

Master Capstone Project

A Professional Development Study on Independent Reading in the Classroom

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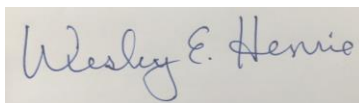
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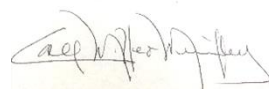
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Abstract

This professional development study focuses on my journey to better understand independent reading in the classroom. Through the literature review and other assessments, I learned that structured approaches, intentional reading instruction methods, and the teacher as an explicit reading role model are common practices among experienced educators who have implemented independent reading into the classroom schedule. Furthermore, I discovered that a structured approach to independent reading aligns with English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. Specifically, the standards provide students with different options to show outcomes from reading such as written summaries, discussions, and digital presentations. This professional development study has changed my thoughts about and approach to independent reading. Prior to this study, I viewed independent reading as an unstructured activity where the teacher takes a hands-off approach and students have no accountability. After reviewing practices from experienced educators and personal reflection, I have come to the realization that independent reading is best served with structure and teacher engagement.

Introduction

This professional development study started with my curiosity as to why some students are avid readers, why some students lack enthusiasm for reading, and what influence the classroom teacher has on reading interest. My curiosity brought me to the 2019 annual literacy survey from the National Literacy Trust which stated that just more than half of children and young people like reading and reading enjoyment continues to decline (Clark et al., 2020). In my observations in the classroom, elementary school teachers strive to increase a student's interest in reading, and ultimately, develop and improve each student's reading comprehension. During my research, I found that independent reading in the classroom is one way to potentially increase a student's interest in reading. Elements of independent reading include dedicated time to read in the classroom, the teacher as an explicit reading role model, and a student's personal choice of reading topics, genres, and materials.

I discovered that independent reading has long been a staple of the elementary education classroom but is often viewed as an unstructured activity. In a report from the National Reading Panel (NRP) in 2000, independent reading came under scrutiny. The NRP (2000) found no link between unmonitored reading programs where students freely read on their own and improvements in fluency and reading achievement. From this report, educators responded with structured approaches to independent reading that were aligned with English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Through this study, I was determined to expand my knowledge of structured independent reading practices and to formulate effective methods to incorporate into my own teaching practice.

Dilemma

From personal observations in the classroom, independent reading is often treated as a filler and the third or fourth option when free time in the schedule becomes available. When independent reading is an option, students may lack reading material of personal interest. Also, teachers have many academic requirements to meet, perceive little or no time for independent reading in the classroom, and therefore are challenged to incorporate independent reading into the daily/weekly schedule.

To address this dilemma, I conducted a literature review to examine studies on teaching practices and core elements of independent reading. Reading several peer-reviewed studies on independent reading spurred me to reflect on my current understanding of the topic and how I can effectively implement independent reading into the daily/weekly schedule and align it with ELA CCSS.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to improve my knowledge and understanding of independent reading and identify effective instructional methods to implement into my teaching practice. Prior to this study, I had limited understanding of the concept of independent reading as a structured activity within the classroom. Through this study, I have gained knowledge of best independent reading practices and am better prepared to implement independent reading in my own classroom and support students in their development and journey as readers.

Questions

1. How does a classroom teacher effectively implement a structured approach to independent reading into their daily/weekly classroom schedule?
2. How does the classroom teacher align independent reading activities to the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards and show student outcomes in learning?

3. Will use of independent reading practices help create connections and develop positive relationships between the students and teacher?

Methodology

The methodologies used in my professional development study consisted of journal entries, observations of and discussions with students in the classroom, and conversations with my mentor teacher. Also, I performed self-reflection of my learning and growth in the area of independent reading and recorded my thoughts and insights in a journal. Listed below are details about the three assessment areas that guided my study.

Data Gathering on Professional Growth

Assessment #1: Journal Entries. I used a journal to capture the details of my observations, thoughts, conversations, learnings, and feelings about independent reading and the journey of my professional growth as an educator. I used the journal to document peer-reviewed articles and other references that were applicable to independent reading. I documented how my thinking about independent reading shifted from viewing it as an unstructured activity to one that requires intentional instruction. Also, I documented my experiences as an explicit reading role model in the classroom by sharing my personal reading experiences and performing read-alouds.

