents. He did not seem too enthusiastic, but agreed to at least look. After giving him some time to search on the computer, I came back to him as he roamed the shelves. “What are you looking for, Roy?” I asked him. “I don’t know the exact thing, something like Please Lincoln...” he said as he looked over call numbers. “Oh, is it If You Please President Lincoln?” I asked as I pulled the book off the shelf and handed it to him. “Yeah, that’s it,” Roy responded as he took the book. He opened the book, flipped through the pages quickly, closed it, and put it back on the shelf. “Nah,” he said. “What’s the matter?” “I don’t like books like that,” he answered. “Like what?” I said pulling the book back off the shelf. “It’s too long. I like Magic Tree House size ones,” he said. “Why?” I continued to probe. “Cause long books take too long. I can’t get into them as good.” (Appendix A) After allowing him to continue his search independently, he checked out three presidential fact books on specific presidents and Buttons for General Washington, a chapter book, under the recommendation of the librarian. (Appendix A)

A similar scenario arose with another student, Gregg. In library, the same day as my interactions with Roy, I stumbled on the realization that Roy was not the only student in my class reluctant to pick up a chapter book. Gregg was searching the computer catalogue solely for football players and teams. I appreciate that the students have an interest in a specific subject, but as a teacher I know that they must broaden their horizons in literature. (Appendix A) Out of curiosity, I let Gregg search on his own to see what he would check out without any teacher input. By the end of the period, Gregg had checked out The Sneeches, a picture book by Dr. Seuss, Baby Animals, an animal fact book containing mostly pictures, and Danger Guys, a small chapter book far below his reading level. (Appendix A)

Because of these happenings in the library, I was interested to see if the same reluctance occurred in the classroom during instructional book readings. After a vocabulary review and some other pre-reading activities, I sent the students back to their seats to read the assigned chapter. I found that Gregg started reading fifty-eight seconds after the rest of the class. While Roy was supposed to be reading, he took thirty seconds to get an eraser from his pencil box and flipped it around in his hands for another twenty-two seconds, then finally opened his book to start reading. (Appendix A)

During silent reading time I noticed very similar circumstances. Out of nineteen students who were in the room at silent reading time, ten

students had books out and appeared to be engaged. Three students, including Roy, had their books closed. Another two students worked on making corrections to class work from other subjects as they were instructed. (Appendix B)

Gregg found similar ways to avoid reading when instructed to do so. “I’m finished and [another student] is in my seat. What should I do?” Gregg asked after he finished an assignment close to the end of the day. Not wanting to start anything new with a few minutes left in the day, I told him to find a book and relax on the carpet until it was time to get ready to go home. For the next five minutes, he looked aimlessly through the classroom library without picking a book before his bus was called. (Appendix A)

I began to realize I had a big problem on my hands and decided to mention my findings to my mentor teacher. Sharing in my concern, she called Roy’s parents to discuss the problem. They were very supportive and had mentioned he had come home somewhat upset about reading. He had told his parents that he did not like reading and there was nothing interesting to read in the library. His parents took him out to the book store and found him a presidential chapter book about George W. Bush. Unfortunately, when I sat down with him to look over the new book and conducted a five finger test, a simple test to check appropriateness of the reading level, he was well over five difficult words by the end of the first

paragraph. This only fueled Roy's frustration and hatred for reading.  
(Appendix A and Appendix C)

With all of these events happening relatively close to one another, I realized that there were several students in my class who were very reluctant readers. They would come up with any means necessary to avoid reading. Some were becoming frustrated with what they were reading. I had to find out why they disliked it so greatly and what I could do to help them find an interest in books.

My desire to help my students find an appreciation for reading was further fueled from my childhood experiences with reading. When I looked at the reluctant readers in my class, I saw myself when I was their age, avoiding reading like the plague. I found any way to get out of reading. Looking back, I wish someone could have motivated me to read as a child. There is so much wonderful literature out there that I missed growing up. I regret now, not being exposed to when I was young.

### ***3. What Others Think and Know***

"Students who can read, but do so infrequently," is how Jerry L. Johns describes reluctant readers in the introduction to his book Lack of Motivation. He goes on to differentiate reluctant readers into two categories. There are those reluctant readers who read below grade level and show no interest in improving their reading ability. These students will find any activity besides reading to engage themselves. The other category of reluctant readers are those students who are at or above grade

level, but are disinterested in reading. They may read only certain books over and over again, or appear bored with reading altogether.

