Let's Read Together: Reading Motivation and Engagement in Elementary Students

Jennifer Doering
Liberal Studies
Dominican University of California
50 Acacia Ave.
San Rafael, California 94901 USA

Faculty Advisor: Rosemarie Michaels

Abstract

Reading opens students' minds to new perspectives and understanding while giving them a way to connect with others' thoughts and feelings. Even though reading is "a way to learn, explore and communicate with the world" (Ortileb, 2015, p. 166)[1], many students are disengaged and uninterested in the activity. A review of the literature indicates that teachers can implement strategies in their classrooms to change these negative trends into positive ones. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to discover strategies that teachers can use to create lifelong readers out of their students. This study will specifically look for strategies that promote, (1) student motivation to read, and (2) student engagement with reading material. This study addresses the following research question: What are effective teaching strategies for promoting lifelong reading in elementary students by increasing student motivation to read and student engagement with academic reading material? In order to collect data, reading instruction was observed in three different elementary school classrooms in California. The observations focused primarily on teaching strategies that are used and effective with students. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with six California educators. The results yielded three characteristics of teaching strategies that classroom teachers use to promote student motivation and engagement in the classroom: personalization, teacher enthusiasm, and planning instruction for appropriate student success.

Keywords: reading instruction, motivation, engagement

1. Introduction

Reading is an incredibly beneficial skill that helps students in numerous ways, both academically and personally. Reading pertains to all areas of life, from online and print materials, to sign posts on the street and tags in the grocery store. It is imperative that every student learns how to read and that their experience with reading does not stop there. They must be engaged with reading and see it as a beneficial and worthwhile skill, for reading is "a way to learn, explore and communicate with the world" (Ortileb, 2015, p. 166)[1] and will translate into future academic and career success. Reading opens students' minds to new perspectives and understanding and provides a way to connect with others' thoughts and feelings.

However, many students are disengaged and uninterested in reading because of a variety of reasons. First, they may feel as if they are not a good reader, or that the material is too difficult. In addition, they may be unwilling to read anything other than the books that they are interested in. Specifically, Miller (2012) and Ortileb (2015) each identify and describe several types of readers that they have seen in their classrooms. A common theme of both studies is that students often have a distorted image of themselves as a reader or are disengaged with the material. This study will attempt to remedy this problem by reviewing strategies that teachers can implement in their classrooms to change

these negative trends into positive ones, where students have a positive image, or self-concept, of themselves as a reader and are engaged with the material.

This study is important because reading is an essential skill that has incredible implications. If a student is engaged with reading and has a positive self-concept of themselves as a reader, they will be much more likely to achieve higher success academically. According to Skinner and Pitzer (2012), "Engagement is the direct (and only) pathway to cumulative learning, long-term achievement, and eventual academic success" (as quoted in Parsons et al., 2015, p. 224)[2]. All teachers want their students to achieve academic success and engagement is an excellent way to ensure this. In addition, research has shown that "reading engagement could compensate for--and even overcome--low socioeconomic status and family educational backgrounds" (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 224)[2]. If simply engaging students in reading can help to close the ever-increasing achievement gap in students, every teacher should know and implement as many strategies as they can to promote engagement with reading, as well as motivation to read in the first place. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to discover strategies that teachers use to encourage lifelong reading in their students. This study will specifically look for strategies that promote, (1) student motivation to read, and (2) student engagement with academic reading material. This study will address the following research question: What are effective teaching strategies for promoting lifelong reading in elementary students by increasing student motivation to read and student engagement with academic reading material?

2. Review of the Literature

This study examines the strategies that teachers can use to promote student motivation to read and student engagement with academic reading material. A review of the literature provides some of those strategies. The first section defines motivation and engagement, as well as why they are important in students. The second section identifies strategies that teachers can use in the classroom to increase motivation and engagement in their students. The review of the literature will end with a synthesis of the information.

Motivation and engagement are the foci of this study and two articles from *The Reading Teacher* define each term. In regards to motivation, the first section of a study conducted by Jang, Conradi, McKenna, and Jones (2015) defined the factors that cause motivation in students. Motivation is incredibly important in reading instruction because it not only fosters lifelong readers, but can also "lead to more time spent reading, which in turn can improve proficiency" (Jang et al., 2015, p. 239)[3]. However, much of the research into motivation is confusing and conflicted, causing most teachers to misunderstand the factors behind it. Jang et al. (2015) clarify the six key factors behind motivation in their article.

