THE IMPACT OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERSONAL READING HABITS ON THEIR LITERACY INSTRUCTION

by

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CERTIFICATION OF THESIS/PROJECT CAPSTONE WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled The Impact of Middle School Teachers'
Personal Reading Habits on Their Classroom Literacy Instruction by Jessica Ruber, Candidate
for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Literacy Birth- Grade 12, is acceptable in form
and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.

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THE IMPACT OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERSONAL READING HABITS ON
THEIR LITERACY INSTRUCTION

ABSTRACT

All educators, regardless of subject or grade level taught, are expected to incorporate

literacy best practices into their classroom (Huang, 2017). They are also expected to inspire their

students to be lifelong readers which can be problematic when teachers do not have positive

personal reading habits (Nathanson, et al., 2008). Based on this understanding, this empirical

study sought to answer the question: what is the impact of core middle school teachers' personal

reading habits on their classroom literacy practices? Participants consisted of nine middle school

teachers. The study used an online survey tool and resulted in three main findings. First, there

was no clear connection between the participant's personal reading habits and their use of

literacy best practices in the classroom. Second, the participants mainly valued reading but were

not frequent readers themselves. Third, within the qualitative data, there was no connection

between the participant's reading habits and their use of best practices as they value a variety of

best practices with an emphasis on more "non-social" strategies. In conclusion, the lack of

reading habits of the middle school teachers surveyed did not impact their use of literacy best

practices in the classroom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Aside from parents, teachers have the greatest opportunity to influence the reading habits of their students as they often model their own preferences and passions towards reading within the classroom (McKool & Gespass, 2009). Regardless of the grade or content area taught, all teachers are expected to teach students how to read, encourage them to be lifelong readers, and show them how to enjoy the act of reading. (Huang, 2017). Although literacy should be taught throughout one's educational career, many content area teachers do not believe that students need literacy instruction past elementary school and many teachers do not make time for it within their instruction (Faulkner,Oakley, Rohl, Lopes, & Solosy, 2012).

As teachers' have a large influence on their student's reading habits, it is problematic that many of them in middle school and high school may not make time for literacy both within their instruction and outside of school (Faulkner et al., 2012). Often times, educators do not consider themselves to be readers and may not have strong reading habits (Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt, 2008). These alliterate behaviors have been the subject of speculation on whether it impacts classroom literacy instruction and therefore student's reading abilities (Nathanson, et al., 2008). This begs the research question: what is the impact of core middle school teachers' personal reading habits on their classroom literacy practices? The most appropriate way to address the question of this relationship was to conduct an empirical research study through the use of survey tools sent to middle school teachers of the core subjects.

Background

As a preservice teacher who can never get her hands on enough books, I have been

constantly baffled by the sheer amount of my colleagues who do not enjoy or practice reading

outside of the classroom. I have always held the strong belief that teachers of reading should also

be models of readers if we are asking our students to read inside and outside of class. Teaching

the skills and strategies of reading is not just a task for the English and early elementary teachers,

but for all teachers as it is prominent in every subjects and level of education. To me, the

importance of reading for leisure and the impacts it can have on our students seem to be lost

among my colleagues. My love of reading encourages me to choose the most effective and

engaging instructional practices, in hopes to instill a lifelong love of reading in my future

students, but I am not sure the same happens with those educators who do not enjoy reading.

This made me curious as to if those teachers who do not enjoy reading for leisure also chose the

best practices for their students.

Terminology

For the purpose of this research study, terms are defined below to provide the reader with

a better understanding of the topic. The first key term is "aliterate" or "aliteracy." Essentially,

aliteracy is when one knows how to read but chooses not to as opposed to illiteracy which is

when one does not know how to read. Asselin (2004) noted that those who are alliterate lack the

intrinsic motivation, or engagement and desire, to read even when they are capable of

successfully comprehending the text. Another key term was "reading habits" which may be

interchanged with "leisure reading." In this study, these terms are all related to the personal

reading teachers do outside of school solely for their own pleasure. The teachers in this study

were all core content area teachers, which are the general education math, science, social studies,

and English teachers within a middle school, or grades 6-8. The last key term was "literacy

instructional practices" which is essentially the strategies teachers use in class to teach different literacy skills related to reading. These are often best practices, or strategies which have been researched and proven to be effective in teaching reading.

Theoretical Stance

In this research study on the influence of teachers' personal reading habits on the best practices implemented in their classrooms, the approaches to literacy were based on the theory of social learning (Bandura, 1977) and the affective theory of engagement (Guthrie, 2004). Researchers have noted that students are initially introduced to literature through observations of their parents at home and then through their teachers at school (McKool & Gespass, 2009). When teachers model good reading habits and a love for reading, their students are more likely to develop into lifelong readers (McKool & Gespass, 2009). These reading habits and attitudes influence the participants' involvement in reading that becomes associated with motivation which, in turn, "influences reading performance to the extent that it increases the amount of time spent reading" (Granado, 2014, p.46). When teachers had stronger reading habits, they not only modeled their enjoyment towards reading but also implemented a greater number of instructional strategies considered to be good practices for promoting intrinsic motivation (Granado, 2014, p. 46). Therefore, the theoretical stances that supported this research was the view of literacy as being learned socially as well as being motivated intrinsically to engage in reading.

The proposed research synthesis aligned with the International Reading Association (IRA) *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2010). Several of the Standards addressed the component of teachers of literacy being readers and choosing the best practices in their classrooms. For example, this candidate was addressing Standard 2; Curriculum and Instruction

by studying the evidence-based instruction, or best practices, teachers' use to teach reading.

Another Standard the candidate addressed was Standard 5; Literate Environment by addressing

the idea that teachers who are readers can help motivate their students to enjoy reading and be

readers themselves. This study proposed that teachers who read more for leisure will be able to

choose best practices that not only help their students in learning to read but also help motivate

them into wanting to read, creating that engaging and literacy-rich learning environment.

Rationale

Burgess, Sargent, Smith, Hill, and Morrison (2011) stated that no matter the subject or

grade level, all educators have a role in both developing the reading skills of their students and

instilling within them a life-long love of reading. This has been especially necessary in the

middle years when, across the world, students were performing below what is considered to be

"satisfactory" in literacy and when students started to develop a negative perception and attitude

towards reading (Faulkner et al., 2012). Several researchers (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides &

Peterson, 2010; Burgess et al., 2011; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008) have

found that many educators do not have positive personal reading habits due to lack of time or

lack of enjoyment in reading. Huang (2017) and Benevides and Peterson (2010) have noted that

teachers who have positive personal reading habits tend to choose more appropriate reading

practices in their classrooms which help their students learn to read. When teachers have shown

that they are knowledgeable and excited readers, they often had a better understanding of what

strategies work best and have interesting ways to motivate students to read for pleasure (McKool

& Gespass, 2009). With this in mind, teachers should all strive to be readers to better influence

and teach their students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

To address the research question of the impact that middle school teachers' personal reading habits have on their instructional literacy practices, an exhaustive review and synthesis of the literature has been conducted. The literature review began with a search of the major databases PsycINFO, Education Source, and ERIC Database. A variety of academic databases have been searched using the key words: reading habits, teachers, literacy instruction, instructional practices, teachers' reading habits, teacher attitudes, and pleasure reading. The studies most relevant to this proposed research were grouped below and arranged according to the other factors aside from teachers' reading habits which were examined within each study.