Johns goes on to explain in his book that reluctant readers lack intrinsic motivation, or the internal drive, for reading. Throughout the student's life, there has been some happening that has caused the student to become unconcerned or disinterested in reading. As teachers, Johns claims we must, "use techniques to bring the student and books back together". (Johns, 4)

But to what techniques is Johns referring? Any that work. Several schools in Kentucky and Maryland have heavily introduced comic books into their school libraries. These schools see a huge improvement in the amount of reading students are participating in when they are given new and "unusual" genres to choose from. (Grillo, 26)

These schools have also realized that, "Conventional print can also hook a student who's steered clear of reading for years. It may just be a matter of finding something that's irresistible." (Grillo, 27) Students can become just as excited about the classics as they would about reading a comic book if teachers take the time to match literature with the students' areas of interest.

It is also stressed by Linda Baker, in her book Engaging Young Readers: Promoting Achievement and Motivation, that reluctant readers are inspired and become engaged in what they are reading when teachers help the students find books appropriate to their reading ability. This is

why leveling book groups is an important concept and should be thought through carefully by the teacher. (Baker, 82)

Along with finding appropriate material for the reluctant reader, Lucy McCormick Calkins talks about the importance of long lasting book groups in her book The Art of Teaching Reading. It is important that groups are put together based on ability because groups will be together through more than one book. Long lasting book groups are important because they allow the students to build conversations from common experiences with other literature that they have shared. This will allow for richer conversation. (Calkins, 397-401)

Calkins also mentions in her book, the importance of conversations in book groups. "...the secret to good club conversations, we say, lies as much in listening as in talking". (Calkins, 398) It is important to establish expectations for the groups as they are forming. Teachers must provide a scaffold and guidance for the students in the beginning and eventually allow the students to take full control of the conversations.

#### ***4. What Were My Wonderings?***

The main wondering that began my interest in conducting this teacher inquiry project was the question, "What motivates reluctant readers to take an interest in reading?". This question fueled many other wonderings. I began taking an interest in how the students in my class perceived themselves as readers. I began thinking about their perceptions of themselves and whether negative feelings correlated at all to reluctance.

Are those students who are reluctant to pick up a book the same students who feel they are poor readers? This also led me to wonder whether there are any other correlations between perceived ability and enjoyment of reading. I wanted to know how much do individual students enjoy reading, both for pleasure and for instruction? Is there any noticeable difference between levels of enjoyment in reading for pleasure versus reading for instructional purposes? Finally, I was led to the following wondering. Will peer interaction and book groups motivate reluctant readers to find a new appreciation for literature?

## **B. My Inquiry Plan**

### ***1. How Did I Carry Out Inquiry in My Classroom?***

#### **Timing:**

Incorporating inquiry into my classroom was not a difficult process. It actually fit into the schedule very nicely at the time. My school had recently undergone a change in Title I instructors, thus causing our Title I schedule to be drastically altered. For the first half of the year, our students who received Title I services were out of the classroom several afternoons for half hour to hour time periods. After the change in instructors, the schedule was changed to very large blocks of time in the mornings. On Tuesdays, for example, the students are out of the classroom from 8:55 a.m. until 10:15 a.m.. On Wednesday mornings, the students are again out of the classroom for an hour and a half and

Thursdays they are out for another half an hour. Before book groups, it was difficult to plan lessons for these large amounts of time. I did not want to plan lessons to cover major academic or core concepts while these students were out for Title I services. But, at the same time, I wanted to make the time useful and meaningful to those students still in the classroom. Therefore, book groups were a perfect solution to the dilemma. This way, if the students receiving Title I services were out of the room, the rest of the book groups could meet. When the students receiving Title I services returned to the classroom, their book group could meet, and they did not miss any major academic content.

### **Book Choices and Leveling:**

I had realized through my observations that several of the reluctant readers in my class were becoming frustrated with reading because they were trying books above their reading level. They were having difficulty getting through these books because of the advanced vocabulary, which is why Roy told me, "...long books take too long. I can't get into them as good". (Appendix A) Because the students never get into a book, they are never able to realize how exciting and wonderful reading can be. Too often I see these students at the classroom library selecting a book, only to see the book back on the shelf the next day. (Appendix D) As Linda Baker stated in Engaging Young Readers: Promoting Achievement and Motivation, the students do not know how to choose appropriately leveled books on their own, causing frustration with reading, which turns these

students off to reading all together. They need proper guidance from a teacher.

