Book Choice of Emergent Readers: Impacts of Policy and Pedagogy

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"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

ABSTRACT

Using a mixed methods comparative case study, this study explored emergent readers' book selection behaviors and how both policy and teachers influence the emerging readers' selection processes within their classrooms. Emergent literacy skills are the forefront of literacy development (Clay, 1982; Ferriero & Teborsky, 1982; Teale, 1986; McNaughton, 1995; Chall, 1996; Neuman, 2000), yet there seems to be little, if any, acknowledgement of the nature of literacy development within current educational policy. Research on reading motivation and engagement has largely focused on older students (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Gambrell et al. 2011; Marinak, 2013), but little has been studied about emergent readers' motivation and book choice using methods beyond surveys (Saracho, 1986; Sperling, et al., 2013).

This study of two pre-kindergarten and two kindergarten classrooms, along with their classroom teachers, utilized observations, interviews, text analysis and policy analysis, to examine the novel construct of bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Clay, 1982, 1991, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995). The observational data were analyzed for vertical and horizontal case analysis, and triangulated with the interview, text and policy data, revealing that teachers were strong proponents of choice and opportunity for children to demonstrate agency in book selection, yet that support was not always observed in practice. The data also indicated that systemic pressure, based on both increasing standards and lack of developmentally appropriate standards, did influence children's opportunity to access books in their classroom. The findings suggest that even

well-intentioned teachers of young children face hurdles when it comes to giving children the ability to choose and interact with a wide variety of texts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A pivotal moment in my decision to pursue a role as a policymaker came when I was required to administer the SAT10 assessment (Pearson, n.d.) to children in kindergarten. Administering an assessment that did not align with my understanding of developmentally appropriate practice led me to seek out a role as a policymaker. Having worn many hats within the field of education, my most recent role as a Board of Education member has given me insight into how education policy can have a trickle-down effect on students within a classroom. Both my doctoral studies and policy work, in addition to living with my own preschool aged children, who love and interact with all types of books, spurred me to wonder about how increasing rigor in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten standards may influence book choice for children, and thus impact their motivation to read. The result of that inquiry is documented here in this dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

While it is widely acknowledged by researchers and practitioners that literacy develops on a continuum, with emergent literacy skills at the forefront (Clay, 1982; Ferriero & Teborsky, 1982; Teale, 1986; McNaughton, 1995; Chall, 1996; Neuman, 2000), there seems to be little, if any, acknowledgement of the nature of literacy development within current educational policy. Although most children will follow the general developmental continuum for literacy development, there is still a variance within the time frame when specific skills will develop, especially given the reciprocal nature of reading and writing development. Additionally, research on family literacy demonstrates that home literacy is an integral aspect of literacy development, particularly

if the child's home literacy environment is disparate from their school environment (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Lareau, 2000; Rogers, 2002). The wide range of home literacy environments and the variance within literacy development are two considerations that are not addressed within current policy. The need for this study is highlighted in the subsequent three sub-sections which discuss the lack of acknowledgement of human development within state standards, a limited amount of research on young children's book choice and motivation, and limitations in usage of survey instruments for emergent readers.

State standards. Early childhood educators have expressed concern over the increasing rigor and academic expectations for children in primary grades as shifting standards and accountability have increased the demands on emergent readers (Gallant, 2009; Pyle & Bigelow, 2015; Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016). This increasing rigor in standards indicates a wide gap between what is known about emergent literacy development (Clay, 1982; Ferriero & Teborsky, 1982; Teale, 1986; McNaughton, 1995; Chall, 1996) and developmentally appropriate practice (Neuman, 2000). The literacy standards for both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children in Tennessee use terms which include, but are not limited to, analyze, assess, evaluate, and delineate (TDOE, 2018d). There is a need to understand if, and how these terms create a classroom culture that embraces an efferent reading stance, while dismissing the notion of reading as an aesthetic pleasure (Rosenblatt, 1978). Another shift in the educational landscape that has raised concern for educators is the narrowing of the curriculum, which may limit access to types of reading materials available for students, and could influence reading motivation (Valencia et al., 2006).

Lack of research. To date I have been unable to locate any research with a focus on how providing book choice autonomy to emergent readers might influence their motivation or literacy development, making the need to study and better understand ways to foster motivation with emergent readers in primary grades imperative. Reading motivation is multifaceted and complex, with aspects such as self-efficacy, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, and social motivation all noted as influencers of reading motivation (Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie & Coddington, 2009). Numerous research studies have focused on reading motivation and engagement of older students (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Gambrell et al. 2011; Marinak, 2013), but little has been studied about emergent readers' motivation and book choice. Autonomy and book selection research has focused on teaching pedagogy for older students (Guthrie, Wigfield & VonSecker, 2000; Daniels, 2002; Huang, 2012; De Naeghel et al., 2014). This body of work lends support to the idea of teaching pedagogy that encourages autonomy in book selection as it can correlate to higher levels of motivation and engagement. There is also evidence that reading motivation declines as children progress through elementary school (Wigfield et al., 1997; Marsh, 1989; Chapman, Tunmer & Levin, 1995).

Limitations of survey instruments. Much of the work on motivation focuses on the use of survey instruments as a tool to understand reader motivation (Gambrell et al., 1996; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Sperling et al., 2013). The use of self-report surveys provides opportunity for both reference bias and self-report bias for what may be considered the socially acceptable group norm, since many of the surveys are administered in whole-group classroom settings (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). One way to help triangulate data from survey research is to use a mixed methods approach with

data gathered from various modes, but very few studies on reading motivation have used a mixed methods approach with observation being included as one of the methods (Gambrell et al., 1996; Turner, 1995; Ciampa, 2012). Given the age of most emergent readers, a mixed methods approach may be a more acceptable methodology to employ to study their book behaviors and how choice may impact their motivation to read.

Summary. Overall, there is a general understanding that literacy development is critical for children, but a key piece missing from the puzzle is understanding how motivation can impact emergent readers. There are a small number of instruments available to use with emergent readers, but those only capture one aspect of reading motivation and are also hampered by self-report bias. Before policymakers can be encouraged to restructure policy, there must be a body of research to present, which is currently lacking regarding motivation and emergent readers.

Study Significance

The intent of this study is to provide insight into how emerging readers select books within pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The study seeks to better understand the role of agency and book choice in relation to motivation to read, even for those who are emergent readers. It will offer insight that could influence the development of more developmentally appropriate educational policy (Neuman, 2000; Gallant, 2009), and honor the continuum of literacy development.

There are many unanswered questions about children's text selecting behaviors in early education classrooms. Do they freely choose or are they re-directed by teachers? While it is known that teachers play an integral role in selecting texts that are available to students in classroom libraries (Gambrell, 1996), there remains a need to understand

interactions that happen once the text is placed in the classroom library. As such, this study is significant in that it will explore, through bioecological and emergent literacy perspectives, an integral part of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms that has yet to be documented.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

The primary focus of this study is to understand how emergent readers demonstrate agency when selecting books within their classrooms and to understand the bioecological factors that play a role in those choices. In addition, the study has the potential to provide a window into how state-level educational policy may impact teaching pedagogy. The following research questions are to be addressed:

1. What behaviors do pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children exhibit when choosing books in the classroom?
2. To what extent and in what ways do teachers in the classroom direct children when they are choosing books?
3. What are teachers' reasons for adjusting or redirecting children's book choice?
4. How does policy influence teachers' decisions about access to texts?

Limitations

The purpose of this study is to examine how emergent readers select books using a mixed methods comparative case study. My participation in the study was as a participant observer during field observations, which was unique to me, my context, and

the lens through which I view education and literacy development. It is through this lens that I have interpreted my results and findings.

Another limitation is the participant selection criteria; I have sought participants that have previously established relationships with various professors within the department in which I am studying. These prior relationships could be a limitation in part due to ongoing pre-service teacher placements at these sites. These sites are both situated in East Tennessee, with one being much more rural than the other, although neither could be classified as urban. Although the contexts of each pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom are unique, they are representative of the local area.

A final limitation is the absence of children's voices. In order to address a gap in the research around emergent reader motivation, this mixed methods case study did not collect data from the children using a survey or other method (see: Saracho, 1986; Sperling, et al., 2013).

Delimitations

The school sites were selected because of their geographic proximity to the researcher to better facilitate data collection. This study is situated in the context of current educational policy in Tennessee, as policy shifts impact pedagogical practice. It is also situated within the broader context of federal education policy.

Key Terms

The following terms are defined the way they are used throughout my study:

Agency—a child's ability to act on their own goals, and make their own choices in a classroom (Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011)

Book behaviors—the behaviors a child exhibits when selecting a book, e.g. approaches book shelf, browses, picks up book, sets down book, puts back book, switches book, looks at book cover, flips pages (Clay, 1982; Teale, 1986; Chall, 1996)

Choice—opportunity for children to self-select texts (De Naeghel et al., 2014)

Developmentally appropriate practice—teaching practices for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten years focus on providing children with authentic literacy experiences and include "opportunities to engage in play that incorporates literacy tools, such as writing grocery lists in dramatic play…" (Neuman, 2000, p. 16)

Emergent literacy—a reciprocal process in which reading, writing and oral language develop harmoniously, not in isolation, and these skills and knowledge are developmental precursors to conventional reading and writing (Clay, 1972, 1982, 1991, 2014; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)

Reading motivation—goals and beliefs that guide reading behavior (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999)

Reading readiness—a model of reading development that believes children are only ready to begin reading at the time of formal schooling (e.g. kindergarten) (Durkin, 1970a, 1970b; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)

Study Organization

The purpose of this mixed methods comparative case study is to understand how emergent readers demonstrate agency when selecting books within their classrooms, and what behaviors children demonstrate when selecting books. In chapter two, I review the literature on emergent literacy, including literature that focuses on the student voice and choice as an aspect of teaching pedagogy. In chapter three, I explain my methodological

choices, outline my theory of emergent readers' voice and choice within my theoretical framework, define the researcher's role, the context and population, the data collected, and analysis procedures. In chapter four, I report the findings of my study as they relate to the research questions, and in chapter five, I discuss the implications of my findings for teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Finally, I close chapter five by identifying remaining questions that may be addressed by future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Remarkable learning has already occurred before children pass through the school doors.

-Marie Clay, *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes*, 2014

There is little doubt that children learn much before they begin formal schooling, and Clay takes a positive perspective, suggesting that family literacy can be a powerful tool for student growth, rather than a deficit to overcome. This literature review begins with a discussion of the historical background of emergent literacy, including facets of family literacy. Next I discuss models of emergent literacy, and current policy implications. Finally, I conclude the literature review with a discussion on reading motivation.

Emergent Literacy: An Historical Perspective

Emergent literacy is the foundation of all literacy development. The term was first introduced in the late 1960s by Marie Clay, but didn't gain widespread popularity until the late 1980s. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998, 2001) added depth to the definition of emergent literacy as a model of learning to read by explaining that "the acquisition of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child, rather than an all-or-none phenomenon that begins when children start school" (p. 848). They further noted that emergent literacy is linked to two other known terms: emergent literacy environments, which focus on experiences that may influence literacy development, and the emergent literacy movement, which focuses on advocacy (1998).

The term literacy has evolved from the more conventional definition of literacy as reading and writing (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, 2001) to an expanded definition that addresses speaking and listening, while including creative processes and content knowledge (Wasik, Dobbins, & Herrmann, 2001). A more recent working definition from the International Literacy Association has defined literacy as "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context" (2016, para 1). For the purposes of this study and this literature review, I will focus on emergent literacy in its more concrete and conventional forms of reading and writing. Thus, this section of the literature review will focus on the construct and models of emergent literacy, as well as the ensuing policy implications.

Developing the construct of emergent literacy. The construct of emergent literacy could be said to be a culmination of the work of various researchers including Teale and Sulzby, Ferriero and Teborsky, and Durkin, but Marie Clay is often considered the 'mother' of the term (Rohde, 2015). Marie Clay notably used the term in her dissertation entitled *Emergent Reading Behaviour* in 1966. Clay (1982) developed this term while studying the reading behaviors of 100 New Zealand children during their first year of school. At the time she undertook this work, there was a lack of longitudinal information available about children's first literacy experiences in a school setting. Clay (1982) observed the children's reading and writing behaviors weekly and then conducted three assessments during the school year. At the end of this longitudinal study, Clay discovered that the children were at varying levels of literacy development and that a delay of reading and writing served no benefit to 5 year olds (1982). At the time, these

findings were contradictory to the reading readiness model which indicated children should not be exposed to formal literacy instruction until a specific set of conditions were met, typically those conditions included the start of kindergarten or display of specific behaviors (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Building on this early work, Clay went on to develop her literacy processing theory, which explained how the children build their literacy skills by using all of the information they have available. Clay's (2001) literacy processing theory states:

> In a complex model of interacting competencies in reading and writing the reader can potentially draw from all his or her current understanding, and all his or her language competencies, and visual information, and phonological information, and knowledge of printing conventions, in ways which extend both the searching and linking processes as well as the item knowledge repertoires. (p. 224)

This processing theory dovetails with Clay's interest in the competencies children develop in literacy before they enter school, as she acknowledged children have unique developmental histories and that children bring their individual knowledge and experiences with them to school.

