October 2020

Let's Read a Story!: Collaborative Meaning Making, Student Engagement, and Vocabulary Building Through the Use of Interactive Read-Alouds

Shaya Helbig
Western Michigan University, shayahelbig@gmail.com

Susan V. Piazza
Western Michigan University, susan.piazza@wmich.edu

Recommended Citation

Let's Read a Story!: Collaborative Meaning Making, Student Engagement, and Vocabulary Building Through the Use of Interactive Read-Alouds

by Shaya Helbig
and Susan V. Piazza

Shaya Helbig   **Susan V. Piazza**

Abstract

The interactive read-aloud has long been a practice during early literacy instruction in schools and in homes. Reading aloud to children provides a platform for teachers or caregivers to model meaning-making interactions with text. Students are able to collaboratively engage in conversations to create a collective understanding of texts. Interactions during a read-aloud can foster engagement, create meaning, and promote vocabulary acquisition. This article examines current research that supports the use of interactive read alouds to engage learners in meaning-making processes and translates research and theory into practical recommendations for effective interactive read-alouds.

Keywords: Interactive read-aloud, read aloud, engagement, reading comprehension, vocabulary, meaning-making process

Introduction

These are interesting times. As this article was being finalized for review with the *Michigan Reading Journal*, elementary children in the state of Michigan and around the globe were staying safe at home due to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The new normal of educating elementary children included recommendations for reading at home with family members, and teachers were finding themselves reading aloud virtually to students rather than in their classrooms. As literacy educators in an elementary school and at a university, the authors of this article thought it was timely to share research and theory about interactive read-alouds in an effort to support educators and family members during these challenging times.

In traditional face-to-face read-alouds, students play the role of passive participants who listen to an adult read a story. They do not interrupt, ask or answer questions. Research on read-alouds in pre-kindergarten (PK) and kindergarten (K) found that this type of read-aloud with occasional questions promotes one-word answers from students (Deshmukh et al., 2019). Heath's (1983) seminal study of literacy practices in homes and communities also found that working-class families' read alouds often promoted one-word answers. Current research and theory recommend that we move away from these traditional practices to include more interaction and dialogue. Given the context of

literacy education in Michigan, it is timely to review these recommendations for read-alouds at home and virtually.

Interactive read-alouds should be designed specifically to encourage discussion, questions, connections, and support a community of learners to create collective understandings during reading (Braid & Finch, 2015; Hoffman, 2011; Jordan, 2015; McClure & Fullerton, 2017). Participating in interactive read-alouds improves relationships and creates bonds within a community of learners (Wiseman, 2010). At the same time, many are reporting the stay-at-home measures are increasing opportunities to strengthen relationships and spend additional time learning (New York Times Learning Network, 2020). The increased interaction during read-alouds strengthens vocabulary acquisition in ways that independent reading or traditional read-alouds may not (Baker, Chard, Fien, Park, Otterstedt, 2013; Santoro, Chard, Howard & Baker, 2008). It is important that educators, families and caregivers keep the benefits of interaction in mind as they are engaging in read-alouds.

The Importance of Interactive Read Alouds

Reader engagement during collaborative meaning-making is a key component of social and dialogic learning theories. In the social constructivist view of literacy, readers develop new understandings by combining what they already know within the context of reading about new ideas and experiences. Modeled dialogue around what the Institute of Educational Sciences (2016) calls academic language skills, provides experience for students with the academic language used in schools and books. Engagement in discussion that uses academic language helps students learn how to make inferences, retell stories, and acquire new vocabulary (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2016). Keeping readers engaged with academic language and in conversation around text is particularly challenging when we read-aloud virtually and cannot always see our learners as we do in classrooms.

Reznitskaya's (2012) research demonstrates that when

students share in creating meaning, they gain increased reasoning, conceptual understanding, ability to make inferences, and improved quality of argumentative writing (p. 448-449). Social interactions during interactive read-alouds promote authentic dialogue. A teacher or caregiver may guide conversations by asking open-ended questions, providing feedback, and asking follow up questions to help learners extend meaning (Reznitskaya, 2012). Michigan's Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy for grades K-3 (2016) highlight the importance of explicit demonstrations for these interactions during interactive read-alouds. This guide recommends that adult readers model higher order discussions, comprehension strategies, and application of strategies, such as thinking aloud, to recognize unknown words and figure out their meaning (2016).

