

**Reading Logs in Elementary Schools and
Their Effects on Students and Teachers**

by

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This article describes and discusses the use and practices of reading logs in an elementary school setting. By focusing on the thoughts and feelings teachers and students have about reading logs, this study contributes to the understandings of how they are used in a classroom and what we can do as educators to help motivate students to read.

Procedure: Participants in this study were six classroom teachers, one reading specialist and three students in the 5th grade. Data was collected over a period of seven months and used qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is exploratory and is used to gain an understanding of motivations, reason and opinions about certain subjects. The study explores the following research questions: (a) What is the role of the reading log in a classroom and how do teachers use and assess it? (b) What are teacher's and student's thoughts and feelings towards reading logs? (c) What is the literature saying about reading logs and how does this practice match with best practices with reading?

Findings: Findings show that a reading log is an integral part of most teachers' homework and that teachers believe that it is necessary and helpful to keep students accountable for their home reading. Research is suggesting that reading logs may not be helpful; especially to struggling readers, and that it could be hindering their enjoyment of reading, which then impacts their progress as readers.

Conclusions: As teachers, we are under pressure to be accountable for our student's progress, which include reading levels and test scores. Accountability was the number one reason the teachers I interviewed gave reading logs in the first place. If teachers are concerned with making their students accountable for reading, why not just monitor that inside of a classroom? The pressure on teachers and students are high enough without the added burden of auditing what students do when they are at home.

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Reading Logs in Elementary Schools and Their Effects on Students and Teachers

Before graduate school, I was a teacher who never questioned anything. Now, I am “that” teacher who always asks why? Why are we teaching this method? Why are we using this curriculum? Who benefits from the use of this specific teaching practice? I am the one who asks for the research behind reading techniques and when it came to writing my thesis, I knew that the topic of reading logs would be interesting and push my limits to change my own teaching practice and, hopefully, change the minds of those around me.

The pursuit of a higher education came from my grandparents, who were both professors, from my parents who always taught me to work hard, and from my own inner drive. I knew that I should constantly push to challenge myself. Teaching is not for someone who remains stationary. I am continuously learning to adjust my teaching and develop new ways of looking at education that includes all varieties of teaching and learning which gives me multiple opportunities to engage with an ongoing, exciting, diversity of students.

The National Reading Panel

The influential 2000 report by the National Reading Panel (NRP) was one of the first studies I read as a graduate student in 2015. The NRP was formed in 1997 and consisted of fifteen panelists who were believed to be experts in reading education, psychology and higher education. In the report, there are many ideas about the ideal way to teach reading. The report concluded that “the appropriate assessment is of the students’ reading achievement and, in addition, other outcome measures such as how interested

students are in reading and how satisfied teachers are with their instructional methods” (p.4-125). When discussing comprehension strategies and implications for reading instruction, student interest and teacher satisfaction are at the top of the list of strategies that encourage reading growth. Three years after they began their research, the panel produced its report “Teaching Children to Read” and had summarized eight areas of research relating to literacy instruction, one of which was independent reading and encouraging students to read.

Regarding independent reading, the NRP found two very different conclusions to the benefits and correlations between independent reading and a student’s ability to read well. On one side, the report concluded that “based on the existing evidence, the NRP can only indicate that while encouraging students to read might be beneficial, research has not yet demonstrated this in a clear and convincing manner” (p.191). Meaning the studies they looked at couldn’t find a positive relationship between encouraging students to read independently and actual student achievement. However, they also concluded 7 pages later “there is ample evidence that one of the major differences between poor and good readers is the difference in the quantity of total time they spend reading” (p.198). So there is a clear connection between student’s reading more, independently or not, and being a better reader.

The findings and recommendations of the NRP “splashed down in the midst of a wave of controversy” (Garan, 2001, p.500) and ensued philosophical turmoil. Joanne Yatvin, a member of the NRP, believed that she and her colleagues “were all searchers after truth, each knowledgeable and respected in his or her professional domain and each dedicated to working together toward our joint goal” (Yatvin, 2002, p.364) but because of

the time constraint, lack of support and all of the 15 panelist having other full time jobs, “we lost our way-and our integrity.” She also goes onto say that “we had done an incomplete, flawed, and narrowly focused job” (Yatvin, 2002, p.369).

Timothy Shanahan, a member of the NRP, wrote an article in 2003 attempting to clarify 10 misconceptions about the 2000 report that he helped create. On page 653 of his article he discussed Myth 9 about the NRP report finding that children don’t need to read when in fact the panel did not “conclude that children did not need reading practice, only that how this might be best accomplished is an open question.” Shanahan (2003) even goes onto say “there is, perhaps, no more widely made claim in the field of reading than the idea that students need to read independently to improve their reading ability (p.653).

Unfortunately, the findings of the NRP are now “a cornerstone of U.S. federal reading education policy” (Shanahan, 2003, p.646) and “has become the basis for large-scale educational policies as well as for other research syntheses” (p. 654). This one report, which was biased, selective and not altogether accurate, has been promoting the building blocks of the way reading is being taught and practiced in the United States. Despite other studies and researchers questioning the recommendations of the NRP, not much has changed in the practice of reading instruction. The results of the National Reading Panel were also highlighted in former President George W. Bush’s plan for improving education, the No Child Left Behind Act, signed in 2001, which led to more controversy and hardships for school.

Many reviews of the NRP study have been conducted. In 2006, one review in particular was written to “examine the meta-analysis of systematic phonics” from the NRP and look at the “results of new analyses” (Camilli, Wolfe & Smith, 2006, p. 28). A

meta-analysis is a statistical analysis that combines the results of multiple scientific studies, and the NRP, although claiming that they used this method, “believe that the procedures at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) for producing meta-analysis are flawed, and it would have been useful to design a more formal process” (Camilli et al., 2006, p.30) like using institutional peer reviews, scientific reviews, and being timeline explicit.

After reading this study I realized that not everything that is being promoted in education as ‘best practices’ is proven to be effective. As a teacher, I was told what to do and what the best practices were by the people who came before me. I assumed that teachers were getting their information from reliable sources, or at least the people in charge were getting the best information. The controversy and critique behind the NRP changed the way I thought about research and teaching and what it meant to my students and myself.

Motivation Behind my Thesis

I want to make a difference and change how people think about teaching reading in elementary schools. It has been stated (Camilli et al., 2006), “good scientific research can certainly help educators understand the complexities of learning to read” (p. 33). Our education system is failing our students and making it harder for teachers to be successful in developing what students need to know to prosper in today’s society. This is the motivation behind my thesis. It comes from wanting to understand one specific practice in education, reading logs, and what we can do to improve that practice.

In 2001, James Cunningham did an analysis of the NRP and found that “the best science has the power to change the thinking of those who previously disagreed with its

conclusions but who are fair-minded enough to admit they were wrong once the case has been made” (Cunningham, p.334). I want to research the uses of reading logs in schools and what they are actually doing for students. If my research changes the minds of even a few teachers and they are willing to try new ways to encourage independent reading, then, for me that would be especially meaningful to teacher practice and student learning.

Exploring the topic of reading in elementary schools has opened my eyes to adjustment, shock, acceptance, and the possibility that things were once different and they can be again. In an article studying reading research, four authors look at ways to educate modern reading researchers and explain the origins and benefits of reading education in the last 100 years. In the next three paragraphs I will be discussing the main research they touch on about the most influential researchers of reading development.

The authors look mainly at Edmund Burke Huey (1870-1913), a psychologist who was one of the first to apply the scientific method to the teaching of reading, “compared and contrasted different approaches to reading instruction and identified controversies occurring in the field, some of which are still with us today.” (Walczyk, Tcholakian, Igou, & Dixon, 2014, p. 602). Research by Walczyk et al., (2014) says that we used to rely “mainly on recitation as proof of reading ability” (p. 614) and that elocution was emphasized over understanding in most cases in the 19th and early 20th century.

In 1837, Horace Mann, who was one of the first to contradict the original views on teaching reading, and argued that teachers need to “instruct students to obtain meaning from their early reading efforts” (Schreiner & Tanner, 1976, p. 470). The original view of how teaching reading was looked at was now changing because of research. History went from oral repeating of words to discouraging oral reading and replacing it with, according

to Huey, “thoughtful reading material which is personally meaningful to the child” (Schreiner & Tanner, 1976, p. 471).

Yet current practices are more like the oral skills promoted in the past. How did we evolve from boring oral recitations, to emphasizing student choice and meaningful interactions then back again to “instructional texts typical of the late 1800s?” (Walczyk et al., 2014, p.606). Huey argued that reading educators should use a diverse approach when teaching reading but now we are taught to use a one size fits all method.

Problem Statement

The issue that currently is being addressed in this thesis is what reading logs are really accomplishing in elementary schools. My research questions are based on finding out how students and teachers feel about the use of them, how teachers are assessing them and how does literature research support or not support the use and practice of them. These are the focal points of my research and my hope is to gain more of an understanding of why reading logs are so widely used in classrooms.

The way we teach reading is killing the love of reading in schools and it is because we use “mind-numbing practices” (Gallagher, 2009, p.2) such as reading logs, where we force students to record their every minute of reading. Edward L. Thorndike, a writer who investigated learning and curriculum, recommended that “students answer comprehension questions after their reading” (Schreiner & Tanner, 1976, p.472) and the reading log was born. Besides my research questions I wonder if reading logs limit the enjoyment of reading and the development of readers?

Many different types of reading logs are used in elementary schools. Susan D. Reed (1988) describes her reading log as a tool to teach coherence of a text. It consists of

binder paper, columns, use of quotations, personal connections to the texts by the students, oral retelling, sharing and “I even model my own logs on an overhead projector with them” (p.55). Reading logs can be on binder paper, blank paper, electronic or in journals or notebooks. They can track minutes read each night, each week or each trimester. Sometimes they look at how many books a student reads, record students’ emotions and reactions to the texts, explore their opinions or write down quotations. Each teacher’s log is slightly different and designed to focus on what they think are important aspects of recording their students’ reading times.

The use of reading logs is a common practice in my school. They are used as a homework piece to mainly keep students accountable for their reading at home. Time and effort goes into these logs on the part of teachers monitoring them and students and families completing them.

Focusing on Encouraging Reading

My interest in reading logs and the way we encourage students to read originated after reading the NRP. The panel does not specifically discuss a reading log but looks at independent reading and how that correlates to student achievement. The panel recommends that a “less explicit, but widely used approach, is to encourage students to read extensively on their own time or with minimal guidance and feedback” (p.190). Some teachers check the logs and give feedback while others like Reed (1988) don’t even read them and believe that “my job is to show students how indispensable these logs are to them, not to me” (p.53). Reading logs are used in such a variety of ways that there isn’t a standard way that has proven effective or not in encouraging students to read more independently or that that using them makes them become better readers.

The value of reading logs was put into question for me when a ten-year-old student of mine made me realize that I was in need of some enlightenment around the use of my own reading log. This fifth grader was a blunt and honest student who wasn't afraid of asking why I was teaching certain things and why he had to complete worksheets when he retained information better than a sponge. It took seven months of constant clashing to get him to complete his reading log and then in turn I recognized that I was the one who needed to change. I was requiring a student who had a better memory than my own to write mundane sentences about what he read and look up definitions to vocabulary words he already knew. He was refusing to read at all because he hated the activities I had asked him to complete following his reading.

My epiphany came when one week I had forgotten to copy the reading log worksheets so students would have to create their own log on a piece of paper. As I explained my oversight to students, I was surprised by their overt response of joy. After the cheers died down I handed out a blank piece of lined paper and told them to record their reading in whichever way they found most useful.

At the end of the week, I was most surprised with my reluctant reader. Not only had he read, but also his reading log was scattered with drawings, quotes he found and references to websites he had done further research on. He could barely breathe because he was talking so fast to tell me all about this amazing online blogging community he had found. He read every blog that was on the page and then began to research other blogs on his favorite topic: video games. The enthusiasm that came from him after almost an entire school year long battle over reading made me immediately question and change the way I taught and looked at reading in my classroom.