The first group dealt with teacher's personal reading habits on their classroom instruction. Four studies were examined within this group which surveyed teacher's personal reading habits, such as how often they read, what they read, and if they value reading for pleasure as well as the types of literacy practices they implement into their classrooms. The second theme found within the studies was teacher's knowledge of children's literature. The researchers from two studies aimed to see if teachers who read more have a wider knowledge base of children's books in their repertoire while the other two looked at teacher's knowledge of children's literature and classroom practices. Having a wider knowledge of children's literature can impact one's classroom instruction and aid in creating lifelong readers. Lastly, the third theme found within the research revolved around pre-service teachers reading habits and attitudes towards reading. The researchers from these studies wanted to examine pre-service teacher's reading habits and how their past reading experiences may have had an impact on their

current reading habits which, therefore, can impact their future classroom instruction.

Teacher's Reading Habits and Classroom Instruction

Several researchers (McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999; Burgess, et al., 2011; Brooks, 2007) have examined the relationship between teachers' personal reading habits and the manner in which these habits influence their instructional practices. When analyzing teacher's personal reading habits, McKool and Gespass (2009) discovered that, on average, teachers only read for a maximum of 24 minutes per day and that 69% of teachers claimed they were very committed readers. Morrison et al. (1999) also found that a majority of educators surveyed had favorable opinions towards reading and, unlike the participants in the McKool and Gespass (2009) study, it was found that these participants engaged in the reading much more frequently. Instead of looking at the amount of time teachers read, Burgess et al. (2011) decided to look at the amount of books teachers read a month and when they do read. They found that, on average, teachers read 2.67 books a month but many claimed to not having enough time to read or that they did their leisure reading in the summer months which contradicts the findings from the Morrison et al. (1999) study (Burgess et al., 2011). According to the aforementioned studies, although teachers considered themselves very committed readers or knew the importance of reading, there was inconsistency in how much of a priority and time teachers alloted to reading in their day-to-day lives.

McKool and Gespass (2009) and Morrison et al. (1999) found a trend in teachers who read more for pleasure and the use of best practices in their classroom instruction. McKool and Gespass (2009) discovered that teachers who leisurely read for pleasure more than 30 minutes a day and value reading did use more instructional practices related to best practice than those who

read for ten or fewer minutes a day. Morrison et al. (1999) also noted that teachers who engaged in and valued personal reading used more recommended literacy practices in their instruction. When examining the types of best practices teachers who read more for pleasure use in the classroom, McKool and Gespass found that 53% of participants reported using "instructional practices more associated with intrinsic motivation" such as socially constructed activities (p. 268). This included allowing students to talk and discuss their readings which can play a key role in creating a lifelong habit of reading in future students.

Unlike the results found from McKool and Gespass (2009) and Morrison et al. (1999), Burgess et al. (2011) and Brooks (2007) found that there was not much variability in the use of best practices by teachers who do or do not read for leisure. As opposed to focusing on the best practices and activities that related to the use of books in the classroom like McKool and Gespass (2009) and Morrison et al, the study by Burgess et al. (2011) included literacy practices tied to the National Reading Panel's essential five elements of reading instruction. Burgess et al. (2011) found that whether teachers read or watched television more had no direct impact on their use of best instructional practices related to literacy. Similarly, Brooks (2007) found that even teachers who were nominated and acknowledged as being "exemplary fourth grade teachers of reading and writing" were all classified as different kinds of readers and writers which shows that not all effective teachers read or write for pleasure. While all of these exemplary reading and writing teachers did not see themselves as readers and writers, they all agreed that the main priority was to support their students by implementing the best practices as opposed to showcasing their own reading and writing (Brooks, 2007). Overall, these studies all acknowledged that while there can be a connection between teachers' attitudes towards literacy and the classroom practices, there

was inconsistency in the strength of the correlation.

Knowledge of Children's Literature

When surveying teachers' reading habits and knowledge of children's literature, several researchers (Cremin, Mottram, Bearne, & Goodwin, 2009; Akins, Tichenor, Heins, & Piechura, 2018; Collins-Block & Mangieri, 2002; Burgess et al., 2011) found a similar theme: that teacher's knowledge of children's books is not as vast as expected. Cremin et al. (2009) identified that while three quarters of the teachers surveyed made time for their own personal reading, teachers had limited knowledge of children's authors, poets, and picture books. Across the study, an over-reliance was discovered on a narrow range of well-known authors such as J.K. Rowling and Roald Dahl which were stated to be books these teachers grew up reading in school (Cremin et al, 2009).

Collins-Block and Mangieri (2002) found that 36% of teachers struggled with identifying popular picture books authors from the last five years and that 17% of teachers were unable to cite even one book. Akins et al. (2018) also discovered that, when asked to check off all of the children's books they had read from a list of 75 books, teachers predominantly read books within the realistic fiction or fantasy genres, with each genre having 100% of the books within this genre being read by at least one responding teacher. The genres with lower percentages of respondents were historical fiction, multicultural, and picture books. When comparing genres, Collins-Block and Mangieri (2002) also concluded that fiction was the only genre where the percentage of teachers exceed 50% (56%). This shows similar findings to the Akins et al. (2018) study in that teachers were most familiar with fiction, specifically fantasy novels, as opposed to multicultural or historical books.

Burgess et al. (2011) and Collins-Block and Mangieri (2002) did not just examin

teacher's knowledge of children's authors, but also how teacher's knowledge of children's

authors may impact their use of best practices in the classroom. Researchers within both studies

(Burgess et al., 2011; and Collins-Block & Mangieri, 2002) found that teachers who had more

knowledge of children's literature reported using best practices more often in their classrooms.

Collins-Block and Mangieri (2002) found that teachers who were surveyed either were very

knowledgeable about children's literature and a wide array of activities to develop lifelong

reading habits for their students or were not very knowledgeable about children's literature,

especially outside of the fiction genre, and were unable to list recreational reading activities.

Being able to recommend books that fit individual student's needs and interests is

important to enhancing student's desire to read for pleasure more often which will only increase

their reading abilities (Cremin et al., 2009). Children's books, or trade books, are often used to

hook students into learning about a specific topic as they "...blend factual information and

scientific inquiry with a compelling story" which is why they are often used by the Common

Core (Cremin et al, 2009, p. 66). It also can allow teachers to be able to model their personal

reading behaviors if they are able to talk to their students about the books the students are

reading (Burgess et al., 2011). As found by the researchers in the aforementioned studies

(Cremin et al., 2009; Burgess et al., 2011; Akins et al., 2018; Collins-Block & Mangieri, 2002),

teachers' personal reading habits of children's books is important as the wider the knowledge of

children's literature, the more likely teachers can help their students in both learning to read and

loving to read.