Students will need guidance as they learn to contribute to an interactive read-aloud, navigate the use of new vocabulary, and construct meaning from text (Baker et al., 2013; Hoffman, 2011; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010; Santoro et al., 2008). There are support strategies that teachers and caregivers can employ to support intended learning outcomes both virtually and face-to-face.

Discussion and interactions intended to teach new vocabulary and create common understandings are often modeled through a gradual release of responsibility from the reader to the students (Baker et al., 2013; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010; Santoro et al., 2008). Initially, the reader models how to ask questions, make predictions (Baker et al., 2013), verbalize connections within and across other texts (Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009), and also share personal connections with the story (Jordan, 2015). Gradually, the heavy lifting of these conversations is shifted to students through a process of "validating and acknowledging students' comments, revoicing students' contributions, and labeling meaning-making strategies" (McClure & Fullerton, 2017, p.56).

As is true for many educational practices, teachers and other adults may need to learn how to model these practices effectively (Baker et al., 2013). In addition to

understanding how to scaffold conversations during an interactive read-aloud (Braid & Finch, 2015; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010), it is also helpful to understand the process of language development in young children (Burns et al. cited, Bortnem, 2011). For example, picture books such as *Mama, Do You Love Me?* (Joosse, 1998) use text and illustrations together to increase comprehension of transcendent ideas such as unconditional parental love, while also introducing children to unique settings and potentially unfamiliar cultures. When illustrations are explicitly analyzed and discussed with students, they engage in higher levels of thinking and interactions with texts (Braid & Finch, 2015).

Recent studies provide valuable guidance on which practices are most effective when implementing interactive read alouds with elementary-aged children. Table 1 displays the recommendations that provide helpful advice for families and educators who rely on interactive read-alouds to support learners in schools; but also, these practices will help prevent literacy slide during potential stay-safe-at-home orders and during summers and breaks. The remainder of this article is dedicated to explaining each of these practices along with examples and resources.

Table 1
Recommended Interactive Read-Aloud Practices

---

1. Make time for interactive read-alouds

2. Select appropriate text

3. Plan ahead for content specific interactive read-alouds

4. Model expectations for student engagement

5. Explicitly teach new vocabulary words

6. Form sentence starters and open-ended questions in advance

7. Use graphic organizers to document discussion and reinforce comprehension

8. Follow the lead of students when co-constructing meaning

Make Time for Interactive Read-Alouds

The most essential part of planning an interactive read-aloud is carving out time in the day to introduce, read, and discuss the text (Bortnem, 2011; Hoffman, 2011). In a study of elementary read-aloud practices (Bortnem,2011), "the amount of time that is spent on reading aloud is small in comparison to the total time spent in the classroom" (2011, p. 38). With so many demands in the school day, finding time to conduct a read-aloud may be the most difficult. Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) recommend making time for interactive read-alouds and thinking about them as an instructional method even during math, science, and social studies. Conducting read-alouds across the curriculum alleviates some of the time constraints educators face, while deepening student understandings across all areas of study.

For read-alouds to be truly interactive in a virtual setting, students need to be participating in a live meeting platform so that interaction can be achieved authentically. Working virtually limits the amount of real-time interactions teachers have with students over platforms such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, or WebEx. With these time constraints all educational content is competing for live instruction, requiring teachers to constantly evaluate and integrate the curriculum.

An alternative for setting aside dedicated time for virtual interactive read-alouds is posting pre-recorded read-alouds with pauses, questions, and interactive components built in to the recording so that students are prompted to share their interactions with ideas in the text in voice or video recorded responses. These prompts may also encourage interactions with family members or caregivers. Pre-recorded read-alouds create an asynchronous learning experience while encouraging active engagement. It is important for teachers to be mindful of time constraints families face when planning pre-recorded read-alouds. The key in making planning decisions is ensuring that time is set aside for this important activity which is a balancing act for anyone supporting instruction in classrooms, online and at-home.