It was as if I was finally taking the information I had learned from the articles I was reading in my graduate studies and started to apply them to real life teaching practice. After that moment, I changed my reading logs by asking for more student input. I also changed the way I taught reading in my classroom by allowing students to choose their books and how they wanted to present them. This started the epic journey of researching my thesis topic.

While there has been a lot of research done on reading, (some would say an incomprehensible amount), there isn't much research really exploring if reading logs are doing what they are meant to do. Reading logs are tools that almost every teacher uses in their classroom and most use them to keep students accountable for their reading at home. Others use them to teach responsibility or motivate students to read.

A blogger from The Huffington Post, a very progressive online news website, wrote a strongly worded article (Singer, 2016) in defense of the reading log use in schools. Leah Singer, a writer and mother, believes that her daughter's reading log is teaching her responsibility and time management while practicing her reading skills. She even goes on to say "homework isn't fun, but it's required and students are expected to have it done when they enter the classroom each day." She discusses the enjoyment of checking in with her daughter and initialing her reading minutes every night. Singer also compares reading to exercise like a chore that must be done with minimal complaint and the acceptance of no enjoyment.

Parent Sarah Blaine argues "I discovered that I didn't care in the least if the reading log was accurate or not, because I knew that she was doing far more reading — with far more joy — on her own than the reading log required" (2015). She even made

the point to say “stop requiring the reading log, so I can stop lying on the reading log” which proves further that even though reading logs are required, their purpose and use is not being practiced to help students become better readers. But Sarah is a parent who sits with her child and reads on a daily basis and that seems to be a rarity in most educational settings. For every parent who enjoys reading with his or her student, there is a parent who doesn't have time to. So how do those students stay accountable for their reading when there isn't an adult to keep them accountable? Is the intention of reading logs meant to teach students responsibility, involve parents in their education, or encourage reading?

My argument here is that most parents are not like Leah and Sarah; most parents don't have time to pore over their child's homework every night and initial reading minutes. An even greater number of parents don't even look at the log, let alone care if it is complete or not. Additionally, is the joy that this parent feels reflected in her daughter's impression of reading logs? Judging from the reaction from my students, the real question is what are other ways that are more effective and enjoyable to motivate students to read? Through my studies, I am discovering there multiple ways to motivate students to read without filling out a worksheet every night.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to look in-depth at what reading logs are accomplishing in schools. This study looked at the uses of reading logs, how they are used, and what teachers and students think about them. This study utilized the literature that identifies the best practices in literacy in order to assess reading logs. More of this literature will be discussed in chapter 2.

When I started my research, my initial thoughts had me adjusting my own reading log that I used in my classroom. I asked the opinions of my students and most agreed that getting it signed nightly was too difficult because of busy parents. They also didn't like finding vocabulary words and writing definitions because most of them didn't have Internet or a dictionary at home. They liked to rate their books and they also enjoyed sharing what they read with each other. I set to work creating a reading log that was everything my students wanted. I thought at the time that I had solved the problem of boring reading logs and my students would be forever engaged in reading at home now because they were part of the process of creating the activities they would be completing.

After a few months of using the reading logs my students helped me build, they were right back in the same rut of complaining about reading at home. It was still a forced activity devoid of personal choice. Based on what I had learned in my own classroom, I focused on the following 4 research questions:

1. What is the role of the reading log in the classroom?
2. How do teachers use logs in their classrooms? Are they assessed and how?
3. How do teachers and students feel about reading logs?
4. How does what the literature says about reading logs match best practices concerning reading?

This is important because I wanted to show accurate research that backs up the truth about independent reading and if keeping students accountable at home for reading is a practice that benefits them as readers. This research benefited my field because teachers will read about new ways they can motivate their students to becoming self-

inspired readers. They will also be able to look at what reading logs are used for and how teachers and students react and feel about them.

Methodology

Overview of the study. The research was conducted in Santa Rosa, California at an Elementary School that houses TK-6th grades. This location has a dominant Hispanic population and 78% of its students are on free and reduced lunch. Most students are low-income and have parents who work multiple jobs. A high number of students are local and live within 1 mile of campus. More about this setting will be presented in Chapter 3.

Participants. The research was conducted from March-September, 2017. I interviewed seven adults that currently work at this school who either use reading logs currently in their classrooms or have in the past. I collected their examples of reading logs, reading journals and worksheets they use to track their students reading. I also interviewed three of my own students from my fifth grade. I used a qualitative method to interviewing to look in-depth on how students and teachers feel about reading logs and what methods they believe to be important in order to help foster a love and encouragement of reading in their students.

In my research, the main way I collected evidence was by qualitative interviews. According to Drew, C., Hardman, M., & Hosp, J., (2008) “the interview is one of the most commonly used methods for gathering qualitative data” (p.189). I decided to interview a variety of teachers and students about reading logs. I used a method of research called qualitative interviewing, which is also known as in-depth interviewing. I chose the in-depth interview method because it “is modeled after a conversation between equals rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange” (Taylor, & Bogdan, 1984,

p.77). Since I interviewed my colleagues and students, I wanted the interview to be “a purposeful conversation” (Bogdan, 1982, p.135) so that the information would be honest and the respondent would feel comfortable answering my questions.

I also collected work samples from adults throughout the interviews. The adults that I interviewed gave me a “collection and review of related documents” (Wiersma, 1995, p.215) that consisted of samples of reading logs they are currently using or have used in the past. This also includes anything related to the tracking of reading in their classrooms such as reading assignments, samples of homework and personal reading logs they use at home.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am looking into the uses of reading logs in an elementary school setting. In chapter 2 I am discussing research that is relevant to reading, reading logs and tracking student’s reading at home. In Chapter 3 I am explaining my methodology in using interviews and data collection. I can start to develop a sense of what is important about reading for students and teachers and how they are utilizing reading logs.

Chapter 4 is where I begin to develop and navigate the patterns I see and what elements in reading logs teachers consistently use and what students think about them. Since the most common reason for the use of reading logs in classrooms is to keep students accountable for home reading, I look into the correlation of keeping track of reading and the improvement of reading skills in students. This brought me to my conclusion of my thesis research where I am looking into further researched needs, implications and limitations for my thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the meaning of literacy and its importance in the education of elementary school children. I also examine the development of literacy and what is successful in teaching. This includes the use of student choice in class and creating a community of readers. The intent of this chapter is to also look at the current practices and problems of reading logs used in schools. I will discuss the purpose and traditions of the reading log and then argue the reasons I chose my research questions. All of this will be tied in with literature supported by experts in the field of literacy, reading logs and curriculum practices.

Literacy and its Importance

Keef and Copeland (2011) argue that “despite the fact there is general agreement that literacy is a human right, there is no general agreement about the definition of literacy” (p. 93). Literacy is important because it is a human right. To be literate “is a right and not a privilege: A right that has been denied an extraordinary number of our citizens” (Lumsford, Moglen, & Slevin, 1990, p. 2 as cited in Keef & Copeland, 2011, p. 93). Historically in the United States, specific groups have been refused access to literacy including “people of color, women and the poor” (Keef & Copeland, 2011, p.93). So regardless of if you have access to it or not, every person deserves the chance to become literate. A person who is literate can become fully engaged in their community and “continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his (her) own and the community’s development” (UNESCO, 2008, p.18 as cited in Keef & Copeland, 2011, p. 93). People who are literate contribute to their community’s growth and that makes literacy an integral part of society.

Founded in the 1950s, the International Association for the Evaluation of Achievement (IEA) strove to determine whether “cross-nationally valid achievement tests could be developed and administered uniformly to school children in many different educational systems” (Husen, 1974, p. 407). It started with mathematics but quickly turned to literature and reading comprehension. Husen (1974), a Swedish educator, stated that the intention of the IEA was to find better ways to educate and develop a “more complex and theoretically sophisticated methodology aiming at the formulation of internationally valid generalizations” (p.408).

Because “educators all over the world hold widely different views about how best to teach students to read” (Elley, 1992, p. 15), a study was charged to look at reading literacy levels around the world. Elley conducted his study about reading literacy between 1990-1991, and involved 32 school systems in 32 different countries. Elley collected from over 9,000 schools, 10,000 teachers and 210,000 students (Elley, 1992, p.4) by examining the naturally occurring differences and similarities between countries when learning is happening. Elley (1992), the author of the first booklet “How In The World Do Students Read?” agreed that reading is a “serious, difficult process, requiring hard work and disciplined effort” (p.77). Elley’s study looked at the “average achievement levels in reading literacy” (p.2) and broke down information further into gender, home background, native language and more.

The study determined that the country of Finland had the highest reading levels of children. Why is their success higher than other students around the world? For starters, Finland assigns less homework for students than other countries. Elley (1992) discussed that some strategies for student’s progressing in literacy were “easy access to books in

their community” (p.42), long periods of time that they silent read in class, and “countries where teachers assigned large amounts of reading homework did not produce the same levels of achievement as those who assigned less” (p.49). Why are low scoring countries not following suit with these basic, successful reading practices among teachers and students and instead focusing on how to sound out words, drill practice and assigning an ample amount of reading homework? (Elley, 1992, p.77).

Meaning making. Jerome Harste, a retired professor from Indiana University, recognized for his multiple accomplishments in literacy research, considers meaning making to be the most important component when creating a language arts program. Literacy is connected to meaning making because “different cultural groups have different ways of making meaning” (Harste, 2014, p.90) and learning how to do that is especially challenging for the 21st century learner. Students in the 21st century need to learn specific skills that help them navigate in today’s society. They learn what literacy is through their community and it means different things to different groups “depending on their contexts, culture and schooling” (Harste, 2014, p.90). Modern students use multiple avenues to learn literacy including technology, art, communication and nonprint-based literacies.

Meaning making is a way for students to communicate through different sign systems and what this means for 21st century learners is that “students are going to continue to need lots and lots of reading and writing, but also in the form of nonprint-based literacies” (Harste, 2014, p.91). Nonprint-based literacies can consist of using technology for blogging, digital storytelling, podcasting and art incorporation where students are asked to sketch what they read or think artistically about a subject they are

learning about. This is also considered to be moving from one sign system to another in order to enliven reading programs while also supporting a student's literacy development.

Literacy is changing as students are not just being asked to read a book and report on it, they are being asked to use electronic media, mix, edit and produce materials and layer "texts, music, images and interactive technologies" (Heath, 2007, p. 200). Heath, who is a linguistic anthropologist focusing her studies on how people learn the structures of languages, also discusses the limitations of English education in that we limit students' choices. Those who do not use a mixing and layering of language skills often don't grow past the beginner stage of communication. English is all about "knowing, using and developing language structures and uses" (p.204) and that we have a long way to go before we can provide students with a sufficient and meaningful education.

In the 20th century, courses on rhetoric (the ability to use language effectively) were replaced by writing and composition and only in the last decade of the 21st century has that changed to include more classes built on developing rhetoric. Heath (2007) argues that we need to "enable learners to move with and beyond the words" (p. 204) and that we can understand that students now have more challenges in front of them to make meaning with their literacy.

Multimedia and multimodality. New medias are "essentially altering our understanding of learning, literacy and knowledge" (Parker, 2010, p.13) and teachers need to adapt their understanding of how to teach literacy to incorporate participating and learning in modern ways in their classrooms. Parker (2010), a former Associate Professor at Sonoma State University in California, studies how to integrate multimedia literacy into academic literacy learning and in her book about bringing digital media into the

classroom, explains that students should be engaged in authentic tasks that connect to the world outside of their classroom. They need to be “provided complex, challenging and open-ended work, and allowed to use multiple resources and modalities, such as reading, writing, speaking and drawing” (p.123). As teachers, we need to have “learning environments that create opportunities for active and intense learning” (p.123), not constrict our students to be like everyone else.