Around the time that Clay was beginning her work in emergent literacy in New Zealand, Dolores Durkin was also conducting research about early readers and writers. Although Durkin (1970a, 1970b) did not frequently use the term in her work, the idea of emergent literacy is supported by her belief that readiness is simply not one thing, but a sum of different abilities which vary in kind and amount. Durkin's (1966) study also provided evidence to contradict the readiness model's core concept that the development of reading must precede writing. She explained that "children who have no interest in

reading per se are found to be very interested in printing" (Durkin, 1970a, p. 533). Carol Chomsky (1971) also supported Durkin's reversal of the traditional path of literacy development in her article *Write First, Read Later.* Durkin additionally offered suggestions and ideas for kindergarten teachers that would allow children opportunities to interact with letters and sounds, but also serve as a mechanism for teachers to assess children's literacy development (1970a, 1970b).

During the 1960s and 1970s, this literacy paradigm shift was influenced by the idea of human development, particularly child development, and strengthened by events "such as the early infancy studies at Harvard University, the widespread use of standardized readiness measures such as the Metropolitan Readiness Test, Head Start, the War on Poverty and the African-American Movement" (Katims, 1991, p. 70). During this era, Teale and Sulzby (1986) undertook their work to better understand how children learn about reading before formal schooling. They realized that the reading readiness model, like many education initiatives was not inherently bad just poorly applied (Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

In their landmark text, *Emergent Literacy: Reading & Writing*, Teale and Sulzby (1986), along with their colleagues, helped expand upon the work of Clay and Durkin. It is generally agreed upon that Clay was the first scholar to use the term emergent literacy, but that Teale and Sulzby's push to explicitly use the term represented a paradigm shift in research (1986). They further defined emergent literacy as "a new perspective which stresses that legitimate, conceptual, developmental literacy learning is occurring during the first years of a child's life" (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, p. 28).

For Teale (1986), Sulzby (1985, 1986), Clay (1972, 1982, 1991, 2014) and other researchers, emergent literacy is a reciprocal process in which reading, writing and oral language develop harmoniously, not in isolation. Family literacy is an aspect of emergent literacy, and in Sulzby's (1985) work, she notes the role of the mother as a mediator in the language development of a child. Both Piaget and Vygotsky influenced the work of Sulzby (1985) as evidenced by the explanation of her framework for studying storybook reading in emergent literacy:

> Similar to the Piagetian stance, it is based on the belief that children's notions are conceptual, but, following Vygotsky, it is also assumed that the form of the physical environment-here, the storybook-is shaped by the social environment in which it is experienced, including the language used. (p. 461)

Research supports the idea that both the physical and social environment play a key role in emergent literacy.

What might a snapshot of emergent literacy in action look like? One may observe a child in a print rich environment, who has the opportunity to interact with a variety of types of print, to develop and practice oral language (e.g., rhyme), and is read to regularly by adults (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Ferriero & Teborsky, 1982). The child in this snapshot also has access to writing materials and mentors who are willing to scaffold the child by responding to questions about reading and writing. Emergent literacy is thus a complex process, but Teale and Sulzby concluded there were six essential elements of emergent literacy:

1. Children in a literate society begin learning to read and write very early in life.
2. Being read to plays a special role in literacy development of the young child.

> 3. Literacy develops out of real-life settings in which reading and writing are used to "get things done." Therefore, the functions of literacy are as much a part of learning to read and write as are the formal aspects of written language.
>
> 4. Young children are actively involved in the process of their own literacy development. Social interaction with parents (or other literate persons) in activities involving reading and writing plays a key role in the process; also, through independent explorations of written language and observations of the literate practices of others, young children construct their understanding of reading and writing.
>
> 5. The young child's reading and writing abilities reinforce each other, developing concurrently and interrelatedly rather than sequentially.
>
> 6. Learning to read and write is a developmental process for young children. Though their learning about different aspects of literacy can be described in terms of generalized stages, children pass through these stages in a variety of ways and at different ages. (1986, p. xviii)

These essential elements were later referenced in the varying models of emergent literacy which were developed in the 1990s.

Beginning at home: Family literacy. In classrooms and political arenas today, we still hear the sentiment shared by Huey that education starts in the home and “it all begins with parents reading to children” (1908, p. 103). Family literacy practices and home literacy environments are an integral element in children’s literacy development, as noted in the work of Teale and Sulzby (1986) and Gee (2001). While there is no universally agreed upon definition of family literacy, the broad tenets described by the

Family Literacy Commission provide a framework for beginning to understand the complexities of family literacy:

> Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Sometimes, family literacy occurs naturally…Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent or may occur spontaneously. Family literacy activities may also reflect the ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage of the families involved. (Morrow, Paratore, & Tracey, 1994, p. 3)

These tenets have encompassed the current spirit of family literacy, which seeks to be inclusive and build upon differences rather than correct deficiencies.

Poverty, language, housing, and health are just a few obstacles that families encounter in making a transition from home to school (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Duke, 2000; Hart, 1995; McCarthey, 2000). The following demographics illustrate what home life looks like for school aged children in the United States (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2017):

- 21% live in poverty
- 29% have parents who lack secure employment
- 35% live in single parent families
- 14% have parents without a high school diploma.

This snapshot depicts the challenging home situations that face many children and their families. As a result, the border crossing between home and school can be bumpy for various reasons, particularly for emergent readers. Collins (1989) and Frey (2010) indicated that by adopting an approach that mirrors family systems theory, which views

the family as an emotional unit rather than in isolation, could be a positive approach for schools. By viewing children and families in context, schools can be more successful in meeting the developmental literacy needs of their students.

Emergent literacy environments. In addition to the home literacy environment, the school literacy environment plays a vital role in literacy development. The impact of the physical literacy environment in an early childhood classroom has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on children's literacy development (Elley, 1992; Goodman, 1986; Morrow & Weinstein, 1982; Neuman, 1999). An exemplary classroom library should contain a variety of books that range from "simple to more complex text, include both expository and narrative texts, have books relating to the current classroom theme and contain a variety of book genres including rhyming texts, alphabet books and 'flap books'" (Guo et al., 2012, p. 309). To develop high quality classroom libraries, teachers must often use their own funds to purchase books. Kindergarten teachers in Tennessee receive just $200 per year to purchase instructional supplies for their classrooms, which may include books. The average teacher spends over double that amount on supplies for their classroom (USDOE, 2018).

In addition to the classroom literacy environment, children should have access to a school library. The benefit of a school library to literacy development and academic achievement is well documented (Lance, 2007; Lance & Kachel, 2018). School libraries, and school librarians, are tasked with managing and keeping library collections up to date (Lance, Rodney, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000). Accessibility to high-quality texts that contain current information are a necessary part of the school literacy environment, particularly if children may not have access to those materials in their classroom library

(Krashen, Lee, & McQuillan, 2012). While the American Association of School Libraries no longer provides a quantitative recommendation of books per student, Tennessee has set the following standards for collection development:

> Basic collection-12 items per student
>
> Standard collection-15 items per student
>
> Exemplary collection-18 items per student. (Tennessee State Board of Education, 2013, p. 1)

These recommendations are lower than the national average of 21.8 books per student and imply that even schools with an exemplary designation in Tennessee may have fewer materials available for students (National Education Association, 2016).

Models of emergent literacy. The models of emergent literacy have transformed from the readiness model to a more holistic model. The readiness model remained en vogue from the turn of the century through the 1970s. As the idea of emergent literacy continued to be developed and explored by literacy researchers, the expansion of research broadened the understanding of how literacy development unfolds and how emergent literacy can be supported at home and in schools. This section will focus first on the readiness model, and then discuss the emergent literacy models, which include the more recent comprehensive emergent literacy model.

Reading Readiness model. The reading readiness model was the de facto model of reading development until the emergence of the emergent literacy model. The two co-existed for a period, but currently emergent literacy is the most widely accepted model. The foundational aspect of the readiness model, as explained by Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), is the belief that a readiness approach can "create a boundary between the

"prereading" behaviors of children, and the "real" reading that children are taught in educational settings" (p. 848).

It can be helpful to view the theory of reading readiness as a parallel to the Piagetian ages and stages of development. Piaget (1977) believed children moved through stages in a fixed sequence, and within a certain time period. Following the reading readiness model, a child in the sensorimotor stage would be unable to engage in reading behaviors because they would not be developmentally 'ready' to read. Once a child moved into Piaget's preoperational stage of development they are then developmentally 'ready' to begin to manipulate symbols for communication (Piaget, 1977). Similar to Piaget's belief that the environment may play a minor role in overall child development, the reading readiness model was centered around the individual, rather than the literacy environment (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006).

Durkin (1970a) provided another perspective on reading readiness, explaining that the model and term made its way into educational dialect in the 1920s based on the work of Andrew Gesell. Gesell, like Piaget, believed that development unfolded in sequential fashion, and if a child was not yet performing a specific motor task like rolling over, it would resolve itself in due time (Durkin, 1970a, 1970b). This idea of maturation was a key aspect of reading readiness that "resulted in the proclamation that a mental age of about 6.5 years defines readiness" (Durkin, 1970a, p. 530). Durkin disagreed with the notion that there was a magical age at which every child was ready to read, instead she believed that there were a variety of factors that determined a child's readiness. Durkin (1970a) further illuminated why the idea of maturation is an inaccurate way to gauge reading development by explaining:

> what makes one child ready for reading might be different from what makes another ready, both are ready because of the interplay of nature and nurture. This is a recognition that children are ready because of hereditary and maturational factors, but also because of the learning opportunities in their particular environment. (p. 531)

A final component of the readiness model is the consideration of how the various 'threads' of literacy develop. In a readiness model, the threads of reading, writing, and oral language are often thought of as separate rather than braided together (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Typically, the readiness model has purported that oral language precedes reading, with writing development unfolding as the final stage in the model. Another way to think about this model is that it is rooted in the assumption that reading and writing require explicit, formal instruction that doesn't begin until a child starts school.

Emergent literacy models. Three specific models of emergent literacy that are well-known are those developed by Mason and Stewart (1990), Chall (1996), and Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998). As summarized by Senechal et al. (2001), these models share many similarities. The similar behaviors they found in these models include:

> (a) children's conceptual knowledge about literacy; (b) children's procedural knowledge about reading and writing; (c) many aspects of children's language (e.g., vocabulary, narrative knowledge); and (d) children's metalinguistic skills (i.e., their awareness of the structure of their language, such as phonological awareness). (p. 443)

While there are commonalities between these three models, each has features that make it unique.

The model developed by Mason and Stewart (1990) had four distinct components. The first component of *Concepts & Functions of Literacy* included children understanding that one reads text, not pictures in a book. Children's ability to dictate and write is the second component, called *Writing & Composing*. *Knowledge about Letters & Words*, is the third component, which moved beyond simple letter knowledge, and focused on children's ability to understand grapheme-phoneme correspondence. The final component of the Mason and Stewart Model was *Listening Comprehension & Word Understanding*, which included children's retelling ability and the use of reading strategies.

In a second model, Chall (1996) asserted that the development of literacy progresses through stages and that "individuals progress through stages by interacting with their environment-the home, school, larger community and culture" (p. 11). The stages begin with Prereading (Stage 0) and end with Construction and Reconstruction (Stage 5) (Chall, 1996). Of relevance and particular interest to this work, is the Prereading Stage, described by Chall as the stage with the greatest series of changes when children accumulate a "fund of knowledge about letters, words, and books" (p. 13), while developing an understanding of the syntax of oral language.

In a third model, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) developed a more streamlined model of emergent literacy which focused on the idea of two processes: inside-out and outside-in. The "*inside-out"* domain centers around phonological and syntactic awareness, while the "*outside-in"* domain covers narrative knowledge and language

(1998, p. 585). They posited that these processes are both essential to reading and work simultaneously in readers who are reading well (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). These models have also served as the foundation for evolving models of emergent literacy.

A more recent model is known as comprehensive emergent literacy model (CELM). CELM is based upon the work of many of the above scholars, and also integrates the whole-to-part literacy assessment ideas of Cunningham and Stanovich (1993). While the aforementioned models focus on procedural and conceptual knowledge, as noted in Figure 1, CELM has acknowledged and honored the powerful influence of culture, community and demographics on emergent literacy (Rohde, 2015, p. 8).