Assessment #2: Observations and Discussions Within the Classroom. Throughout the school year, I used observations to learn about reading habits and interests of the students in my classroom. I recorded observations such as reading stamina (the amount of time spent continuously reading), the students' genuine desire to independently read, and the instances when the students wanted to talk with the teacher and other students about what they had read. I approached the study as a collaborative partnership with the students and sought their feedback and input to independent reading. This approach is aligned with the participatory action research (PAR) methodology which is designed for research participants to collaborate and have a voice

in the study (Langhout and Thomas, 2010). Furthermore, students appreciated that the mentor teacher and student teacher provided access to a wide selection of current and well-liked books.

Assessment #3: Feedback and Evaluations from Mentor Teacher. The mentor teacher and I had both formal and informal conversations about independent reading. The mentor teacher shared her experience with reading instruction at different grade levels over her 18-year career in education. She consistently stressed alignment of independent reading to ELA CCSS with students ultimately producing an outcome that showed proof of learning or comprehension.

Literature Review

Independent reading in the classroom has often been identified as an unstructured activity with no demonstrated outcome or proof of student growth in reading skills (Kelley & Claussen-Grace, 2006). Kelley and Claussen-Grace listed popular school-wide programs from the 1990's such as *Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)* and *Uninterrupted, Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)* as examples of reading activity without proof of student academic growth. Since the NRP report from 2000, much has been researched and written about structured approaches to and teacher involvement with independent reading. This literature review is focused on four areas of independent reading: structured approaches, personal choice of reading materials, the teacher as a reading role model, and reading materials and genres. For the purposes of this literature review, the phrases independent reading, sustained silent reading (SSR), and uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR) are interchangeable and synonymous.

Structured Approach to Independent Reading

Experienced educators who incorporated independent reading into their reading curriculum used structured approaches such as intentional reading instruction. Sanden (2012) described reading instruction as a way to directly or indirectly teach about reading through

interactions around text. In a yearlong study focused on effective teaching practices of independent reading in the classroom, Sanden (2012) studied a group of elementary school educators who incorporated intentional reading instruction into independent reading sessions. The teachers had students use written methods such as reading logs, reading graphs, reading responses, or story summaries to demonstrate their learning. The teachers also used verbal methods such as individual conferences or large group share circles to identify a student's comprehension of the reading material. Another example of a verbal-based method included deliberate pauses during read-alouds to discuss the meanings of passages and words. Sanden observed a teacher who had students first write a description about their reading material and then had the students share their work with classmates. This provided the teacher with a way to hold students accountable and check their understanding of what they read. Kelly and Clausen-Grace (2006) studied the impact of intentional instruction methods on a SSR program with a third-grade class. The approach consisted of five steps: read, relax, reflex, respond, and rap – and included one-to-one instruction and comprehension strategies such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing. After several months, Kelly and Clausen-Grace found that the percentage of students reading at instructional and intervention levels dropped from 89% to 5%. Also, students read more genres with 61% reading three or more genres compared to 38% at the beginning of the study. Structured approaches to independent reading have been used at higher grade levels too. In a study of independent reading in a middle school classroom, Messer (2020) found that class-wide discussions about texts provided students with opportunities to connect, debate, and listen to each other. Specifically, Messer found that intentional instruction, e.g., asking questions and starting conversations, had an effect on students' engagement in reading and their connection with a text. Messer observed that these conversations continued outside of the classroom and to home environments.

Allotting time for students to read in the classroom is a common practice among teachers who take a structured approach to independent reading. Messer (2020) found that allowing time in the classroom to read, even short amounts of time like 10 minutes per day, had a positive impact on students. Messer studied daily reading times of 26 8th-grade students and found that the total combined number of books read by the students in the study increased from 32 books per month to 58 books per month, an 81% increase in reading volume. Furthermore, Messer discovered that the students in her study had limited time outside of school and that consistent time for independent reading in the classroom was the reading activity that students enjoyed most. Messer examined time journal entries and identified three significant areas that competed for time with independent reading: entertainment, extracurricular, and academic. Messer found that technology was a noticeable distraction to reading with many students spending significant amounts of time each day playing video games, texting, and using social media. Twenge et al., (2019) found that the average middle school student spent more than five hours per day utilizing digital mediums. Twenge et al. also showed that over a ten-year period, adolescents spent far less time reading books, magazines, and newspapers and far more time engaged in online and digital activities. In a survey of 1,765 middle school students from 23 different schools, Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that 63% of the students identified free time to read as their most preferred in-class reading activity. In follow-up interviews with students, Ivey and Broaddus documented specific reasons for classroom reading time which included a quiet atmosphere, no disturbances, and being able to read alone.