These six key factors that contribute to student motivation to read are: attitude, interest, value, self-efficacy, self-concept, and goal. Each is related to motivation in a unique way: Attitude is "a set of feelings that develop over time and that generally prompt the students either to read or to avoid reading" (Jang et al., 2015, p. 240)[3]. Interest is a student's enjoyment of a particular topic. Value concerns an individual student's "perceived importance of reading" (Jang et al., 2015, p. 240)[3]. Self-efficacy is a student's judge of the likelihood of success and how they will perform during an assessment or reading assignment. Self-concept is "how students see themselves as readers" (Jang et al., 2015, p. 241)[3]. Goals are the aim of reading, broken down into two categories, performance and mastery, by Jang et al. (2015): a performance goal is focused mainly on grades, teacher affirmation, and points received. A mastery goal is "motivated by a desire to learn through text, satisfy a curiosity, and derive enjoyment from reading" (Jang et al., 2015, p. 241)[3]. The combination of these six factors creates the basis for a student motivation to read and teachers can influence these factors with a variety of teaching strategies, which will be discussed later in this review of the literature. These six factors will become the framework for determining motivating strategies when the researcher analyzes her own data.

In regards to engagement, the first part of an article by Parsons, Malloy, Parsons and Burrowbridge (2015) explained why engagement is important for student achievement and its direct relationship to literacy tasks. Engagement is the key to meaningful learning, according to Parsons et al. (2015). But unfortunately, students are often disengaged with lessons in school despite teachers' best intentions. Parsons et al. (2015) defined engagement as a "multidimensional construct, consisting of affective, behavioral, and cognitive components" (p. 224)[2]. These components include time on task, strategic effort, and interest in the topic or task (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 229)[2]. Engagement is less of a constant quality in students and more of a fluid, constantly changing state of mind that exists during lessons. Students cannot be constantly engaged with lessons, but can be engaged for a majority of the time and certain tasks can promote this, as Parsons et al. (2015) studied in the second part of their article.

Parsons et al. (2015) claim that there are five key characteristics of tasks that promote student engagement with reading: "authenticity, collaboration, choice, appropriate challenge, and sustained learning" (p. 224)[2]. Authentic tasks are ones that have real world applications, outside of the classroom. Collaborative tasks are ones that allow students to work together to complete assignments. Tasks that give students choices are ones where students can choose what they are interested in. Challenging tasks are ones that are "neither too difficult nor too easy" (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 225)[2] and allow students to work hard while not becoming frustrated. Tasks that promote sustained learning keep students interested for a prolonged period of time. Parsons et al. (2015) believe that when teachers design instruction that has these characteristics, they will be able to support the needs of all students. They designed a study to determine what tasks would be most engaging for students, which will be discussed later in this review of the literature. These five characteristics will become the framework for determining engaging strategies when the researcher analyzes her own data.

Motivation and engagement are essential pieces of meeting the goals of the current California Common Core State Standards (CCCSS). The CCCSS state that the goal of reading instruction in California is to create literate and college/career ready students in the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language by the end of high school (California Board of Education, 2013)[4]. The standards also describe what being literate person in the 21st century means, namely to "undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature" and "actively seek wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews" (California Board of Education, 2013, p. 2)[4]. The standards set out to meet this goal by focusing on results rather than set teaching methods, using an integrated model of literacy that combines reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language, incorporating research and media skills into instruction, and requiring reading in a wide variety of content areas (California Board of Education, 2013, p. 3-5)[4]. The characteristics of a student who meets the goals of the standards are 1. demonstrate independence, 2. build strong content knowledge, 3. respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline, 4. comprehend as well as critique, 5. value evidence, 6. use technology and digital media strategically and capably, and 7. come to understand other perspectives and cultures (California Board of Education, 2013, p. 6)[4]. The section of the standards that focuses specifically on reading states that with a wide reading of texts that are both informational and literary and from various cultures and time periods, students will "build a foundation of knowledge in those fields that will give them the background to be better readers in all content areas" as well as "acquire the habits of reading independently and closely, which are essential to future success" (California Board of Education, 2013, p. 10)[4]. When teachers increase motivation to read and engagement with academic reading material, they help build these skills of independent and close reading in their students. This study's focus of motivating and engaging strategies moves teachers towards meeting the goals of the CCCSS in literacy.

Since research has shown that increasing motivation and engagement in reading instruction is helpful for students and meets the goal of the CCCSS, strategies for doing so are important to recognize. Literature from a number of academic sources suggested various strategies for increasing motivation and engagement by implementing strategies designed specifically to increase motivation and engagement, incorporating technology, and concentrating on wide, focused reading rather than just one book or source.

As a sixth grade teacher aiming to make her students become lifelong readers, Miller (2009) described many useful reading instruction strategies in her book, *The Book Whisperer*. Her main goal was to create an motivational and engaging environment for her readers through a combination of eight factors: 1. immersion in reading, 2. demonstrations of the uses of texts, 3. high expectations of the teacher towards reading, 4. possibility of choice, 5. time to practice, 6. meeting students at their skill level, 7. nonthreatening and immediate feedback on progress, and 8. engagement with reading through personal value, having a positive self-concept, being free from anxiety/having positive self-efficacy, and modeling from respected mentors (Miller, 2009, pp. 34-36)[5]. Three of the strategies she described as a part of her year-long reading journey with her students are sharing the rights of the reader, conducting student surveys, and reciprocal book recommendations. Each is designed specifically to increase motivation and engagement with reading.