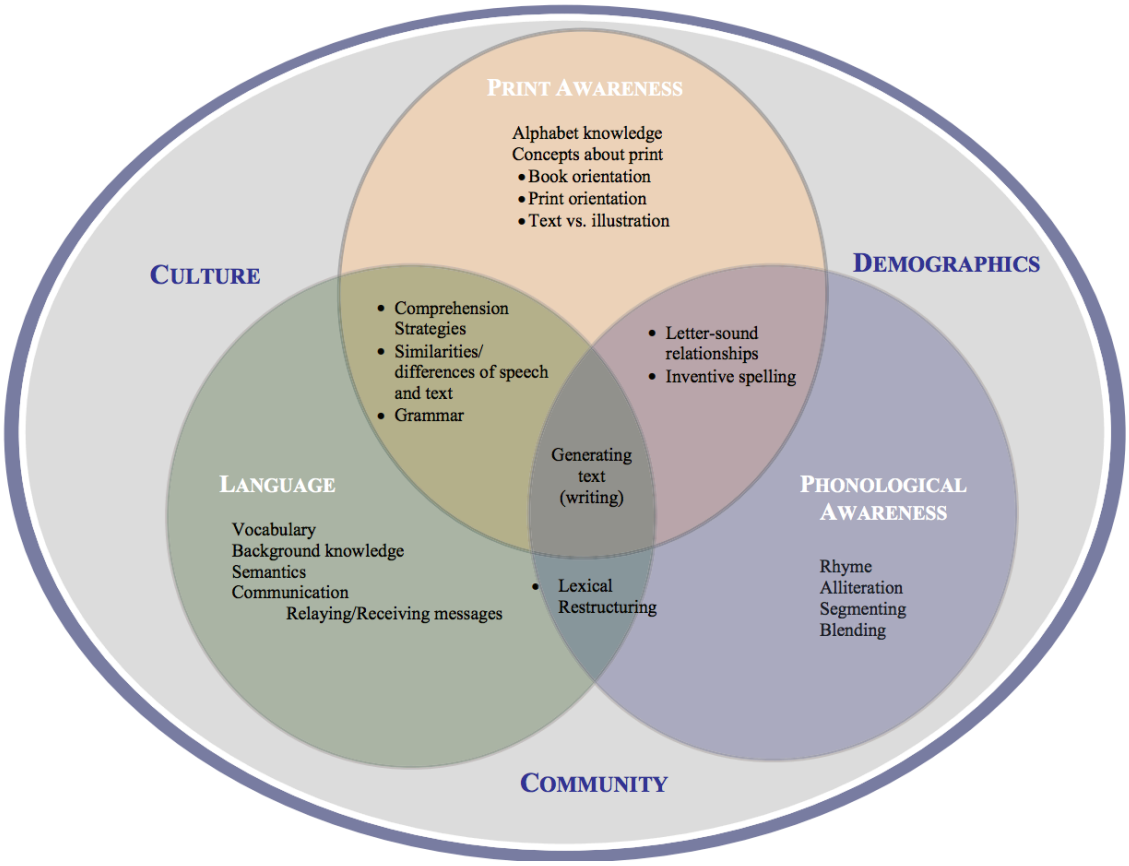


Figure 1. Comprehensive Emergent Literacy Model (Rohde, 2015, p. 8).

In understanding the influence of culture and demographics on emergent literacy, it is necessary to highlight the growing body of research on emergent bilinguals. Reyes and Azuara have defined emergent bilinguals as "young children (ages 3 to 5 years) who speak a native language other than English and are in the dynamic process of developing bilingual and biliterate competencies with the support of their communities" (2013, p. 228). In their case study of children whose first language (L1) was Spanish, and second language (L2) was English, Reyes and Azuara (2013) found that children developed metalinguistic awareness of print in both languages, the families routinely engaged in literacy practices in their homes, and there was evidence of bidirectional, intergenerational learning among varying family members. These findings supported their belief that a more bioecological perspective of biliteracy should be developed given that "emergent bilingual children's development of biliteracy is dynamic and mediated by their immediate sociocultural contexts" (Reyes & Azuara, 2013, p. 257). Shifting to a bioecological model would value the emergent literacy that develops in the child's home environment in their L1, and also provide a more accurate portrayal of their emergent literacy skills. By discouraging speaking and writing in L1, while only providing books in English, the current educational policies throughout much of the country are a deterrent to children developing choice and voice as they travel the continuum of literacy development. The subsequent section will highlight how these policies impact emergent literacy and early childhood education.

Policy implications. A constant in the history of early childhood education is the persistence of questions about "how early literacy skills should be taught, by whom, to whom, and at what age" (McGill-Franzen, 1993, p. 18). The answers to these questions

often help form policies which impact children in pre-kindergarten programs. To better understand the history of early childhood education and its impact on emergent literacy in the United States, I provide a brief overview of well-known pre-kindergarten programs. Next, I review more recent reforms, focusing on Race to the Top (RTTT), and finally, I discuss Tennessee specific policies and practices, while considering how these policies and practices become realities for children and teachers in pre-kindergarten classrooms which thus influence emergent literacy development.

Pre-kindergarten programs. Although there have been various pre-kindergarten program initiatives, the most well-known is Head Start. Head Start began as a multi-faceted program to serve the needs of economically disadvantaged children in 1965 (McGill-Franzen, 1993). While it may have been touted as a model that more closely resembles the current community schools model, which integrates social services within public schools, the focus has remained heavily on school readiness and kindergarten preparation. Many analyses of the Head Start program have been undertaken, but there is little evidence of its success (McGill-Franzen, 1993; Karch, 2013). One critical difference between Head Start and public pre-kindergarten programs in Tennessee, is that only teachers in the latter are required to be licensed educators. This distinction regarding qualifications of Head Start teachers has resulted in tensions between Head Start and public pre-kindergarten programs, and has also impacted early education policy in the fight over limited funding (Karch, 2013).

The Perry Preschool Project (PPP) is one that is often-cited by policymakers who support early education programs. PPP took place in Ypsilanti, Michigan from 1962-1967, and focused on educating African-American children who were living in poverty.

Although this study is frequently cited as an example of the high return on investment of funding preschool or early education (Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003), there have been numerous concerns raised about the sample size, the randomization of treatment participants, issues surrounding the prescribed curriculum, and the administrators' deficit perspective that it was the teacher's role to help change the cultural practices of families served (Heckman et al., 2010; Derman-Sparks, 2016). Derman-Sparks, who taught at PPP, reflected that she and other teachers "focused on helping families learn ways to support the skills children needed for cognitive development in general, and school skills in particular" while being culturally sensitive (2016, p. 101). While the "investment" of PPP may be used to encourage funding of preschool programs solely based on student outcomes, perhaps it necessary to realize, as Derman-Sparks reflected, that the relationships developed between teachers and families vary, and can also impact student outcomes.

Federal policy influences. Despite the support for and concerns with early education, it wasn't until No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that the accountability regime for public schools kicked into high gear, and was furthered by the enactment of Race to the Top (RTTT) in 2009 by President Obama. Both acts placed seemingly impossible demands upon schools for accountability, and in particular, the goal of making 'adequate yearly progress' (AYP) (Ravitch, 2011). Rather than course correct from the dismal outcomes of NCLB, RTTT expanded the agenda of punitive outcomes for teachers and schools that did not make AYP. Ravitch (2011) explained the most notable change with the adoption of RTTT is that "it represents a remarkable expansion of the federal role into what has traditionally been the province of state and local decision-making" (p. 6).

Tennessee, like many states, purposefully changed legislation to directly tie teacher evaluation scores to student standardized test scores in hopes of receiving RTTT funding. Tennessee was one of the first "winners" in the RTTT competitive grant process and thus has been a bellwether for the education reform movement. During this time, legislation was also enacted to make tenure more difficult for teachers to achieve, in part due to the connection of student standardized test scores to teacher evaluations.

RTTT also had a focused pre-kindergarten element with the Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC), which was a competitive grant, specifically for providing funding for pre-kindergarten and early learning programs to increase kindergarten readiness (USDOE, 2013). Over $1 billion has been invested in 20 states, which committed to develop programs that focus on "the collection, organization, and understanding of evidence of young children's progress across a range of domains, as well as implementing comprehensive data systems and using data to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies" (USDOE, 2013, p. 2). Although Tennessee was one of the first RTTT 'winners,' it did not apply for the additional funds from RTTT-ELC, likely because Tennessee had already begun funding public pre-kindergarten programs years earlier. Opting out of RTTT-ELC did not exempt Tennessee pre-kindergarten classrooms from data-driven decision making. This focus on data-driven decision making in RTTT has raised concern from educators and policymakers alike, and has directly impacted students in Tennessee.

Tennessee policy influences. In 2005, excess lottery funds were used to establish pre-kindergarten classrooms through a competitive grant process, under the *Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) for Tennessee Act*. Currently over 18,000 Tennessee children in 137 school

districts are served through VPK (TDOE, 2018e). The goal of VPK continues to be to serve children living in poverty, and VPK requirements state that 90% of the enrolled students must be considered economically disadvantaged. An interesting component of VPK falls under the description of its basic principles, the first principle listed is 'voluntary' and is described as such: "parents, communities, and school districts can decide locally whether they want and need high-quality pre-K classrooms" (TDOE, 2018e).

As with many educational programming and funding decisions, there is often research conducted to determine any outcomes of new programs, and VPK is no exception. In 2015, the results were released of a randomized control trial study of VPK, with an embedded longitudinal component, which was conducted by researchers at Vanderbilt University. The results of the study showed positive benefits for those children at the end of their year of VPK, but that these results did not persist in a subgroup through third grade (Lipsey, Farran, & Hofer, 2015). While the authors themselves shared their surprise at the results, they did note that children in VPK did continue on in high-poverty schools, and that there may have been an instructional mismatch during kindergarten because teachers are "directing their attention to the children who need it the most, thus allowing them [non-VPK children] to catch up with those who have been in pre-k" (Lipsey, Farran, & Hofer, 2015, p. 41). The authors failed to address the possibility that the fade out effect in the later grades could be due to a variety of other factors including shifting standards and evaluation systems. Legislators simply took the results of the study as a way to push for greater accountability within VPK.

In 2016, following the release of the Vanderbilt study of VPK, additional legislation was passed by the Tennessee General Assembly regarding the quality of pre-kindergarten programs. Under the *Pre-K Quality Act of 2016*, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) was granted the authority to determine what constitutes a highly qualified pre-kindergarten program, and additionally has required the use of portfolio teacher assessment for both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers. The implementation of this act has allowed for the student outcome data of VPK programs and teacher evaluation scores to be specifically included in applications for VPK funding. The VPK application rubric describes programs as excellent and eligible for 10 points per the rubric (the maximum allotment), as those that focus on "student outcome goals and continuous improvement strategies are evidence based (research, student measurement analyses, teacher evaluation data, stakeholder input, early childhood specialist consultations)" (TDOE, 2017a). These academic goals refer back to the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards ("ELDS") which were first adopted in 2004 by the State Board of Education, and later adopted with further revisions, with the most recent revision taking place in January 2018. According to the TDOE, these standards have been purposefully revised to "provide a direct alignment with the content areas found in Tennessee's state English Language Arts and mathematics standards as well as the Tennessee state standards for kindergarten" (TDOE, 2018d). These shifts in the ELDS to match standards in kindergarten have resulted in a backwards alignment and been the source of concern for early childhood educators (Gallant, 2009; Pyle & Bigelow, 2015; Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016). The unintended consequence of attempting to align standards, while making them more rigorous, is the complete absence of support of

developmentally appropriate practice and void of any understanding of the continuum of emergent literacy development.

Developmentally appropriate practice. In the joint position statement of developmentally appropriate practices for young children by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the recommended teaching practices for preschool and kindergarten years focused on providing children with authentic literacy experiences and "opportunities to engage in play that incorporates literacy tools, such as writing grocery lists in dramatic play…" (Neuman, 2000, p. 16). In stark contrast to this suggestion, the *Teaching Literacy in Tennessee* guide developed by the TDOE, which is used in teacher professional development, and as a guide for teacher evaluation, makes no reference to play as an appropriate method for developing literacy skills.

Another juxtaposition is found in the discussion of English Language Learners (ELL), children whose first language is not English. The IRA/NAEYC has stated that teachers should "never use a child's language, dialect or culture as a basis for making judgments about the child's intellect or capability" (Neuman, 2000, p. 16), which is a positive frame, compared to the deficit viewpoint of the TDOE, that has specified ELL as a group that requires collaboration and intervention. The TDOE also has noted that "all students, regardless of English Language Proficiency, are held to the same rigorous grade-level standards" (TDOE, 2018c, p. 14) which indicates that kindergartens who are learning English may be set up to fail when held up to standards that are not developmentally appropriate.

While it is known that literacy develops on a continuum (Chall, 1996; Clay, 1991; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001), there is little acknowledgement that children may be at different stages in their literacy development in the current standards. The direct link between pre-kindergarten (left column) and kindergarten (right column) literacy skills is demonstrated in the Tennessee early learning standards, as seen in Figure 2 (TDOE, 2018b, p. 10). In comparison to the IRA/NAEYC guidelines, which consider kindergarten the experimental writing stage, during which children may "begin to write letters of the alphabet and some high-frequency words" (Neuman, 2000, p. 20), the kindergarten standard in Figure 2 (b) illustrates the push down curriculum, where academic demands of kindergarten have increased, and have a closer resemblance to first grade demands (Gallant, 2009). Gallant (2009) described the impetus of these changes landing in early grades because "kindergarten has, through escalating federal, state, and local attention, increasingly become a target for educational change and is now considered a tool for narrowing the achievement gap" (p. 204).

