



THE IMPACT OF BOOK CLUB CONVERSATIONS ON RELUCTANT OR STRUGGLING READERS

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Abstract:

This qualitative case study details the effects on the persistence of conversations about reading among reluctant readers as well as the effect that joining a book club has on a student's desire to read. Six fourth graders and their teacher librarian participated in this study from a tiny, rural location. Different reading responsibilities were taught to the students, who used them during the book discussion. In response to the research questions, the researcher found five key themes. Diverse Perspectives Deepened Understandings is the first theme. Building Relationships Provide Safety is the second theme. Themes three and four are that aesthetic and efferent reactions were apparent and that community accountability was required. The students loved the idea of community accountability and were able to form connections that enriched their understandings. They also expressed aesthetic and efferent emotions. The professional was crucial in meeting the students' need for a professional to hear their voice and help them make these crucial connections to books by carefully listening to the students' own stories and providing the necessary sensitivity while recommending other books based on their interest level and ability level.

Keywords: Librarian, Book Club, Community, Accountability, Qualitative, Reading

Introduction:

Education professionals have evaluated and contrasted students' learning for centuries (Dresser, 2013; Johnston, 2013). However, a single exam result or a solitary demonstration of expertise is frequently given priority. Although each person is important to a society and its development, pupils' ability to collaborate with and learn from others determines how deeply they may learn (Johnston, 2013). Communities' ability to thrive ultimately depends on how well members of the community coexist and learn from one another. Building communities through discussion creates a learning environment where enthusiasm and difficulty are

shared. To fully enjoy learning, classroom cultures in our schools must be healthy.

As a culture, we spend far too much time using social media and other technological advancements to amuse ourselves. The value and interest in youngsters studying with technology will only increase (Comuntzis-Page & Hitchings, 2012-2013). But our culture's pace and objectives can cause us to lose sight of what should be far more important than work or technology: people. Everyone has to practice being present with other people in conversation on a regular basis (Goldberg & Pesko, 2000). Our culture's pace and demand for learning will only quicken, but we still need to

work on how we appreciate one another. The level of discourse generated by a book club can improve community by placing more weight on each person's perspective (Beach &Yussen, 2011).

Purpose of the Study:

This study aimed to encourage and empower young learners to participate intellectually and socially in each other's academic pursuits through book clubs. Less outside distractions resulted from reading being given a greater purpose (Rank, 2013). Social responsibility and a selfless bias were created within the framework of a book club (Beach &Yussen). Students who were able to do so improved their ability to study in other academic fields and interact socially with classmates, which further motivated them to read for their book clubs. The development of self-motivated responsibility for greater degrees of dialogue within communities and the inspiration of deeper levels of learning for students in their reading of literature are both facilitated by book clubs.

Rationale of the Study:

The impact of reading proficiency on a child's education and daily life is immense. According to recent assessments, children' scores are declining, and a child's enthusiasm in reading directly correlates with this. For this reason, book clubs could be used by librarians and educators to raise reading proficiency and general interest in reading. This is in stark contrast to the known importance of the need to develop a strong reading culture noted above in the standard. This implies that must divide the one hour of time allotted to this assignment by students in order to further emphasize the topic. With the assistance of a teacher librarian, kids in this situation would thus have six seconds

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per week to concentrate on their reading choices. Studying the book club and the reading emphasis it might give students will be beneficial for students, teachers, librarians, administrators, and parents.

Problem Statement:

Research indicates a continuing need for more techniques to encourage kids to become lifelong readers, even if numerous advancements have been achieved over the years to involve students in book discussions in which students increased in capacity to synthesize material and recognize themes.

Literature Review:

According to **Dresser's (2013)** research, novice teachers were unaware of the connection between social-emotional and academic development because social-emotional learning was not integrated into education, and most novice teachers did not emphasize or engage their students in social-emotional learning. Without social-emotional learning, students are less engaged in their classroom communities, which lead to a dissonance between the social-emotional and academic facets and produces unfavorable outcomes. Without involvement, the learning environment in the classroom will not support academic or social growth. Students must feel important to the community and cherished as individuals.