Siegel (2012), a Professor of Education at Columbia University, focuses her studies on multimodality in classrooms and how the social practice of meaning making “by combining multiple semiotic resources-has captured the pedagogical social imaginations of contemporary literacy educators” (p. 671). Literacy has become multimodal where students are asked to use their visual, aural, gestural and spatial tools all at once to assemble meaning. She states that “more than ever, teachers and students are expected to adhere to standards and assessment practices that look back to an imagined past where multimodality might have a place in arts educations, but not in the literary curriculum” (p. 196). In modern education, Siegel (2012) discusses how literacy now includes play, performance, appropriation, collective intelligence, negotiation and transmedia navigation that are all critical and relevant to multimodal design. This is just further proof that the way we teach literacy is changing and teachers need to adapt curriculum to adhere to what students are expected to know in modern education.

Multiliteracies and participatory culture. Literacy used to be considered only the ability to read and write in the language your culture produced and even in the 19th century was a “prerequisite to the right to vote” (Johnston, 2016, p.8). Johnston, a professor of Education and Culture at University Technology Sydney in Australia, is

concerned with the multiple influences on the futures of children and young people specifically looking at 21st century literacy practices. In Johnston's 2016 article about the history of literacy, she outlines the various interpretations of literacy and the ideas of a modern definition including Multiliteracies, which is a combination of language, text and reading (p.8). What started as simply the ability to know the letters of the alphabet, to then transforming into involving "communication of meaning, in multiple modes of media of expression" (p.9), a perception of social knowledge, linguistic and visual understanding, it is no wonder that education is struggling to change the way we are teaching the basic skill of reading in a classroom.

Henry Jenkins, an author of over a dozen books on participatory culture and multiliteracies, looks at modern education as a place where students get the opportunity to express their interests, learn from peers, develop skills, and contribute to their community with a feeling of support. Jenkins (2009), in an article about participatory culture, discussed new ways that literacy is defined in education in the 21st century. He claims it incorporates media literacies that "include the traditional literacy that evolved with print culture as well as the newer forms of literacy within mass and digital media" (p.19). Digital media is a new way for students to communicate and getting them involved in it shifts the focus from "one of individual expression to community involvement" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 7), which is so important for the development of literacy in the 21st century.

However, school literacy practices have not changed and still focus on phonics first and created a "strong movement in the United States towards more restrictive and prescriptive forms of reading instruction" (Lockwood, 2008, p.11), which has contributed

to the decline of authentic literature in the classroom in the past fifty years. There is now more emphasis on fluency that is “measured by a stopwatch, rather than reading for meaning” (p. 11) and Lockwood (2008) argues that in order to develop literacy, students need to be choosing books themselves and having social interactions to develop communities around literature (p. 12).

Development of Literacy: What Works?

Making meaning out of text is important to getting students to understand what they are reading. Students who get to choose their books and participate in literature culture get more enjoyment out of reading and are then more likely to read independently. Taking into account the above topics discussed about literacy: meaning making, multimedia, multimodality, multiliteracies and participatory culture, what are some practices that studies have shown to be successful at motivating students to read more and become better readers? The research suggests that student choice, reading in class instead of reading at home and establishing a community among readers are three strategies you can use to help students progress with their reading skills.

Student choice. In an article written about the influences of interests on learning and choice among students, Ainley, Hidi and Berndorff (2002) conducted a study where students were given four different texts and asked to read and answer questions for all of them. They also chose what order they wanted to read each text in. The study then looked at the order the student chose, how long they spent on each text, their feelings about the text, and a measurement of learning with a multiple choice quiz at the end. What they concluded from the study was that “the strongest model linking topic interest and learning suggested that topic interest was related to affective response, affect was then

related to persistence with the text, and persistence was related to learning” (p.558). In other words, choice made a positive difference in students’ interests in the specific topic and allowing students to choose their own materials confirmed that they were more engaged in reading. However, according to Sherry Sanden, an Assistant Professor of Child Education at Illinois State University, student choice comes with a “monitoring of that choice” (Sanden, 2014, p.167) and an extra effort from the teacher to match appropriate materials to students. Sanden conducted a study looking at eight teachers who were designated as “highly effective in teaching literacy” (p. 163) and interviewed them on their practices. Most teachers in the study agreed that while students need to choose books reflecting their interests, it is important that teachers oversaw their choices and “maintained the final decision making power” (p.169). There needs to be a balance between student choice and teacher involvement in order to make literacy attainable for students. Rosemary Hopper (2005), who conducted a study looking at the reading choices of 11-15 year olds over a period of a week, argues the reason teachers only play a small role in helping students choose books in the classroom is because “teachers’ general lack of knowledge” (p.117) regarding what students want to read. The article looked at student choice, influences, and the “importance of validating all reading experience, including the new literacies” (Hopper, 2005, p.113), which can include technology. Teachers being more knowledgeable about what students are interested in will help foster a love of reading inside and outside of the classroom and help create curriculum that focuses around a modern take on how to teach literacy. Letting students have freedom to choose for themselves, along with guidance from educators, helps them feel involved in their education and can encourage persistence with reading.

Development of Literacy: What Doesn't Work?

Reading in class versus reading at home. Taylor, Frye and Maruyam studied 195 students in grades 5-6 in 1990 and investigated the times spent reading at school and at home and how that related to students' reading achievement. The results of this study concluded that "time spent reading in the classroom contributes significantly to growth in reading achievement" (p.358) and that the study was "unable to provide support for the idea that time spent reading at home contributes to reading achievement gains" (p.360). Taylor et al., (1990) discuss the many factors that could have been the result of not being able to see gains from reading at home, including the lack of teacher support and students' difficulty in remembering what they read and how long they read for.

Reading at home can be challenging because sometimes parents who are listening to their students read "think they do not need any specific literacy training to do this at home" (Glasgow & Farrell, 2007, p.135). Successful teacher literacy practices are the focus of Glasgow and Farrell's 2007 book to help educators become involved with current literacy practices. Literacy teachers need to encourage parent involvement and give specific instruction needs to teach parents "what they should do rather than leaving it to chance" (p.135) in order to be successful at having their students read at home. Students reading in class are making more achievement gains and their home reading is not necessarily supporting them in the best possible way and creating a positive learning environment. A positive learning environment is important to foster the love of reading for students. Teachers create a surrounding that encourages reading inside of a classroom, which can make students more successful readers. If their home life is not supportive of their literacy practice, students are less likely to gain achievement in reading.

Community of readers. Another essential component of a reading program that Parker (2010) discusses is creating "a community of learners, a shared culture of participation in which youth contribute their knowledge of the world and simultaneously demonstrate a

keen sense of creativity within these mediated experiences” (p.6). Regularly meeting with students and discussing literature sparks their interest and builds the “buy-in” to reading without having them fill out worksheets and count minutes. Creating that community also means learning about “the everyday lives and interests of young learners” (Heath, 2007, p.200), which can be accomplished by simply discussing books and passions about subjects during short meetings with students. A seventh-grade teacher from Illinois states that simply “asking them to share their current book and page number” (Davis, 2014, p.45) with their classmates and write a short reflection on it has made her students more focused and share their thoughts on reading more often.

Becoming a community means involving the people that surround the student, including their families. Weinstein (1998) argued that “literacy programs in schools can be strengthened when they involve at least two generations of a family and that these relationships effect literacy use and development” (as cited in Glasgow & Farrell, 2007, p.133). This is a chance for teachers to bring the community into the classroom and encourage parents and students alike to be a part of the literacy development. Creating that community reinforces literacy inside and outside the classroom. When students are sharing their perspective and their reading choices with others around them, they become more invested in that literature. A sense of community around books also supports teachers getting to know their students as readers and involving them in conversations around those books. Students become more invested in reading when their thoughts and ideas are being heard by their community.

Current Practices and Problems

Reading outside class. As previously discussed, there is another argument that reading at home “did not contribute significantly to students' growth in reading achievement” (Taylor et al., 1990, pg. 357) which means that reading at home and keeping track of it with a reading log is not necessarily helping readers become better. There is more of a debate “that the minutes of reading per day during reading class variable contributed significantly to students' reading achievement” (p. 357) because the atmosphere in the classroom is fostering a love and opportunity for reading. That affection for reading doesn't automatically happen at home because the absence of teacher scrutiny could allow students to misrepresent their actual time when filling out reading logs (Taylor et al., 1990). The problem is that students need a teacher's support in order to succeed, and that doesn't happen at home.

Teachers like Karen Walenta (2013) motivate their students into thinking reading logs are the best way reading can be recorded, and that it is important to record it in the first place. “Today we learned that powerful readers keep and analyze reading logs,” stated Walenta (2013) on her Reading Log Blog. She also goes on to discuss that “research shows the more reading the students do...the stronger readers they will become” which became her proof that reading logs were making her students become better readers.

A reading log “offers a two-way communication with parents about their child's reading and is also used as a way of training them in how to help their child take the next step” (Lockwood, 2008, p.74). In order to train parents, there must be conferences, observations with each personal family, training sessions and Lockwood (2008) suggests

communicating with parents through whole school and individual support meetings. The issue with this is having the time to train and meet with each family in order to provide the support the student needs at home in order to grow academically without teacher's support.

Preparation for adult life. Bobbit (1924) argued, "Education is primarily for adult life, not for child life. Its fundamental responsibility is to prepare for the fifty years of adulthood, not for the twenty years of childhood and youth" (p. 8). Bobbit was a professor, writer and specialized in the field of building effective curriculum. If Bobbit is right, then how does the reading curriculum we are currently teaching fit into that category of preparing students for their adult lives? He goes on to discuss the objectives of education and how they must prepare men and women for every kind of activity that will create a well-rounded adult life, and that "everything should be done with a view to this purpose; and that nothing should be included which does not serve this purpose" (pp.7-8). So what part of the reading curriculum are we teaching that doesn't serve a purpose to our students? Which parts do serve a purpose and how do we know?

Dewey (1929) argues that there is no way to teach students to prepare for the future because no one knows what that future will look like. Why would we waste our time preparing for the unknown instead of teaching students basic skills that they can use no matter what the approaching world will look like? School is a community and "education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (p. 35). When it comes to preparing students for adulthood, are we doing that by requiring reading logs?

Maxine Greene (1995) connects educators to diversity inside the classroom and

looks at the different shapes of literacy in education. Existing social structures in education are ignoring the “unequal transmitting of knowledge” (p.50) that include the unfairness of tracking students, demeaning of immigrant families and one-dimensional reforms. Greene (1995) also discusses the importance of “atmospheres that exclude the lived lives of children” (p.54) and that students are just learning what we want them to. Creating an environment that includes children takes work and dedication. One step toward creating an inclusive environment is motivating students to be a part of the conversation around literacy. Ask them their opinions, have them help make curriculum and value their lived lives outside the classroom.

Additionally, teachers are not asking students for their opinion on books, we are asking them to give us the answers we think are correct. Students are unmotivated because what is going on in class doesn't have relevance to their own experience or interests (Short & Burke, 1991) and students “spend their time trying to figure out what the teacher wants” (p.4) instead of attaining anything.

Elliot Eisner, a former professor of arts and education, focused his career on creating a better understanding of how arts in the educational setting can greatly benefit the development of the young. Eisner (1994) states that “what schools teach is not simply a function of covert intentions; it is largely unintentional” (p. 93). He goes on to discuss that schools teach far more than what they advertise. For example, one of the first lessons a student learns in school is to provide the teacher with what they want or expect (Eisner, 1994, p.89) and that too often, the issues become “the expectation and the need to meet it” (p.89) instead of what the students wants to do or are capable of doing.

Reading Logs: Purpose and Practice

Reading logs are accidentally killing students' desire to read. Kelly Gallagher's book *Readicide* highlights the reading habits of adolescents and *aliterates*, people who can read but choose not to. This can be dangerous because we are producing more alliterates in education and showing no improvement in reading achievement. Gallagher (2009) defines "Read-i-cide as the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools" (p. 2). As a result of those practices, reading instruction has been narrowed and improvement of reading skills have taken a back burner of importance.