Personal Choice of Reading Materials

When students self-select reading materials, they often select books and texts of a personal or individual interest. In a comprehensive study about reading motivation, Gambrell found that children enjoyed reading more when they selected books and stories for their own reasons and

purposes and only 10% of the respondents' mentioned books or texts that they did not self-choose (1996). In a survey of middle school students, Messer (2020) found that the most valued aspect of independent reading from the perspective of the student was personal choice of reading materials. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that 42% of middle school students surveyed about reading practices selected personal choice of reading materials as a motivator for reading in the classroom. In interviews with students, Ivey and Broaddus also found that personal selection of reading materials was closely tied to positive reading experiences in the classroom. Conversely, students most often identified assigned reading as a negative reading experience with boredom and lack of comprehension as two main reasons.

There is evidence that helping students select reading materials is a common practice among teachers. In interviews with a group of experienced teachers, Sanden (2012) discovered that teachers were not completely removed from the reading selection process and played a key role in determining appropriately leveled materials. Teachers helped students select just-right books, defined as not too hard and not too easy (2012). In a study of reading selection methods focused on six-year-old, seven-year-old, and eight-year-old students, Wutz and Wedwick (2005) found that a structured method for book selection with younger students led to better results with independent reading. In interviews with younger students focused on how one selected books of personal choice, Wutz and Wedwick found that most students did not put much effort into book selection, resulting in only 36% of students finishing the books they had selected. Wutz and Wedwick studied a specific method to help students select properly leveled books focused on book length, genre, topic, and interest. By the end of the study, Wutz and Wedwick showed that all students were able to continuously read for 45 minutes or greater and student positive attitudes towards reading doubled. Springer et al. (2017) found that methods such as interest inventories and individual reading conferences helped teachers match readers to books of

personal interest. Springer et al. observed a one-to-one reading conference where the teacher learned of a student's personal interest in a topic and directed the student to books and magazines in the classroom library.

The practice of teacher assistance with independent reading is aligned with Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Eun (2018) described the application of ZPD in learning and development as the teacher providing support and guidance to a learner and stated that a more experienced and knowledgeable person utilizes instructional approaches until the less experienced and knowledgeable person can perform the skill unassisted. Research focused on intentional reading instruction and choosing reading materials found that when the principles of ZPD were applied, the results were evident in an increase of number of books read, increase in amount of time read, and improvement in attitudes toward reading.

The Teacher as a Reading Role Model

In the life of an elementary education student, the general education teacher is a significant role model which includes enthusiasm and beliefs in reading. Several studies have shown that the classroom teacher as a reading role model had a positive impact on students. In a study involving first-, third-, and fifth-grade students, Gambrell (1996) found that students consistently identified their teacher as a positive influence and motivator for reading, and when teachers were explicit in the classroom about their passion and experiences in reading, they saw higher reading achievement among their students. Gambrell identified specific traits of an explicit reading role model such as sharing their own reading experiences and emphasizing how reading enhances and enriches their lives. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2006) used read-alouds, shared reading, and book talks to model reading enthusiasm to students and found that all students in the study recognized the teacher's interest and passion for reading. A popular reading activity directly aligned with explicit teacher modeling is the read-aloud. Messer (2020) discovered that read-

alouds offered differentiation in reading instruction and helped students who were assessed as auditory learners. In a study of read-alouds amongst 141 middle school teachers, Albright and Ariail (2005) found that nearly 86% of the teachers performed read-alouds with modeling good reading practices as the most frequent reason.

A teacher's level of enthusiasm for reading has an impact in the classroom. Applegate and Applegate (2004) studied the influence that teachers have on the reading habits of students and found that teachers who were engaged and enthusiastic readers resulted in students demonstrating similar indicators of engagement and enthusiasm in the classroom. However, in a two-year study of reading habits and attitudes of 379 preservice elementary education teachers, Applegate and Applegate discovered through surveys that more than 50% of the subjects self-identified as unenthusiastic readers. Several of the preservice teachers in the study recalled bad experiences with reading in elementary school such as dealing with uninteresting books and teachers that did not make reading fun. In a study of teacher participation in a school-wide uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR) program where teachers were required to silently read along with students, Loh (2009) discovered two different findings. The first finding came from an interview with teachers where Loh found that nearly all the teachers believed in the benefits of reading and teacher role modeling during USSR. However, Loh showed through observation and data collection that more than half of the staff were consistently taken away from USSR because of other duties and responsibilities. In a study on the effects of teacher modeling during SSR, Widdowson et al. (1996) found that teacher modeling had a profound impact on average and low achiever readers. With teachers directly involved during SSR sessions, on-task performance increased by 50% for average-achieving readers and 40% for low-achieving readers.