According to **Dresser (2013)**, kids will be more emotionally and academically willing and interested in their learning the more connections they form with their mentors, professors, and peers. Respect and trust are built through social circumstances, empowering learning even through failure since emotional hope is found. Relationships help pupils succeed academically by making them feel respected and inspired. Individual students

are supported even through difficulties, whether they arise in the social, emotional, or academic contexts, if trust is being created within classroom communities. Higher levels of thought can frequently be motivated by emotional connections as well. Academic success is more likely to occur in a setting that is safer and helpful for pupils. Small groups of students can form book clubs to lay the groundwork for a supportive and active classroom environment. A community can safely demand a higher degree of commitment and thought, but it can also be made up of self-motivated students who are interested in one another's learning. Book clubs can encourage commitment by holding one another accountable, which promotes socializing in both book club discussions and dialogues about all topics. Book groups can foster interpersonal trust.

Everyone finds it difficult to engage in conversation, thus whether or not it is modeled and practiced at home, it should occur frequently throughout a person's educational experience. College freshmen must compare their ideas and understanding of what they have studied in order to have a deep understanding of what they have learned (Brank & Wylie, 2013). The more conversant college students are, the more effectively we can live in and assist our existing and future communities (Johnston 2013).

The value of student-led conversations, particularly in guided reading groups, was examined by **Hulan (2010)**. Teaching and modeling debate skills is crucial. With this autonomy for the book club, students experimented and directed discussions independently of their teacher, and there was more immediate learning from the discussions' successes and mistakes. Feedback is crucial to promoting learning for both teachers and students, but the kind of feedback will

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vary based on the needs of the individual student (Hattie, 2012). Beginning with strengths while focusing on the need to get better as learners, specific praise and constructive criticism must be given

Giving pupils control over their learning experiences is necessary to promote accountability. As students take charge of their education, there will be support as well as difficulties. With the freedoms granted, book clubs can help students get a deeper grasp of what they are reading, a deeper understanding of other people through their talks, and opportunities to fail and succeed safely. The student-led culture made possible by book clubs can be used to foster social-emotional learning. Book clubs demand and stimulate engagement in both intellectual and social obligations.

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To what extent do book clubs help students begin to see reading in a more positive light?
- 2) How can a Teacher Librarian influence students' sustained engagement in conversations about reading?

Methodology:

To allow all students to join, the book clubs were shifted to various times during the day. Students had individual conferences to discuss the impact of book clubs on their reading, learning, and interpersonal communication at the completion of the research.

For each student, taking part in the book club experience was optional. Students in book clubs were asked if they wanted to participate in the study, emphasizing that it was optional and that their decision would not affect their participation in the book club or the learning process as a whole in our

classroom. Both research participants and non-participants received the same level of help in the classroom.

Data Collection:

Data was gathered through focus group discussions, participant observations of book club participants, and an individual student questionnaire regarding reading habits that was distributed between the first and last focus group meetings. A focus group, according to Wildemuth, is a collection of people who have been chosen and brought together by researchers to talk about and offer their opinions on the research issue based on their own experiences (p. 242). During each book club meeting, questions were posed to the focus group. For a list of the focus group questions for each of the book club's twelve meetings. One of the primary objectives of this study was to have talks, and the focus group method made that possible. Focus groups "are a considerably stronger research tool if utilized in tandem with other methodologies," claims Wildemuth. As a result, the focus group is complemented with participant observation throughout the process and a questionnaire that has been simplified to five straightforward questions for each student's response. In addition, according to Wildemuth, "participant observation is a method in which a researcher participates in the everyday rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the ways to learn about the overt and covert facets of their cultural practices". With the help of this technique, the group members could be better understood and had a stronger sense of connection. The focus group's field notes and audio recordings allowed for a more in-depth participant observation. In the field notes, the researcher noted the frequency of voluntary conversation contributions, such

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as when a participant voluntarily added a comment to another participant's earlier discussion of a book; the frequency of voluntary "popcorn reading," which enables readers to voluntarily read aloud for however long they feel comfortable by joining in when the previous reader stops and with no one else present.

Data Analysis:

The reading questionnaire, audio recording transcripts, and focus group field observations were all investigated using traditional qualitative content analysis. Because coding categories and themes can be derived both directly and inductively from the raw data, I employed the traditional qualitative analysis method.

Findings:

In a Google Document, the teacher recorded his observations of the book clubs, generalizations from informal chats with students about their experiences, and particular ideas provided during formal conversations regarding book clubs. Following their book club meeting, students gave their experience and learning in brief remarks via a Google Form. The teacher used both the Google Form replies and the teacher's diary as a source of information to direct additional research and explain the experience's strengths and priorities for students' development. Book clubs improved students' love of reading and learning through four key themes in the coding and analysis of the observations and feedback: Aesthetic and efferent responses were obvious, relationships fostered safety, various perspectives increased understanding, and community accountability was required.