"The Rights of the Reader" is a document that Miller (2009) shares with her students each year. It was written by a French author, Daniel Pennac (2006), and is a set of ten statements about reading that apply to all readers: "1. The right to not read. 2. The right to skip pages. 3. The right to not finish. 4. The right to reread. 5. The right to read anything. 6. The right to escapism. 7. The right to read anywhere. 8. The right to browse. 9. The right to read out loud. 10. The right to not defend your tastes" (as cited in Miller, 2009, p. 75)[5]. This list gives Miller's students the understanding that they can be empowered to make choices about their reading habits for themselves. In order to make choices about reading material, teachers often give student surveys, Miller's second strategy. Student surveys are designed to "gain insight into the preferences and personalities of ... students" which helps Miller give "personal reading recommendations to ... students" based on "their past reading experiences and their interests both in and out

of school" (Miller, 2009, p. 39)[5]. Once Miller has an understanding of what her students are interested in, she can move on to her final strategy, reciprocal book recommendations. With this strategy, Miller (2009) recommends books to her students and also takes recommendations from them for what she should read (p. 105-106)[5]. This relationship gives students a positive experience with reading and promotes both motivation and engagement, as do each of Miller's strategies.

To specifically target motivation, the second section of the study by Jang et al. (2015) presented strategies that teachers can use to increase motivation by first describing two categories of assessment, then giving a classroom example focused on each of the six factors of motivation: attitude, interest, value, self-efficacy, self-concept, and goals. Reactive and non-reactive assessments are designed to help teachers gather information about reading motivation in their students. A reactive assessment is one where students "are expected to self-report their beliefs by responding to a set of questions or statements" often in print form, such as a survey (Jang et al., 2015, p. 241)[3]. They are valuable tools for planning instruction, but can be misleading due to social desirability. A student may say that they enjoy reading more than they do to please the teacher, skewing the results. Non-reactive assessments are much more difficult to perform, but usually provide un-biased results because the students do not know that they are being assessed. Examples of non-reactive assessment are observing students and asking them to keep reading logs.

Jang et al. (2015) then gave evidence-based strategies that teachers can use in the classroom to influence the six factors of motivation, attitude, interest, value, self-efficacy, self-concept, and goal. To foster positive attitudes towards reading, they suggested reading aloud to students, which shows students their teacher's enthusiasm for reading and gives them the opportunity to be exposed to new and more complex texts (Jang et al., 2015)[3]. To extend interests, they suggested offering digital choices of reading material. This adds another dimension of choice for students and gives them a much larger selection to choose from. To stress the value of reading, Jang et al. suggested making instruction personal and interactive. They also stressed the importance of teaching students that reading is both an opportunity to do well on a task and gain future rewards. To promote self-efficacy, they suggested offering students clear roles in text discussions, such as idea circles, where students read different books on the same topic, possibly at different levels, and must share their ideas with each other. This allows all students to be a part of the discussion regardless of their reading ability (Jang et al., 2015)[3]. To build self-concepts, they suggested providing specific feedback. Instead of telling a student that they are a "good" reader, Jang et al. support the practices of Mr. Cole, a pseudonym for a reading teacher who tells his students exactly what they did well in reading, saying things such as, "Wow Abby, look at how you never gave up on that word, even though it was one that you didn't know" (Jang et al., 2015, p. 245)[3]. This gives students the opportunity to build their own positive self-concept as a reader, separate from their teacher's praise. Finally, to strengthen mastery goals for reading, they suggested designing activities that challenge students. If a task is too easy, students will not be motivated to complete it. But if the task is just a little challenging, students will be prompted to work harder (Jang et al., 2015)[3]. Jang et al. (2015) believe that if teachers implement these strategies designed to increase motivation in students, their students will achieve more in the area of reading. These strategies are all model examples of motivating strategies that the researcher can look for when she conducts her own research.

To specifically target engagement, the second part of Parsons et al.'s (2015) article described a study of various literacy tasks to determine the ten most engaging and ten least engaging tasks in reading instruction. They studied six students in a sixth-grade classroom in a Title I elementary school, two low-achieving, two average-achieving, and two high-achieving in the area of reading. They rated each task with a rubric designed to classify them as "closed, moderately open, or open" (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 225)[2] based on the categories for enhancing engagement that they had found: authenticity, collaboration, choice, appropriate challenge, and sustained learning. They observed students during instruction and conducted post-observation interviews with individual students to determine their behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement with the assignment and recorded the results using a rating scale (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 225)[2].