Researching the practices of reading logs is important because many teachers use them without any real reason except for accountability of students reading at home. I want to look into what reading logs are really doing to students. Is reading at home helping their skills inside the classroom? My thesis will explore the thoughts of teachers and students and spotlight their opinions on how reading logs are used as well as other ways teachers support student reading.

There is research that teachers use reading logs for "holding their students accountable for their reading" (Sanden, 2014, p.169). Sanden (2014) knew that the only way her "students would improve their reading abilities was for them to read consistently and often." (p.45). While reading consistently and often has proven that students become better readers, is there a specific reason reading logs are used as a way to keep track of that reading? Do teachers use logs for accountability? Do they use logs to understand their student as a reader?

"Research indicates that simplified analyses do not help teachers develop their

own reading model, nor do they highlight and lead to understanding of the issues concerned with the evaluation of individual readers” (Long, 1985 as cited in Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 2005, p.7). With this in mind, are reading logs used to keep students accountable for reading at home and are teachers using logs because they are an easy form of assessment? Do teachers actually spend time counting minutes, reading summaries, and searching for correct uses of vocabulary? Do reading logs utilize the modern student’s use of multiliteracies as discussed by Johnston (2016)? If reading logs do not give the teacher any insight into what the student can or cannot do, why are we using them? Typically they are “weekly assignments in place to keep my students accountable for the reading they completed outside of class” (Sanden, 2014, p.45). However, who is to say that students are completing the work as they say they do on paper.

As teachers, we are under immense pressure to be “accountable for the students’ success in reading” (Layne, 2009, p.5) and one way to prove that we are doing that is by tracking a student’s reading with reading logs. However, are reading logs showing the positive aspects of teaching reading? Are the elements of a reading log helping students to use good practices to become better readers? Instead of having choices and being apart of a community of readers, school is often where all students learn the same thing at the same time and reading logs are a good example of that.

Reading in class instead is asking students to do the same amount of work, just no longer on their own time. For a lot of students they have problems accessing literacy because they have not had many opportunities to “experience what is possible with books” (Fillmore, 2009, p.9) and instead are more focused on filling out worksheets to

prove that they are reading. How are reading logs connected to the achievement of students' reading? If students make the most significant gains inside class during reading time, why is there such an emphasis and defense of reading at home? The study done by Taylor et al., (1990) discussed earlier concluded that "despite the perceived importance of time spent reading, a number of studies have found that intermediate grade students spend relatively little time reading at school or at home" (p.352). Therefore, these are the questions framing my study:

1. What is the role of the reading log in the classroom?
2. How do teachers use logs in their classrooms? Are they assessed and how?
3. How do teachers and students feel about reading logs?
4. How does what the literature says about reading logs match best practice concerning reading?

In the next section I will be discussing the methodology process of my research. This will be connected to the above research questions and outline exactly how I conducted my study, who the participants were and where the study took place. I will also be discussing relevant data collected about reading levels for grade levels.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Overview of the Study

As a teacher, I'm told what to do and how to teach my students to read based on best practices as defined by our current language arts curriculum. We are assigned a new language arts curriculum every few years that we are expected follow on a daily basis and this is supposed to help our students become more literate. We have limited time for silent reading, book exploring, and in general, teaching the enjoyment of books. Our curriculum is non-fiction heavy and there isn't a lot of room for improvising.

The motivation behind my thesis came from wanting to understand one specific practice in education, reading logs, and what we can do to improve that practice. In order to explore the way reading logs are used in classrooms, I focused on the following research questions:

1. What is the role of the reading log in the classroom?
2. How do teachers use logs in their classrooms? Are they assessed and how?
3. How do teachers and students feel about reading logs?
4. How does what the literature says about reading logs match best practices concerning reading?

In order to answer these questions, I started with interviewing seven staff members and three students about their use and experience of reading logs inside their classrooms. This was done over a period of seven months and in that time I used that data to also create new ways to encourage my own students in class to read independently. I collected different types of reading logs from the teachers and any other related material to their encouragement of home reading from their students.

Setting for the Research

Ellen Ochoa Elementary School¹ is located in Northern California and was established in 1994 in a neighborhood that caters to low-income students. It is a public school that services 550 students in Transitional Kindergarten through sixth grade. The community is tightly knit and teachers and administration have long careers in this district. Their mission is to prepare children academically and socially to function responsibly in society and to envision and achieve their goals in life.

Students that are enrolled in this school are 80% socioeconomically disadvantaged (as determined by the amount of students on free and reduced lunch), 75% Hispanic or Latino and 54% of them are English Language Learners. The school's mission statement encourages staff to challenge the students to love learning, problem-solve, have civic responsibility, and form the necessary life skills for economic independence and a positive code of ethics supported by the community at large.

The reason that this is the location of the study is because many of the students at Ellen Ochoa Elementary are below grade level in reading according to the statistics from the 2016-2017 data of the tri-annual Dibels² testing for K-3rd grades and Star Reading³ scores for 2nd-6th grades.

Dibels testing, given three times a year, measures the basic early literacy skills of

¹ Ellen Ochoa Elementary School is a pseudonym and information from this section was taken from the school's website. The general SARC website is found here:

² Dibels is a state wide given test that is designed to measure literacy in students. More information can be found at <https://dibels.org/dibels.html>.

³ Star Reading is an adaptive computer based assessment identifying which literacy skills your students knows and what they need to work on. More information can be found at <https://www.renaissance.com>.

students. The data below shows the results at Ellen Ochoa Elementary School for the 2016-2017 school year.

*BGL=Below Grade Level in reading

Grade Level	% BGL @ Beg. Of Year	%BGL @ End Of Year
Kindergarten	39%	27%
1 st Grade	34%	33%
2 nd Grade	22%	33%
3 rd Grade	39%	42%

While Kindergarten and 1st grade had fewer students below grade level by the end of the year, 2nd and 3rd grade had an increase of students who were reading below grade level after a whole year of reading instruction. Below is the data for the 2016-2017 school year that used the Star Reading program as a way to measure student's literacy throughout the school year.

Grade Level	%BGL @ End Of Year
2 nd grade	51.37%
3 rd Grade	64%
4 th Grade	45.6%
5 th Grade	69.1%
6 th Grade	85%

The above data is drastically different than the Dibels testing even though they are measuring the same data. Using this data I am able to know that many students at this school are below grade level, which is why I am focusing my research here. This research will shed more light on how reading logs are used in classrooms as well as the opinions of teachers and students about reading logs.

Researcher's Role

The researcher in this school is the teacher of the students in the sample. In this respect, the researcher is a participant observer, which is an approach to observation “wherein the researcher is a full, active member of the setting or group being observed” (Drew, C., Hardman, M., & Hosp, J., 2008, p. 206). The researcher is also a colleague to the fellow staff members in this study.

As a teacher in the classroom, the researcher's views are going to be catered to the “particular experiences, background, and out-of-school life” (Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1982). p. 207) of the teacher. There is a potential for change when the teacher is using qualitative research in order to change themselves and their immediate environment (Bogdan et al., 1982, p. 208) as well as becoming agents of change where they work. The role of the researcher in this study is to observe their students and record what their thoughts are about reading logs. Their role is to also interview and collect data from teachers about their uses of reading logs in classrooms. This chapter explains the methodology the researcher has undertaken in this research. Included in this chapter are the following sections:

Overview of Research Methods

Description of Sample

Student Population

Teacher Population

Description of Data

Interviews

Samples

Procedure of Data Analysis

Timeline for Study

Overview of Research Methodology

Description of sample. “Designing and conducting research in education” by Drew, Hardman & Hosp provides a first step into the world of research. When Drew et al., (2008) discussed participant selection they said that the “researcher must select participants who are appropriate to the topic under study” (p.82) and that “participants in a study should resemble that population” (p.83). My subjects are teachers and students who have direct contact with reading logs and reading practices at our school. The teachers are implementing and using reading logs and students have current or past experience having them as assignments in their classrooms.

“Sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small” (Wiersma, 1995, p.301) which is largely due to the sites at which the research is conducted because there are often one or a very limited number of participants. Wiersma (1995) also goes onto discuss that there isn’t a general correct sample size (p. 301) but it may be useful to look at other studies that relate to the study topic as a reference.

For this study, three students and seven adults were interviewed, which is a manageable number of interviews to conduct while the researcher is teaching full time. The researcher chose this specific population of adults and students because “the logic of

purposeful sampling is based on a sample of information-rich cases” (Wiersma, 1995, p.298) and the students and adults chosen are rich with information about the topic.

Student Population. This research consisted of three students between the ages of 10-11. They were all in the 5th grade and have attended Ellen Ochoa Elementary School since Kindergarten. There were two males and one female. The males are Latino and come from families that have immigrated to the United States in the last 20 years. The female is Caucasian and her family is from California originally. I chose these three specific students because they represent a low, medium and high sample of reading level in the classroom.

The reader with the lowest reading score, Octavio Carter⁴, has struggled with learning English and reading his whole education career. I chose him because he has been enrolled in after school programs, interventions before school, specialized classes to help him get personalized attention and he still has a hard time practicing reading. At the end of 5th grade he was below grade level in reading despite all of the mediations he received.

The reader with the middle range score, Katie Ross, is a confident reader but lacks many basic skills. It is difficult for her to sound out words and comprehend what she has read. She is eager to learn and has made steady progression throughout her school career.

The student with the highest reading score, Joshua Valencia, has been above grade level all year in reading. He enjoys reading and devours books one after the other. He came to my morning intervention class all year because he wanted to and loves sharing what he read with others. His family is Latino and he comes from a household

⁴ Octavio Carter, Joshua Valencia and Katie Ross are all pseudonyms for students and their personal information was not revealed in this paper.

that has both parents working full time. I chose him because he is self-motivated to read and his reading scores show that he understands and enjoys reading.

Teacher Population. Based on the grade level and experience with reading and reading logs, seven teachers were chosen for the population of this research. In Bogdan's (1982) book about the theory and methods behind qualitative research, he described "purposeful sampling" as choosing "particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory" (p.67). I purposefully selected the teachers in this study because I knew they had knowledge of reading practices and used reading logs in the past or currently use them in their classrooms. These teachers also agreed to participate in the study.

Kristin Forbes⁵, a 1st grade teacher at Ellen Ochoa Elementary School, has been teaching for seven years. She has taught Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade. She currently uses a reading log in her classroom and has them read fifteen minutes every night. Students read the current book that the class is reading, a weekly poem, and then anything else they want to read. The reading log requires a signature every night by an adult and is distributed, along with a packet of other homework, on Monday and due the following Monday. I chose Forbes for this research because she has knowledge of reading logs and how to motivate her students to read.

Amelia Roberts, a 2nd grade teacher, is on her ninth year teaching and has taught at four different elementary schools during that time period. She has experience teaching in grades 3rd, 6th and her current grade of 2nd. She has been at this school for five years.

⁵ Kristin Forbes, Amelia Roberts, Linda Dobbs, Kyle Kohl, Caroline Nash, Tricia Warren and Margaret Adler are all pseudonyms for adults and their personal information was not revealed in this paper.

Roberts uses a reading log in her classroom that asks students to read for fifteen minutes each night. She uses a poem as well to help her student's fluency skills and makes sure parents sign off on their reading nightly.

Linda Dobbs, a 3rd grade teacher, has been a Kindergarten, 5th grade, 1st grade and 3rd grade teacher in her twenty-seven years of experience. She has a passion for reading that attracted me to interviewing her. Dobbs is ardent on teaching her students the pleasure of reading and her use of reading logs, that haven't changed much over the years, is focused on student choice of books and fostering the love of reading on a daily basis.

Kyle Kohl, a 4th grade teacher, recently changed from using a reading log to a book report. It is related to a reading log in that students are asked to summarize what they read every night. Kohl is a fifteen-year veteran teacher and has a clear drive to educate his students and teach them the basic skills for being a successful reader. He refers to reading logs as "training wheels" to help guide students towards becoming proficient readers and wants to make sure his students have a choice in what they read. I chose Kohl for this interview because he is very outspoken about current teaching practices and isn't shy about voicing his opinions.