- **Diverse perspectives:**

One of the opening statements in both formal and informal discussions regarding the students' book club experience frequently centered on the students' improved enjoyment of reading as a result of the diverse viewpoints from their club members. Mary said, "Book groups are great because they push me to read at higher levels and think critically. This response was made in response to a question that was left open at the start of the book club event. The students' awkward quiet during the first sessions, when they were unsure of what to do with the free time and talk, made her response unexpected. Some book clubs had trouble coming up with topics for discussion during their first few sessions, but they all aimed to maintain their independence despite these difficulties.

Earlier in the year, a few students were hesitant to join a book club because they did not want to give up their time for independent reading. The book club meeting time was moved to just before lunch as a result of this input. Bill expressed his willingness to resume book clubs informally at the start of the third quarter, saying, "I'd even be prepared to give up on my reading time to still conduct a book club." Students discovered reading to be more enjoyable since varied viewpoints helped them understand the materials better.

The kids' focus on their own reading was sharpened by the information that was shared among them. The students were able to interact with their peers during the discussion more effectively because to focused reading. Their dialogue was valued and deepened as a result of the increased emphasis on increasing their independent reading. The more in-depth their conversation, the more inspired they

were to read critically on their own time and share their findings with their book club.

Mary talked on how her participation in the book club helped her understand the book they read more thoroughly and introduced her to other works she might not have discovered otherwise. She said in a formal meeting, "I wouldn't get to read a book I never heard of, so it's a good thing. Books that I haven't heard of before don't interest me. She had been influenced to read new literary genres by the book clubs she had participated in. She would not have developed an interest in the various genres or titles if she had not engaged in talks with her friends. Her interests grew after joining a learning community.

- **Building relationships**

Students connected with one another and the community within the book clubs while providing as much personal information as they felt safe doing so. Students emphasized the importance of book clubs as a secure environment for problem solving and as a means of developing communication skills. Being in a book club helped me achieve one of my key goals of becoming better at verbally communicating with peers and becoming ready for intellectual conversations. Brady's admission that having a secure environment for learning and sharing ideas with his classmates was crucial to him during our conversation in December astounded me. I love talking about a book instead of my personal life, the man said. He continued by noting that he could be social with friends and have fun without talking about anything personal. He didn't have to provide any private information in order to engage personally with the book and their book club discussions.

For Mary, book groups were about more than just being a better reader. When asked why book clubs have been essential to her, she answered, "It helps me best in my communication." She read at a higher level, and book groups made her think more deeply as she read. She enhanced her interpersonal interactions through enhancing her communication skills.

Alicia put forth a lot of effort in school and adored reading. She was urged to participate in a book club not just to learn from others but also to enjoy reading with people in her neighborhood. She was first shy since she didn't want her passion for reading to be curbed. She gave it a try since she had the option to end the experience whenever she wanted to, and having control within the parameters of the book club offered her comfort. She found that she enjoyed participating in discussions with her classmates and forming bonds more and more as her book club meetings progressed. She gave the following response when asked to explain the goal of book clubs: "Book clubs are about learning from other people." She said she loved the experience and continued to learn alongside her classmates, but she preferred to just be in one book club. With as much personal information as they desired, students connected with one another and the community.

- **Aesthetic and efferent responses**

Students actually enjoyed the book club experience because it forced them to read at a higher level of thinking, which led to deeper thinking, and because it allowed them an unstructured time with their peers in control of their learning. The majority of the pupils found that learning independently was the most enticing part. Without reading and reflecting on an

assigned reading and engaging in focused discussion during book club time, the book club would not endure more than two weeks. The book group required everyone to take responsibility. When they had nothing they were eager to talk about or enquire about, socializing became boring. Students were not aesthetically motivated to continue book clubs without conversation arising from the efferent components of the experience; book clubs without responsible learners discontinued meeting due to frustration or apathy among learners.

Brady has participated in both successful and unsuccessful book clubs, so I asked him to explain the differences from his point of view. We are skilled because we converse with others about the same book, recognizing various things, he said. I've discovered that if you merely put in the bare minimal effort, I learn less. He discussed the premise that students were more motivated to continue learning in the community if they worked harder. Each and every student desired to interact and relate to their buddies. The book club encouraged them to use what they had learned to structure these communities throughout their day of learning across many curriculum areas, which not only helped them succeed in their own student-structured learning settings but also brought them success there as well. They were encouraged to be lifelong learners by the lessons they were learning in their book clubs, which helped them adapt to different situations and personalities.