Pre-Service Teacher's Reading Habits and Attitudes

Many researchers (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Huang, 2017; Granado, 2014; Nathanson et al., 2008) have honed in on pre-service teachers' attitudes towards reading and other factors that impacted their reading habits. While the researchers found a variety of results, most showed that pre-service teachers are not as enthusiastic of readers as expected and that they do not have strong reading habits. When examining just education majors, Applegate et al. (2014), determined that 51.1% considered themselves enthusiastic readers. When the education majors were broken down by preferred class level to teach, it was found that the lowest percentage of pre-service teachers that were enthusiastic readers (36.4%) wanted to teach kindergarten and first grade. (Applegate et al., 2014) This is disconcerting because these are the first years of schooling in which students are being taught the foundations of reading and having a strong reading role model is important. Similarly, in the study by Nathanson et al. (2008), which was conducted on graduate education majors, only 47% classified themselves as enthusiastic readers, about 33% said they read only if they have time, and 17% found no pleasure in reading (p. 318). When compared to the national average in the study conducted by Granado (2014), it was found that 65% of future teachers read less books per year which reinforces the data found in the prior studies. Benevides and Peterson (2010) found slightly different results as 65% of the pre-service teachers read often or very often and 61% reported that they associated reading with enjoyment. These results were much higher than those mentioned in the prior studies as Benevides and Peterson (2010) found that a majority of those pre-service teachers surveyed enjoyed reading as opposed to the prior studies where those students who enjoyed reading were the minority. Although there was inconsistency in the results of pre-service

teachers' reading habits and enjoyment in reading, the varied results showed an inconsistency in future teacher's beliefs toward reading and how they will teach their students to love reading.

When the reasons behind and types of reading habits pre-service teachers have were analyzed, Granado (2014), Huang (2017), and Applegate et al. (2014) concluded that many pre-service teachers viewed reading as an obligation. In Granado's 2014 study, it was found that 84.2% of pre-service teachers surveyed only had one use for reading to satisfy the academic requirements of their studies which was also similar to the results in Applegate et al.'s study (2014). Huang noticed that when the amount time pre-service teachers spent reading a week was analyzed, it was concluded that most preservice teachers spent at most 1-4 a week reading, with 38.4% reading for academic purposes and 19.5% reading for extracurricular purposes (2017). Reading mainly for academic purposes means these pre-service teachers are mainly extrinsically motivated to read which is detrimental as extrinsic motivation does not sustain a reading habit (Granado, 2014). Granado found that the primary indicator of a reading habit is reading literature, especially for pleasure (2011).

When their excitement towards reading or their reading habits was discussed, many authors (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Nathanson et al., 2008) found that an abundance of pre-service teachers mentioned the impact of early reading experiences which shaped their attitudes towards reading. In the study by Benevides and Peterson (2010) there was a significant correlation found between the participants enjoyment of reading and frequent reading during personal time and their recollection of positive childhood reading experiences. Applegate et al. (2014) found similar results as the participants who noted that they received parental encouragement to read or who were praised by parents for their reading skills were more

likely to be considered enthusiastic readers than those who did not mention parental involvement (62.7% to 43.7%). Most of the detailed responses mentioned the teachers who guided them through reading acquisition. Most significantly, 72.4% of enthusiastic readers recalled a former teacher who had "recommended personalized choices of books that the teacher(s) felt they would like," (Applegate et al., 2014, p.195). In the study by Nathanson et al. (2008), it was also found that parents had a powerful effect in creating enthusiastic readers, early reading experiences were more likely to be rated as positive by enthusiastic readers, and that 64% of enthusiastic readers had a teacher who shared their love of reading with them.

Summary

While there was variability in the studies' results, overall, it was discovered that both in-service and pre-service teachers were not reading as much as would be expected (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Huang, 2017; Granado, 2014; Nathanson et al., 2008; Cremin et al., 2009; Akins et al., 2018; Collins-Block & Mangieri, 2002; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison et al., 1999; Burgess, et al., 2011; Brooks, 2007). Many elementary teachers did not have a wide enough knowledge of children's literature which can have negative impacts on inspiring children to love reading if they cannot recommend and use a variety of books in the classroom to reach all students (Cremin et al., 2009; Akins et al., 2018; Collins-Block & Mangieri, 2002). Yet, those teachers who do read more often and more widely have been found to have a positive impact on their students in regards to reading. The pre-service teachers who were enthusiastic readers often accredited their love of reading to parental, teacher and other positive early literacy experiences which shows the extent of a teacher's influence (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Huang, 2017; Granado, 2014; Nathanson et al., 2008).

Teachers who were readers also understood that reading is a social event and knew the importance of showing their enjoyment towards reading to intrinsically inspire and motivate their students to read (McKool & Gespass, 2009). Those elementary teachers who were classified as readers also tended to choose more best practices to teach literacy (McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison et al., 1999; Burgess, et al., 2011; Brooks, 2007).

The literature review covered the themes of teacher's personal reading habits on their classroom instruction, teacher's knowledge of children's literature, and pre-service teachers reading habits and attitudes. Overall, the literature agreed that teachers, whether in-service or pre-service, were not reading as much as would be expected and do not enjoy reading enough to instill a love of reading in their students (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Huang, 2017; Granado, 2014; Nathanson et al., 2008; Cremin et al., 2009; Akins et al., 2018; Collins-Block & Mangieri, 2002; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison et al., 1999; Burgess, et al., 2011; Brooks, 2007). However, there were no studies in the reviewed literature that examined the reading habits of middle school teachers and the impact on their literacy instruction across the content areas. This study surveyed middle school teachers to find out their personal reading habits and the best practices implemented in their classrooms. In the sections below, I will describe the methods used in research, the data and the analytic process of coding the data and eventually the findings of this research and how they will contribute to this reviewed body of literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview of Methodology

There has been little question that teachers can influence the reading habits of their students when they often model their own preferences and passions towards reading within the classroom (McKool & Gespass, 2009). Researchers (Burgess et al., 2011; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, et. al., 1999) have found that elementary teachers who have positive personal reading habits tend to choose more appropriate reading practices in their classrooms which help their students learn to read. When teachers were more knowledgeable and excited readers themselves, they tended to have a better understanding of what strategies work best and have interesting ways to motivate students to read for pleasure (McKool & Gespass, 2009). Through the use of a survey, the Principal Investigator addressed the question of: do the personal reading habits of middle school teachers impact the literacy best practices implemented in the classroom?

Design of Study

In order to discover the personal reading habits of middle school teachers and the literacy best practices they have implemented in the classroom, an empirical study was conducted. The methodology for this study was quantitative empirical research using analysis of data collected through a survey of middle school teachers. The Principal Investigator used the survey to inquire about their personal reading habits and attitudes as well as the literacy practices the participants value and used most often. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected within this study. Analysis of the qualitative data from the survey consisted of coding the data to determine patterns and themes whereas the quantitative data consisted of statistical analysis, both of which led to the findings for this study. This specific study aimed to add to the current literature by

examining the personal reading habits of middle school teachers in Western New York along with the teacher's instructional literacy practices within their respectful content areas.

Participants. To gain participants for this study, the researcher used a convenience sampling as she had connections within the two middle schools. There were 35 teachers from the two middle schools in Western New York that were emailed an invitation to participate in the study as they all teach within grades six through eight the subjects of math, science, social studies, and/or English. Both male and female participants were be surveyed spanning from age 21 through 65 and have varying ethnic backgrounds. Of the 35 teachers, eleven responded and nine provided consent and completed the survey. Of the nine consenting participants, five taught 6th grade, three taught 7th grade, and three taught 8th grade with one participant teaching classes in all three grades. In order to protect the confidentiality, names of the participants were not collected all data was anonymous.