Select Appropriate Text

Text selection is a critical component of planning an interactive read-aloud (Baker et al., 2013; Bortnem, 2011; Braid & Finch, 2015; Hoffman, 2011; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Santoro et al., 2008; Wiseman, 2010). Some variables to consider when selecting text are age, sociocultural background, student interest, and opportunities for complex meaning-making. Purpose for reading may determine whether you choose one text, or build a set of texts to reinforce units of study across the curriculum (Laminack & Wadsworth, 2006). Research reminds us that text selection is especially important for learners from traditionally under-served groups such as culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Hall & Piazza, 2008; Wiseman, 2010). Selecting texts that are socially and culturally sustaining is important for diverse learners, but the use of diverse books is important for all learners and is an important part of Michigan's curriculum.

When choosing reading materials, it is important to find texts that are developmentally and instructionally appropriate in both length and content (Bortnem, 2011). Choosing diverse literature (Santoro et al., 2008) and books that provide opportunities for engagement (Wiseman, 2010) helps foster social and cultural responsiveness for students and encourage participation. When selecting picture books, it may also be helpful to find books where the words and illustrations work together to create meaning (Braid & Finch, 2015). Above all else, it is important that the text selected for an interactive read-aloud provides opportunities for complex meaning-making (Hoffman, 2011).

Meaning-making can take different forms for different purposes. Some reading materials may be chosen because they fit with a topic of study (Santoro et al.), or reinforce specific student learning targets (McClure & Fullerton). For example, identifying story sequence is an important early learning target. The simple structure of stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (Marshall, 1986), *The Three Little Pigs* (Kellogg, 1997), and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* guide young children to understand how to retell stories in sequence.

Other texts may be selected based on previous and future readings. A series of texts which are variations of the same story may be chosen to compare and contrast (Wiseman, 2012). *Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel* (Storace, 2007), is an example of a classic fairy tale told from a Caribbean cultural perspective. This book may be paired with a Eurocentric version of the story as part of a compare-and-contrast activity. Pairing fiction and nonfiction texts with common themes can also be used for text-to-text comparisons (Baker et al., 2013; Bortnem, 2011; Santoro et al.,2008). An example might be a class working on a science unit about the life cycle of butterflies. Educators may pair a nonfiction text such as *The Amazing Life Cycle of Butterflies* (Barnham & Frost, 2018) with Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1983).

Library closures and lack of access to classrooms during the COVID-19 shutdown made it difficult for some teachers and families to obtain the books they needed for read-alouds. There are, however, digital alternatives to using physical books. Epic! is an online library where teachers can access digital copies of books. Scholastic BookFlix is a paid subscription online library which matches fiction and nonfiction books to be read in tandem. There are also many pre-recorded virtual read-alouds of children's books available on YouTube and Storyline Online which features famous actors and actresses reading popular children's books.

Plan When Teaching Specific Content

The practice of an interactive read-aloud may require various levels of pre-planning, guided by the purpose of reading. Pre-planning an interactive read-aloud is necessary whenever the purpose of reading is to teach specific content or reading skills (McCaffrey & Hisrich, 2017). If the read-aloud is meant to intentionally teach a concept, planning to create before, during, and after-reading activities will be required (Baker, Chard, Fien, Park, Otterstedt, 2013; Santoro, Chard, Howard, Baker, 2008; Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009). We recommend predictions and activating prior knowledge before reading, emphasizing metacognition and making

connections during reading, and checking predictions and reflection after reading.

Selecting and reading books in advance allows the reader to be more intentional about instruction during the read-aloud. In addition to planning before, during, and after activities, the reader can also identify vocabulary from the text to teach or review (Baker, Chard, Fien, Park, Otterstedt, 2013; Santoro, Chard, Howard, Baker, 2008). Determining pacing for the read-aloud, planning when to stop and discuss, and preparing notes and questions to guide discussions are also benefits of planning with the text in mind (McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009).