I found it necessary, as Baker also noted, to group students by ability to help limit the frustration of certain students reading books above their reading level. I formed four groups of students, each with five or six students. I also named the book groups for my purposes only. No student ever knew there was leveling or grouping of any kind. I felt it was easier for my record keeping to name the groups to help distinguish their levels.

Group 1 was made up of the highest ability readers in the class. With the help of the school librarian and my mentor teacher, I decided to have this group read the novel On My Honor. I felt this book was a good fit because it would challenge their reading level as well as introduce critical thinking about morals and values for which this group was prepared to handle. (Appendix A)

Group 2A was made up of grade level readers in the class. These students have average reading abilities, and contain some of the students I had determined were reluctant readers. Because this group contained some students who were hesitant to get into books, I decided I needed to find a book that was on their reading level and was also of high interest. I decided on the novel Because of Winn-Dixie. This is a highly entertaining book about a dog, which usually grabs students' attention. It also recently came out as a movie in the theaters, so I knew the students would have an

interest to read something that was somewhat familiar to them and they could create a connection with. (Appendix A)

Group 2B was also made up of grade level readers in the class who I felt were just slightly below group 2A. These students were still reading on grade level and were able to read the same text as group 2A, but I felt they would do better being grouped together. Because of the similarity in levels between groups 2A and 2B, I decided to have them read the same book, Because of Winn-Dixie. (Appendix A)

Since the students who are removed for Title I services have very similar reading abilities, it worked perfectly to group them together as Group 3. Because this group also contained several students who I had previously determined were reluctant readers, I knew the importance of choosing a book that was both of high interest and appropriate for the reading abilities of these students. After reading several stories and seeking the advice of several teachers and the school librarian, I decided on the book Stone Fox. This book was perfect in that it was appropriate to their level and it was highly entertaining. (Appendix A)

### **Planning:**

I planned for book groups to be held for one hour, two times per week. Each book group would have the chance to meet for fifteen to twenty minutes twice weekly. The groups would meet somewhere outside the classroom—the library, resource room, faculty room, all-purpose room, or even the hallway, depending on what was available. While the

students were being called for book groups, those students not meeting with their group were in class working at stations for language arts. They worked with my mentor on persuasive writing paragraphs or peer editing stations. This structure was important because it was easy for the students to get up in the middle of their work if they needed to leave for their book group. Had I planned for a lecture based or exploratory lesson that required the acquisition of information throughout the lesson, the students who were out of the classroom meeting with their groups would have missed the beginning of the lesson and other groups would miss the information presented in the middle or end of the lesson. Because of the stations, students were able to work at their own pace to complete their work and did not have to rely on a teacher-driven lesson plan.

Had I been the only adult in the classroom, the only part of this structure that would need to change would be the location of the book groups since I would be unable to leave a classroom of students alone to meet with a book group in a different location. It would have been just as effective to conduct the book groups at a table in the back of the classroom while the rest of the class worked on their writing or station work. But, because I had the option to leave the classroom, I decided a quieter place to discuss may lead to fewer distractions.

### **Encouraging Independence:**

When I started the book groups, I knew I wanted the groups to act independently from me. I wanted the groups to be centered on the

students and their ideas. I also knew I had to eliminate the feeling that the book groups were associated with schoolwork since my goal was to foster an interest in reading for pleasure. (Appendix E) As I met with the first groups and we conducted a book look and read the first chapter to give a starting point for discussion, I realized what little experience the students had been given to lead a discussion. All of the discussions they had participated in were led by teachers, so the students were unfamiliar with asking questions of their peers instead of answering the teacher's questions. They also had a difficult time talking to each other and not focusing their answers on the teacher. (Appendix A and Appendix F) The students looked at me with confused faces, asking questions such as "Well, what are we going to talk about then?" and "What do you mean we don't raise our hands?" (Appendix E)

As they read the assigned chapters before the book groups met again, several students wrote down good questions to ask. However, only some students wrote questions or comments down, and as it came time for the students to meet, many of the papers were lost. The meeting was somewhat tough because the groups had trouble getting started on their own. In several groups, I was more involved than I would have liked, in an attempt to fuel the discussion to help their conversation take off. To attempt to alleviate this problem, I decided to give each student a small white notebook they could use to write down questions, interesting facts, words they did not know from the text, or anything else they wanted to

bring to the group to share. I made sure to stress that this book was not an assignment. I would not be collecting it, looking at it, or grading it. It was simply a place to keep all of the ideas and questions they had about what they read in one organized place. (Appendix E)

After a great deal of modeling and prompting, I was able to gradually lessen my involvement in the discussion to the point where I said nothing at all during the entire book group session. The students came to their book groups with questions and connections that they were so eager to share with each other. It was also a struggle sometimes to help them learn how to have a discussion when hand raising was not involved. The students were so excited to share their feelings that they often forgot what I had taught them about polite conversation. Having never been in a situation such as a book group, many students did not know to wait until a person is finished speaking before sharing their thoughts. It took some work for them to realize these rules that adults may do naturally.