Procedures. The Principal Investigator also completed a Human Subjects Application to gain approval from the Human Subjects Committee at the State University of New York at Fredonia. Approval was granted to the Principal Investigator on December 13th, 2018. On February 25th, 2019, either the Principal Investigator emailed the general education teacher or the school principal agreed to email all the general education teachers in their school on the behalf of the Principal Investigator to explain the purpose of the study and provide a link to the online survey. Within the survey, the teachers were asked to provide their consent to participate in the rest of the survey, or not providing consent and exiting the survey. A week later, on March 5th, 2019, the Principal Investigator sent a reminder email to the candidates individually to gently remind them of the survey and to reach as many participants as possible. Participants had

another week to submit the survey before the survey closed.

The survey was a modified version of McKool and Gespass's survey (2009), which was intended for use with 4th through 6th grade teachers but in this study, was used with 6th through 8th grade teachers in the current proposed study so modifications were necessary. The Principal Investigator went through the survey and removed or modified any questions which were directed towards teachers of a younger audience or questions that were irrelevant to content area teachers. The remaining list of questions were rearranged and formatted to be easily completable online to form the survey used in this study (Appendix A). The Principal Investigator gained permission from both researchers to use and modify their survey (Appendix B).

The instrument measured the participants' personal reading habits and values towards reading as well as the literacy best practices they implement in their classrooms. The survey consisted of a few background questions about the teacher's demographics (grade, current position, school). Then, the participants were asked 14 questions regarding different literacy strategies and how they are implemented in their classrooms. The participants were first asked to generate three strategies they value and use often. Then, the survey included a variety of four-option Likert-type questions to determine how often teachers implement certain best practices into their classrooms, ranging from "Not At All" to "Everyday."

The next segment of the survey consisted of ten questions (nine multiple choice and one short answer) regarding the participants' personal reading habits and values. The multiple choice questions also used a four-option Likert type questions in which a statement about reading is presented and the participant chose one of four options, ranging from "Extremely Descriptive" to "Not Descriptive At All". The short answer question was added to provide the Principal

Investigator with further information about the teacher's personal reading habits. To ensure

reliability and validity, the same survey was administered to all consenting participants. After all

the data was collected, the Principal Investigator coded and aggregated the data based upon

themes and patterns presented.

Data Collection. The instrument used was an online survey which took up to 30 minutes

for the participants to complete. Data was collected anonymously, as no names, emails or

significant descriptors were collected through the Google Forms. The data collected was securely

kept and remain confidential during the study. Hard copies of the surveys were stored in a locked

cabinet. Electronic records of the data were stored on the researcher's personal (secured by

password) computer. The surveys will be destroyed (through shredding and deleting) after

completion of the study in June 2019.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the data analysis for this study was to see if there was a connection

between teacher's personal reading habits and the use of literacy best practices in their

classrooms. Data analysis included qualitative and quantitative techniques as the survey included

both likert-type and short answer open ended questions. After the completion of the survey, the

data was exported from Google Forms which presented the data from all participants according

to question. The participants spanned in content area taught with most of them, or five out of the

nine participants (55.56%), having taught English or ELA and/or Social Studies for at least part

of the day. Only one participant out of the nine (11.12%) taught science and no participants

taught math. To keep the participants anonymity, the data was aggregated only by the

participant's content areas taught, levels of personal reading habits, and their instructional

literacy practices used in the classroom. This aided the investigator in being able to analyze the data to see how strongly participants enjoyed reading and which literacy best practices they used most frequently in the classroom. The themes and patterns from each layer of analyzation described below were combined and compared by two researchers to ensure extra reliability.

Quantitative Data. To analyze the quantitative data, the investigator calculated the descriptive statistics in the quantitative data within the study for the likert-type questions. By using the exported data from Google Forms, the investigator processed the data first by looking for questions that had trends of six or more of the participants answering in similar ways. By establishing a six out of nine (66.67%) participant agreement, the Principal Investigator established what would be considered a majority of responses. With such a small sample size, those questions that did not show any trends were not included in the analysis of the survey. The investigator then analyzed the remaining questions quantitatively by aggregating each question for frequencies and converted those into percentages to examine how all nine participants answered each of the likert-type questions.

The first of two sections of likert-type questions addressed the strategies participants used frequently in the classroom. The participants were asked "How often do you use the following strategies?"and were provided a range of four options: "Every day," "1-2 times a week," "1-2 times a month," and "Not At All." Although there were four options, they were combined (two more frequent, and two less frequent) to better show trends in the data. Four strategies were used "Every day" or "1-2 times a week" by nine out of nine (100%) of the participants. These strategies were: "ask oral comprehension questions," "ask students to answer comprehension questions in writing," "allow students to practice using academic vocabulary," and "allow

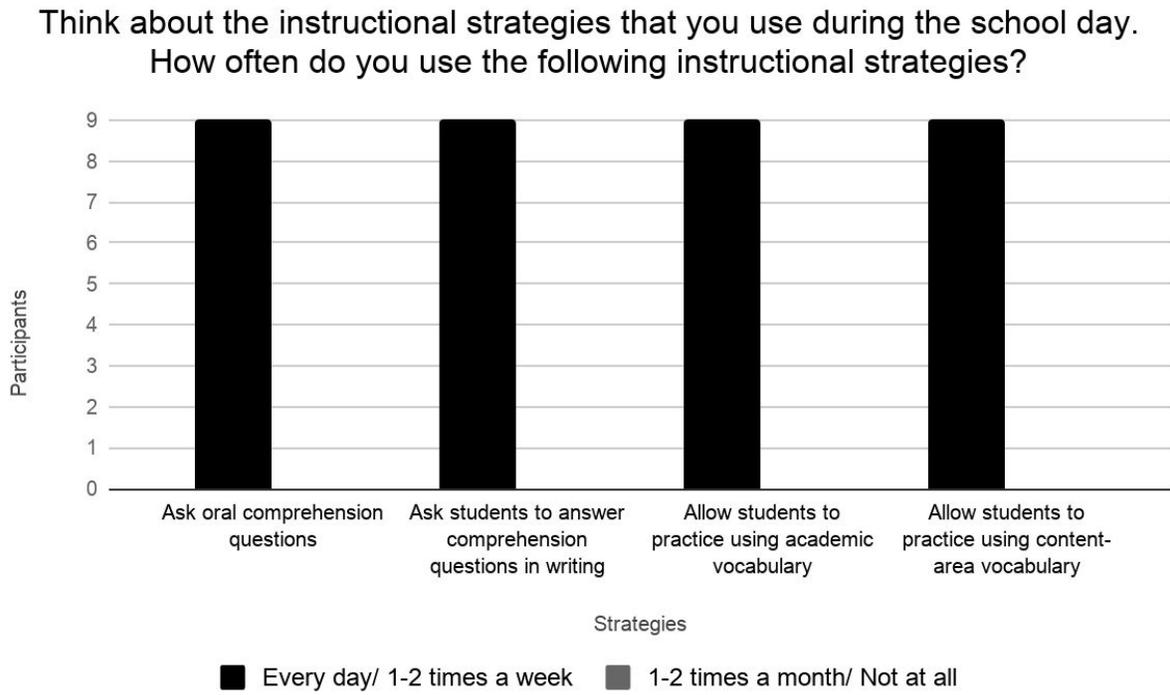students to practice using content-area vocabulary" (see Figure 1).