Planning for a virtual interactive read-aloud includes identifying vocabulary, developing questions, and planning pacing as well. However, there are special considerations to address in a virtual setting. When planning virtual read-alouds, the first decision is whether the read-aloud will be conducted live or pre-recorded. The format for delivering the read-aloud will affect to what degree students will be able to participate, which will affect explicit vocabulary instruction, the ability of students to discuss with partners or small groups, which questions will be asked and how they will be delivered to students, and the pacing for reading.

Model Expectations for Engagement

An interactive read-aloud is, by nature, active. Students are encouraged to speak freely during purposeful discussions to create meaning around the text. Types of discussion may include whole group think alouds, small group discussions, paired turn-and-talk responses, or some combination of these. Before conducting an interactive read-aloud, students should become familiar with routines for engaging in these types of discussions (Hoffman, 2011; Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009). Teacher or adult modeling of respectful interactions demonstrating how to turn and talk, how to participate in whole group discussions, and how to listen and respond to others is vital (McClure & Fullerton, 2017). These skills aid in constructing a culture of respectful student participation (Hoffman, 2011), which will encourage engagement during interactive read-alouds.

When adult readers are open, accepting, and encouraging of students' perspectives, they help to create a culture conducive to meaningful and respectful interactions around books and ideas (Hoffman, 2011). In building a collaborative community of learners, adults may need to refocus the conversation, prevent children from talking over one another (Hoffman, 2011), and model respectful ways to disagree with the views of others (Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009). Sentence stems such as, "I respectfully disagree with you because…" supply students with respectful ways to share their views. Providing students with skills needed to respectfully collaborate, empower them to participate in productive whole group, paired and small group in-person or virtual conversations.

Paired and small group interactions during an interactive read-aloud promote engagement of all students as each has more opportunities to participate. In a study by Braid and Finch (2015), an average of 200 conversational turns were counted during small group read-aloud discussions. To be implemented effectively, paired and small group discussions require scaffolding on the part of the teacher. After initial modeling of expectations for these activities, it is helpful to listen in to small group and paired turn and talk conversations to guide, and encourage further discussion between partners (McClure & Fullerton, 2017). Small group interactions also present a valuable opportunity to observe and assess student understanding and perhaps even use newly acquired vocabulary.

Teaching in a virtual classroom creates some barriers for students to actively engage in read-alouds. Students can get lost in the shuffle when trying to voice their thoughts, questions, or opinions over a virtual meeting. Too many students trying to talk at once, internet connectivity issues, and disruptive background noise can all prevent students from being heard. As a preventative step, teachers should create a plan for when and how students will participate. To prevent disturbance from background noise students could be asked to turn off their microphone. Using the reaction buttons in Zoom to signal when they would like to speak will prevent students from talking over one

another. Requiring students to use the chat option of live meetings is another, albeit less interactive, way for students to actively engage during virtual interactive read-alouds.

Explicitly Teach New Vocabulary

Struggling with reading can create a barrier to access vocabulary. Presenting vocabulary in context as part of a read-aloud removes this barrier, and helps children acquire vocabulary which they would not have access to independently (Santoro et al., 2008). According to Vygotsky (1978), as cited in Bortnem (2011), hearing words in context is necessary for children to understand their meaning. However, simply hearing the words in context is not enough. Explicit instruction, child friendly definitions, and practice over time is necessary to build academic vocabulary according to Michigan's Early Literacy Essentials for K-3 (2016).

The use of during and after read-aloud activities to explicitly teach vocabulary, in conjunction with presenting and using words in context, fosters vocabulary acquisition for students (Baker et al., 2013, Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006). Effective vocabulary instruction requires planning on the part of the teacher to identify vocabulary words in the text, and form extension exercises or questions to expand understanding and use of the new words. Interesting, meaningful, and functional words that are important to comprehend the text should be chosen for vocabulary instruction (Santoro et al., 2008). Vocabulary instruction should be reinforced by providing students with several opportunities to encounter and use newly acquired vocabulary (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006).