Foundational Literacy Standards Word Composition – Standard #4 FL.WC.4 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills when encoding words; write legibly.	
PK.FL.WC.4 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills when encoding words.	**K.FL.WC.4** Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills when encoding words; write legibly.
a. Begin to recognize the difference between upper and lowercase letters.	a. Write uppercase and lowercase manuscript letters from memory.
b. Begin to print the distinctive features of letter forms (circle, line, diagonal, crossed lines, etc.).	b. Write a letter/letters for most consonant and short vowel sounds (phonemes).
	c. Represent phonemes first to last in simple words using letters (graphemes) such as "rop" for "rope."
	d. Spell VC (at, in) and CVC (pet, mud) words with short vowels; spell V (a, I) and CV (be, go) words with long vowels.

Figure 2. Tennessee Early Learning Standard showing connection between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten standards.

Teacher accountability in Tennessee. An additional policy layer is the accountability shift that took place during this time period, with varying policies being adopted that led to greater accountability for teacher evaluations. Prior to 2017, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers were evaluated using value-added scores for the entire school. In 2017, both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers were required to be evaluated using the portfolio method. The portfolio method requires evidence collection that shows growth based on both ELA and math standards. These portfolio scores make up 35% of a teacher's level of effectiveness (TDOE, 2018c). Figure 3 shows the amount of data collection required by educators in both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms which includes 12 samples for literacy.

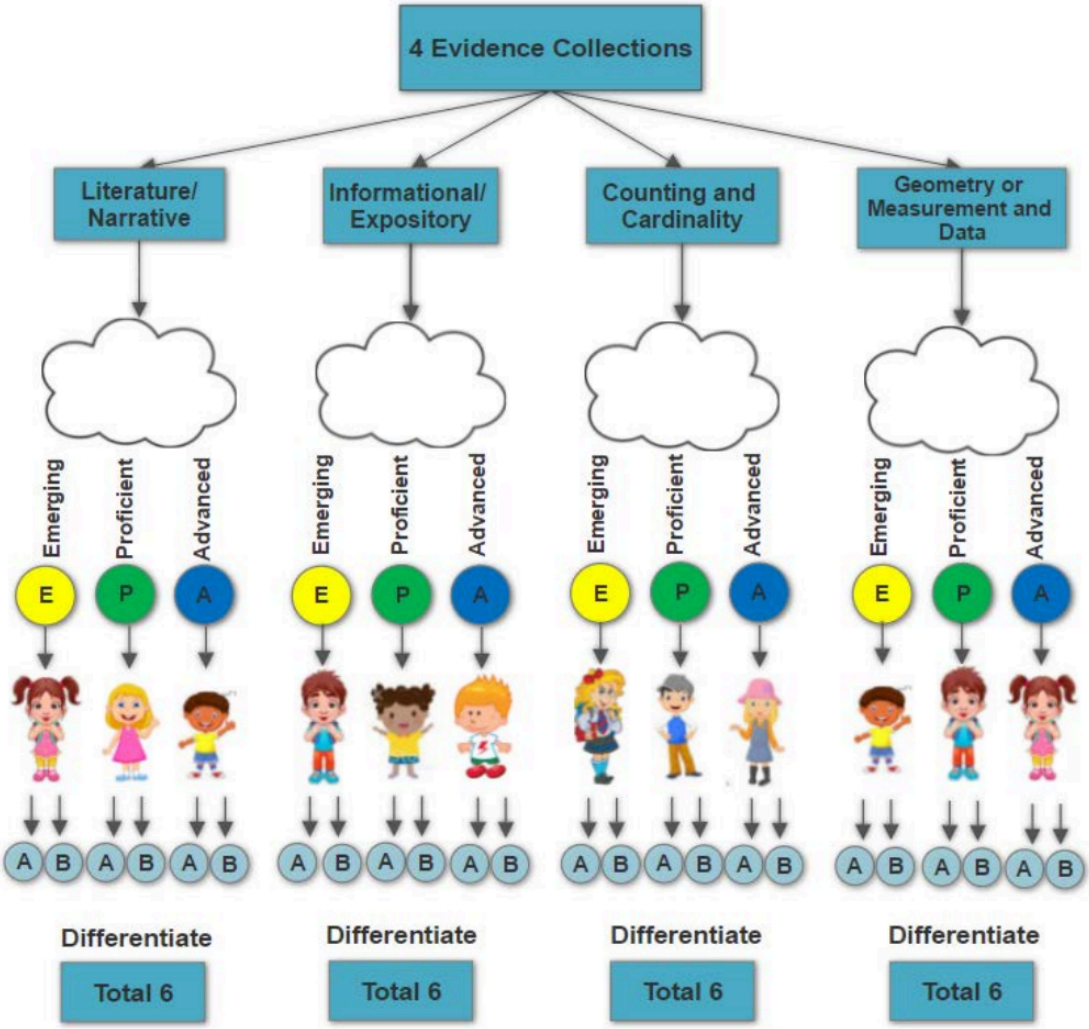


Figure 3. Data collection requirements for TEAM Portfolio for VPK and kindergarten teachers (TDOE, 2018c).

Teacher views on policy changes. How has the implementation of RTTT in Tennessee caused a trickle-down effect to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms? Ravitch accurately predicted the outcomes of RTTT in 2011:

> the results of tying evaluation, compensation, and tenure to student test scores are predictable: there will be more teaching to the test; more time devoted to test preparation rather than instruction; and a consequent narrowing of the curriculum. (2011, p. 7)

In a study of Michigan kindergarten teachers, Gallant (2009) found a shift in responses around curricular autonomy, with 40% responding they had a low level of flexibility and used words like 'forced' when describing their roles (Gallant, p. 212). The teachers in the study also raised concerns about the academic expectations for students and the long-term effects of curricular demands that may lead to lowered student self-efficacy. Although Le et al. (2019) found that exposure to advanced ELA content did not negatively impact socio-emotional development, they did not control for evaluation factors that may influence content and instructional practice within their study. Concerns have been raised by pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers about the increased rigor in the required portfolio evaluation, which teachers have voiced is not developmentally appropriate for their students.

Additionally, the idea of 'teaching to the test' can be applied to both VPK and kindergarten, given the amount of evidence teachers must collect to show growth on specific standards as noted in Figure 3. The TDOE has embraced the ideals of RTTT, and state that the pre-kindergarten teacher evaluation portfolios are being explicitly used to "collect better information about each teacher's effectiveness and to give them the

support they need" (2018a, p. 5). This implies that a teacher has a classroom of homogenous students, with little appreciation of the multitude of literacy backgrounds of individual children, family literacy experiences, and home languages in Tennessee.

Reader Choice, Voice, and Motivation

Reader motivation and choice is an often debated topic in professional development meetings throughout the United States, as teachers lament the decline in student motivation and engagement with reading. While this may seem like a more recent concern based upon the most recently imposed accountability within the *Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)*, research on this specific aspect of literacy dates back several decades. This research can provide a framework for understanding why choice can influence even emerging readers' motivation. As a general overview, there are numerous theories of academic motivation, including attributional theory of motivation (Graham & Williams, 2009), self-efficacy theory (Schunk & Pajares, 2009), and expectancy-value theory (Wigfield, Tonks & Klauda, 2009), among others. It is widely accepted that academic motivation is multifaceted, and reading motivation is particularly complex, with research noting that numerous constructs impact reading motivation (Guthrie & Coddington, 2009). Motivational constructs that positively impact reading include intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and social motivation. There are also constructs of motivation which correlate negatively to reading motivation, such as performance-avoidance and amotivation (Ryan & Deci, 2006).

Wigfield (2000) suggested there are three specific aspects of motivation that are generally the keys to reading motivation: (1) social motivation, (2) competence and efficacy beliefs, and (3) intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. Research on motivation has

centered around many of these aspects (Baker & Wigfield, 1999), but the bulk of the research has focused on children in first grade and above. That research has shown that reading motivation declines as children progress through elementary school, making the need to study and better understand ways to foster motivation with emergent readers in primary grades imperative (Wigfield et al., 1997; Marsh, 1989; Chapman, Tunmer & Levin, 1995). This section will highlight instruments of reading motivation research, the instrumental work of researchers seeking to understand reading motivation of elementary school students, and explore research on how student choice impacts motivation.

Instruments of reading motivation research. This section will highlight four available and well-used instruments used to study reading motivation. One commonly used tool in reading motivation research is the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) developed by Gambrell et al. (1995) that includes a survey and interview. The survey portion provides a way to quantify a student's self-concept as a reader and their value of reading, and has been used in several studies as a pre/post intervention measure (Davis, 2010; Marinak, 2013; Malloy et al., 2013). Qualitative data can be gathered from the conversational interview and gives more personal, descriptive data about reading motivation (Gambrell et al., 1996, p. 525). Gambrell used the MRP to study the implementation of the Running Start program and its impact on reading motivation of 1st grade students. This multi-dimensional program highlighted the importance of a book-rich environment and was designed with the following goals:

> (1) increase the number of books in the classroom; (2) increase the number of books in the home; (3) increase opportunities to read at school and at home; (4)

> foster reading success for all children; and (5) provide home, school, and community support for literacy development. (Gambrell, et al., 1995, p. 144)

The MRP was used as a way to study the first large-scale Running Start program, which included over 7,000 students. The results indicated an increase in reading motivation and behaviors, which was statistically significant (Gambrell, 1996, p. 18). Follow-up studies also found increased reading engagement in both the home environment and classroom environment, based on the converging responses of students and parents (Gambrell, 1996, p. 19).

Another popular instrument used in reading motivation research is the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) which was developed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1995), and has been subsequently revised for use in numerous studies. Wigfield and Guthrie (1995) identified 11 unique aspects of reading motivation that they categorized under three broad motivational tenets: self-efficacy, extrinsic motivation, and social motivation. The MRQ ranges from 70-82 questions that children answer on a Likert scale. In their study of fourth and fifth graders, which used a revised version of the MRQ, Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) found that motivation is multifaceted and that high levels of intrinsic motivation correlated to an increase in the amount of reading activity (p. 429). While the MRQ has provided detailed data about reading motivation for older students, the language and format of the instrument make it unsuitable for use with children in early grades.

The Preschool Reading Attitude Scale (PRAS) (Saracho, 1986, 1988; Saracho & Dayton, 1989, 1991) was developed as a tool to measure children's attitudes toward reading and contains 12 items. The survey is administered orally to the children in a

whole group setting, and covers four domain areas: school reading activities, non-school reading activities, library reading activities, and general reading activities. The children respond to 'how do you feel' questions using a happy, neutral, or sad face. The survey includes questions about how children feel "when the teacher reads you a story" and "when you check out books from the library" (Saracho, 1986, p. 100).

More recently, Sperling et al. (2013) have combined aspects of aforementioned MRP and MRQ, with the addition of new items, to develop a new 18-item instrument they refer to as the Emergent Readers Motivation and Reading Scale (ERMAS) (p. 465). This instrument, along with the Preschool Reading Attitude Scale (PRAS) (Saracho, 1986, 1988; Saracho & Dayton, 1989, 1991) was piloted with 16 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children in Study 1, and then replicated in Study 2 with a similar, but larger population. Sperling et al. (2013) addressed the issue of using the MRP and MRQ with emergent readers, and explained how the ERMAS was adapted to a more developmentally appropriate level for emergent readers (e.g. use of smile/frown faces for responses). The researchers examined the responses between the PRAS and the ERMAS and found correlation between the two instruments, which indicated the ERMAS could be another potential tool for emergent literacy researchers focusing on motivation (Sperling et al., 2013, p. 482). The ERMAS focuses more on attitudes of how children feel about reading, e.g. "I feel happy when someone gives me a book for a present" (Sperling et al., 2013, p. 473). There is little within either the PRAS or the ERMAS that addresses how children select books.

Studies on autonomy and literacy motivation. Much of the research on choice in a school setting has been inspired by the work of Deci et al. (1991), Ryan and Deci

(2000), Schiefele (1991), and Schiefele et al. (2012). Deci and Ryan (1991) have applied self-determination theory (SDT) to education, and their work has focused on competence and relatedness as ways to facilitate motivation, in combination with autonomy support (p. 333). An essential aspect of SDT is that a self-determined behavior is one which the person perceives the control (or choice) is internal, rather than external (Deci & Ryan, 1991). In their research, Ryan and Deci (2000) concluded that the social conditions greatly influence the expression of intrinsic motivation. Unsurprisingly, conditions where behavior is controlled undermine self-determination, while conditions with autonomy support, allow for growth of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 76). The work of Schiefele (1991) and Schiefele et al. (2012) highlighted the aspect of interest as a motivational factor. Schiefele hypothesized that student interest is what determines their motivational orientation (either task or learning oriented), and that this also impacts their learning experience (1991, p. 316). Interest can further be viewed as situational and individual, with benefits being noted for students who have teachers that cultivate situational interest, as it may lead to long term, individual interest (Schiefele, 1991). It is evident that autonomy, interest, and motivation are all facets that can encourage or impede literacy development.