Think about the instructional strategies that you use during the school day. How often do you use the following instructional strategies?

Figure 1. Literacy strategies participants use often

Four strategies were used "Every day" or "1-2 times a week" by eight out of nine

(88.89%) of the participants. Those strategies were as follows: "read aloud from an

informational book, article, or text in class," "directly teach vocabulary strategies," "directly

teach academic vocabulary," and "use graphic organizers or visual displays to represent

information and relationships," (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Literacy strategies participants use often

Three strategies were used "Every day" or "1-2 times a week" by seven out of nine

(77.78%) participants. Those strategies were: "let students discuss literature/texts in small

groups," "teach how to use and read specific content-area texts," and "model specific content

area reading strategies," (see Figure 3).

Think about the instructional strategies that you use during the school day. How often do you use the following instructional strategies?
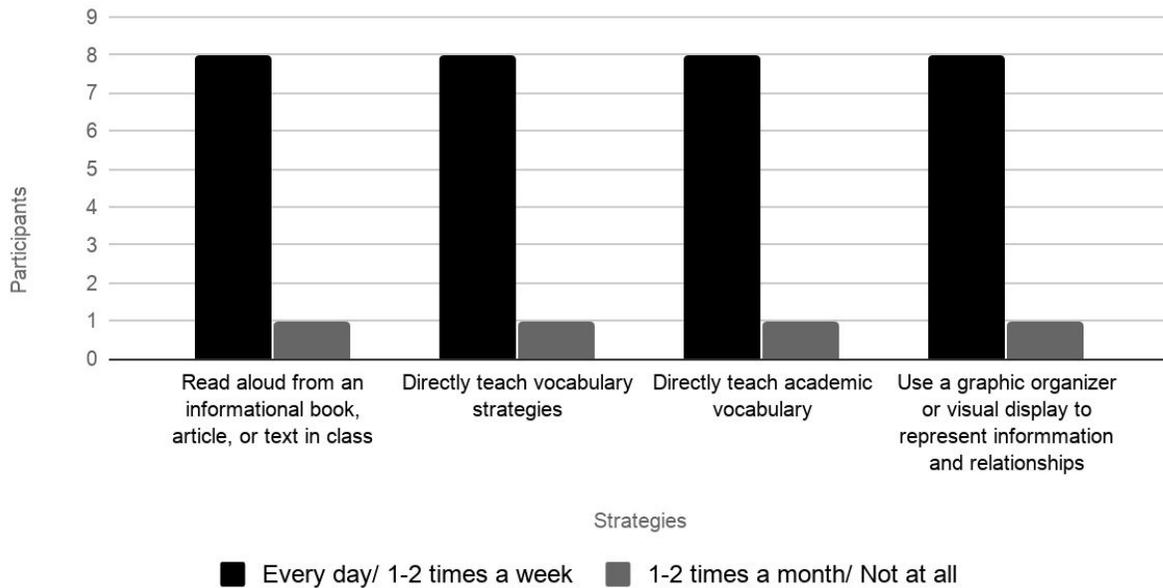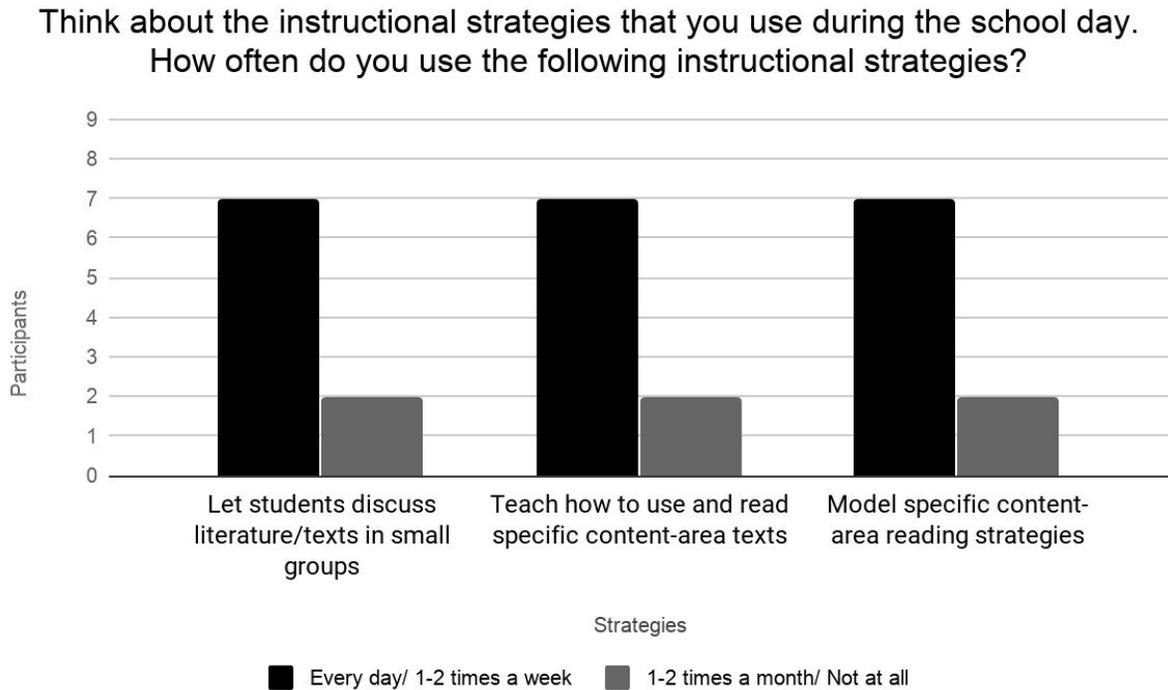
Figure 3. Literacy strategies participants used often

The last two strategies which showed trends in the data had seven out of nine (77.78%) of

the participants using the strategies in their classroom "Not at All" or "1-2 times a month" which

were: "give students an opportunity to discuss self-selected materials in class" and "recommend