Modeling and strategic questioning are ways in which vocabulary can be explicitly taught in context during an interactive read-aloud. During reading, students can learn to use clues from the text and/or illustrations to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words or ideas (Baker et al., 2013; Santoro et al., 2008). With guided practice, students take on more responsibility to identify the meaning of unknown words during read-alouds and independent reading and writing activities.

Conducting read-alouds in a virtual classroom, either as a live or pre-recorded activity, limits the interactions around new vocabulary before and during reading. To accommodate for these limited interactions, additional activities providing opportunities for students to interact with new words may need to be created. Additional activities may include separate vocabulary lessons before the read aloud, or more in-depth vocabulary instruction during the virtual read-aloud. Partnering with parents by providing vocabulary activities they can do with their child may also be helpful. Discussion prompts such as, "do you see anything in the picture that would give you a hint about what _____ means?" are a simple activity parents can talk through with their child.

Post-reading small group or independent activities help to deepen students' understanding of the meaning of vocabulary words. In a study by Morrison and Wodarczyk (2009), students used alphaboxes to solidify their understanding of new vocabulary. Alphaboxes are used to write down newly acquired vocabulary words in an alphabet grid along with a written or illustrated meaning of the word (Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009). Students later used the alphaboxes to include the new words in their own writing. In a virtual classroom, alphaboxes could be shared easily with students using an interactive template in an online learning platform such as SeeSaw, or as a Google Document if using Google Classroom.

Strategic questioning can also be used to reinforce word meanings. In a study conducted by Santoro, Chard, Howard & Baker (2008), the teacher reintroduced a new vocabulary word, used it in sentences, then asked if these sentences used the word correctly. In one example, a teacher used this strategy to clarify the meaning of the word *slumbering*. After reading and discussing the word in context as examples and counter-examples, the teacher reintroduced the word and then asked students, "If you are running are you slumbering? How do you know?" (Santoro et al., 2008, p.404). This is a simple exercise which deepens the understanding of the word meaning for the students, by clarifying what it does and does not mean. The interactive nature of the discussion elicited from these questions gives

the teacher insight into students' overall comprehension. When conducting a pre-recorded read-aloud this exercise can be used as a check for understanding activity. Online activities could include interactive sorts matching examples with vocabulary words in an online learning platform like SeeSaw, or quizzes when using a Google Classroom format.

Form Sentence Starters and Open-ended Questions

Asking open-ended questions is a way to encourage student participation in creating meaning. There is no right or wrong answer to these kinds of questions, but rather they guide students to make predictions, form connections, and to think more critically about the texts they read (Jordan, 2015; McClure & Fullertonk, 2017; Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009; Wiseman, 2010; Wiseman, 2012). Pre-reading of the text is necessary to plan these types of questions along with sentence starters for students to use during discussions (Hoffman, 2011). Planning for an open-ended discussion in advance can also help determine the level of scaffolding required for these activities based on the needs and abilities of students (Pentimonti & Justice, 2010).

A higher level of scaffolding will be necessary for live or pre-recorded virtual read-alouds. For very young children it may be helpful for the teacher to provide families with the list of questions and sentence starters in advance, and indicate in pre-recorded virtual read-alouds when caregivers should pause the video and talk through these with their child. In most cases these would be the same questions which would be used during a classroom interactive read-aloud such as:

- How do you think _____ feels on page _____?
- Can you think of a time you felt the way _____ feels?
- What do you think is going to happen now?
- What makes you think that?

Use Graphic Organizers to Reinforce Comprehension

Pre-reading activities allow students to make predictions about the text, and also aid in generating excitement and interest in what will be read. These activities can be as simple as voicing wonderings about the text to model making predictions (Jordan, 2015). More structured activities, such as graphic organizers, can also be used to make and document predictions.