Reading Materials and Genres

A cornerstone to independent reading is personal choice of reading material which includes the flexibility of the reader to select a variety of different materials and genres. A popular genre among elementary education students is the graphic novel. The use of graphic novels in the classroom has been studied for its suitability in reading programs and classroom instruction. In a study of 60 educators, Lapp et al. (2011) found that most educators used graphic novels for specific applications such as English Language Learners (ELL), struggling readers, and unmotivated readers. However, even though the study showed that nearly all of the educators recognized the appeal and popularity of graphic novels to young readers, more than half did not include graphic novels in their core reading curriculum due to the perceived low educational value of the genre. In a study involving 71 sixth grade students reading graphic novels, Moeller (2016) found that the majority of students enjoyed reading graphic novels but acknowledged the limited educational value of the genre. In a study comparing reading comprehension using the same story in both graphic novel and traditional text formats with 40 fifth grade and sixth-grade students, Richardson (2017) found that comprehension levels were only slightly higher for the students who read the story as a graphic novel.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA) has placed greater focus on non-fiction texts, now comprising half of the CCSS K-5 ELA standards. In a study of book recommendations from three teacher organizations, Dreher and Kletzien (2016) found that non-fiction recommended books increased from 58% to 69% over a ten-year period. Although a large part of nonfiction reading material for young readers today encompasses biographies and significant moments in United States and world history, magazines and newspapers have been used as non-fiction sources that offered differentiation in reading instruction. In a study of 197 middle school students who read magazines, Gabriel et al. (2012) found that magazines connected with young readers due to specific topics of interest to the

reader and provided a wide range of reading levels within each issue. Furthermore, in a survey of the students, Gabriel et al. found that students were excited about receiving something addressed to them in the mail and proceeded to read the magazines on the day of arrival. Due to the brevity of magazine articles, the research from Gabriel et al. found that magazines provided differentiation in reading instruction such as short text chats where students discussed recent articles. Newspapers also provided differentiation in reading instruction. In a study of scaffolding dynamic texts with a first-grade classroom, Jordan (2015) utilized newspapers during read-alouds to teach students about real-time information and how the world changes. Jordan found that this format with newspapers led to student talk and active participation in current events.

Reflection

Structured Approach

Prior to embarking on this professional development journey, I viewed independent reading as just an unstructured, free-for-all activity that would naturally and surely improve one's reading interest, fluency, and comprehension. Through the literature review, I discovered that a structured approach is the recommended way to utilize independent reading in the classroom. Sanden, Messer, and others provided several examples of intentional reading instruction methods to maximize student development. Approaching independent reading with structure is the area where my thinking has shifted the most. I no longer view independent reading as an unstructured activity, and moving forward, I intend to follow best practice and ensure independent reading activities are organized and balanced. Furthermore, time is limited in

the daily schedule and the classroom teacher has many academic requirements to meet, so staying organized and structured optimizes time.

In the classroom, there are times when unstructured, free reading is appropriate. For example, I used short periods of free reading time (15-20 minutes) as a brain break after an extensive math lesson. The students in my classroom used this time to relax, unwind, reset, and clear their minds before starting the next topic. In other instances, a student may finish an assignment early or earn independent time at the end of the week, all of these scenarios warrant time for free reading.

Alignment to ELA CCSS

In my research, I found that the activity of independent reading is not explicitly listed in the ELA section of the CCSS. My mentor teacher has made a point to link most activity in the classroom, including independent reading, to CCSS and specific learning targets. There are several ELA CCSS that can be aligned with independent reading. For example, the 4th grade ELA reading standard CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3 states for students to “Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).” This standard relates to several methods that show student comprehension and understanding of reading material such as a reading log focused on key points and characters in the story (see Appendix A for an example), written story summaries, or verbal-based individual conferences. Another example is CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.5 which states, “Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.” This standard provides an opportunity for differentiation in instruction and allows students to use presentation tools (e.g., PowerPoint and Google Slides) to show understanding and comprehension of reading material. I intend to follow my mentor teacher’s advice in these areas.