specific reading materials (novels, articles, texts, etc) to students in your class," (see Figure 4).
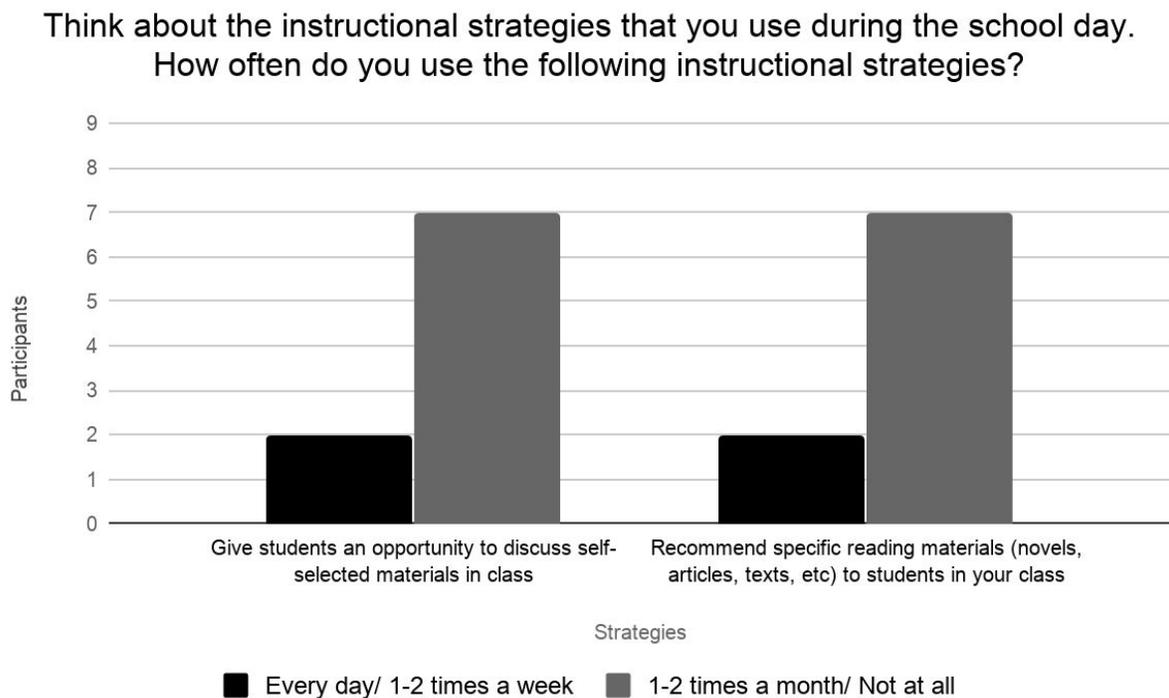

Figure 4. Literacy strategies participants used often

The second set of likert-type questions analyzed tackled the participant's personal

reading habits and were asked to rank how descriptive certain statements were to themselves.

The participants were provided a range of four options: "Extremely Descriptive," "Very

Descriptive," "Slightly Descriptive,," and "Not Descriptive At All." Although there were four

options, they were combined (two more descriptive and two less descriptive) to better show

trends in the data.When presented with two negative statements towards reading, most of the

teachers did not strongly agree that the statements described them. The statement "Frankly, I

don't find reading very relaxing" had eight out of nine (88.89%), of the participants saying that

this statement is either "Slightly Descriptive" or "Not Descriptive At All." Similarly, seven out

of nine (77.78%) of the participants selected either the "Slightly Descriptive" or "Not

Descriptive At All" options in regards to the statement "I've never really thought of myself as a

'reader'." When given the statement "I think I am a devoted reader," six out of nine (66.67%) of

the participants said that this statement was "Slightly Descriptive" or "Not Descriptive At All,"
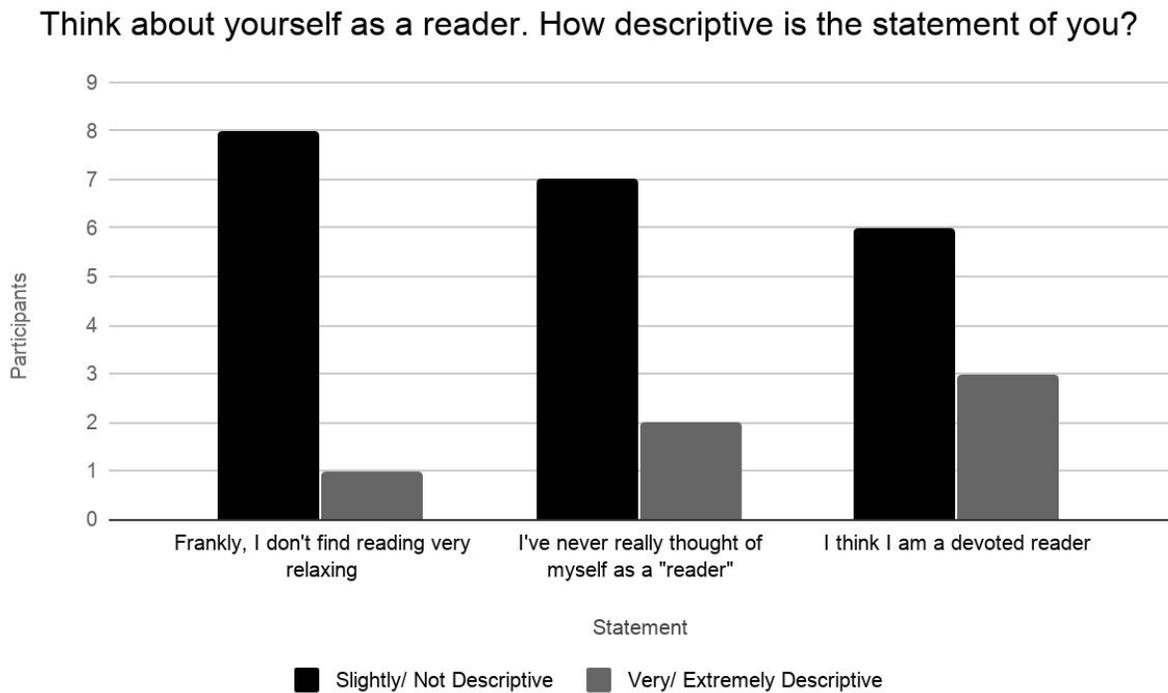
(see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Participants views of themselves as readers

    Some of the statements asked the participants to rank how descriptive the statements

were of them regarding how often they read or value finding time to read for pleasure. For the

statement "I'd rather watch TV or movies than read," six out of nine of the participants (66.67%)

said that this was "Very Descriptive" or "Extremely Descriptive" of themself. The next

statement, "I make time to read for myself," had seven out of nine (77.78%) of the participants

claiming that this statement was "Slightly Descriptive" or "Not Descriptive At All." When

presented with the statement "I'd like to spend a day reading when I have time," six out of nine