Turner (1995) studied the reading motivation of first graders through a task orientation lens. Observations and interviews were used to determine how literacy tasks affect the willingness and effort of children in learning to read. There were two key findings in Turner's study: (1) motivation is found in the intersection of child and task, and (2) a degree of choice can be an intrinsically motivating factor (1995, p. 437). This is

significant because much of the work on self-direction has focused on older children, but this research supported a level of autonomy for emergent and early readers.

Reading interest has been studied to determine if it is a mediating factor in motivation, in particular when students are presented with a challenging task. Similar to the work of Turner (1995), Fulmer and Frijters (2011) explored how middle school students presented with a challenging reading passage would respond, and how this would impact their motivation. They used two matched experimental conditions and found that the high interest in the text mediated some of the effects of the level of challenge that a complex text created (p. 203). Guthrie, Wigfield and VonSecker (2000) also studied task orientation with third and fifth grade students, and how the concept oriented reading instruction (CORI) model impacted task orientation and motivation. The children in the CORI classrooms reported higher levels of motivation, particularly in autonomy support and competence (Guthrie, Wigfield & VonSecker, 2000, p. 338). The use of the CORI model and how the scaffolding methodology in CORI can support reader motivation is discussed at length in the later work of Guthrie, Wigfield, and Perencevich (2004).

Ciampa (2012) and De Naeghel et al. (2014) both researched reading motivation of elementary students, with student autonomy being a significant finding in both studies. Ciampa's study focused on ebooks as a way to increase reading motivation in first grade students. A compelling finding was that all the student participants noted choice as one aspect of the ebook program which they liked, which was not as readily available in their regular classroom reading program (Ciampa, 2012). De Naeghel et al. (2014) focused on a broader age range of students in third through fifth grade. They sought to discover how

instructional practice and classroom environment can influence motivation. The findings of De Naeghel et al. (2014) showed that each of the three focal teachers studied provided varying degrees of autonomy support for their students, with ample opportunity for students to self-select texts. These results indicated that providing teachers with explicit training on the self-determination theory and its complementary teaching dimensions of autonomy support, structure and involvement, can be beneficial to students' reading motivation (De Naeghel et al., 2014). However, none of these studies were conducted at the emergent reader level, so this further highlights the need for the current study.

Motivational research in a theoretical context. Most literacy scholars are in agreement that reading motivation is multidimensional. This makes Clay's (1991) literacy processing theory an excellent match for discussing and understanding work on reader motivation. Clay's focus on the complexity of literacy processing mirrors the complexities found within reading motivation research. The idea posited by Clay that literacy expertise is a self-extending system can also be used as a way to study motivation, and has been similarly discussed by Mazzoni et al. (1999). In their study of first graders in the United States and Finland, Mazzoni et al. (1999) found that motivation to read could be considered a self-extending system, which is similar to the Matthew effect described by Stanovich (1986), in which those who read fluently will read more and those who struggle to read will read less. Simply learning to read was a powerful motivator for both groups of first grade children (Mazzoni et al., 1999).

Motivational research has shifted its focus to encompass studies that provide a better understanding of how instructional practice can impact reading motivation (De Naeghel et al., 2014; Guthrie, Wigfield & VonSecker, 2000), and this melds with

Rosenblatt's (1978; 1995) discussion on the importance of classroom environment (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Vonsecker, 2000; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Guthrie, et al., 2006; DeNaeghel et al., 2014). Rather than creating an environment that honors only one response to text, Rosenblatt urged teachers to create a welcoming environment that provides a place where readers can consider why they respond to text in a specific way while developing the skill of seeking personal meaning in text (1995, p. 67). Rosenblatt also referenced the premises of SDT and the need for teachers to provide both autonomy and support to students when presented with a variety of texts and tasks (1995, p. 69).

Summary

As detailed throughout this chapter, literacy is a complex process that begins at birth. Family literacy and emergent literacy are situated together in many contexts, particularly given the shift from the reading readiness model of emergent literacy to the more holistic comprehensive model. Understanding how, and why readers are motivated, is a question with significant research focus, likely due to the stagnant reading scores on standardized measures across the country, and the understanding that motivation is an essential part of literacy development. While there have been studies that use survey instruments to understand motivation (Saracho, 1986, 1988; Saracho & Dayton, 1989, 1991; Sperling et al., 2013), this body of research provides only one aspect of emergent reader motivation and does not address motivation within the context of text selection. Each of these aspects provide a window through which to view emergent readers, and a framework for understanding how emergent readers choose books, and highlights why this area deserves further exploration.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In response to the research gap identified in chapter two, I designed a mixed methods comparative case study to gain insight into how children demonstrate agency in book choice in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. Throughout this chapter, I outline the rationale behind my mixed methods comparative case study, as well as the theoretical framework, the researcher's role, context, participants, data collected, and data analysis methods.

Introduction to Methods

Mixed methods research has deep roots in qualitative and quantitative research, developed by researchers seeking answers to complex questions that require different viewpoints (Plano & Creswell, 2007). The definition of mixed methods has changed and shifted over the past two decades since its emergence as a recognized method. What originally defined mixed methods research was the focus on methods, but today has shifted to a broader, more holistic definition. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) addressed this, and explain that this shift has led them to create core characteristics of a mixed methods researcher, rather than a definition focused on either methods or methodology. According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018), a mixed methods researcher:

> collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data rigorously in response to research questions and hypotheses, integrates (or mixes and combines) the two forms of data and their results, organizes these procedures into specific research designs that provide the logic and procedures for conducting the study, and frames these procedures within theory and philosophy. (p. 5)

While there are many design applications of mixed methods, I have selected a mixed methods comparative case study design as the model that best fits my research questions. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) have encouraged researchers to "carefully select a core design that best matches the research problem and reasons for mixing in order to make the study manageable and straightforward to implement and design" (p. 65). They subsequently defined a mixed methods case study design as "one in which both types of data are gathered concurrently in a convergent design and the results merged together to examine a case and/or compare multiple cases" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018, p. 106). This design also has leaned heavily on the ideas of inquiry being developed from a constructivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, Nolen (2007) has made a strong case for mixed methods to be used by literacy researchers, particularly those interested in emergent literacy:

> This approach made it possible to study the aspects of reading that children saw as salient motivations to read and write, how various aspects of motivation and interest were related, how the reasons for literacy changed as children became more experienced and able readers and writers, and how the trajectories of specific aspects of interest and motivation arose in different classroom contexts. (p. 224)

Similar to the mixed methods comparative case study by De Naeghel et al. (2014) on teaching pedagogy and reading motivation, I used observations, interviews, and document analysis in my design, which were then used to complete both a vertical and horizontal analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The observation time was purposefully planned to capture data about children's opportunities to interact with and select books in the

designated ‘book area’ of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. By analyzing documents regarding the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten curriculum beyond the school level, I captured how broad policy decisions can play out within the walls of a classroom. Data were first analyzed using a vertical analysis by classroom, and the followed by a horizontal analysis to seek out themes between cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I describe the theoretical frameworks that are the foundation of this study. Understanding reader motivation, and in particular, the motivation of emergent readers requires a depth of understanding combining work in the fields of child development and literacy. Similar to the imagery used of literacy being an entwined rope with the individual aspects of orthography, reading, writing, and oral language entwined to form the complex literacy process (Scarborough, 2001; Bear et al., 2004), I have proposed a novel construct based on the aspects of literacy covered in the literature review. As noted in Figure 4, the strands of family literacy, emergent literacy, reader choice and classroom environment weave together and form a rope of emergent reader motivation. The lack of knowledge and understanding about book choice for emergent readers highlights a gap in the research, and has made my inquiry vital in expanding the idea of autonomy in book selection to those at the beginning of the literacy continuum.

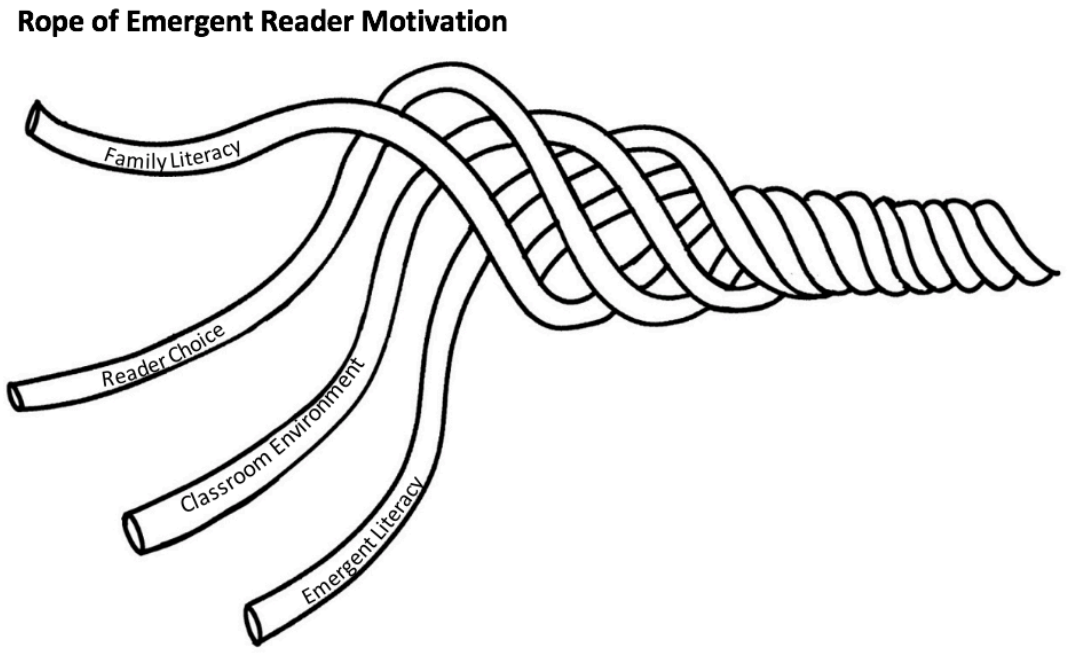


Figure 4. Rope of emergent reader motivation.

Because a child carries their home literacy with them into the classroom setting, the intersection of the following theories have guided this work: bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), literacy processing theory (Clay, 1982, 1991, 2001), and transactional theory of literacy (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995). While Clay's work is well-known and oft-cited within the field of emergent literacy, Rosenblatt's work has been traditionally found within literacy research focusing on young adults. Central themes in each theory are presented in Table 1, and each theory is discussed in detail in the following sections. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion on the interrelatedness of the theories and how they will help answer my research questions.

Table 1: Summary of Theoretical Perspectives

Theoretical Perspectives		
Bioecological model of human development	Literacy processing theory	Transactional theory of literacy
Processes (interaction), context (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem), time	Interacting competencies, increasing complexity, development of inner control	Reader, text, the poem (literature), transaction between reader/text/poem, efferent – aesthetic continuum, selective attention

Bioecological theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological theory of human development is an evolutionary theory that has grown and changed since its beginnings in the 1970s to its most present form. The most commonly used analogy by Bronfenbrenner in describing his development and work on the bioecological theory, is the imagery of Russian matryoshka dolls, with each layer of the system nested within the other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These interrelated systems form a hierarchy from most proximal to distal, as follows: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner further developed the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model with an added focus on the concept of time and the proximal processes aspect of the theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The development and evolution of this theory has been guided by its interdisciplinary nature, and according to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), has an "explicit interest in applications to policies and programs pertinent to enhancing youth and family development" which make it pertinent to my study (p. 794).

To best understand the bioecological theory, one must understand the idea of development, which Bronfenbrenner (2005) has defined as "phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopyschological characteristics of human beings both as individuals and as groups. The phenomenon extends over the life course across successive generations and through historical time, both past and present" (p. 3). The overarching theme of Bronfenbrenner's work has been the interconnectedness between the active individual and their active context, and these are integrated as development grows progressively more complex (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Bronfenbrenner revolutionized the field of human development by defining the ecological levels of

human development. These levels begin with the microsystem and expand to the macrosystem. The immediate environment surrounding a person is classified as the *microsystem*, which in the case of my work, includes a classroom setting, but also has included the "connections between others present in the setting, the nature of these links, and their indirect influence on the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7). Bronfenbrenner (1979) also defined the elements of the microsystem as those activities, roles, and relations in which a person engages. Within this study, the microsystems studied included the teacher, the children, and their relationships. The *mesosystem* level can be viewed as a system of microsystems, with a focus on the connections between two different settings, e.g. a pre-kindergarten classroom and home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7). An example of a mesosystem within this study would be the connection and interaction between books that a child may take from their classroom to their home. The relational aspect between settings includes those in which the person participates, and those settings which impact the person, but they may not participate in, is the defining aspect of the *exosystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 8). The idea of *mesosystems* and *exosystems* have been explored within literacy research, in particular the work of Purcell-Gates (1995) which examined the divide between home and school environments of urban Appalachians, and how the *exosystems* of educational policy are a factor in that disconnect. The final encompassing level is the *macrosystem,* which Bronfenbrenner has defined as the "manifestation of overarching patterns of ideology and organization of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture" (1979, p. 8). Numerous *macrosystems* are at play with children in public school settings, particularly policy mandates and curricular adoptions, and thus, are a focus in the current study.