My mentor teacher created a structured approach to independent reading by incorporating activities from the *Independent Reading Level Assessment Framework* guide. She scheduled 45-minute independent reading blocks three times per week for the entire class. While the class silently read, she worked one-to-one with students reading below the 4th grade level. The one-to-one sessions were short in duration (5-10 minutes) and focused on fluency. Initially, this appears to be a productive use of time, but more time is needed to determine the long-term impacts on students' reading fluency. Adding one-to-one reading instruction into dedicated reading sessions showed me the flexibility of structured independent reading and how a teacher can be creative in addressing a student's gaps in reading ability.

Reading Role Model

The independent reading practice that struck a chord with me on an emotional level is the teacher as a reading role model. I am an enthusiastic reader so sharing my personal reading experiences with the students came naturally. Every time I discussed a book I was reading, I got the full attention of each student. Students were interested to learn about the content of what I was reading, especially if it contained something historical. For example, I used a book that I had recently read, *The American President*, to teach a reading lesson about non-fiction, informational texts. I opened the book to the section about President Obama and received an overwhelming, positive response from the students. We had a robust conversation about significant events during President Obama's time in office. In one independent reading session, I discussed my progress through the book *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. I stated my opinion that Abraham Lincoln was the greatest president in the history of the United States. From that statement, a student asked, "What was President

Lincoln's single greatest act as president?" Without hesitation, I said that the *Emancipation Proclamation* was his single greatest act because it essentially ended slavery in the United States. This started a broader conversation about other U.S. Presidents and moments in history such as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and The New Deal. The simple act of sharing my reading experiences gave me insight to the academic interests of my students. Gaining awareness of this kind of information can lead to the development of creative and interesting reading curriculum.

I discovered that read-alouds are an effective way to show a teacher's enthusiasm for reading and a good way to start the school day. The benefits of a read-aloud also include student talk, vocabulary expansion, improving the ability to listen, and making sense of specific context and phrases within a text. I have had positive experiences with read-alouds during my student teaching, and I intend to continue being an explicit reading role model by incorporating this dynamic activity into my teaching practice.

Connection with Students

The most inspiring part of my journey with independent reading was the number of connections I made with students by simply helping them obtain books that they wanted to read and having one-to-one discussions about specific content in their books. The first step in building connections with students is talking to them about their reading interests. A reading interest inventory is a document with a series of questions used to initiate discussions about reading interests with students. During this study, I found several examples through searches on the internet. Appendix B is a version of a reading interest inventory that I used to initiate and guide discussions with students. The discussions can be one-to-one or as a whole class.

From my observations and conversations with students, I obtained several books based on their personal interests. We called this collection "Mr. Henrie's Bag of Books" and included

graphic novels, fiction chapter books, historical fiction, and non-fiction selections. A few specific examples of student experiences and interactions are provided below.

Student E is a creative student who has an interest in creating digital stories using graphics. He stated that he had challenges obtaining a copy of the book *The Odd Is Out* by James Rallison. The author of the book is a young, popular YouTube video creator. I purchased a copy and presented it to Student E. He was surprised, extremely happy, and appreciative to finally have access to the book. Through his request, this book became a popular selection among several other students.

Student J is a multilingual student and developing reader. Student J is an excellent soccer player whose favorite player is Lionel Messi. I provided a copy of a Lionel Messi biography just above Student J's reading level. He immersed himself in the book and couldn't put it down. After a few independent reading sessions, I discussed the book with Student J who proceeded to provide details about Lionel Messi's childhood. From this experience, I discovered that students could show greater comprehension when reading material of a personal interest. Furthermore, as sports fans who both follow international soccer, Student J and I developed a connection and a trust that crossed over to other academic areas.

Student A is a multilingual student with behavioral issues who reads at a 4th grade level. Student A prefers to read graphic novels, especially the *Owl Diaries* and *Ballet Bunnies* series of books. Student A's individualized education plan allows for breaks at any time. When Student A does take a break, reading a graphic novel is an effective way to relax and relieve pressure. Additionally, Student A is a shy and quiet child, but on numerous occasions, Student A approached me to show and tell me about specific text or visuals in the books.