(66.67%) of the participants responded that it was either "Slightly Descriptive" or "Not
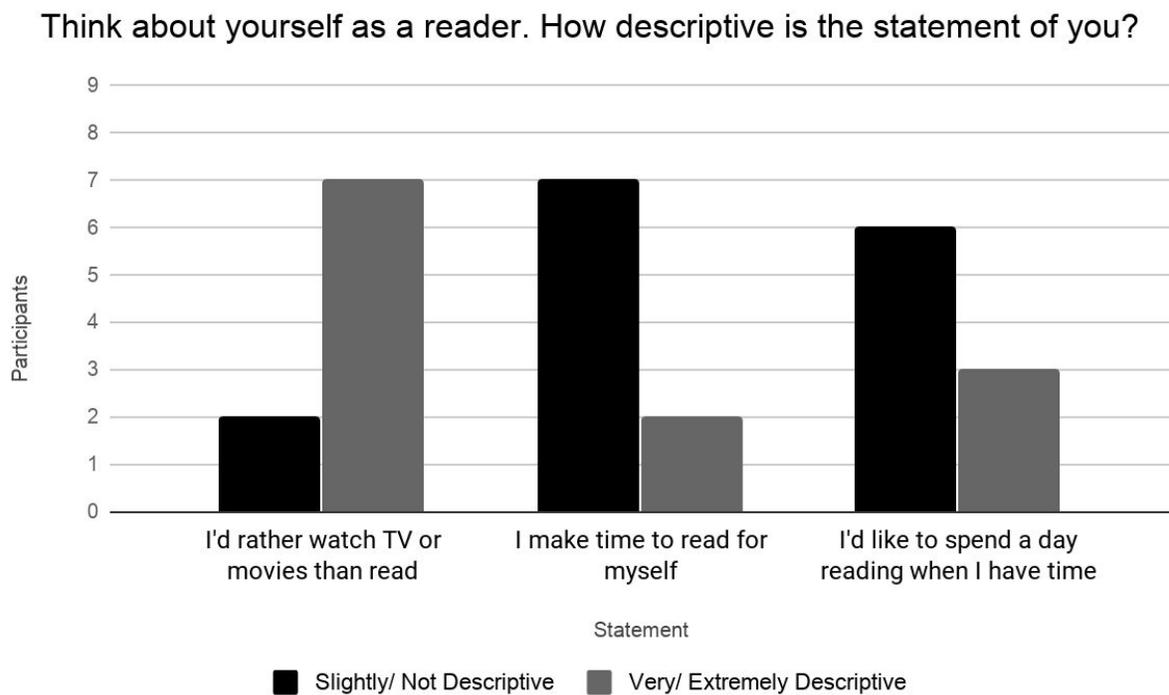
Descriptive At All," (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Participants value of reading

Although the participants were provided four options (Never, 1-2 times a month, 1-2

times a week, and Every day) to answer the question "How often do you read for pleasure**?**" the

two more extreme answers were not selected by any of the participants. The option "1-2 times a week" was selected by five out of nine (55.56%) of the participants and the option "1-2 times a month" was selected by four out of nine (44.45%), or almost an even split of the participants, to describe how often they read for themselves (see Figure 7).

How often do you read for pleasure?

Figure 7. How often participants read

Qualitative Data. Analysis of the qualitative data was conducted through coding the short-answer responses both descriptively and thematically to find patterns and trends.Two open-ended responses were included in this study and each written response was given a one or two word code that represents the data piece before pattern coding occured to determine the large themes among the data. When asked to "Name three literacy instructional strategies you value and use regularly in your classroom," the investigator used the codes of "social" which includes

students working cooperatively with their peers or "non-social" which includes the independent or teacher-lead instruction to categorize the strategies.

The other short answer question analyzed was: "If you read for pleasure, what do you like to read (novels, poetry, professional materials, newspaper, online articles, magazines, graphic novels, etc.)? What have you read most recently (please be specific)? If you do not read for pleasure, how do you spend your time instead?" The two codes used to classify the responses were either "enjoyment reading" which included the participants reading novels, poetry, and graphic novels or "informational reading," which includes professional development texts and articles either online, in magazines, or in the newspaper. It was found that if teachers read, they often read for information than they did for enjoyment.

Chapter 4: Results and Interpretations

Results

The research question for this study was: do middle school teachers' personal reading habits impact their use of literacy best practices in the classroom? The Principal Investigator conducted a survey study with both quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis of said data resulted in three main findings, two from the quantitative data and one from the qualitative data. First, it was found that there was no clear connection between teacher's personal reading habits and their use of literacy best practices in the classroom. Second, it was found that the participants mainly valued reading but were not frequent readers themselves. They mainly read for information as opposed to enjoyment. Lastly, in the qualitative data it was found that there was no connection between the participant's reading habits and their use of best practices as they value a variety of best practices with an emphasis on more "non-social" strategies which are not conducive to motivating students to enjoy reading as well as "social" strategies.

Reliability of Data

Data for this study was consistently gathered and analyzed through multiple means. The same survey was administered to all participants for the same length of time to ensure the data was reliable between the responses. A second reader analyzed the collected data to ensure reliability in the findings and what the Principal Investigator found to be the main results. The Principal Investigator and the reader both made analyzations and comments on the data before coming together to agree upon the main findings for this research study.

Interpretation of the Data/Results

Quantitative Findings. There were no clear connections between the nine participant's

personal reading habits and their use of literacy best practices in the classroom. While many of these teacher's did not have strong reading habits as the majority often preferred to "watch tv or a movie" and did not frequently "make time for themselves to read." Though these participants did not read often for their own enjoyment, they did use many literacy best practices in the classroom almost every day or every week such as: asking oral comprehension questions, having students answer comprehension questions in writing, having students practice using academic and content-area vocabulary, reading aloud from a text, directly teaching vocabulary strategies and academic vocabulary, and using graphic organizers and visual displays in the classroom.

The other quantitative finding was that the participants mainly valued reading but were not frequent readers themselves. While a majority of the participants said that they considered themselves readers and find it enjoyable, they do not find themselves to be devoted readers. The data analyzed showed that the nine participants read around 1-2 times a week to 1-2 times a month and read far more for information and professional means as opposed to enjoyment as shown by the types of materials they read such as articles (newspapers, magazines, online) as well as professional development materials.

Qualitative Finding. It was found in the data that many literacy best practices were used frequently in the participant's classrooms. When analyzing the strategies they valued and used most, the Principal Investigator found that there was a variety of strategies which were either more "social" or "non-social" in nature with an emphasis on more "non-social" practices. The more social strategies are ones that students work cooperatively with their peers and allow for discussion which in turn increases intrinsic motivation and an interest in reading. Some of the social strategies mentioned as being valued and used frequently by the participants were:

Think-Pair-Share, partner reading, literature circles, and allowing students to discuss literature/texts in small groups. Slightly more non-social practices were valued and used frequently such as: independent practice, directly teaching academic vocabulary and vocabulary strategies, and asking oral comprehension strategies.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Study and Findings

All teachers, despite the age or content area they teach, are expected to teach students how to read, encourage them to be lifelong readers, and show them how to enjoy the act of reading(Huang, 2017). Yet, many teachers' are also alliterate, meaning that they do not make time for their own personal reading which can influence their student's reading habits (Faulkner et al., 2012). These alliterate behaviors have been the subject of speculation on whether it impacts classroom literacy instruction and therefore student's reading abilities (Nathanson, et al., 2008). This led to the research question for this study: what is the impact of core middle school teachers' personal reading habits on their classroom literacy practices?

The most appropriate way to address the question of this relationship was to conduct an empirical research study through the use of survey tools sent to middle school teachers of the core subjects. The Principal Investigator used the survey to inquire about their personal reading habits and attitudes as well as the literacy practices the participants value and used most often. Data analysis resulted in three main findings, two from the quantitative data and one from the qualitative data. The first finding was that there was no clear connection between teacher's personal reading habits and their use of literacy best practices in the classroom. Second, it was found that the participants mainly valued reading but were not frequent readers themselves. Lastly, in the qualitative data it was found that there was no connection between the participant's reading habits and their use of best practices as they value a variety of best practices with an emphasis on more "non-social" strategies.