Caroline Nash, a 5th grade teacher, has been teaching at Ellen Ochoa Elementary School for almost twenty years. She has taught Kindergarten, a 5/6-combination class and currently teaches 5th grade. She changed her reading logs from students recording their reading on paper to having them record it online with a program called Whooo's

Reading⁶. She switched from paper to online because she believed that the reading log she was sending home wasn't getting completed and wasn't motivating her students to read.

Tricia Warren, a 6th grade English language arts teacher, has seventy-six students in her class throughout the day. She teaches the entire 6th grade at our school and reinforces reading habits with her use of reading logs and reading journals. As a parent herself, she understands the struggle of getting homework done during the week and has her reading logs assigned on Thursdays and then due the following Thursday, giving students ample time to complete it. She has been teaching for eighteen years and has experience in grades 5, 4, 6 and Kindergarten. She has an interesting perspective because she has changed her reading log over the years multiple times to accommodate her students and their unique backgrounds.

Margaret Adler, the reading specialist at Ellen Ochoa Elementary School, received her degree in early childhood development in Wisconsin in 1974. She has taught Preschool, Kindergarten, 1st and 3rd grades and has been the current reading teacher at this school for twenty years. I chose her for this research because she has a strong background and opinion about motivating students to read and the immense benefits that comes from enjoying reading. She even has her own reading log that she has kept for tracking the books she has read since the 1990's, which created an interesting topic to discuss in her interview in chapter 4.

⁶ Whoo's Reading is an online reading website that allows students to answer high level questions, take quizzes and get positive feedback on books they have read. <https://www.whooosreading.org>

Each teacher was chosen because they have knowledge in the field of reading. The reason I wanted to use these teachers is because they helped me “solve problems, to expand knowledge, and to increase understanding” (Drew et al., 2008, p.11) in the way that reading logs are used and felt about in our school.

Description of Data

Drew et al. (2008) discussed that researchers should “seek data from a variety of sources, using different collection methods, and possibly from different perspectives” (p.188). The two primary methods of gathering data for this study were interviews with teachers and students and the collection of samples from various reading logs from teachers to analyze. Teachers provided their own personal reading logs that they use in class or have used in the past.

Oliver-Hoyo & Allen (2007) called this data collection method “triangulation” which involves “careful reviewing of data collected through different methods” (p.42) by drawing upon different sources of data. Triangulation of information can show that only relying on “one or two methods of qualitative data collection could lead to the misrepresentation of the results” (p. 46) which is why I am using interviews and collecting reading logs and related documents from both teachers and students.

Interviews. The purpose of my interviews was to get the perspective of teachers’ and students’ opinions about reading logs and how they are used and assessed. Because “the interview is one of the most commonly used methods for gathering qualitative data” (Drew et al., 2008, p.189), I interviewed seven teachers who currently teach at our school and three students inside the researcher’s classroom (two from the 2016-2017 school year and one from the 2017-2018 school year). Interviews were developed and conducted with

guidance on important aspects of interviewing from Seidman's (2013) book "Interviewing as Qualitative Research". This book concentrates on in-depth interviewing as a method of research in education and identifies listening as "the most important skill in interviewing" (p.81). I listened and asked appropriate questions to follow up how my interviewee responded.

He also discusses a way of interviewing called "phenomenological approach" in which "interviewing focuses on the experiences of participants and the meaning they make of that experience." (p. 16). I am asking participants to search for the essence of their experiences with students and reading logs. Phenomenological approach also looks at the interviewee's point of view and at the true reality of what they are understanding (Siedman, 2013, p. 17). My questions in the interviews were based around what they experienced in their classrooms and the attitudes of students and requirements they put upon them to track reading.

I structured my interviews so that there was a set of questions for the teachers and a set of questions for the students. I left room for flexibility in both sets of questions. For example, when I asked a teacher if she used a reading log in her own life she responded with a yes. Although I didn't have any follow-up questions already prepared for that question (I assumed no one used a reading log as an adult), I was able to ask her questions to describe the reading log and how she used it. Bogdan (1982) discusses interviews being "in the hands of the qualitative researcher" where "the interview takes on a shape of its own" (p.135). I wanted my interviews to be structured but also be malleable to what the participant was interested in discussing. Each interview took

between 10-20 minutes and I asked approximately 10-15 questions for each adult and 8-10 questions for each student. I did one interview per person with no follow-up questions.

My interview protocol⁷ was more than questions for the interviewee. It also consisted of a script of what I would say before I started recording, how I would collect consent, how I would thank them for their time afterwards, and a description of what my thesis was about. Interview protocols are a “procedural guide for directing a new qualitative researcher through the interview process” (Jacob, S., & Furgerson, S., 2012, p.2) and for me added a sense of security and confidence while giving my interviews.

In the beginning of my interviews, I would practice on my husband and my friends. I would give them my opening speech and then get consent from them while having a pen and paper ready for note taking. Other important aspects to my protocol, as discussed by Jacob et al., (2012) was having a genuine concern for the interests of the person I am interviewing, helping my interviewees feel heard and keeping it focused on the topic of reading logs (p.8).

Samples. From the teacher interviews, I collected a variety of samples that are related to reading logs and reading practices used within their classrooms. This consisted of reading log samples, reading journals, student filled out reading logs and examples of other ways teachers encourage reading in their classrooms. Below is a description of the varieties of items collected from each teacher that I interviewed. I hoped to gather enough examples of reading logs to be able to see commonality between them or patterns that I could qualify. I wanted to learn how similar or different they were depending on grade level and teacher experience.

⁷ My interview protocol will be attached in Appendix A and B of this paper.

Kristin Forbes (1st grade teacher) gave me a copy of her weekly homework packet that she sends home. It gives a very detailed timeline of everything she wants her students to accomplish throughout the week. On Monday, they are circling and spelling their words of the week. Tuesday they are illustrating a poem and on Wednesday, they are telling a family member about a book they are reading. Thursday is when they complete their book report, which is Forbes' version of a reading log. It has the students fill out the title, author, illustrate the first, next, and last parts of the book as well as write about their favorite part. This packet is given to students on Mondays and then collected the following Monday so that they have time over the weekend to read and explore with books.

Amelia Roberts (2nd grade teacher) handed me an example of her reading log that goes on the front cover of her homework packet for her students. It has a space for students to fill out what book they read each night, for how long and what adult they read to. Parents are required to sign it every week. Students receive the packet on Mondays and it is due complete and with a parent signature on Friday morning.

Linda Dobbs (3rd grade teacher) gave me a sample of the reading log she sends home to her students on Monday nights. It is returned on Friday mornings and requires students to read for twenty minutes a night with no signature needed from an adult. All they do on it is write the title they read and how much time they spent reading. In her classroom she also supports student reading by having daily comprehension homework and weekly fluency practice.

Kyle Kohl (4th grade teacher) gave me a sample of the reading log he used at the beginning of this school year but doesn't currently use in his classroom. It has the days

Monday through Thursday on it and each day the student is required to put the title of the book, a vocabulary word, the meaning of that word, where it was found, and a short summary of what they read. It also requires a nightly parent signature. He asks his class to read eighty minutes per week and to fill out the reading log every day. Kohl distributes the reading logs on Mondays and collects them for homework on Fridays.

Caroline Nash (5th grade teacher) supplied me with the website she uses to help keep her students accountable for their home reading. Whooo's Reading, is an online-based program designed to help students answer more comprehensive and detailed questions about their reading. They can do journal entries where they answer questions, take a quiz when they have completed a book and also write a review to share with their classmates. Nash has a requirement of books that need to be completed in a trimester and keeps track of her student's reading through the website and the content they produce.

Tricia Warren (6th grade teacher) shared her weekly reading log bookmark that consisted of putting the date, minutes read and page numbers. This was then put into a small reading response journal that was turned in every week and students are asked to read a total of one hundred minutes per week and record their thoughts in a variety of different ways. Students responded to prompts such as "what was the most important event you read about? Use details from the text to explain" or "draw and color a picture of a character and list five character traits describing that character". Students had an option of fiction and non-fiction prompts and could choose any prompt when they were done with a book. This response journal and reading log bookmark was attached to reward fieldtrips and grades in her class.

Margaret Adler (reading teacher) showed me her personal reading log, which I photocopied. She has been writing a simple list of every book she has read since the early 1990's. She puts the title, the author and the date of when she read it on a small notebook. It is a way for her to keep track of books she has read and to recommend ones to her friends and family that she has enjoyed.

Procedures of Data Analysis

Before I conducted my interviews, I thought a lot about what questions I wanted to ask and what categories I would put these results into. My questions were geared toward sections I wanted to pursue and analyze. For my student interviewees I started with them describing what a reading log was to them. I did this so I could see their perspective on what it meant to them. I also asked them about what their thoughts (negative and positive) were about reading logs and if they thought it kept them accountable for their home reading.

Once I collected data from my students I put those answers into categories. One category was how each student described a reading log, and the three of them more or less had the same answer. They have all been going to this school and in general have had the same teachers throughout their education so that doesn't surprise me that they had similar answers. The other questions I asked them were also put into categories and I then compared with their other responses. More of this will be discussed in chapter 4.

In Glaser, Anselm L., and Barney G. Strauss' (1967) book "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research" the author's discuss a "comparative analysis" method for organizing data. I used this as a reference to establish categories for my own data collected from adults and students. I looked at evidence from

the interviews as a way to generate “conceptual categories” (p.23) and then be able to look further into what those categories mean. My interview questions for teachers were specifically looking rationale behind their use of reading logs. They were also intended to see how teachers assessed and analyzed them and how they used them to monitor student reading at home. For example, my first question that I asked teachers was geared towards looking into their background as educators. How long have they been teaching and what experience with different grades or schools they had. I wanted to do this to see if there was a correlation between experience and their use of reading logs in classrooms. Glaser, et al (1967) would consider this a “generality of a fact” (p. 24) where we can use that generalization that teachers who have lengthy experience in education use reading logs in their classrooms. I looked at all the answers from the seven teachers I interviewed and five of them use reading logs. Out of those five that use reading logs, three of them have been teaching the longest out of all seven. I can then generalize that the teachers who have been teaching the longest believe that the use of a reading log in their classroom is important and relevant for their students.

The next questions were all looking at describing what their reading log looks like. They all had very different answers that included if they required a parent signature, how many minutes the student needed to read every night and what the follow-up activities were. I put those into categories and in Chapter 4 there are multiple graphs to explain what categories they fall into.

The last question I asked during the qualitative interviews was if the teacher used a reading log themselves as adults. I wanted to compare facts so that I can “generate properties of categories” (Glaser, et al, 1967, p.24) when looking at my data. After

finishing my interviews, I transcribed them then looked at each individual question and each individual answer. Specifically looking at this last question of if teachers use a reading log of some sort in their own life was the most interesting.

Although five of the seven teachers are passionate about requiring students to track reading nightly, not one of those five use one as an adult. The only one who did use one is the reading teacher at our school and she is avid about writing down her books and makes it a point to refer back to it and use it as a source of reference. I can generalize that while teachers support student's use of reading logs because they trust it helps them become better readers, most if not any use one in their own lives. Analyzing data from the interviews I conducted brought results that were interesting and also expected. Putting the results into categories made it more organized and easier to draw conclusions from.

Timeline for Study

This process took place over the course of seven months from March, 2017-September, 2017. I interviewed seven teachers and three students. Below is the timeline for each interview. I collected samples and evidence of reading logs at the time of the interviews from the individual I was interviewing. The reason for interviewing and collecting evidence of reading logs from teachers was that I hoped to use them in order to gain a better understanding how they were used in their classrooms. Teachers were asked to describe their reading logs in the interviews, but looking at the actual example helped me analyze their content and organize the different types that were being used.