A complete list of the tasks Parsons et al. (2015) studied can be found on page 226 of the article, but the first three tasks that were most engaging were: "1. Read handout independently and underline the most important information. 2. 'At the end of the week, we talked about how each group will get a cake to demonstrate--without words--the Coastal Plain.' Students talk to their groups about how they will show this region on a cake. 3. 'I'm going to list the vocabulary words. Your job is to write a paragraph using all of those words. One that makes sense...that shows me you know what they mean'" (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 226)[2]. Generally, the most engaging tasks were ones that were moderately open or open and included authenticity, collaboration, and choice, based on the assessment rubric for tasks. To increase collaboration, the directing teacher was intentional when creating groups, including students with a variety of skills and learning levels in each group, including low-achieving but passionate students (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 227)[2]. The teacher also gave differentiated support to her students in each engaging task. The first three tasks that were least engaging were: "1. Complete a worksheet on the American Revolution. 2. Students talk through worksheet as a whole class. 3. Play 'Jeopardy': Students are divided into teams. A student from each team goes to the front of the classroom.

The students remaining at their seats can 'steal' incorrect answers by writing down the correct answer" (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 226)[2]. Generally, the least engaging tasks were closed, too difficult, and relied heavily on worksheets, according to the assessment rubric and student interviews.

There were some limitations to this study, such as the fact that only six students were observed and interviewed and only twenty-six tasks were observed. However, based on their results, Parsons et al. (2015) encourage teachers to include "content-laden visual and printed texts and [offer] tasks that invite student interest and collaboration" (p. 228)[2]. They also recommend using differentiated instruction, integrating technology, and avoiding tasks that do not seem to have a purpose, from the student perspective. This advice provides excellent examples of strategies that increase engagement for the researcher to look for in her research. When teachers plan instruction using these guidelines, Parsons et al. (2015) are confident that students will be engaged in meaningful work that will lead to increased understanding and future academic success.

This review of the literature has shown the impact of motivation to read and engagement with reading in students. The first section defined motivation and engagement: Jang et al. (2015) explained that there are six key factors that contribute to student motivation to read: attitude, interest, value, self-efficacy, self-concept, and goal. Parsons et al. (2015) explained that there are also five key factors of tasks that promote student engagement with reading: authenticity, collaboration, choice, appropriate challenge, and sustained learning. Then a review of the current CCCSS in English Language Arts and Literacy introduced the goal of reading instruction: to create students that are literate, independent readers of a wide variety of materials, including literature and informational texts. When students are motivated and engaged, they will be able to meet this goal.

The final section presented a variety of strategies that teachers use to create lessons that meet these characteristics of motivating and engaging reading instruction. The general trends of these strategies revealed that there are four main characteristics of strategies that promote motivation to read and engagement with reading. The first characteristic is personalization. When instruction is personalized to individual students, the factors of interest and choice are met. The second characteristic is the integration of technology, as seen in the study by Parsons et al. (2015). Technology has the capability to meet the factors of authenticity and interest. The third characteristic is positive teacher-student interactions in regards to reading. Positive teacher-student interactions that encourage students to value reading and see themselves as readers help meet many of the factors, including attitude, value, self-concept, and goals. The fourth characteristic is differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction meets the needs of all students as well as the factors of self-efficacy, attitude, collaboration, and appropriate challenge. Other trends that were evident in the literature were intentional planning of activities that would promote sustained learning, real world connections (authenticity) and collaboration. When teachers implement these characteristics of motivational and engaging reading tasks, instruction will be focused on creating the literate students that the current CCCSS demand and will promote a love of reading in all students.

3. Methods

When students are unmotivated to read and disengaged with reading, they are less likely to meet the goals of the CCCSS for Language Arts, and fail to learn an invaluable life skill. Based on a review of the literature, teachers can have a big impact on their students by identifying the types of readers in their classrooms and implementing strategies to increase motivation to read and engagement with reading in those students. The purpose of this study is to identify strategies that teachers use, especially those that encourage lifelong reading. To do so, the research question was: *What are effective teaching strategies for promoting lifelong reading in elementary students by increasing student motivation to read and student engagement with academic reading material?*

This study follows qualitative design using classroom observation and short interviews. To answer the research question, the researcher observed two classrooms in one elementary school, first- and third-grade, and another fourth- and fifth-grade classroom in a different elementary school. The third-grade classroom was observed in the fall semester of 2015 for a total of thirty-four hours and the first-grade classroom was observed in the spring semester of 2016 for a total of forty-five hours. Five observations were recorded during that time, two in the fall and three in the spring, for an average of thirty minutes each. A sixth observation was made in the fourth- and fifth-grade classroom in the spring semester of 2016 for approximately an hour. In addition, the researcher designed an Interview Protocol instrument and interviewed four California teachers, or former teachers, and two university professors in the field of literacy. These interviews lasted for an average of twenty-five minutes each and were conducted over a period of several weeks.

Three elementary teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area were observed in their classrooms and six California educators were interviewed. These educators were chosen because they teach in the school where the researcher is currently doing fieldwork, or have a relationship with the researcher. This is a sample of convenience.