A KWL chart is a graphic organizer which explicitly documents the interactive nature of reading and consists of recording what students know, want to know, and have learned from reading (Ogle, 1986). Responses from all students are added to each section of the chart before, during, and after reading (Santoro et al., 2008). After introducing the book, students take turns sharing what they know about this subject, author, series of books, etc. These contributions are written in the K column of the chart.

Students also share their wonderings of what they want to know about the text. These wonderings are added to the W column of the chart (Santoro et al., 2008). Students then use their collective knowledge in the K column paired with their combined wonderings in the W column to make predictions about what they will encounter in the text. While reading, students may add more wonderings to the W column of the KWL chart, and add new information they have learned in the L column (Santoro et al., 2008). Sharing of knowledge and wonderings will initially be heavily modeled by the teacher. However, with practice, the responsibility of creating this chart and making predictions will shift to the students.

Other graphic organizers, such as discussion webs can also document student ideas and connections while reading (Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009). Discussion webs are graphic organizers that can take different forms for different purposes, and can be used to help students focus on a specific topic or question during an interactive read aloud. A discussion web used to compare and contrast different versions of the same story, and a discussion web detailing character traits would differ in form and function while still working toward the same goal of collective meaning making. Discussion webs can be used when reading fiction or nonfiction text, and create a platform for the class to; list or illustrate

story elements such as characters and setting, use a story ladder or S.W.B.S.T (someone, wanted, but, so, then) to sequence events of a story, demonstrate the link between problems and solutions, use Venn diagrams to compare and contrast more than one text, create a flowchart to detail the steps in a process such as a life cycle, create illustrations such as labeled diagrams, identify main ideas and list their accompanying details, etc.

Information from KWL charts and discussion webs provide a visual representation of the common understanding created from discussing the text. They can be used to solidify concepts during independent post-reading activities. Post-reading activities are the most valuable in allowing time for students to practice what they learned during the interactive read-aloud (Baker et al., 2013). Small or whole group discussions after reading can summarize and reinforce the common understandings developed by children during reading. These conversations can also correct misconceptions or help students develop or expand on their ideas (Baker et al., 2013). Individual student activities such as journal writing (Wiseman, 2010), and retell prompting (Santoro et al., 2008) engage students in a personal reflection of the text. All charts or webs created during an interactive read-aloud should be available for student reference during small group and independent post-reading activities.

Moving these types of before, during, and after activities online could come with barriers based on the age of the children participating, and the level of virtual interaction. If the interactive read-aloud is being conducted live with students over a platform such as Zoom, the teacher could create a graphic organizer containing input from younger students. The graphic organizer could then be shared with the students for use completing post-reading activities.

Older students can be granted higher levels of participation in virtual interactive read-alouds through the use of Zoom features such as whiteboard and groups. The whiteboard feature would provide a platform for students to actively engage in group creation of graphic organizers during virtual interactive read-alouds. The

group feature provides the host of a Zoom meeting with the ability to send small groups of participants to separate rooms creating a space for students to participate in small group discussions.

If live Zoom meetings are not feasible, another alternative is for teachers to record themselves conducting the read-aloud or choose from the many pre-recorded read-alouds currently available online. The benefit to creating your own interactive read-aloud video is that you can pose noticings and wonderings specific to the purpose for reading. The work of creating graphic organizers then becomes more student driven. Providing a skeleton of a graphic organizer for students to fill in will help them verbalize their individual understandings of the text. Teachers could share an editable template students can complete and submit using the virtual learning platform SeeSaw. Similarly, templates can be shared as Google Documents that one or many students can edit. As many families will be helping to instruct children at home it would be helpful to provide instructions for completing the graphic organizer.

Let Students Lead the Meaning Making Process

Co-construction of meaning is achieved through "capitalizing on student-initiated responses and the use of follow-up questioning to guide the meaning-making process across multiple participants' contributions" (Hoffman, 2011, p. 190). During an interactive read-aloud, all parties are constructing meaning together through conversation (Wiseman, 2010). Just as in creating engagement and developing new vocabulary, this can also be achieved through a gradual release of responsibility of meaning-making from the teacher to the students (McClure & Fullerton, 2017). Teachers can model this for students through a process of confirming and sometimes restating their responses (Wiseman, 2010). Then, prompting and further open-ended questioning helps students move past simple ideas and responses to more critical understandings while making connections with the perspectives of others (Braid & Finch, 2015; Hall & Piazza, 2008; McClure & Fullerton, 2017). With practice, what should take

shape is a student-led conversation with guidance and support from the teacher (Jordan, 2015).