(Appendix A and Appendix G)

## **2. *Collecting Data***

I collected data in several ways throughout my research process. My foremost means of data collection was written records in a spiral bound notebook. I found it easiest to record what I observed in library class, during silent reading times, and during instructional book reading periods. I also found this method of data collection essential for capturing conversations and dialogue between myself and those students I was

especially targeting throughout the research process. I kept the notebook in an easily accessible place on my desk where I could grab it quickly to jot down important information as I observed my students. The use of written records also helped to keep clear notes of what transpired during book groups. I developed a code to keep track of which students spoke and how often they introduced questions, connected the discussion to outside events or other texts, quoted the text, repeated what had already been said by another student, or participated in silly or off-task behavior. (Appendix A)

Throughout my research I conducted several surveys as a means to collect data on my students' thoughts. In the first survey given at the beginning of my research, I asked the students how they perceived themselves as readers, how much they enjoyed reading, and what topics they enjoyed reading about. This information helped narrow my scope of students who I considered to be reluctant readers. (Appendix H)

Another survey I conducted about half way through my research was an Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. This survey was more specific than the first and helped to narrow down the specific areas that students disliked about reading. It gave a raw score and percentage score for the students' attitudes, either positive or negative, toward reading academically compared to recreationally. (Appendix I)

The final survey given to my students was at the end of the final book group meeting. I was interested in hearing their honest opinions

without the influence of their peers. I wanted to know if the students enjoyed the book groups, why they did or did not enjoy them, and if the book groups had any impact on their excitement about reading.

(Appendix J)

I used many surveys because I feel it is more accurate than interviewing students. I feel that when placed in a face-to-face situation with a teacher or adult, students feel they are expected to answer a certain way. When they are given a survey to fill out, even though their name may be on it, the students may not feel as much pressure to answer as they think they are expected to answer. I explained to my students before each survey that I needed their honest answers and that negative answers will not affect their grades. They understood that in order for my research to have any meaning, I needed to know what they really thought. Many of them were concerned that if they answered negatively, I would receive a lower grade in my class. I found their concern touching and quickly cleared up the situation. I feel that the students were comfortable answering the surveys honestly.

### ***3. Analyzing Data***

The first survey I gave my students before any book groups were formed was a quick questionnaire, using only a half sheet of paper. I was curious to see how students ranked themselves as readers in comparison to what I believed them to be. I was surprised with some of the results I came away with. Some of the lower ability readers ranked themselves as

“Great Readers”. This made me curious as to their perceptions of their abilities compared with their classmates. (Appendix K and Appendix H) I found that overall, however, students’ understandings of their reading ability is accurate. From this survey I found that only four students ranked themselves at a higher reading level than I would have placed them and three ranked themselves lower than I would have placed them. This leaves the vast majority, fourteen students, who appropriately ranked their reading ability (Appendix A and Appendix H)

I also spent a good deal of time analyzing how questions one and two of this survey corresponded with one another. Question one asked the students, “How would you rank yourself as a reader?” with the options, “Great Reader”, “Good Reader”, “Fair Reader”, and “Poor Reader” from which the students could choose. Question two asked the students to, “Rank how much you like to read,” with the options “Love It!”, “Like It”, “It’s Ok Sometimes”, and “I’d Rather Not Have To”. I was interested to see if those students who ranked themselves as “Great Readers” or “Good Readers” also answered favorably to question two. I found that out of the seven students who answered that they were “Great Readers” all of them said they either loved or liked reading. Of those students who considered themselves “Good Readers”, two said they loved reading, five answered that they liked reading, and two claimed that “It’s Ok Sometimes”. Out of the five students who answered that they are “Fair Readers”, zero students said they loved reading, two said they liked reading, one said reading was

okay, and two answered that they would “Rather Not Have To”. No students claimed they were “Poor Readers”. From this data, I concluded that students’ opinions on reading are almost always a direct correspondence to their perceived reading ability. (Appendix A and Appendix H)