Teacher #1 is a female third-grade teacher who has been teaching for a total of eight years over a fourteen year period. She currently teaches in a Waldorf-inspired charter school, where reading is taught slightly later than traditional public schools and technology is not used, and has a background in outdoor education. She wants her students to enjoy reading and be inspired to read more and learn more from books.

Teacher #2 is a male first-grade teacher in the same school as Teacher #1. He has been teaching for approximately twenty-five years. He began his teaching career in Austria, then moved to the United States and taught kindergarten for seventeen years. This is his first year teaching first grade. He wants his students to be able to read and support each other.

Teacher #3 is a female former first-grade teacher. She has been teaching for forty-six years, and has taught first- and third-grade, as well as college students. She was the principal of two California schools and believes in meeting the needs of each student.

Teacher #4 is a female school librarian, who is a former teacher. She taught third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade, as well as sixth-grade religion in Bay Area Catholic schools for about thirty-five years. She has been a librarian for eleven years and wants her students to enjoy reading so that it becomes a part of who they are.

Teacher #5 is a female university professor and school principal with a background in early literacy. She taught elementary students for twenty-three years, college-age students for fourteen years, and has been a school principal for two years. She has a doctorate in curriculum and instruction and several credentials, including CLAD (Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development) and administrative. She wants her students to have a joy of reading, a purpose for reading, whether it is for enjoyment or new information, and an understanding of reading as a life skill.

Teacher #6 is a female fourth- and fifth-grade teacher. She has been teaching for approximately ten years in the San Francisco Bay Area. She believes that challenging her students is the best way to keep them engaged.

Teacher #7 is a male university professor with a background in children's literature. He has been teaching at the undergraduate and graduate level for thirty years and holds two graduate degrees, one in literature and writing and one in language and civilization. He hopes that his students will gain useful information from the texts they read and see reading as a pleasurable and artistic activity.

4. Findings

In the findings from both the observations and interviews, there were four main themes. Three of these themes, personalization, teacher enthusiasm, and planning instruction for appropriate student success, pertained to characteristics of strategies that teachers use in reading instruction. The fourth theme, the complexity of reading in the classroom, was a surprising finding that informed the researcher of just how complicated reading instruction can be.

Teachers can include students' interests through personalization as an excellent motivator. Personalization was apparent in several of the observations and most of the interviews. It was a key aspect of the observations on 9/2/15 and 11/10/15. In the 9/2/15 activity, the female student was given personalized assistance with choosing a book, based on her own personal interests. In the 11/10/15 activity, students were given the opportunity to choose whatever words they liked to put into their story to make it their own. It was also apparent in the observation on 2/10/16: Students were given the opportunity to create their own clue for the class. This led to an engaging and fun activity for all the students, where they gained confidence based on their own abilities.

Personalization was also mentioned in almost every interview. Teacher #1 expressed a desire to include her students' interests in everything she does in the classroom, including math word problems and book recommendations. Teacher #2 explained that he allows his students to tell him what they want to do and tries to learn what motivates them in the classroom. Teachers #1, #4, #5, and #7 stated that they give students choices in the classroom to motivate them. Teacher #5 explained that she gives her students a "forced choice" to make them feel as if they have power in the classroom. She explained this using 7/11: When you go into 7/11, "you can't get any soda in the world; there's a range. But you feel empowered because you think you have a choice. You really don't. You have whatever they offer." The same goes for choice in the classroom. Giving students a range of options makes them feel empowered. Finally, Teachers #1 and #7 stated that making reading material relevant to students puts a value on it and makes them much more motivated to read.

In every single observation, the researcher noted that students were more engaged and interested in the activity if the teacher was also interested in the activity and showed that excitement. Most specifically, in the observation on 1/20/16, Teacher #2 was incredibly animated and excited about the story when asking his students questions. They responded to that excitement and answered questions quickly with enthusiasm. In addition, the observation on 11/10/15 showed the importance of teacher enthusiasm. Teacher #1 expressed her love for Mad Libs when she was explaining the activity and circulated throughout the classroom giving positive feedback throughout the lesson. Students were incredibly excited about and engaged with the activity and showed this by focusing on their paper and quickly writing their own stories. This was in contrast to an observation the researcher made before beginning this project, in a fourth-grade classroom in the spring of 2015: the students were reading *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell as a whole class, something the review of the literature discouraged as a reading practice. The teacher did not seem interested in the book, made evident by his choice to play a recording of the book, ask students to follow along in their own copy of the book, then asking in a bored voice for students to find the top of the page each time the recording started on a new page. The students were not engaged in the activity, looking around and barely turning their pages. Based on observations made during this project, the researcher hypothesizes that if the teacher had shown more interest in the book, the students would have been more engaged.