Margaret Adler (Reading teacher) Wednesday, March 29th, 2017

Kyle Kohl (4th grade teacher) Wednesday, April 5th, 2017

Tricia Warren (6th grade teacher) Thursday, April 6th, 2017

Kristin Forbes (1st grade teacher) Friday, April 28th, 2017

Joshua Valencia (5th grade student) Friday, April 28th, 2017

Octavio Carter (5th grade student) Monday, May 1st, 2017

Linda Dobbs (3rd grade teacher) Friday, September 4th, 2017

Caroline Nash (5th grade teacher) Thursday, September 7th, 2017

Katie Ross (5th grade student-girl) Friday, September 8th, 2017

Amelia Roberts (2nd grade teacher) Monday, September 11th, 2017

Conclusion

After the interview process was over, I took time to transcribe them and print them out. This started the process of analyzing and putting my data into categories. I was able to find patterns between the different answers from the teachers and students. I found that teachers had similar answers to why they used reading logs, because their accountability factor of having students read at home. Each teacher, however, had a slightly different process of how they distributed, collected and graded their reading logs. Some were adamant about nightly parent signatures while others were more concerned about the written summaries that came afterwards.

The three students I interviewed were all familiar with reading logs and had used them throughout their education careers. They were able to describe them and give me thoughtful answers about what they were supposed to be accomplishing concerning their reading practice at home. Chapter 4 looks at the data and evaluates what the interviewees said and what that means in generalizations about the topic of reading logs in elementary schools.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

Students' Perspective

Students that were in my classroom for the 2016-2017 year and the current 2017-2018 have all been well versed in the use of reading logs. Most of their previous teachers have used them and all three of the students I interviewed knew what they were and were able to describe them. They were also able to express what they felt were the benefits and negatives of a reading log as well as if they believed they would help keep them accountable for their home reading.

When I asked my three students to describe what a reading log was to them, they more or less had the same answer. Octavio⁸ described it as something you use to keep track of your reading at home. He also mentioned that it is a way to write down how many minutes you read a night. Joshua has a similar response and describes a reading log as writing down the book title and how many minutes you have read. Katie was able to answer with more detail with the following response:

CRUZ: So I just described what we are going to be talking about. Can you, in your own words, describe what a reading log is to you?

KATIE: A reading log is a sheet of paper that says Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. No Friday, because you have to turn in your homework then. And it says how much time did you read, and what characters are in it, what is the main idea and what is the setting.

CRUZ: When do you use them?

KATIE: In 4th grade we used them for "is your book good, or bad or in the middle". Do you like it or something?

CRUZ: So you rated your book? So when did you turn it in?

KATIE: Started on Monday and turned it in on Friday.

CRUZ: So you filled something out every night?

KATIE: Yea,

CRUZ: Do you remember how many minutes you were supposed to read every night?

KATIE: 20

CRUZ: Did you ever read more than that?

⁸ Octavio, Joshua and Katie are pseudonyms for three students in my classroom.

KATIE: Yes

So all three of the students have had similar experiences with reading logs, which means even though they had different teachers and were in different classes, teachers more or less kept the basic elements of a reading log throughout grade levels. I'll discuss more of this later in the chapter when the results of the adult interviews are examined. After they described the reading logs they have used, I wanted them to think about the benefits of having them assigned. All three of them had a unique take on what the benefit was for them. Katie says that it helped her remember what she read and that it was helpful to be able to go back and look at her reading log as a reference. Joshua, whose conversation is below, looked at reading logs more of a continuous goal for reading.

CRUZ: What do you think the benefit (or something good) of using a reading log is?

JOSHUA: You can keep track of your minutes, and then you can add them up and see how many minutes you read for.

CRUZ: And having your total minutes per week, what does that do for you?

JOSHUA: It's like a goal.

Octavio really relied on reading logs as a way to help him read more. He is an avid reader and devoured books in my class. Already a self-motivated reader, using a reading log helped him remember to read and he said, "I feel good about reading logs, they help me because I have to read and if I don't read, it's not going to help me." Octavio is one of my students in multiple interventions and gets tons of help with reading. He uses reading logs as a way to help him become better at it.

There was one main reason that my students thought reading logs had a negative impact on them. The requirement to get an adult signature was adding stress to getting their reading at home done. Joshua didn't enjoy the parent signature because "sometimes they don't have time to sign it, like they need to pay bills and I ask them and they just tell me later." It can be frustrating for a student to rely on a parent who is busy and unable to

spend time looking over homework. Usually the consequence is for the student, not the parent, which creates extra stress on the student to get that signature. Octavio said there were no negatives to a reading log that he could think of.

After explaining what accountable meant to my students, I asked them if they thought that reading logs kept them accountable for their reading at home. This was where their answers differed the most in the interviews. Octavio's conversation below describes how his mom is very involved in his homework and reading practice and that, in combination with his reading log, keeps him very accountable for home reading.

CRUZ: Do you think that reading logs keep you accountable for your reading at home?

OCTAVIO: My mom says 'show me your homework or else you can't watch TV'. And when you give us the reading log I have to read an hour before I can watch TV and she watches me read. At Cool School⁹ I barely even read because it's loud and it's quiet at home. I think they keep kids accountable."

Katie agreed with Octavio, in that reading logs keep students accountable for their reading but she was not able to articulate why. Joshua had a different answer and thought that reading logs did not keep students accountable. After some hesitation during the interview, he explained, "I assume that some people (*named students in class*) play games instead of reading and then just write in that they read." He thinks that students would write in the answers without actually reading. A teacher later on in this chapter has a comparable reason why she uses an online reading log in her classroom instead of a traditional paper one.

Having the perspective of students gives a new insight into what reading logs are actually doing for motivation and accountability with their reading at home. After only

⁹ Cool School is an afterschool program that is designed to help students who need extra support with reading, homework, math and socialization.

interviewing three students, I learned that all of them were intimately familiar with the practice of using reading logs, they were able to find positives and negatives about them, and their opinions varied when it came to if they actually kept kids accountable for reading. As later discussed in this chapter, accountability is the main motivation behind teachers' use of reading logs, and it was hard for students to tell me why they used reading logs in the first place, which means teachers are possibly not communicating this to them in a way they can understand or students don't understand the reason to be using them in the first place.

Teachers' Perspective

I interviewed seven adults who are current staff members at Ellen Ochoa Elementary School. Six of them were 1-6th grade teachers and one was a Reading Specialist. I interviewed them by asking them various questions about current and past practices surrounding the use of reading logs in their classrooms. I inquired about information pertaining to how they used reading logs, how long they spent looking at them or grading them, what were important elements and the motivation behind using a reading log in the first place.

Of the seven adults I interviewed, five are currently using reading logs in their classrooms. The 4th grade teacher, Kyle Kohl, who does not use reading logs this year in his class, requires book reports instead. He says book reports are related to reading logs in that they are writing a short summary on a book they are reading and that he has previously used reading logs during most years of his teaching. Margaret Adler, the Reading Specialist at our school, also does not assign reading logs because she is not a classroom teacher and does not give homework, but "I strongly urge students to read

every single night and I try to facilitate them reading on a level they can find books.”

After I asked the other teachers how they used reading logs in their classroom, I asked them to describe what their reading logs looked like. Below is a table of what each adult said.

Table 1 *Describe the Reading Log*

Teacher	Grade Level	Description of Reading Log
Kristin Forbes	1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for 15 minutes a night • Parent signature required nightly • Packet given on Monday, returned following Monday. • Can work on it over the weekend • Write title and who they read to
Amelia Roberts	2 nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for 15 minutes a night • Parent signature required nightly • Packet given on Monday, returned following Monday. • Can work on it over the weekend • Extra credit for reading on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. • Write title and who they read to
Linda Dobbs	3 rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for 20 minutes a night • No parent signature required • Packet given Monday, returned on Friday • No weekend reading required • Write title and minutes read
Kyle Kohl Data based on previous year's reading log use.	4th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for 20 minutes a night • No parent signature required • Assignment given every night and turned in the next day. • Write short summary of what was read
Caroline Nash	5th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No minimum reading minutes a night • No parent signature required • Online only and done in class • Write title and take quizzes once a week • Short answer and journaling
Tricia Warren	6th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for 100 minutes a week

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent signature required weekly • Log given on Thursdays and due the following Thursday • Can work on it over the weekend • Write title of book, minutes read and journal response to two prompts a week.
Margaret Adler Data based on if she was able to give out a reading log to students.	Reading Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students need to be reading 20 minutes a night • Bring back reading log to prove to teachers they are reading • Each teacher has his or her own approach and format to reading logs

Each teacher I interviewed has a unique and different style of teaching. I was surprised to see the similarities between their uses of reading log practices in their classrooms. Looking at the data above I can conclude the following things about those seven adults:

Some teachers think students need a parent signature to prove they read. Out of the seven adults, only three of them required parent signature on their reading logs. Roberts (2nd grade) believes that the most important element to her reading log is the signature. “For me it makes me believe that it happened. I think that all of it gives me more proof that they read.” On the other hand, Dobbs (3rd grade) doesn’t “assume that if they didn’t have a reading log or a signature that they wouldn’t read but I do think that many students would not be reading if it wasn’t assigned.” She also goes onto talk about how she used to have a parent signature but she removed it because it was a “hassle and it looked like we didn’t trust them”. Warren (6th grade) contemplates every year how to change her reading log. She says that “parents and kids lie and parents just sign it, they trust their kids or they don’t want to deal with it.” Kohl (4th grade) doesn’t have a

signature required because “I know they did it. I put that on there originally and I have never really honestly used it”.

A follow-up activity needs to go with the reading log. It’s no secret that when you read something, an activity is sure to follow it inside a classroom. All of the seven adults stated that they have some sort of written assignment that goes with their reading requirement in their classroom. For 6th grade, it’s not only a reading log but also a response journal where students are asked to write about two different prompts a week. Forbes (1st grade) believes that “as long as they are reading it, it doesn’t matter what’s included in the reading log.” Roberts (2nd grade) agrees in that she doesn’t like the concept of homework in the first place, and “that reading is the one thing you do nightly that really helps. So I send home minimal homework for the rest of it and I think they just need to be reading.”

There are certain elements of a reading log that are important. Each adult had a unique perspective on what the important elements are to their reading log. Nash (5th grade) really believes that the essential part to her reading log is “to understand and remember what they read” which is why she assigns them. Originally, teacher Kohl (4th grade) says that the reading log has them commit to a book of their choice. The important elements to his reading logs are “more so for the students who are reluctant readers and to give them incentive to stick with something” because without reading logs he doesn’t think they would read a book all the way through.

Necessary to Dobb’s (3rd grade) reading log is that she encourages them to read whatever they want and so “I try to keep it simple so they just read and that they read for pleasure”. She also wants to establish good reading habits while reading things that are

important and meaningful to them without have to do all this extra work around it. Adler (reading specialist), who has a different and more analytical view on reading logs, sees them as an advancement of their progress. “It may, I don’t know if it does, help the reluctant readers. It forces them to do what they are supposed to do” and in turn they will become better readers by simply reading. She discusses that students should also be reading material that is meaningful to them.

There are different motivations behind the use of reading logs. Accountability was the number one answer for the motivation behind the use of reading logs in classrooms. Teachers want students to be reading at home and they want a method for visibly measuring that reading with an assignment. Adler (reading specialist) says, “I believe strongly that kids need to read and they need to have some sort of accountability.” That accountability is providing a way for students to practice reading skills. Other teachers believe that accountability is the reason behind reading logs but that it is also motivated by the lack of trust with students. Nash (5th grade) says her motivation is “so that I know they are reading something at some point in time because I don’t think that if I am not sending home a reading log that they are really reading. I think that more than ½ of them would be faking what they were reading.”

The purpose of reading logs for Dobbs (3rd grade) is “for me to encourage them to read” and while that seems easier said than done, she spends a lot of time in class making assignments meaningful to her students and believes that “if you turn it into a project it can also be extra work and drudgery. You choose it, you read it, and you enjoy it. We aren’t going to ask you to do anything beyond that.” The incentive behind the use of reading logs for Forbes (1st grade) is “to make sure that kids are reading because it is so

important when they are learning how to read they are also practicing”. Her view more focuses on teaching them skills in the classroom and then using those skills independently to practice at home.