The *Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT*) model focuses on the interactive and dynamic relationship between the four factors: *process*, the interaction between person and its environment, the *person* and their developing characteristics, and, finally, the environmental *contexts* and the *time* during which these take place (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 795). Within the bioecological model, the construct of proximal processes has specific features that relate to emergent literacy and my research questions, especially the process of engaging in an activity regularly, which should be bidirectional and can include interaction with objects or symbols (e.g. print) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 798). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) also posited that the it is the combination of *person* and *context* together that provide a "mutually reinforcing, multiplicative, indirect effect on the power of proximal processes as the 'engines of development'" (p. 801).

The final feature of the PPCT model is *time*, which has been further delineated into micro, meso, and macro timeframes. This aspect of the PPCT model is one that has shifted significantly since the inception of Bronfenbrenner's original model. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) explained the delineations of the time levels as such:

> *Microtime* refers to continuity versus discontinuity in ongoing episodes of proximal process. *Mesotime* is the periodicity of these episodes across broader time intervals, such as days and weeks. Finally, *Macrotime* focuses on the changing expectations and events in the larger society, both within and across generations, as they affect and are affected by, processes and outcomes of human development over the life course. (p. 796)

The idea of macrotime is particularly of interest in this study, as I hoped to better understand through teacher interviews how the *macrotime* shifts in education policy have impacted classroom pedagogy, and in particular how state curricular standards can influence reading choice and stance in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms.

Literacy processing theory. Marie Clay's (1982) development of the literacy processing theory stemmed from her longitudinal research study of 100 New Zealand children in their first year of school. In addition to weekly observations, Clay's design included a testing protocol to be administered three times over the course of the study (p. 8). Clay's seminal study of beginning readers and her subsequent follow up studies informed the development of this theory. While she used varying methods, observations of children learning to read, in particular, led to the development of this theory. The literacy processing theory hinged on Clay's belief that literacy develops as children develop inner control (Clay, 1991).

Clay (1991) has described behaviors that are observable signs of children developing this inner control, which begins with oral language. As children develop control, they progress from using oral language cues to developing visual processing strategies. The building blocks of visual processing strategies are understanding letters and words as a source of information, while also developing an awareness of directionality and orientation (Clay, 1991, p. 264). The next step is the development of processing strategies, which requires strategic control to read a novel text. This control requires readers to make choices, direct their attention to certain text features, and self-monitor for understanding (Clay, 1991, p. 289). This period of developing the internal mechanisms of doing the 'work of reading' is essential, because Clay posited that during

this stage of development children can be habituated into using either efficient or inefficient processing strategies (Clay, 1991, p. 313).

Clay (2001) best described the literacy processing theory, which she defined as a complex, interactive model with:

> interacting competencies in reading and writing the reader can potentially draw from all his or her current understanding, and all his or her language competencies, and visual information, and phonological information, and knowledge of printing conventions, in ways which extend both the searching and linking processes as well as the item knowledge repertoires. (p. 224)

The complexities described by Clay illustrate that without the development of inner control, the reader will face numerous challenges in literacy development. Clay (1991) focused on the acquisition period of literacy development, because she believed it to be a key time period in which instruction becomes formalized, and teachers can use observation to help support the growth of emergent readers (p. 318). This time period is one in which Clay decried the pedagogy of manipulating single letters, sounds or words because it directs attention away from the relational aspect required to process text (p. 321). Clay further encouraged teachers to "use what a child is able to read and write to develop the articulate awareness of phonology and print, on many different levels" (p.322) to provide opportunities for success in developing the inner strategies while also understanding phonological processes. These formative years, defined by Clay as the first two years of schooling, are critical to developing this complex, self-extending system of literacy processing.

Transactional theory of literacy. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) developed the transactional theory of literacy during her tenure as a professor of English education at New York University. Rosenblatt's (1978) seminal text *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* focused on her experience teaching and studying how readers arrive at a response to a poem. In contrast to previous work (Richards, 1929) that was focused on responses after repeated readings, Rosenblatt was most interested in determining how students initially approached a poem that had no identifiers available (e.g. author name) to provide them a pathway to interpretation. Over the years of instructing students, Rosenblatt analyzed the initial responses students gave to a quatrain by Frost, and thus developed several conclusions about the reader. The primary conclusion was that the reader is an active participant in developing a response to the text. Rosenblatt's secondary conclusion was that the reader does not follow a linear path to interpretation of a work, rather a process that is subtler and more circuitous in its refinement.

Thus, the text itself has a twofold function: as a stimulus and as a blueprint (Rosenblatt, 1978). More explicitly, Rosenblatt found that the text acts a guide, and that guide determines what should be the main focus of the reader (1978). There is a critical distinction in Rosenblatt's work between the text and the poem (of note, poem is used throughout Rosenblatt's theory as a common term for any literary work) (1978). The text is the symbol in print, while the poem is the adjoining event of reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1978). To help develop an understanding of how the poem is more like an event, Rosenblatt used the analogy of the actor imparting their own tone into a role in a play. For further clarity, Rosenblatt explained how a text itself can change: "a specific reader and a specific text and a specific time and place: change any of these, and there

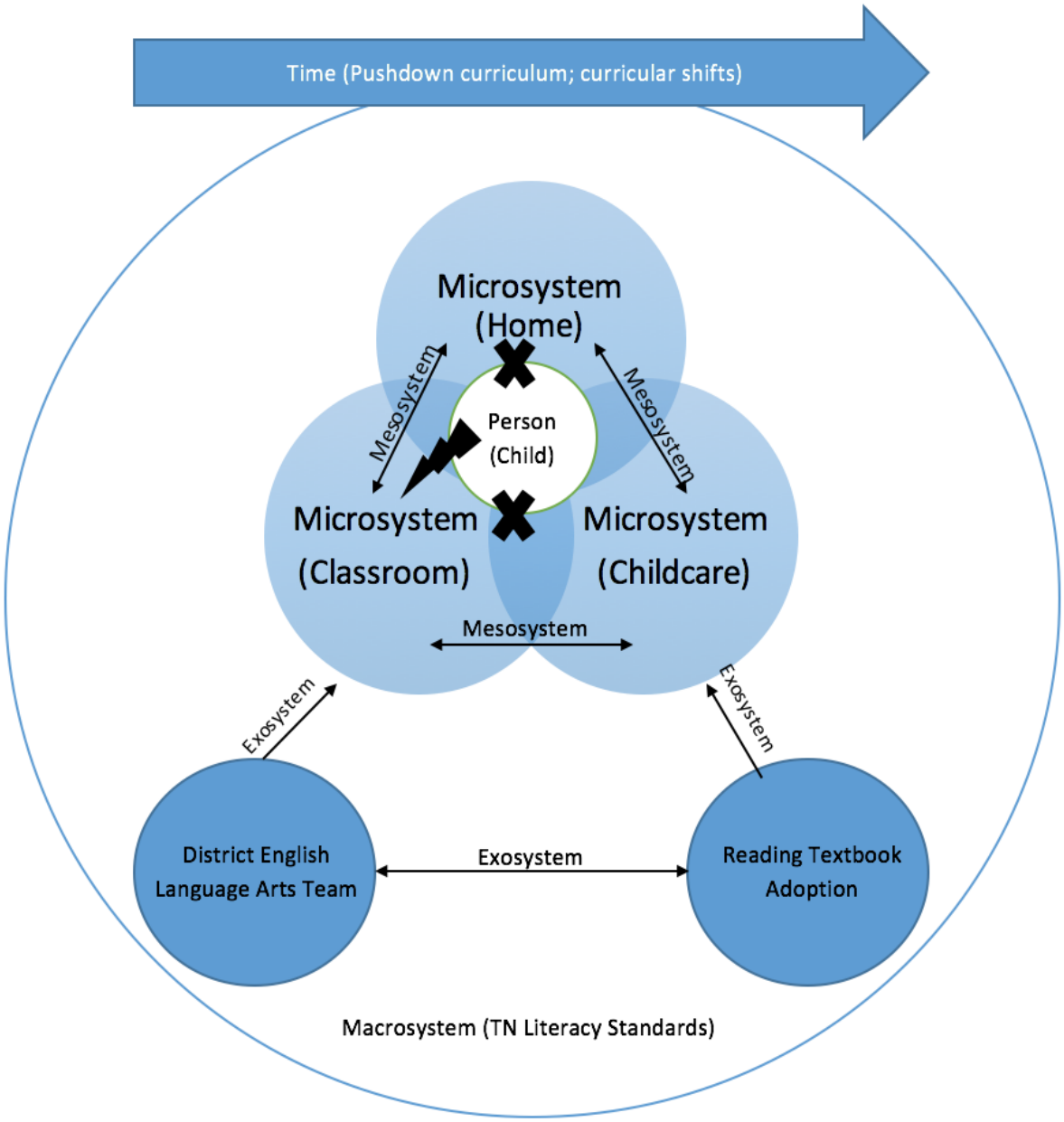
occurs a different circuit, a different event-a different poem" (1978, p. 14). Consequently, the meaning of any text can change, given any change in the reader.

Leaning on the work of Dewey and Bentley, Rosenblatt (1978) selected the term 'transactional' as the way to best capture the reading process discussed above. Both the reader and the text, in Rosenblatt's view, were equally necessary components of the reading process. Rosenblatt has warned against viewing the transactional reading process in too narrow of confines, and instead encouraged thinking about the transaction as the event between what the text directs the reader to. This is a detour from information theory which has focused on the outcome of the reader decoding and gathering a set meaning from the text (Rosenblatt, 1969). As an additional analogy, the transaction between reader and text is similar to the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly; once the poem has been created in the transaction between the reader and text, the reader has been noticeably changed.

An additional tenet of Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory is the efferent-aesthetic reading continuum. While the initial response may be to assume that the text type determines the reader's stance on the efferent-aesthetic reading continuum, Rosenblatt noted that the contrast is due to the focus of the reader's attention. Rosenblatt selected the term efferent to describe the reader's primary concern of what will the reader will take away from the reading. The contrasting aesthetic stance is focused on what happens while reading, and Rosenblatt (1978) defined the attention in this stance as being "centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (p. 25). The concentration of a reader once the aesthetic stance is activated is

consumed with the ongoing emotive aspect of the reading process, rather than end goal of the efferent stance.

Summary of frameworks. The aim of this study is to examine how emergent readers' book choice is influenced by teachers within the microsystem of their classroom setting, while understanding this pedagogy within the complex education reform macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, and in particular PPCT, provide a way to view the interactive development of literacy, while emphasizing all the layers that impact literacy development. This model also aligns with Clay's and Rosenblatt's work that honors the complexity of literacy development and the transactional nature of reading a text. Figure 5 illustrates my interpretation of Bronfenbrenner's work and its intersection with the theoretical work of Clay and Rosenblatt within this study.



This symbol denotes the interaction between child and text (Rosenblatt, 1978) which occurs internally within the child, but also is mediated by the text available in the classroom environment and the efferent-aesthetic continuum of reading.

This symbol highlights the development of inner control (Clay, 1991) that happens as emergent readers develop literacy skills. It is connected to the classroom where teachers are guiding instruction based on observations of students.

Figure 5. A bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice.

Clay's literacy processing theory has supported that readers draw on all facets of their knowledge, which includes what the child carries to the classroom from their home literacy experiences. In *Becoming Literate*, Clay dedicated a chapter to teacher selection of text, and the type of curricular programming children may encounter within their first years of formalized schooling. Clay (1991) connected this text choice via teachers to the processing theory by stating that teachers can choose texts that can help expand children's efforts in developing control over their processing strategies (p. 178). By studying how teachers direct children's book choice, I will build upon Clay's work to determine if teachers are using children's input (via observation) or following a programmatic formula based on other factors.

Since I also explored how teachers adjust and redirect book choice, I integrated Rosenblatt's transactional theory of literacy into my framework. The aspect of Rosenblatt's work that can be further developed in my study is her view of the efferent-aesthetic continuum of reading (1978). I believe it will be useful because it speaks to teaching pedagogy and current curricular demands that encourage an efferent reading stance. Specifically, some of the curricular standards for both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten in Tennessee use terms which include, but are not limited to, analyze, assess, evaluate, and delineate (TDOE, 2018d). There is very little terminology or direction within the standards that could be perceived as encouraging reading from an aesthetic stance, one could argue that the standards actually discourage this type of reading. The focus on the efferent stance in these standards dismisses the work by Rosenblatt (1978, 1995) that indicated both stances of reading are valuable.