Teacher enthusiasm builds a culture of reading in the classroom and makes it a normal part of the school day. Teacher #1 expressed the importance of simply making reading a part of one's life in her interview as did Teacher #4. Teacher #4 described a school-wide practice in place in her school where every single member of the school community, including students, teachers, and faculty, sit down to read for a half-hour once a week. This strategy really makes reading a part of the school culture and builds the value of reading if it is simply a part of the day. Another strategy that builds a culture of readers is classroom library maintenance. Teacher #5 explained in her interview that a classroom library can tell you a lot about the students' attitudes towards reading. If the books are neatly organized and free from tears and other damage, they care about their books and reading. If the library looks dirty and unorganized, there is a good chance they do not value reading. Teachers can encourage students to keep their library looking neat and presentable and foster a respect for books that will lead to a respect and hopefully love for reading. Finally, Teacher #7 stated: "If you're bored then your students will be bored. So be excited!"

In addition to being enthusiastic, teachers can engage and motivate their students by planning for their success. However, as Teacher #6 explained, there has to be a challenge as well. Teacher #5 stressed the importance of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), "the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help ... developed by Soviet psychologist and social constructivist Lev Vygotsky" (Culatta, 2011)[6]. The ZPD is the area between what a student already knows and what they still need to learn. It is where learning takes place. Tasks that are within a student's ZPD will be challenging enough for them to be engaged and not bored, but not so challenging that they become frustrated. They will have the appropriate amount of success to keep working for more success. Both Teachers #1 and #5 stressed that, "The *very,* the very worst thing you can do is to push it" (#1) and "I can't keep pushing harder, harder, harder. I need to meet you where you're at" (#5). Planning activities that will be within a student's ZPD is incredibly important and the interviews and observations revealed many ways to do this: build students' self-confidence and self-knowledge, scaffold activities, reread material, and tell students exactly what's expected of them.

In her interview, Teacher #3 stressed that the most important aspect of student engagement and motivation is self-confidence. If students are confident in their own abilities and in themselves, they will try much harder and be much more engaged. One of her teaching strategies focused on writing combined self-confidence and self-knowledge. She asked her students to think about their strengths. She gave the example of girls drawing often, so their fingers and hands were good at drawing and therefore writing. She also mentioned that boys often play outside with a ball, so their arms and hands were used to throwing, and may need more work and help to form letters. However, she stressed that students should focus on their own personal strengths, regardless of gender stereotype. By having them think in this manner and personalizing their learning process, she gave them confidence and support. In addition, both Teachers #1 and #2 named intrinsic motivation as a key motivational tool. Teacher #2 explained how his students are just starting to read and are motivated by being able to read the stories they love all by themselves. Finally, Teacher #5 explained that self-knowledge is incredibly important because students need to know what they do not know so that they know when to ask for help. Giving students opportunities to develop self-motivation and self-knowledge is a way of scaffolding instruction.

Every interviewee discussed some sort of scaffolding. Teacher #1 described several techniques she uses: chunking words, where words are broken down into pieces that are smaller and easier to recognize and therefore read; sweeping, where students sound out each letter of a word and then take an imaginary broom and sweep all the letters together again; and partner reading, where students read together in groups of two, each reading one page and helping each other. Teacher #1 also stated that partner reading is the most useful strategy that he uses in reading instruction. He has

stronger readers paired with weaker readers and encourages them to help one another as they read and learn. Teacher #5 also explained that it is important to include scaffolding for academic reading material: students must be given instruction on how academic text is structured, what vocabulary words will be used in text, and what they will use the information for. In addition, almost every observation included some sort of scaffolding. The observation on 9/2/15 included scaffolding because the student was instructed to look at the book first, before she chose it, to make sure she would be able to read it. The observation on 11/10/15 included several forms of scaffolding: allowing students to work in pairs, having a separate group for some of the struggling students, and providing a word bank if students needed it. The observation on 2/10/16 also included scaffolding, as some students were given more assistance reading their word and coming up with their own clue, and others were given more challenging activities, such as writing their word on the board themselves. The observation on 3/21/16 included several academic/informational text scaffolds: during the introduction of primary sources, Teacher #6 pointed out where key information was in the document, such as dates. In addition, when students were unsure of what the word "sustenance" meant, she led them in a class discussion of how to find the meaning of the vocabulary word.

Another way to give students support and scaffold their instruction is to reread materials. Teacher #5 explained that rereading is an incredibly effective strategy for students. It builds fluency through rate and prosody when students read out loud. However, the recommended number of reads is seven, which can get boring for students. She explained that reader's theatre, where students are given a script to memorize and act out, is an excellent way to get at least four reads of a material. In addition, students are able to act out and perform something, which is exciting. Teachers #1 and #2 incorporate rereading by having their students read poems that they have heard before and chorally, all together. Teacher #2 shared a poem book that his students have created that includes their favorite poems, some of which the students have written themselves.

Finally, Teacher #4 explained that the best way to support students is to tell them exactly what is expected of them. She said that her students do best when they have a rubric to follow and told a personal story about her nephew who was unable to succeed in school until his teachers gave him structure. Teacher #1 did this in the observation on 11/10/15 when she gave the instructions for the activity, as did Teacher #6 in the observation on 3/21/16.