“We all know that the only way to get good at anything is by doing it” which is why Kohl (4th grade) builds personal interest into his reading and has an expectation of students reading at home. Adler (reading specialist) also agrees with Kohl by saying “I think that reading logs encourage practice and without practice nobody gets better at anything.” In summary, the teachers varied in their reasoning for using reading logs; however, they all expressed a desire to encourage students to become better readers through practicing at home.

Time teachers spent looking at reading logs is similar for all grade levels.

Teachers spend time creating, grading and discussing their homework during class time and outside of class on their own time. I was curious exactly how much time teachers spent on grading their reading logs. On average, the six classroom teachers¹⁰ required students to spend 15-20 minutes a day on reading, and then additional time filling out the activities that go with that reading. That is an average of about 90-120 minutes a week solely on reading and a reading log assignment. The graph below shows the time spent by teachers to check the reading logs after students turn them in.

Table 2-Time spent of reading logs

Teacher	Grade Level	Time spent on Reading Logs
Kristin Forbes	1st	“I check and see if they completed their homework.”
Amelia Roberts	2 nd	“Less than 10 minutes a week”

¹⁰ Margaret Adler is a reading specialist, and sees selected students in small groups throughout the day. She does not give homework or require assignments outside of her groups, which is why I do not include her in the section above.

Linda Dobbs	3 rd	“About 10 minutes a week”
Kyle Kohl	4 th	“10 minutes a day” (on chapter summaries)
Caroline Nash	5 th	“45-60 minutes a week”
Tricia Warren	6 th	“60 minutes a week”
Margaret Adler	Reading Specialist	(Does not assign reading logs)

Warren (6th grade), who has a total of 76 students rotating throughout her English Language Arts class, says “it’s not one of my bigger time killers, I just skim it real quick.” Kohl (4th grade) talks about how he walks around monitoring that they wrote every morning but “I’m not sitting there reading it.” Some teachers don’t even read what students wrote and even though they require a parent signature, a minimum requirement for reading and writing, they spend a minimal amount of time making sure that is happening. Dobbs (3rd grade) says that when they turn it in on Friday, “I don’t spend a lot of time looking it over,” while Roberts (2nd grade) says she just checks if they read but nothing really beyond that.

Most adults have tweaked their reading logs over the years. Warren (6th grade), who has been teaching for 18 years and taught 4 different grades, says “this is probably my 4th version of a reading log. Education changes a lot and this is my 4th ELA¹¹ program we have had at this school. Everything changes and you have to change with the times.” Nash (5th grade) admits “last year I didn’t use one at all” but discusses how her reading log has changed a lot over the years. “It started off as just read for 20 minutes and then parents initial at the end and then it evolved into choosing a word to define and use it in a sentence.” Now she uses an online-based reading log that challenges

¹¹ ELA=English Language Arts curriculum program. Schools often change and adopt new curriculum every few years.

students to answer difficult questions on comprehension instead of tracking their reading minutes.

Some of the teachers changed their reading logs every year with small tweaks or drastic adjustments while others left them relatively the same. The only difference in Dobbs' (2nd grade) reading log is that she added or took away a quick summary for her reading log and she has been teaching since 1995. She uses a basic reading log that doesn't change depending on grade level or years teaching. Forbes (1st grade), who has taught younger grades most of her career, added a weekly poem to her reading log this year. Other than that, it has stayed similar year after year.

Adults' use of Reading Logs. When I asked this question most were surprised that I would be interested if they themselves used a reading log for their own home reading. Forbes (1st grade) flat out said "no" and then laughed at the question. Other teachers had different versions of reading logs that didn't necessarily have anything to do with writing down a summary or tracking how many minutes they read.

Roberts (2nd grade) said, "I think you could say that my reading log is my bookshelf because I don't get rid of books". She was a literature major in college and has an immense amount of books in her house. She keeps everything she reads and uses her bookshelf to recommend and reread ones she liked. Kohl (4th grade) and Nash (5th grade) both admit they have never used any sort of reading log as an adult. An interesting take on why she doesn't use a reading log was from Dobbs (2nd grade), who says, "I don't because I am so slow. I read at night and then I fall asleep. It takes me forever to go through a book."

The only adult I interviewed who used a method for tracking reading remotely close to a reading log we traditionally see in elementary schools was Adler (reading specialist). She has kept track of every book she has read for the last 12 years. “I just write down the titles and the authors and I’ve started over the seven years doing a tiny little rating thing with a 3,2,1 rating”. She uses this reading log to recommend books to people and to remember if she has read a book. It is in a tiny little notebook about the size of a small journal and is simple but clearly makes an impact on the way she enjoys reading.

Conclusion

Most of the teachers I interviewed use reading logs in their classrooms. A lot of them have specific requirements for their students ranging from writing down minutes, answering comprehension questions, reading to an adult, and keeping students accountable for reading at home. Kohl (4th grade) considers that “the culture, not just kids but adults too, are on a moment by moment basis and all we do is go from one webpage to another. Books don’t work that way, you can’t read two pages and enjoy it, it’s the story that counts”. For him a reading log is a foundation and “a schema that can be applied later on in other ways”. It is a habit he is creating for students to learn responsibility and to use that reading log as a template for other literacy skills that need to be learned.

Adler (reading specialist) believes that “if they can’t read well enough, accurately enough, automatically enough, they won’t enjoy what they are reading” which is where practice at home comes in. However, students who are unable to read well enough to practice independently don’t get the benefit of using a reading log. They can’t access the

importance of reading and then comprehend what was read. It is too difficult for them to read on their own let alone take that information and turn it into writing, comprehension or an activity to build upon. While most of this school's students are significantly below grade level in reading¹², almost all of the teachers, no matter what grade they teach or what kind of students they have, require a reading log.

The students who are incapable of reading independently at home tend to not benefit from using a reading log and are just going through the motions of filling out paperwork to make their teacher's happy and in hopes of receiving a passing grade in their class. This is not teaching them to enjoy reading; this is teaching them that reading is a mechanical activity that requires a follow up exercise that doesn't mean anything to them. Kohl (4th grade) believes that reading logs lay good groundwork, "especially for those who are struggling with the whole concept of what reading really is". While reading logs can provide some students with the support they need to analyze what they read, it also inhibits others from the enjoyment of it. In chapter 5 more of the implications of the use of reading logs will be discussed.

¹² See chapter 3 for statistics on reading levels for students at this school.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

After a year of researching the effects of reading logs in schools, I have learned a lot about myself as an educator and what my journey and process has been as a teacher. At the beginning of this journey, I was adamantly against the use of them in classrooms and fed up with the mundane practice of tracking the minutes you read. At one point in my research, I tried to fill out my student's reading log myself and only lasted two days before I gave up from boredom and time constraints. Now that I have interviewed students and teachers about their thoughts and reason behind using reading logs, I am realizing that the bottom line is teachers want students to be reading and students enjoy reading when presented with an environment that is welcoming. Below is a break down of the research questions I looked at and what some implications and conclusions I can now draw from them.

What is the role of the reading log in the classroom?

Reading logs are wasting time teaching. How meaningful are reading logs to teacher or students if barely any time is spent looking at one once it is complete? On average the teachers that I interviewed who used reading logs require students to read 120 minutes per week plus spend another average of 100 minutes to do a follow-up activity. Students are spending 220 minutes a week doing just homework pertaining to reading logs while teachers, on the other hand, are spending about 10 minutes or less a day checking if they are completed.

I can suggest through my research that teachers are setting an example that once the reading log is complete, it doesn't matter. It is obviously unrealistic for teachers to

grade everything they give to students but reading logs are an integral part of most teacher's homework yet it doesn't warrant a second look once it's turned in.

As discussed in chapter 2, Davis (2014), a teacher, just wanted her students to be a part of a reading community and she asked them to share their thoughts on books in small groups which made them more focused and engaged in reading with no writing or tracking of minutes required. As far as my research concludes, teachers are not using reading logs as any part of a follow-up activity that involves students sharing what they are reading. This can signify that most reading logs are checked off in grading books and then never seen again. I believe if teachers used reading logs as more of a community building skill and asked them to share their thoughts on literature, they would be more effective in classrooms. Anything you do in a classroom can be meaningful if you look at who is doing the work, what the students are getting out of it and what the follow up is. With reading logs specifically, most teachers threw them in the trash after students turned them in. Whether the students knew that or not, what kind of message is that sending? My weekly meetings with students are meaningful because they get to voice their opinion and share in a community about literature.

There is no perfect reading log. Throughout my research this past year there are clear conclusions I can make about the use of reading logs in elementary schools. One of them is that there isn't a "right" way to teach reading and there isn't a "perfect" reading log. I experienced this first hand with my own students when they helped me create a reading log they would consider worthy of their effort. Like Elley (1992), mentioned in chapter 2, everyone holds a different view on "how best to teach students to read" (p.15) and finding a reading log that fits every student would depend on if every student had the

same view on what they thought was important about reading, which is unrealistic for any teacher to accomplish. Finding that impeccable reading log that will motivate all students to read is not a reality, which brings me to my next conclusion to look at if they have changed in education over the years.

How do teachers use reading logs in their classrooms? Are they assessed and how?

Reading logs haven't changed. Reading logs are practically the same everywhere I investigated with my research. The teachers I interviewed gave very similar descriptions of reading logs they have used or are currently using in their classrooms. Most of them have students write the book titles, minutes read, summaries, vocabulary words to give definitions to and have a space for their parents to sign to prove that they read. This was the same no matter the grade level, the amount of experience of the teacher, the curriculum program we have or had in the past and the requirements of homework for our school.

I also did research outside of my school and found out that most of the articles I read about reading logs focused on the same information. In 1988, Susan D. Reed said her reading log was on piece of binder paper and used quotations and connections to the text (p.55) and that there isn't one way that is better than the other to prove effective to encourage home reading. From my research with teachers and students as well as my review of the literature I can conclude that the use of reading logs in U.S. elementary schools have been the same for many years in education.

How do teachers and students feel about reading logs?

Students do as teachers say. As well as reading logs staying the same in education, I can also mention that students will do whatever the teacher says is the best practice. If I tell my students this reading log is the best at making them become better readers, they will believe me just like Karen Walenta (2013), a teacher who convinced her students that using reading logs makes them powerful readers, mentioned on her education blog.

Elementary students are programmed to think that teachers know all of the answers and in turn students do what we say usually with minimal questioning. Short & Burke (1991) point out that students spend their time “trying to figure out what the teacher wants” (p.4) instead of thinking for themselves, what can motivate them to learn and become improved readers and learners. I can suggest through my research that students listen to teachers because we are in a position of authority and it is expected to respect that authority. Because we are in that position of power, it is our job as educators to make sure we are doing what is best for the students with educational research to back it up.

Teachers just want students to read. A common theme throughout my research has been that teachers just want students to read and will try anything to make that happen. This goes back to my research question looking at what teachers think about reading logs. Almost all of my teacher interviewees agreed that their reason for assigning reading logs was to have students practice reading at home, because reading is one of the most important skills they want their students to attain in their classrooms. Some teachers expressed distaste for homework in general but most agreed that students needed to be doing something at home because there wasn't enough time in the day to teach them everything they needed to know.

How does what the literature says about reading logs match best practices concerning reading?

Are reading logs really helping? This question of if a reading log is helping students goes back to my initial research question looking at what the research says about reading logs and what are the best practices to help students become better readers. In the Taylor, Frye & Maruyam (1990) study mentioned in chapter 2, we know that time spent reading in class made students better readers but reading at home didn't show any improvement in their reading ability. So if we know that reading at home isn't necessarily helping students, why are reading logs such a popular requirement for most elementary school students?