From this survey I was also able to pinpoint those students who had a perceived low reading ability and lack of desire to read. These students were those I knew I needed to especially focus on throughout my inquiry to monitor their level of motivation and interest in what they were reading. (Appendix K and Appendix H)

I analyzed my notebook of written records in several ways depending on the information. The majority of what is contained in these notes are conversations and observations of students. I also kept a tally at each book group meeting of which students spoke and what types of comments were being adding to the conversation. I used this information as data to prove the level of enthusiasm and interest students had in the books. If certain students were asking many questions, or a certain person was always eager to start the discussion, I could conclude that their level of motivation was high. (Appendix A)

The second survey I gave to my class was an attempt to collect data on the students’ attitudes about reading for academics compared to reading for recreation. Each question on the survey pertained to either reading for academics or reading for recreation. The most positive

reaction to each question was given four points, and so on down to one point for the most negative reaction. The answers given by the students were recorded for each category and a raw score was found for recreational reading and academic reading individually, then converted to a total and percentage. I especially focused on the results of those students I had identified as reluctant readers. However, I could not find concrete data showing that students feel more positively about recreational or academic reading. As with the scores of the reluctant readers, the class averaged a positive reaction to recreational reading of 72% while academic reading received a 71%. I used this information instead to narrow in on areas about reading that specific students felt negatively about to see if those were areas I could address through my research. (Appendix A and Appendix I)

In my third and final survey, I focused on questions three and five. Question three asked the students, “How much do you enjoy book groups?”. The students could circle a number from one to five, one being the highest rating. I used this information to determine whether the students were having a good time discussing their books, or whether they felt it was another school assignment that needed to be completed. I found that the average class opinion of book groups was 1.78, with a rating of one being the most positive opinion. Even more interesting was the fact that the average opinion of the reluctant readers I had been closely following was 1.2. (Appendix J)

In analyzing question five which asked, “Did book groups make you more excited about reading?” I found that seventeen students replied positively and only three responded negatively. This allowed me to conclude that in the vast majority of students, book groups affected the motivation to read. (Appendix J)

Throughout the course of my research, I wrote several journal entries about my findings and ideas. These journals helped to collect my thoughts in an organized manner. Journaling also forced me to do a great deal of reflection on the data I was collecting and the direction I should move with my research. (Appendix D, E, and K)

## C. What I Learned

### 1. Claims

\* **Claim 1:** Book groups can increase motivation to read in reluctant readers and make the great majority of students more excited about reading.

\* **Claim 2:** Student value their peers’ responses to literature.

\* **Claim 3:** There is a correspondence between students’ perceived ability to read and their level of enjoyment of reading.

### 2. Evidence from Data and Literature

\***Claim 1 Evidence:** Book groups can increase motivation to read in reluctant readers and make the great majority of students more excited about reading.

As the main focus of my inquiry research project, I found conclusive evidence that students are more motivated to read when they are participating in book groups. After my first book group meeting, I gave the students about fifteen minutes of silent reading time in which

they were able to read the assigned chapters for their next meeting. After a few minutes I noticed that Roy was out of his seat to get a tissue. I originally thought he was stalling for time so he did not have to read. After using the tissue and disposing of it, he approached me and asked, “Do I only have to read the first chapter?”. “Yeah, did you finish it?” I asked him. “Yup! Can I read on?” he asked. I nearly fell over in shock. “You *want* to read on?!” I asked. “Yeah, I really do...” he said hopefully. I paused and thought about the rest of his group. I did not want to overwhelm them with too much to read before the next book group meeting. So I told Roy, “Well, why don’t you hold off for now.” He sighed disappointedly and returned to his seat.

After a few minutes passed I noticed that many of Roy’s group members were already close to finishing the assigned chapter as well. Individually, I approached each member of the group and asked if they would like to read another chapter. The responses were astonishing. The students cheered and smiled when I told them they could. Roy said, “Yesssss!” and started reading right away. I had never seen a reaction like that from any of these students about reading a book before. While transitioning between activities I overheard Roy speaking to my mentor teacher. He said, “This book is good! Miss K. let me read on!”.