Even with all these strategies, sometimes the only thing teachers can do is wait. Teacher #1 beautifully stated that, "I really very strongly believe that when the window is open, when they're ready to *I wanna know what this says*, then you let it come in, the information, but if it's closed, don't push it. Because then they're gonna get really turned off on reading and then you'll hear things like "I hate reading!" which is so sad because it'll come, it might just come slower. Because if you ask a class to, "I want you to go to that fence over there," some will run, some will skip, some will walk and stroll; they'll all eventually get there, just not in the same way."

Although there are many ways to make reading motivating and engaging to students, the observations and interviews revealed just how complex reading is. In most of the research, reading is described as an isolated activity. In practice, the opposite is true. Reading and writing are completely integrated and literacy is the true skill taught during "reading" activities. Almost every observation showed that reading activities commonly incorporate some other literacy action, whether it is writing, speaking, or listening. For example, the observation on 11/10/15 was a literacy activity, in which students were writing their own story. The observation on 1/27/16 required that students listen to a story being read to them. The observation on 2/10/16 combined reading and speaking. Students were asked to read a word and identify the sounds that were a part of it. The interview with Teacher #3 revealed that one of the best reading activities for her students was creating their own dictionary. This was a way for them to learn alphabetical order, how to write common words, and gain self-confidence in spelling. None of these activities were directly about reading motivation or engagement, but each was planting the seeds for reading. Reading is not always an isolated activity, so it should not be taught in isolation.

In addition, the interview with Teacher #5 revealed that reading instruction is different depending on the grade level. In the lower elementary grades, students are learning how to read. Once they reach the upper elementary grades and beyond, they are reading to learn. Therefore, specific strategies are different, because the goals are different.

Overall, the data from the observations and interviews showed that there were three main characteristics of strategies that teachers use in reading instruction: personalization, teacher enthusiasm, and planning for appropriate student success. Allowing students to feel empowered in the classroom by offering them choices is an excellent motivator. If teachers are interested and excited about their subject, their students will respond to that enthusiasm. In addition, teacher enthusiasm creates a reading culture in the classroom that makes reading a normal part of life. Finally, planning instruction for appropriate student success allows students to thrive in their ZPD and have the appropriate amount of success to continue to be challenged to keep working. Self-motivation, self-knowledge, scaffolding, and waiting for students are excellent ways of achieving this. The last theme revealed in the data was surprising and unexpected: the complexity of reading in the classroom. Reading is an integrated activity, with literacy being the true skill being taught.

In addition, reading instruction is different depending on the grade level. However, the themes of teacher enthusiasm, planning for appropriate student success, and personalization still apply.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to discover strategies that teachers use to encourage lifelong reading habits in their students, specifically by promoting motivation to read and engagement with academic reading material. The research question was *What are effective teaching strategies for promoting lifelong reading in elementary students by increasing student motivation to read and student engagement with academic reading material?* A review of the literature, observations in elementary classrooms, and interviews with educators found that there are many characteristics of strategies that encourage lifelong reading, with three main themes that are present in all: personalization, teacher enthusiasm for reading, and scaffolding for appropriate student success.

The review of the literature found that there are four main characteristics of teaching strategies that promote reading motivation and engagement: personalization, integration of technology, positive teacher-student interactions, and differentiated instruction. The observations and interviews supported that personalization, positive teacher-student interactions, and differentiated instruction are important. Almost all of the interviewed educators mentioned personalization, each observation included teacher enthusiasm, which is a positive teacher-student interaction, and each educator named differentiated instruction or scaffolding as incredibly important. However, the observations and interviews also exposed a new theme: although reading instruction is important in its own right, in practice, it is not an isolated activity. Most of the time, reading instruction is taught as a literacy activity, with reading combined with either speaking, listening, or writing.

These themes indicate strategies that promote motivation and engagement in specific ways, according to the key factors of motivation and engagement. Jang et al. (2015) stated that motivation is created by six key factors: attitude, interest, value, self-efficacy, self-concept, and goal. Parsons et al. (2015) explained that engaging tasks are characterized by five key factors: authenticity, collaboration, choice, appropriate challenge, and sustained learning. Each of the themes found in the data addressed at least one of these factors and was supported by at least one piece of literature.

Personalization addresses the motivation factors of interest and value and the engagement factor of choice. When instruction and materials are personalized to a student, that student's interests are being met, making them interested in the activity and more prone to place a high value on the activity. In addition, choice is usually the personalization tool used by teachers, as in the case of Teachers #1, #4, #5, and #7, addressing that factor of engagement. The studies done and articles written by Jang et al. (2015), and Miller (2009) also supported personalization as a motivating strategy for students.