Researcher's Role and Subjectivity

Through fieldwork, I was a participant observer in this study. As explained by Spradley (1980), being a participant observer requires the dual role of engaging in a situation while observing the situation, all while remaining explicitly aware (p. 55). Because my research involved work with both children and teachers, it was necessary to delineate the level of participation I had in the study. The type of activity can determine the level of participation, but the goal of the research can also be a factor (Spradley, 1980). Young children are inherently curious, and as a participant observer in my pilot, I fielded questions and comments from the children during my fieldwork, which led me to classify myself as a moderate participant at the start of this study. According to Spradley (1980), a moderate level of participation by the ethnographer occurs when seeking balance between the emic and etic perspective (p. 60). As a way to be a moderate participant, the children were introduced to me (including sharing with them that I was pregnant), and I showed them the research equipment during a pre-observation visit. The teachers explained to the children that I was not a teacher, but a student myself, trying to learn more about reading. They were also told that when I visited the classroom that my work was observing, so they should refrain from asking me questions. Throughout the study, I worked to maintain this balance, but due to my physical proximity during the observation time and the curious nature of young children, I often fielded questions about when my baby would arrive, and also questions about text. When children asked personal questions, I would try to answer succinctly, with a simple yes or no, as a way to redirect them back to their task at hand. Questions around books and text proved much more complex, as the children often turned to me when their classroom teacher was

engaged with another child. During some interactions, I did find myself helping a child sound out a word or reading an unknown word to them.

Researcher's Reflexivity

My role in this study has influenced this research in a multitude of ways. As a former elementary school librarian, I hold strong beliefs about the essential nature of book selection and access to books. As a former board of education member, I had numerous interactions and discussions about developmentally appropriate practice, while proposing resolutions against policies and practices of the TDOE and state legislature. In my combined experience as an elementary school librarian and a board member, I have spent a significant amount of time in a wide variety of school settings and have had growing concern about how little opportunity to freely choose a book and engage with it children were given. When I began my doctoral studies, I was committed to the idea that children should only have access to high quality literature (e.g. books that received glowing reviews from journals such as *School Library Journal* or *The Reading Teacher)*. Throughout my scholarship, I have had the opportunity to learn with professors who challenged this mindset and through research (McGill-Franzen, Ward, & Cahill, 2016) helped me realize that the books children select because they enjoy them are as valuable as a Caldecott Award winning text. Because this study grew out of the intersection of my various lived experiences, including being a mother of young children, I worked to bracket my experience and knowledge as I conducted my fieldwork.

Context

This study took place at two school districts in east Tennessee. Jordan Elementary is a small rural elementary school that serves students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade in a rural district in east Tennessee. Vines Elementary is a small elementary school that serves students in pre-kindergarten through third grade in an urban district in east Tennessee. The most recent, detailed data publicly available at the TDOE describes the population of both sites. Jordan Elementary serves 270 students; the student demographics are 93.7% White, 4.4% African-American, and 1.4% Hispanic, while 44% of the student population is economically disadvantaged (TDOE, 2017b). Vines Elementary serves 439 students; the student demographics are 45.5% White, 3.8% African-American, and 54.6% Hispanic, with 32.3% noted as having limited English proficiency, and 49.9% of the student population classified as economically disadvantaged (TDOE, 2017b).

Participant Selection

This study focused on student populations in two schools, and their corresponding classroom teachers. Because I have had an ongoing political role in my own local school district, I used a convenience sample of teachers outside that district, but with whom members of my committee have worked in varying degrees of professional practice.

The classroom teachers provided consent. Parents also provided consent for their child's participation in this study.

Participants

A total of 62 children, 4 classroom teachers, and 2 teaching assistants participated in the study. Figure 6 shows the demographic information for each study site and classroom teacher. Pseudonyms are used for all identifying information such as participants' names and school names.

	Jordan Elementary Pre-Kindergarten	**Vines Elementary Pre-Kindergarten**	**Jordan Elementary Kindergarten**	**Vines Elementary Kindergarten**
Teacher years of experience	11	25	16	21
Degree	N/A	B.S. Early Childhood, Pre-K Endorsement M.S. Teaching and Learning Ed.S. Educational Leadership	B.S. Education M.S. Elementary Education	B.S. Education M.S. Early Childhood Education
Total Children	12	20	22	17
ELL Children	0	0	0	7
Age Range of Children	3 years to 4 years	3 years to 4 years	5 years to 7 years	5 years to 6 years

Figure 6. Demographic information for study sites.

Jordan Elementary Pre-Kindergarten. Jordan Elementary Pre-Kindergarten ("Jordan Elementary PK") is a class of 12 children at Jordan Elementary. Ms. Reed is the lead teacher and there is also a classroom assistant. Ms. Reed began her career as an Assistant Teacher for Head Start, transitioned to Lead Teacher, and this is her first year as Lead Teacher at Jordan Elementary. Ms. Smith is the Assistant Teacher for the class. As noted in Figure 6, Ms. Reed does not hold a degree in education, highlighting a unique feature of the Head Start program, in that it does not require teachers to hold a state teaching license. Ms. Smith is the teaching assistant at Jordan Elementary PK.

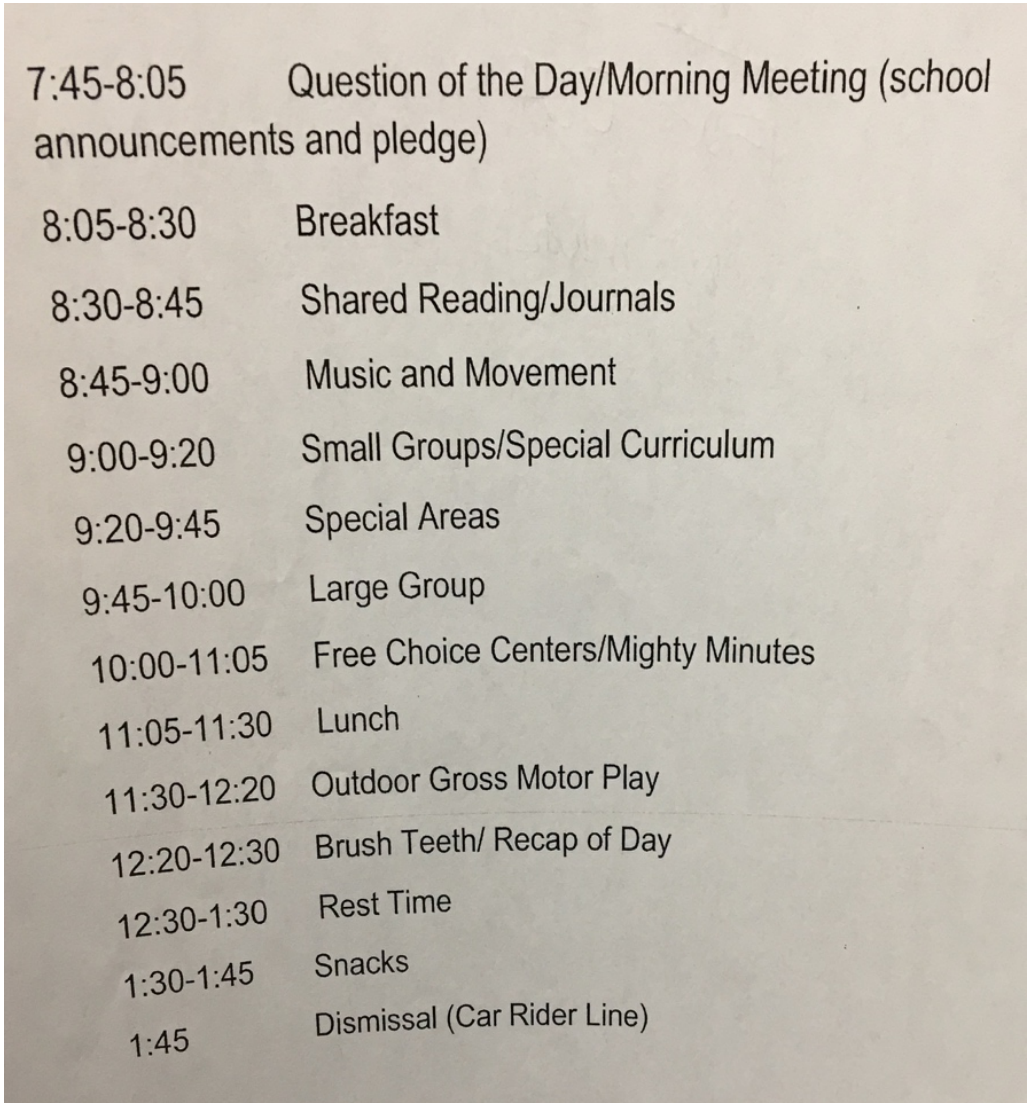
Figures 7 and 8 are photos that show the classroom space. As in many pre-kindergarten classrooms, books are infused in each center. Figure 8 shows what Ms. Reed notes is the "library center". The other centers in the classroom are art, engineering, writing, science and imagination station, and Ms. Reed indicated that these are required centers and would be found in any Head Start program, although the name of the center may vary, e.g. imagination station may also be known as imaginary play or dress-up. The schedule for the classroom is shown in Figure 9.



Figure 7. Overall view of Jordan Elementary PK classroom.



Figure 8. Library center in Jordan Elementary PK.



7:45-8:05	Question of the Day/Morning Meeting (school announcements and pledge)
8:05-8:30	Breakfast
8:30-8:45	Shared Reading/Journals
8:45-9:00	Music and Movement
9:00-9:20	Small Groups/Special Curriculum
9:20-9:45	Special Areas
9:45-10:00	Large Group
10:00-11:05	Free Choice Centers/Mighty Minutes
11:05-11:30	Lunch
11:30-12:20	Outdoor Gross Motor Play
12:20-12:30	Brush Teeth/ Recap of Day
12:30-1:30	Rest Time
1:30-1:45	Snacks
1:45	Dismissal (Car Rider Line)

Figure 9. Jordan Elementary PK Classroom Schedule.

Vines Elementary Pre-Kindergarten. Vines Elementary Pre-Kindergarten ("Vines Elementary PK") is a class of 20 children at Vines Elementary. Vines Elementary PK is a part of the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program in Tennessee. Ms. Hill is the lead teacher. Ms. Hill began her career teaching pre-kindergarten and has been teaching for 25 years. As noted in Figure 6, Ms. Hill's highest degree is an Ed.S. in Educational Leadership. In addition to her role as lead teacher, Ms. Hill also serves as the District Preschool Program coordinator and teaches as an adjunct instructor at a local community college. Additionally, there is an assistant teacher in the classroom, Ms. Kay, and there are often practicum students and intern teachers from a local university. The photos in Figures 10 and 11 show the classroom space. While some pre-kindergarten classrooms use the term centers, Ms. Hill defined the areas of the classroom as "zones". Ms. Hill stated that the classroom is set up with four big zones and "in those zones are different opportunities for children to engage in different types of learning" (Ms. Hill, personal interview, December 4, 2018). The main zones of the classroom are carpet/large blocks, house, small blocks and craft, and writing. The daily schedule is shown in Figure 12.



Figure 10. Overall view of Vines Elementary PK classroom.

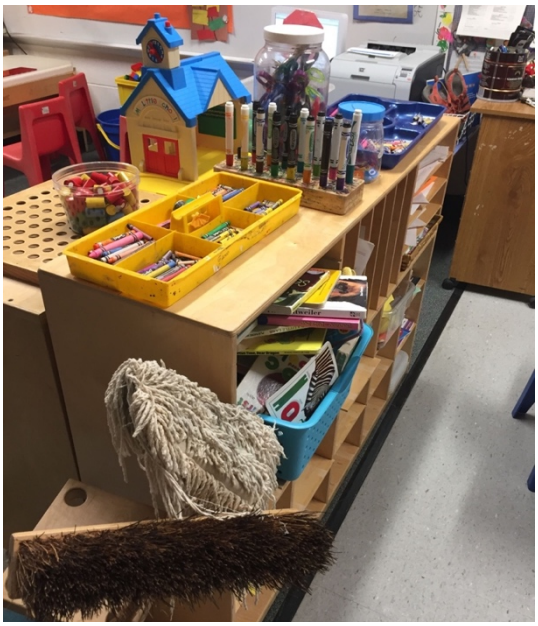


Figure 11. Books in the writing zone in Vines Elementary PK.