(Appendix A)

The results of the last survey conducted about book groups are evidence to prove that book groups are a motivational tool for students

whether they are reluctant readers or not. Seventeen out of twenty students who participated in book groups responded that these groups helped them become more excited about reading. None of the students who responded that book groups did not increase their excitement about reading are considered reluctant readers. In fact, two of the three students who answered this way are naturally avid readers. (Appendix J)

**\* Claim 2 Evidence:** Students value their peers' responses to literature.

On question four of the last survey I gave my students, I asked them to explain why they liked or did not like book groups. As I read over the comments they wrote down, I found a common theme running through. Mostly all of the students mentioned in their response that they enjoyed book groups because they could talk with their classmates and hear what they had to say about the book. In fact, seventeen of the twenty students who answered the survey made a comment about enjoying book groups because they could talk with their peers about the book. One student I had been following as a reluctant reader throughout the process answered, "It's nice to meet up with kids reading the same book as you and hear their thoughts about the book". (Appendix J)

Lucy McCormick Calkins also stressed the importance of long lasting book groups in her book The Art of Teaching Reading, because of the relationships formed as a result. Because the students are grouped together throughout an extended period of time, they are able to relate discussions to the prior common knowledge base of past book group

conversations. Calkins also discussed the positive sense of community that is formed in a long lasting book group. Students become comfortable enough with one another to openly share their thoughts without intimidation. (Calkins, 397-401)

**\* Claim 3 Evidence:** There is a correspondence between students' perceived ability to read and their level of enjoyment of reading.

It can be concluded from the first survey I conducted that there is a direct correspondence between students' perceived ability to read and their level of enjoyment of reading. Those students who ranked themselves as high ability readers consistently marked that they love or like to read. Those students who ranked themselves as lower level readers consistently answered that reading was ok sometimes or they would rather not have to do it. This shows that the lower the confidence students have in their ability to read, the less they enjoy reading.

As Linda Baker noted in her book, Engaging Young Readers: Promoting Achievement and Motivation, students do not often know how to choose books appropriate to their reading level. They will often choose books above their reading ability, causing frustration and a dislike for reading. As a result, many of these students perceive themselves as poor readers. This negative feeling about themselves as readers deters many students from reading altogether. (Baker, 82)

## **D. Future Directions**

### ***1. Implications for Future Teaching Practice***

I plan to restart book groups with my class within the next couple of weeks. Because all of the groups finished their books around the same time, and our academic schedule was becoming very busy with state testing, I decided it would be a good idea to take a break from it for a few weeks. Now that testing is almost finished, as well as the end of band, orchestra, and chorus, there is more instructional time where the whole class is available.

Maybe not this year, but definitely when I have my own classroom, I would like to inquire into whether using different literary genres in book groups has the same positive effect on motivation to read as fiction. I would be interested to see if the students would have the same enthusiasm if they were able to discuss a poem or a biography with their peers as they were when they discussed a fictional novel.

I would like to continue to explore different methods to increase motivation during instructional book reading. I feel that creating a variety of methods of response to the text may be a successful motivational tool. I am interested to see if giving the students a choice of response methods would have the same effect on motivation as book groups.

When I have my own classroom, book groups will definitely be a part of the weekly curriculum. I feel there is so much to gain from these groups. Not only do they increase motivation, they teach students the

invaluable skills of communication, patience, and dealing with differing opinions. It was often a struggle for students to not talk over each other in a situation where everyone was excited to share and hand raising was not in use. But by the end of book groups, the students were more understanding of appropriate conversational behaviors.

## **2. *New Wonderings***

As a result of conducting this inquiry project, there are many new wonderings that have surfaced. I now wonder if exposing students to other types of literature besides fictional novels increases motivation to read? I now know that a high interest fiction novel compels students to read, but I am curious about the effects of other forms of literature on motivation. Would poetry or non-fiction, for example, have the same positive results?

I also wonder if allowing the students the freedom to choose their follow-up activity after reading an instructional book increase their desire to read? I often heard grumbles and groans from the students when observing language arts classes where the students were assigned reading and given a list of questions to answer upon completion. Would providing the students with several choices of response methods and styles increase their motivation to read the assigned text?

One of my realizations about many reluctant readers is their inability to choose appropriate books for their reading level. The books they chose are often too difficult and turn students off to reading because

it becomes a struggle. Because the book groups constantly surrounded these students with appropriately leveled books, will they be able to choose more appropriate books for their reading level independently?

Conducting this research was well worth the time and effort. It allowed me to look deeper into the needs of my students as individuals. I tried to put myself in their shoes and attempt to feel how they do when faced with a reading task. I learned the importance of knowing and understanding my students' feelings. Often times this is the key to finding successful techniques in education. I hope to be able to continue my inquiry throughout my professional career to allow me to grow as an educator and be able to best meet the needs of all my students.

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