Significance of the Findings

  The findings of this study are similar to previous research as it was discovered that the participants were not reading as much as would be expected of current teachers in the field (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Huang, 2017; Granado, 2014; Nathanson et al., 2008; Cremin et al., 2009; Akins et al., 2018; Collins-Block & Mangieri, 2002; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison et al., 1999; Burgess, et al., 2011; Brooks, 2007). In the studies by McKool and Gespass (2009), Morrison et. al. (1999), Burgess et al. (2011), and Brooks (2007), it was found that those elementary teachers who were classified as readers also tended to choose more best practices to teach literacy. This study did not have similar findings as most of the participants did not classify themselves as readers yet they still used many literacy best practices in the classroom frequently. Lastly, McKool and Gespass (2009) found that those teachers who were readers also understood that reading is a social event and knew the importance of showing their enjoyment towards reading to intrinsically inspire and motivate their students to read, this study did not have enough participants to produce similar findings. This study found that the participants used both social and non-social practices equally as often with a reliance on more non-social strategies.

Limitations of the Findings

  This study only surveyed nine participants from two middle schools in the Western New York which limits the findings for this study. Also, the participants surveyed mainly taught English Language Arts for at least part of the day which can also limit the study as there was not a large range of subjects taught. These limitations made the findings less generalizable to all middle school teachers as the population was very narrow. Also, the survey format of this study

could have caused self-reporting bias as the participants may have wanted to answer in the way they know they should which may not actually be their most accurate answers. With that being said, the findings from this study should be approached with caution.

Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question

The research question for this study, which was connected to the methodology is as follows do middle school teachers' personal reading habits impact their use of literacy best practices in the classroom? There was no strong answer to this question due to the low number of participants for this survey. A majority of the participants viewed themselves as readers but did not make much time for personal reading in their lives. With this being said, it was also found that these teachers did use many literacy best practices frequently within their classrooms. From this limited study, it can be said that reading habits of the middle school teachers surveyed do not impact their use of literacy best practices in the classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research

The next steps for this study would be to replicate it but with a larger population size as nine participants was not conducive to providing any clear findings related to the research question. Also, it would be imperative to include middle school teachers from an array of middle schools, not just within the Western New York area to gain more reliable findings for all middle school teachers in the country. Lastly, it would be beneficial to do a follow up interview with the participants after the complete the survey to gain a better insight into their reading habits and literacy instruction. Many of the questions asked in the survey resulted in quantitative data and the addition of more qualitative data would help clarify the participants' quantitative responses.

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Appendix A
Adapted Survey Questions (McKool, S. & Gespass, S., 2009)

No matter the subject or grade level, all educators have a role in both developing the reading skills of their students and instilling within them a life-long love of reading (Burgess, Sargent & Hill, 2011). Literacy skills play a role in all classrooms and many factors may play a role in the literacy skills taught across the content areas. I plan to take a look at the instruction being taught in different classrooms and see how personal reading habits may have an impact on classroom literacy instruction.

Therefore, I am asking you to please take no more than 30 minutes to provide information about your personal reading habits and the literacy instruction used in your classrooms. Please note that all information provided via this survey is confidential. Survey data will be aggregated.

Grade:_____
Subject:_____

1. Name three literacy instructional strategies you value and use regularly in your classroom.

    a.
    b.
    c.

2. Think about the instructional strategies that you use during the school day. How often do you use the following instructional strategies?

1. Ask oral comprehension questions
    a. Not at all
    b. 1-2 times a month
    c. 1-2 times a week
    d. Everyday
2. Ask students to answer comprehension questions in writing
    a. Not at all
    b. 1-2 times a month
    c. 1-2 times a week
    d. Everyday
3. Have students read orally in a large group setting
    a. Not at all
    b. 1-2 times a month
    c. 1-2 times a week
    d. Everyday
4. Give students an opportunity to read self-selected materials in class
    a. Not at all
    b. 1-2 times a month
    c. 1-2 times a week

      d. Everyday
5. Give students an opportunity to discuss self-selected materials in class
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
6. Read aloud from an informational book, article, or text in class
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
7. Read aloud from a novel or children's book in class
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
8. Let students discuss literature/texts in small groups
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
9. Let students discuss literature/texts with the whole class
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
10. Have students respond to reading in notebooks
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
11. Share insights from your own personal reading
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
12. Recommend specific reading materials (novels, articles, texts, ect) to students in your class
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month
      c. 1-2 times a week
      d. Everyday
13. Model specific content area reading strategies
      a. Not at all
      b. 1-2 times a month

      c.   1-2 times a week

      d.   Everyday

14. Directly teach vocabulary and strategies
   a. Not at all
   b. 1-2 times a month
   c. 1-2 times a week
   d. Everyday
15. Allow students to practice using content-area vocabulary
   a. Not at all
   b. 1-2 times a month
   c. 1-2 times a week
   d. Everyday
16. Directly teach academic vocabulary
   a. Not at all
   b. 1-2 times a month
   c. 1-2 times a week
   d. Everyday
17. Allow students to practice using academic vocabulary
   a. Not at all
   b. 1-2 times a month
   c. 1-2 times a week
   d. Everyday
18. Teach how to use and read specific content-area texts
   a. Not at all
   b. 1-2 times a month
   c. 1-2 times a week
   d. Everyday
19. Conduct anticipatory or pre-reading activities
   a. Not at all
   b. 1-2 times a month
   c. 1-2 times a week
   d. Everyday
20. Use graphic organizer or visual displays to represent information and relationships
   a. Not at all
   b. 1-2 times a month
   c. 1-2 times a week
   d. Everyday

3. Below are some statements teachers can use to describe themselves in general terms. For each statement, please select the option that indicates how descriptive the statement is of you.

How descriptive is the statement of you?
   1. I've never really thought of myself as a "reader".
      a. Extremely Descriptive

      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive
2. I think I am a devoted reader.
      a. Extremely Descriptive
      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive
3. I'd like to spend a day reading when I have time.
      a. Extremely Descriptive
      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive
4. I get lots of satisfaction from my personal reading.
      a. Extremely Descriptive
      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive
5. I'd rather watch TV or movies than read.
      a. Extremely Descriptive
      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive
6. Frankly, I don't find reading very relaxing.
      a. Extremely Descriptive
      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive
7. I wish I had more time to read for myself.
      a. Extremely Descriptive
      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive
8. I make time to read for myself.
      a. Extremely Descriptive
      b. Very Descriptive
      c. Slightly Descriptive
      d. Not At All Descriptive

4. How often do you read for pleasure?
      1. Not at all
      2. 1-2 times a month
      3. 1-2 times a week
      4. Everyday

5. Short Answer: If you read for pleasure, what do you like to read (novels, poetry, professional materials, newspaper, online articles, magazines, graphic novels, etc.)? What have you read most recently (please be specific)? If you do not read for pleasure, how to you spend your time instead?

Appendix B
Approval From Researchers to Modify Their Survey

Sharon McKool   7:10 PM (18 minutes ago)
to Jessica, Suzanne

Fine with me, Jessica. Let me know if I can be of help.
Sharon

...

Suzanne Gespass   7:19 PM (9 minutes ago)
to Jessica, smckool

It's fine with me, too, Jessica.
Good luck and do share the final product with us.
Best,
Suzanne Gespass

Sent from my iPhone

...