While reading the text, the teacher may frequently stop to facilitate conversations which confirm or deny predictions (Baker et al., 2013; Santoro et al., 2008; Wiseman, 2010), introduce new vocabulary, answer student-created questions (Santoro et al., 2008), form opinions (Jordan, 2015), or make text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world connections (Morrison & Wodarczyk, 2009; Wiseman, 2012). During these interactions, the teacher may also model how to support these ideas with evidence from the text (McClure & Fullerton, 2017). It is important during this process to follow the lead of students. Using what students have proposed to create follow up questions, and then asking if others agree or disagree helps students build on the ideas of others to create a collective understanding (Hoffman, 2011).

In a study by Hoffman (2011), teachers were encouraged to reflect on their interactive read-aloud practices. One teacher recognized that when students voiced misconceptions about meaning, her instinct was to move on to other students in an attempt to find the "right" answer. After coaching, the teacher realized that talking through misconceptions with students to help them reconcile their understanding was more effective than fishing for the correct answer. The teacher also learned she needed to relinquish control of what she thought was correct to allow the ideas of students to shine through (Hoffman, 2011).

Highlighting student ideas looks very different in a virtual environment. During a live virtual read-aloud all participants have the opportunity to interact with each other, to create a collective meaning. In addition to talking with one another, students also have the ability to send chat messages to the whole group or in private chats with a turn and talk partner. Children who are not writing yet, however, will be limited to talking as a way to co-construct meaning.

Conclusion

Given the recommendations to increase the use of read-alouds in classrooms by many researchers, and also noting the increase in the use of read-alouds during the stay-at-home policies this year, this is a timely review of research and theory that supports educators' and families' efforts across the state of Michigan. These practices can be incorporated in classrooms and in-home settings to help engage with texts, build academic vocabulary and increase readers' comprehension during interactive read-alouds. The act of co-constructing meaning in socially and culturally responsive ways has a community-building component that encourages active participation on the part of the learner. Through modeling and sharing respectful discussions, questioning, making predictions, and determining the meaning of unknown words, interactive read-alouds provide valuable teaching and learning opportunities regardless of the environmental context.

References

Baker, S., Santoro, L., Chard, D., Fien, H., Park, Y., & Otterstedt, J. (2013). An evaluation of an explicit read aloud intervention taught in whole-classroom formats in first grade. *The Elementary School Journal, 113*(3), 331-58. https://doi.org/10.1086/668503

Barnham, K. & Frost, M. (2018). *Look and wonder: The amazing life cycle of butterflies.* Barron's Educational Series Inc.

Blachowicz, C., Fisher, P., Ogle, D., & Watts-Taffe, S. (2006). Vocabulary: Questions from the classroom. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(4), 524-39. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.4.5

Braid, C., & Finch, B. (2015). "Ah, I know why…": Children developing understandings through engaging with a picture book. *Literacy, 49*(3), 115-22. https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12057

Bortnem, G. (2008). Teacher use of interactive read alouds using nonfiction in early childhood classrooms. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning, 5*(12), 29-44. https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v5i12.1213

Burns, M., Griffin, P., & Snow, C. (Eds.). (1999). Starting out right: A guide to promoting children's reading success. Cited in Bortnem, G. (2008). Teacher use of interactive read alouds using nonfiction in early childhood classrooms. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning, 5*(12), 29-44. https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v5i12.1213

Carle, E. (1983). *The very hungry caterpillar.* Philomel Books.