Teacher enthusiasm addresses the motivation factors of attitude and value. When teachers model a positive attitude towards reading and build a reading culture in the classroom, students are more likely to have a positive attitude towards reading and place a high value on it as an activity. In addition, the review of the literature showed that teacher positivity can also promote a "reader" self-concept in students, by the use of positive comments and praise. This was from the article by Miller (2009), which promoted positive teacher-student interactions.

Planning instruction for appropriate student success addresses the motivation factors of self-efficacy, self-concept, and goal and the engagement factors of appropriate challenge, sustained learning, and collaboration. When instruction is planned to be in students' ZPDs, they will feel confident that they can complete the activities because they are having the appropriate amount of success and challenge, addressing self-efficacy and appropriate challenge. When they have that success, their view of themselves as a reader will grow, causing a positive self-concept as a reader. When instruction is planned to create student success, it will also promote sustained learning. All the participants named scaffolding as an excellent way of doing this, and collaboration and defined goals were named as two ways of scaffolding instruction. In addition, self-motivation is an excellent example of a mastery goal, one of the two types of goals described by Jang et al. (2015). The review of the literature also promoted scaffolding and differentiation, such as the studies done and articles written by Parsons et al. (2015), Jang et al. (2015), and Miller (2009).

Finally, the complexity of reading in the classroom is not a strategy, but it does address the engagement factor of authenticity and the integrated model proposed by the CCCSS. Reading will not be an isolated activity outside of the classroom, so it should be taught as an integrated activity in the classroom. The review of the literature named incorporating technology as a way of addressing authenticity as well as interest in the study done by Parsons et al. (2015), but the researcher was unable to find this in her own research. Technology was only mentioned in two interviews, with teachers #4 and #7, and seen in one observation, on 3/21/16. It was given much less attention and

value in the real classroom than in the literature. The students saw technology as just another normal tool to be used, not something new and exciting, as the literature suggested. In this way, technology does address authenticity, but it does not hold much interest for students.

The review of the literature, observations, and interviews did have some correlations, as have been discussed, but there was a definite difference between theory and practice. This was evident even within the literature. If a piece was written by a teacher or former teacher, it emphasized different strategies and goals than one that was written by a researcher. Teachers were more likely to focus on personal attention and relationships and researchers were more likely to focus on specific strategies and quantifiable test results. This was evident in the observations and interviews as well. Teachers in the field seem to be more focused on meeting their students' needs, rather than using specific strategies that are supported by research. Although the review of the literature did not support this finding, the researcher was able to see students react positively to this type of instruction.

There were two main limitations of this study: small sample size and biased observation setting. The sample size was very small, considering the researcher was only able to observe three classrooms in two schools and interview six educators. In addition, the school where the researcher did the bulk of the observations was biased against using technology, as it is Waldorf-inspired. If, as the literature indicated, technology is a largely effective motivating and engaging tool for students, the researcher was unable to determine this because she did not see the use of any specialized reading technology in most of her observations.

As a future elementary teacher, the researcher will apply this research to her future classroom and implement personalization, teacher enthusiasm, and scaffolding for her students. In addition, the researcher has two recommendations for future research. First, since reading instruction is different depending on the age of students, the researcher would recommend a research study with a narrow focus of either the lower or upper elementary grades. The researcher would also recommend researching ways for teachers to grow the reading culture created in school to one that encompasses the student's home life, by influencing and encouraging parents.

In conclusion, there are three main characteristics of strategies that teachers use to encourage lifelong reading habits in their students: personalization, teacher enthusiasm, and planning instruction for appropriate student success. These three characteristics address the factors of motivation and engagement and are supported by the review of the literature, observations, and interviews. However, teacher enthusiasm was overwhelmingly evident in all of the researcher's observations and interviews. Although it is not a specific, research-based strategy, teacher enthusiasm is the best way to motivate and engage students. When reading instruction is created to address each of these three characteristics, it will reach all students, even those who struggle with reading or are uninterested. In addition, this type of reading instruction will create the close, wide readers that the CCCSS hope all students will become.

6. References

1. Ortileb, E. (2015). Deconstructing and developing the attitudes of primary school readers. *Support For Learning, 30*(2), 161-169. doi:10.1111/1467-9604.12085

2. Parsons, S. A., Malloy, J. A., Parsons, A. W., & Burrowbridge, S. C. (2015). Students' engagement in literacy tasks. *The Reading Teacher, 69*(2). 223-231.

3. Jang, B. G., Conradi, K., McKenna, M. C., Jones, J. S. (2015). Motivation: Approaching an elusive concept through the factors that shape it. *The Reading Teacher, 69*(2). 239-247.

4. California State Board of Education. (2013). *California common core state standards: English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.* Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/

5. Miller, D. (2009). *The book whisperer: Awakening the inner reader in every child*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

6. Culatta, R. (2011). Zone of Proximal Development. Retrieved from http://www.innovativelearning.com/educational_psychology/development/zone-of-proximal-development.html