At Ellen Ochoa Elementary School, the school I did my research at, fifty percent or more of each grade is below grade level in reading. If students are not able to read independently at their grade level successfully, a reading log isn't going to benefit them. Octavio, one of the 5th graders I interviewed, who has been below grade level in reading his entire school career, thought reading logs helped him stay accountable for reading and kept him on track to read every day. He is, however, still struggling daily with his reading and there is no way to know if a reading log is helping him become better or hindering him from just enjoying reading. He also might just be expressing that he likes reading logs because that is what he thinks I want to hear as a teacher.

As teachers, we are under pressure to be accountable for our student's progress, which include reading levels and test scores. Accountability was the number one reason the teachers I interviewed gave reading logs in the first place. If teachers are concerned with making their students accountable for reading, why not just monitor that inside of a classroom? The pressure on teachers and students are high enough without the added burden of auditing what students do when they are at home.

Suggestions for Further Research

Discussed in this chapter are a few implications I have drawn after my research and a few things that I suggest for further research. Literacy is important for any person to become engaged and succeed in a community and that is what I am trying to foster in my own classroom. I no longer use reading logs. Rather, I've adopted more of a community around reading. Instead of having a paper reading log, I have a homework group meeting with 6-7 students at a time every week. In that meeting they are required to add to the conversation about the reading they did that week, bring their book to the meeting that they are reading and also follow-up online with a reading quiz and review of their book. The meetings are built around a community of readers where students get to share their books, ask questions of each other and have more peer interaction. It's not just me talking at them about reading, often I am pretty quiet in those meetings and just help with question prompts or redirecting if they get off topic.

This helps me get to know my students better and take an interest in what they are reading, which is a successful strategy to encourage student reading. I also no longer have to check their minutes read or what book they read because they bring it to the weekly meeting. I can tell right away if they weren't reading that week by the comments they share about their book. Making a point to ask my students if they read that week is also part of my curriculum and students are very honest when they respond. Most of them will let me know when they finished books, switched books or just plain didn't have time to read much that week because of other circumstances. I don't have to prepare any surveys, curriculum or paperwork to fill out; it is simply a conversation that I take a few notes on in my meeting journal. I have changed a lot of my curriculum over the last year and am

sure I will continue to do so to reflect my student's individual needs. I have seen a change in my student's reading because I centered their reading around sharing and contributing, not counting minutes of a piece of paper. They are more enthusiastic about reading and I often catch them fighting over who gets to read a certain book next.

Using Multimedia. Paper reading logs are an outdated practice that has been going on for decades in education. In my research, most of them are still on paper, given to students on Mondays and returned to teachers on Fridays, require a parent signature and record a summary of what was read. The format doesn't change with grade level, curriculum, teacher or location. Students in the 21st century are different than students who went to school twenty or even ten years ago. There is more of a need in modern education to incorporate the use of multiple resources to express literacy and using media and technology is a way to encourage that.

Integrating multimedia literacy into classrooms is what teachers should be focusing on in modern classrooms. Changing the reading log to adapt to the new kind of student in education is important to having student success and motivation around reading. We should be allowing students "to use multiple resources and modalities, such as reading, writing, speaking and drawing" (p.123) as Parker (2010) discusses in chapter 2. There should be more options for students, not limiting or constricting students to use the same old reading log their parents used when they went to school.

At my weekly meetings I also integrate the use of technology with an online program called Whooo's Reading¹³ where students are answering in-depth questions, writing reviews and taking quizzes about books they have completed. These reviews are

¹³ Whooo's Reading was mentioned in Chapter 3 as a way to track books read by students.

then public to the rest of the class and students can access recommendations from other students of books they are interested in. Often, I also print out reviews and read them at the weekly meetings to entice students to read different books. Students are more engaged because not only is their own writing being shared, other students are interested in what they read, which in turn motivates them to read and write more about literature.

Further research needs to go into what else will be motivating for students to read. Catering to students who are capable of texting their friend, while blogging, listening to music and typing a message on Facebook all at the same time should have an education reflective of those skills. A common paper reading log is not gratifying to them. Nash (5th grade teacher) who doesn't use a paper reading log but an online one instead leans towards using the skills of these 21st century learners to keep them engaged with reading. Further research needs to be done comparing online reading logs and paper reading logs and whether online logs are more effective in keeping students more motivated to read.

Further research also needs to be looking at a new curriculum to replace reading logs. Could there be a new curriculum that encourages all the positive motivations I found in my research like community building around literacy, interaction and contribution with peers, use of multimedia and technology, sharing literature and student choice? This curriculum could be turned into an active part of a classroom instead of using reading logs to motivate students to read at home. I have learned a lot through this journey and I will continue to change and adapt my practice to reflect how my students learn best when it comes to literacy and motivation to read.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol Script for Adults

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my study. As I mentioned to you before, my study is looking at the effects of reading logs in elementary schools. This study is also looking at the role of the reading log in the classroom as well as how teachers and students feel about it. The aim of this research is to find out what reading logs are really doing and how teachers are using and assessing them.

I have already handed you a consent form that you have signed and returned. I want to reiterate that your name or personal information will not be used in this study. That consent form also gives me permission to audio record our conversation, which I will start now. Any questions before I begin recording?

1. Please state your name and current position/experience in education.
2. Do you use a reading log in your classroom currently?
If yes, how are they used?
If no, what are your thoughts about the use of them in classrooms?
3. How would you describe your reading log? What are the important elements?
4. Why do you use a reading log?
5. How much time do you spend correcting/looking at your reading log?
6. What do you do besides reading logs to help kids with their reading skills?
7. Have you changed your reading log over the years?
8. Do you use your reading log as a way to assess your student's reading? How? If not, what are other methods you use to assess your student's reading ability? Level?
9. What do you do with a reading log once a student has turned it in?
10. Any other comments about the use of reading logs?
11. Do you use a reading log or a way to track your own reading as an adult?

Thank you so much for your responses and your time. I will let you know if I have any follow-up questions for you.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol Script for Students

Thank you for participating in this interview. As we talked about earlier, I am in college and writing a thesis about reading what the effects of reading logs are in elementary schools. This study is also looking at the role of the reading log in the classroom as well as how teachers and students feel about it. The aim of this research is to find out what reading logs are really doing and how teachers are using and assessing them. I also want to know how you feel about them and how you use them as a student.

You and your parents have already signed and returned the consent form but I want to remind you that your name and personal information will not be used in this study. That consent form also gives me permission to audio record our conversation, which I will start now. Any questions before I begin recording?

1. What is your name and grade?
2. Please describe what a reading log is:
3. When do you use them?
4. How do you feel about them?
5. What do you think the benefit of using a reading log is?
6. What do you think is negative about a reading log?
7. Do you believe that reading logs keep you accountable for your reading at home? (If student does not understand “accountable”, explain it to them).
8. How else can you stay accountable for your reading at home?
9. What would you want to do instead of reading logs to record your reading?

Thank you so much for your responses and your time. I will let you know if I have any follow-up questions for you.

Appendix C

Consent Forms

Student Assent Form

March, 2017

I am getting my Master's Degree and need to do some research for it and I need your help! If you decide to participate, I will be using work samples, interviews, surveys, audio recording, video recording and observation of you for my thesis. Research will be based on what I learn from reviewing the work samples, interviews, surveys, audio recording, video recording, and observation of you. Examples of things I have learned from your work may be included in my research. However, it is important to know that I will protect your privacy by not putting your name, pictures or videos of you, or any other identifying information about you, into my research.

You are free to withdraw your permission at any time throughout this process with no negative impacts. Participation or non-participation will have no influence on your grade, and that there's no reason for you to perform any differently than you normally do just because it is for research. You will not be identified by name or face and will have a code affiliated with your name instead.

_____ I give permission to Mrs. Cruz to use my work samples, interviews, audio recording, video recording and observations for research for her thesis.

_____ I DO NOT give permission.

Student Name _____ Signature _____

Parent Consent Form

March, 2017

Dear Parents of _____

Your student is invited to participate in a study of Reading Logs being conducted by their teacher, Mrs. Cruz, at Sonoma State University starting

March, 2017 until June, 2017.

I am getting a Master's Degree in Education and writing a thesis on reading logs. I hope to learn how reading logs are used in schools and what we can do instead of them by incorporating art, technology and writing projects to motivate student's reading and keep them accountable.

If you decide to participate, Mrs. Cruz will be using work samples, interviews, surveys, audio recording, video recording and observation of your student.

The benefit of this study is that it is a great opportunity for your student to voice their opinions and make a change in the way reading logs are used. There are no risks involved in this project and will be conducted during normal activities in class. You may withdraw permission at any time throughout the process with no negative impacts for your student or their grade in my class.

Any information obtained from this study will be confidential. Students will only be identified by a code. Their name or face will never be used in any public documents.

_____ I give permission to use my student's information in Mrs. Cruz's thesis.

_____ I do not want my student participating in this thesis research.

Parent/Guardian Name _____ (please print)

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

If you have any questions, please contact

Mrs. Cruz.

(650)576-9585

sarahcruz@wrightesd.org

Estimados Padres de _____

Su estudiante está invitado a participar en un estudio de Registros de Lectura que se hace por su maestro, la Sra. Cruz, en la universidad Sonoma State University empezando

El marzo, 2017 hasta el junio, 2017.

Estoy recibiendo un Licenciado Máster de la Educación con escribir una tesis sobre los registros de lectura. Espero aprender como los registros de lectura se usan en las escuelas y lo que podemos hacer en vez de ellos con incorporar la arte, tecnología y proyectos de escritura para motivar la lectura del estudiante y mantenerles responsables.

Si Ud. decide de participar, la Sra. Cruz va a usar muestras de trabajo, entrevistas, encuestas, y grabaciones auditorios, grabaciones de video y observación de su estudiante.

El beneficio de este estudio es que es una gran oportunidad para su estudiante de dar sus opiniones y hacer un cambio en el modo que se usan los registros de lectura. No hay ningunos riesgos involucrados en este proyecto y se va a hacer durante las actividades normales de la clase. Ud. puede retirar su permiso en cualquier momento durante el proceso con ningunos impactos negativos para su estudiante o su calificación en mi clase.

Cualquier información obtenida de este estudio será confidencial. Los estudiantes solamente se identifican por un código. Su nombre o cara nunca se usará en ningunos documentos públicos.

_____ Yo doy permiso de usar la información de mi estudiante en la tesis de la Sra. Cruz.

_____ Yo no quiero que mi estudiante participe en esta investigación de tesis.

Nombre de Padre/Tutor _____ (favor escriba en letra de molde)

Firma de Padre/Tutor _____

Si tiene cualquier pregunta, favor póngase en contacto con la

Sra. Cruz.

(650)576-9585

sarahcruz@wrightesd.org

Adult Consent Form

March, 2017

Dear Teachers, Parents and Administration staff,

You are invited to participate in a study of Reading Logs being conducted Sarah Cruz, at Sonoma State University starting

March 2017 until November 2017.

I am getting a Master's Degree in Education and writing a thesis on reading logs. I hope to learn how reading logs are used in schools and what we can do instead of them by incorporating art, technology and writing projects to motivate student's reading and keep them accountable. If you decide to participate, Mrs. Cruz will be using work samples, interviews, surveys, audio recording, video recording and observation of you in her thesis. Your informed consent grants you permission to opt out of any audio recording, videotaping or photographs if you so choose.

For Teachers: This means I will be collecting work samples, interviews (audio and video recording) and surveys from you.

For Parents: This means I will be conducting interviews (audio and video) of you to discuss the role of reading logs in you and your student's lives. There is no risk in this study and your participation has no impact on your child's grades.

For Administration: This means looking at the requirements of reading logs (homework) and what is expected of teachers to implement these. I will be conducting interviews (audio and video) and surveys from you.

You will never be identified by name or face in any of my research and you will only be identified by a code. You may withdraw consent at any time throughout the process.

_____ I give permission to use my information in Sarah Cruz's thesis.

_____ I do not want to participate in this thesis research.

Name _____ (please print)

Signature _____

If you have any questions, please contact

Mrs. Cruz.

(650)576-9585

sarahcruz@wrightesd.org

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