Student B requested specific reading materials that I could not satisfy. However, after looking through my bag of books, Student B selected one of the biographies about Martin Luther

King, Jr. After reading the first book, Student B became enamored with Dr. King and proceeded to read three more books about him. Student B is now reading books about other prominent civil rights leaders from the 1950's and 1960's. Student B has approached me on several occasions to discuss specific aspects of the civil rights movement and important moments in Dr. King's life.

Genres

Through my observations in the classroom, graphic novels are a highly popular genre. More than half of the students read at least one graphic novel during independent reading sessions. I believe that there are good uses for graphic novels in the classroom such as free reading time, brain breaks, and motivation for unenthusiastic readers. However, I realized that not all students are drawn to graphic novels and those students may not benefit from this genre. As the Richardson study showed, comprehension levels do not automatically or drastically improve by students reading a story in graphic novel format. Some students are not interested in graphic novels and prefer traditional chapter books.

There are students who gravitate towards non-fiction reading material. Of particular interest are biographies about prominent people in history and society. In my teaching practice, I intend to incorporate a balance between fiction and non-fiction and provide differentiation using formats such as magazines and newspapers.

Limitations

School-wide reading programs and the school library program were not within the scope of this study.

Recommendations

In my reflection, I wrote at length and provided specific examples about making connections and building positive relationships with students through independent reading. However, during my research, I could not find peer-reviewed studies about this specific area. I

recommend further academic, peer-reviewed studies focused on the bond and trust created between teacher and student when the teacher helps the student obtain reading materials of a personal interest.

With the wide-spread popularity of the graphic novel genre, there is a need for a current, comprehensive research study that explores the various uses of the genre in the classroom. Specifically, the impact on reading interest and comprehension with ELL students, reluctant readers, and emerging readers. Also, I recommend further study on the influence of non-fiction reading items such as biographies and topic specific informational texts.

Professional Growth Plan

As I go forward as a first-year teacher, my goal is to incorporate structured independent reading into my reading curriculum. I will follow the independent reading best practices that I have learned through my professional development study experience and engage with teachers one-to-one or through Professional Learning Communities who have incorporated independent reading in their classrooms. I will continue to be a reading role model, sharing my enthusiasm for reading and discussing the books that I have read. Furthermore, I will help students determine their reading interests, assist them in obtaining books that they really want to read, schedule time in the classroom for independent reading, and engage with students about their reading experiences.

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Appendix A

Example Independent Reading Log

Independent Reading Log

My NAME: _____ Date: _____

Title of Book: _____ Pages Read: ____ Minutes Read: ____

Today, I read from page ____ to page ____ in my book.

After your reading today, write a summary of key points, events, characters, or people in the story.

Key Points or Events:	What were the key points or events in the reading? List at least 3. 1. _____ _____ 2. _____ _____ 3. _____ _____ _____
Important Characters or People in the Story:	Describe what happened to the characters or people in the story. Focus on what you just read. 1. _____ _____ _____ 2. _____ _____ _____ 3. _____ _____ _____

Appendix B**Example Reading Interest Inventory**

1. What kinds of books do you like to read?
2. What book or books are you reading right now or have recently read?
3. What are some of your personal interests? Sports? Hobbies?
4. Do you have time to read at home?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No
5. Do you read in your free time?
 - a. Yes! All the time.
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No
6. Do you like independent reading at school?
 - a. Yes! All the time.
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No
7. Do you read more than just chapter books like magazines, graphic novels, or comic books?
8. Is there a book that you'd like to read, but you don't have a way to get it? If so, what's the name of the book?

Author's Note

Although I am a career changer that has decided to become an elementary education teacher later in life, I have had several opportunities to teach and instruct over the years in a wide range of areas. I have held positions as an instructor teaching aircraft maintenance, computerized maintenance management systems (IBM's Maximo product), process improvement principles (the Toyota Production System aka "Lean"), and baseball umpiring mechanics. Teaching is a calling and something that feels natural and almost second-natured to me.

As for reading, I am the type of person that always has a book. My preferred reading topic is golf. I have read all the classics and more than 100 books about golf including biographies about the greatest players in the game, the history of the game, famous tournaments over the years, and popular instructional books on how to improve one's game. The next golf book I plan to read is *Tiger & Phil: Golf's Most Fascinating Rivalry* by Bob Harig. I cannot wait!