Identifying strengths came first in the discussion of learning as a class, then what needed to be improved. We talked about the book clubs' positives as well as negative aspects in both official and casual settings. As he wrapped up his remarks, Brady emphasized the significance he placed on the efferent components of

learning, adding, "I think what needs to change is we need to talk more about our learning instead of about the book. While discussing the book is vital, learning is even more crucial.

- **Accountability**

Being individually accountable was the thing that every book club participant found the most difficult. In a book club, there were numerous duties to be performed. In order to participate in conversations, maintain concentration during those talks, finish their outside reading independently, and be aware of the time the book club convened, students had to assign reading for their book clubs. The weight of all this responsibility scared the pupils.

After a few months of attending both unsuccessful and successful book clubs, Brady told me in November, "I prefer one book club at a time because it is easier. Even though I still have more novels to read, I only need to be accountable for reading for and staying with one book club. In January, he shared with me a different perspective on his involvement in book clubs: "Because I am in two book clubs, I can communicate more about my reading. Being in more than one, in my opinion, is more enjoyable. We keep switching our prescribed reading since we enjoy the book so much; we will finish it in a week. I am reading it with a man. It makes me want to read more. He had such a strong desire to keep studying in the neighborhood. He was not only urged to read more, but he also showed enough maturity to join two book clubs. He was motivated to succeed as a learner by the responsibility he received from his colleagues in the book club setting.

Students' desire to read independently increased as they deepened their grasp of the texts they were reading through conversation. When there was choice learning time, the book club members wanted to read all day long, just like Brady did. The majority of students who participate in book groups increase their home reading. A couple kids expressed their wish to read during break because they wanted to read responsibly for their book club and have access to the school's online resources. Students' urgency and enthusiasm to read at home and at school, rather than instructor mandates, led to this desire.

Discussion and Recommendations:

The level of collaborative learning in the classroom within the framework of book clubs significantly exceeded expectations. Higher degrees of relationships were built between students and their peers as well as higher levels of learning were attained in the academic parts of reading and learning in a community. Their book club improved the quality of their conversation, which spread to other academic subject areas and other social groups they encountered throughout the day. Students discovered that their book club could be more than simply a way to engage in deep thinking during class; it could also be a fun way for them to study with their classmates in a variety of contexts throughout their lives.

Students were aesthetically driven by book clubs to seek out a depth of knowledge and connections within and outside of the academic community. Students also understood that aesthetic drive ended in the absence of difficulty. Because they were confident in their friends' support, students were more likely to take on difficult texts. Reading in a community became qualitative because

students were delving deeply into the material together, enhancing the book club discussion with a variety of perspectives and diverse schema. The group accountability became more than just quantitatively completing the assigned reading and sharing a summary.

Despite their many differences and arguments, the children were able to feel a feeling of belonging. In numerous circumstances, the experience of belonging deepened comprehension and responsibility in the academic and social facets of learning.

Recommendations:

The study was restricted by the pupils' various schedules and reading levels as well as by their varied timetables. The depth of dialogue that students reading at primary reading levels could have been constrained since their reading was more concerned with comprehension than with preparation for the topic. The more opportunities students had to participate in the book club community, the more their reading skills improved. Shorter books were read by students with lower reading skills, which made it difficult for us to supply reading material across several weeks. Because of all the interventions, learning programs, and other pullout activities like music and orchestra during the week, it was difficult to schedule a regular time when kids could have their book club discussion. As a result, during the course of the research, the planned book club time was altered several times, eventually taking up some math time.

The study was additionally constrained by the amount of time that research data was gathered. Throughout the rest of the year, the level of learning grew deeper. The pupils' academic and social experiences at school benefited from

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the lessons they learned through the book club. The more the students participated in their book club, the more learning spread across the entire classroom.

Future Scope:

More investigation might look into expanding the varieties of book clubs. These book clubs could consist of nonfiction or genre-specific book groups, book groups with teachers and students, book groups with students from different classrooms, or book groups with students from other grade levels. These book clubs could offer and concentrate on a range of other academic and social methods and abilities, creating more communities and increasing the number of connections between students.

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