Deshmukh, R., Zucker, T., Tambyraja, S., Pentimonti, J., Bowles, R., & Justice, L. (2019). Teachers' use of questions during shared book reading: Relations to child responses. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 49*, 59-68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2019.05.006

Foorman, B., Beyler, N., Borradaile, K., Coyne, M., Denton, C. A., Dimino, J., ... & Keating, B. (2016). Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Educator's Practice Guide. NCEE 2016-4008. What Works Clearinghouse.

Galdone, P. (2011). *The three billy goats gruff.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Hall, L. A., & Piazza, S. V. (2008). Critically reading texts: What students do and how teachers can help. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(1), 32-41. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.62.1.4

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511841057

Hoffman, J. (2011). Coconstructing meaning: Interactive literary discussions in kindergarten read-alouds. *The Reading Teacher, 65*(3), 183-94. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01025

Jordan, M. (2015). Extra! Extra! read all about it. Teacher scaffolds interactive read-alouds of a dynamic text. *The Elementary School Journal, 115*(3), 358-83. https://doi.org/10.1086/680174

Joosse, B. M. (1998). *Mama do you love me?* Chronicle Books.

Kellogg, S. (1997). *The three little pigs.* Morrow Junior Books.

Laminack, L. L., & Wadsworth, R. M. (2006). *Reading aloud across the curriculum: How to build bridges in language arts, math, science, and social studies.* Heinemann.

Marshall, J. (1988). *Goldilocks and the three bears.* Dial Books for Young Readers.

McCaffrey, M., & Hisrich, K. E. (2017). Read-alouds in the classroom: A pilot study of teachers' self-reporting practices. *Reading Improvement, 54*(3), 93–100.

Mcclure, E., & Fullerton, S. (2017). Instructional interactions: Supporting students' reading development through interactive read-alouds of informational texts. *Reading Teacher, 71*(1), 51-59. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1576

McLaughlin, M. (2012). Reading comprehension: What every teacher needs to know. *Reading Teacher, 65*(7), 432–40. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01064

Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators General Education Leadership Network Early Literacy Task Force (2016). Essential instructional practices in early literacy: K to 3. https://literacyessentials.org/k-to-3/

Morrison, V., & Wlodarczyk, L. (2009). Revisiting read-aloud: Instructional strategies that encourage students' engagement with texts. *The Reading Teacher, 63*(2), 110-18. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.63.2.2

New York Times. (April 23, 2020). What students are saying about family conflict in quarantine, starting over and health care heroics. *The Learning Network.* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/23/learning/what-students-are-saying-about-family-conflict-in-quarantine-starting-over-and-health-care-heroics.html

Ogle, D. M. (1986). KWL: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. *The Reading Teacher, 39*(6), 564-70. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.39.6.11

Pentimonti, J., & Justice, M. (2010). Teachers' use of scaffolding strategies during read alouds in the preschool classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 37*(4), 241-48. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-009-0348-6

Reznitskaya, A. (2012). Dialogic teaching: Rethinking language use during literature discussions. *The Reading Teacher, 65*(7), 446-56. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01066

Santoro, L., Chard, D., Howard, L., & Baker, S. (2008). Making the very most of classroom read-alouds to promote comprehension and vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher, 61*(5), 396-408. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.61.5.4

Storace, P. (2007). *Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel.* Jump at the Sun/Hyperion Books for Children.

Wiseman, A. (2011). Interactive read alouds: teachers and students constructing knowledge and literacy together. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*(6), 431-38. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-010-0426-9

Wiseman, A. (2012). Resistance, engagement, and understanding: A profile of a struggling emergent reader responding to read-alouds in a kindergarten classroom. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 28*(3), 255-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2012.676407

Witte, P. (2016). Teaching first graders to comprehend complex texts through read-alouds. *Reading Teacher, 70*(1), 29-38. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1467

Author Biographies

Shaya Helbig is a literacy coach at Benton Harbor Charter School Academy in Benton Harbor Michigan. She is also a doctoral student at Western Michigan University focusing on Literacy Studies.

Susan V. Piazza is a professor of literacy and graduate program coordinator at Western Michigan University. She was a recipient of Michigan Reading Association's Teacher Educator of the Year Award in 2016.