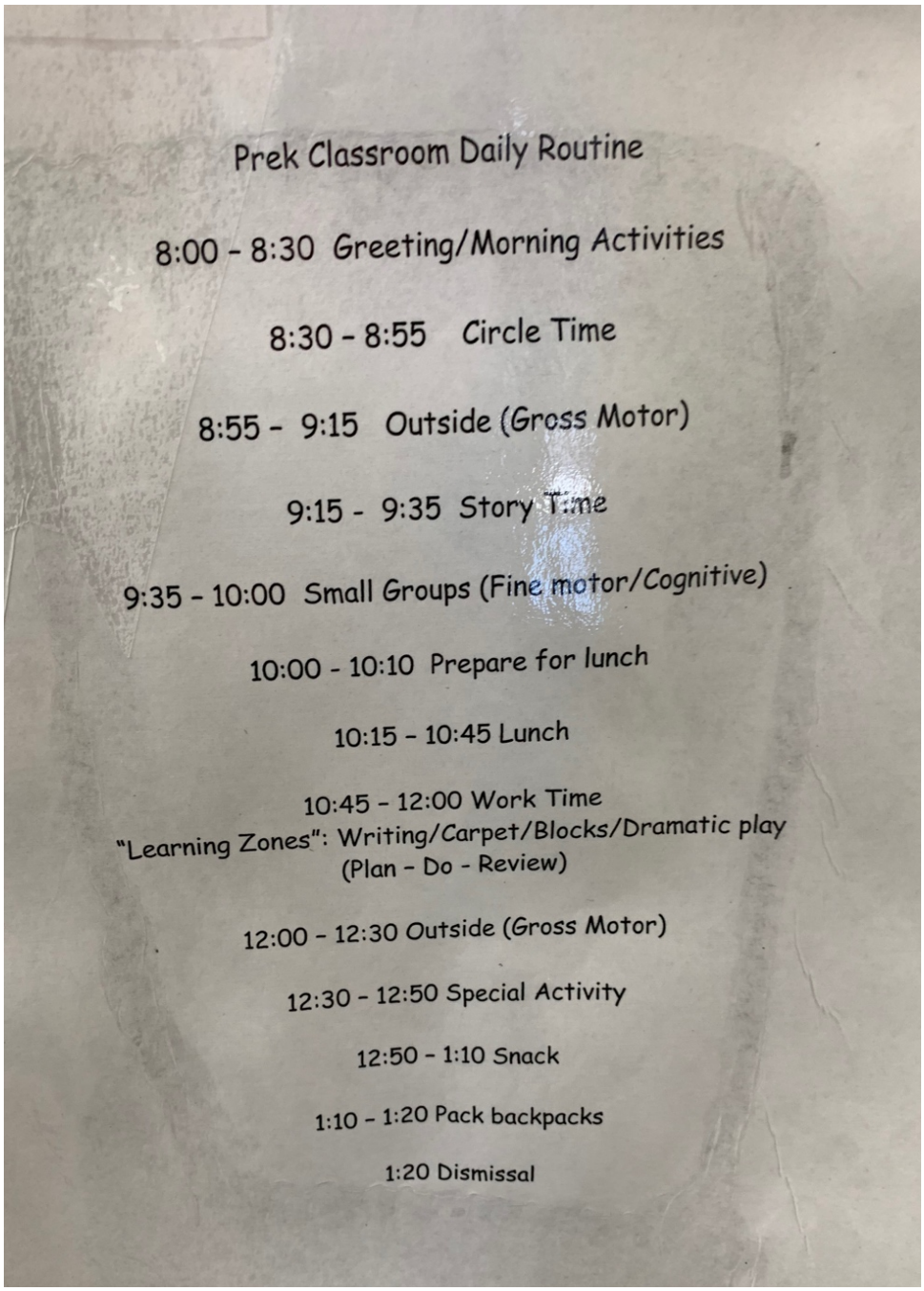


Figure 12. Vines Elementary PK daily schedule.

Jordan Elementary Kindergarten. Jordan Elementary kindergarten is a class of 22 children at Jordan Elementary. Ms. Brown is the teacher. Ms. Brown has been a kindergarten teacher for 16 years. As noted in Figure 6, Ms. Brown holds both a B.S. and M.S. in education, and has been teaching kindergarten at Jordan Elementary for the entirety of her career. Ms. Brown has also served as a mentor teacher for pre-service teacher interns from a local university.

The photos in Figures 13 and 14 show the classroom space. The schedule for Jordan Elementary kindergarten classroom is shown in Figure 15. As noted on the schedule, and in the interview with Ms. Brown, the time when children in the classroom would have access to select and interact with texts is during station time. Heterogeneous groups that Ms. Brown developed based on behavior, move through stations, including writing, reading, Legos, technology, and extra stations that may be added (e.g. seasonal and/or holiday thematic stations, Thanksgiving recipe making station). It was during this station time that the classroom observations took place. Because stations were clearly delineated and had specific purposes, e.g. writing center specifically for writing, the researcher observed and video recorded only in the book center.

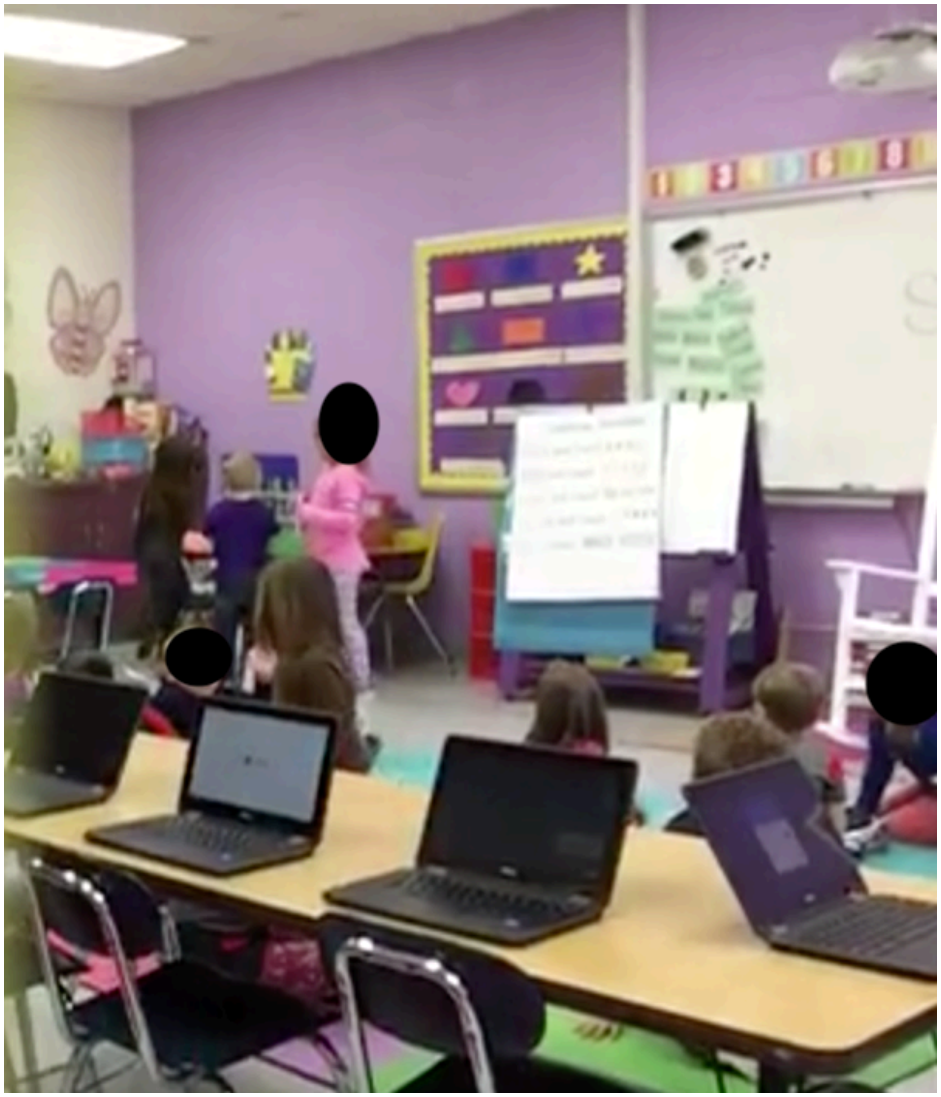


Figure 13. Jordan Elementary kindergarten classroom.



Figure 14. Jordan Elementary kindergarten book station.

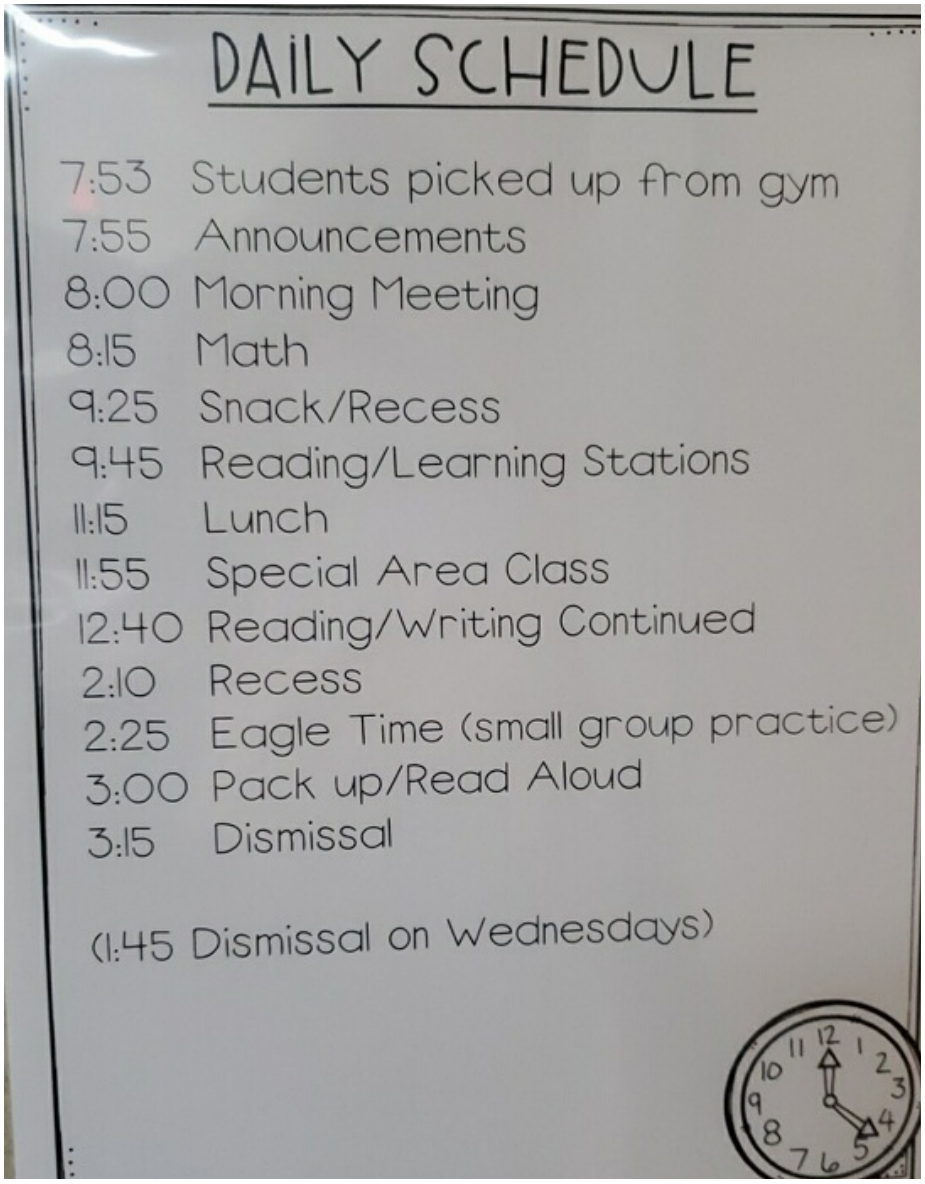


Figure 15. Jordan Elementary kindergarten daily schedule.

Vines Elementary Kindergarten. Vines Elementary kindergarten is a class of 17 children at Vines Elementary School. Ms. West is the teacher. Ms. West has been a kindergarten teacher at Vines Elementary for 8 years and has 21 years teaching experience. As noted in Figure 6, Ms. West holds both a B.S. and M.S. in education. Prior to teaching kindergarten at Vines Elementary, Ms. West taught third grade and pre-kindergarten. The classroom layout in Vines Elementary is shown in Figure 16, and the book station is shown in Figure 17. Figure 18 shows the additional books Ms. West uses throughout the year in the classroom.

The schedule for the classroom is shown in Figure 19. As noted on the schedule, and in the interview with Ms. West, the time when children in the classroom would have access to select and interact with texts is during station time. Children self-selected which station they would like to work in and use a card that Ms. West marked so they move through all the stations during a week, including writing, reading, manipulatives and small group. The station time was in 15-minute increments, so that children have the opportunity to move throughout several stations in one station period. The only limits were if a station was full or if a child had already visited the station, and needed to complete another station before re-visiting a station.



Figure 16. Overall view of Vines Elementary kindergarten.



Figure 17. Book station in Vines Elementary kindergarten.



Figure 18. Additional texts Ms. West uses in Vines Elementary kindergarten.

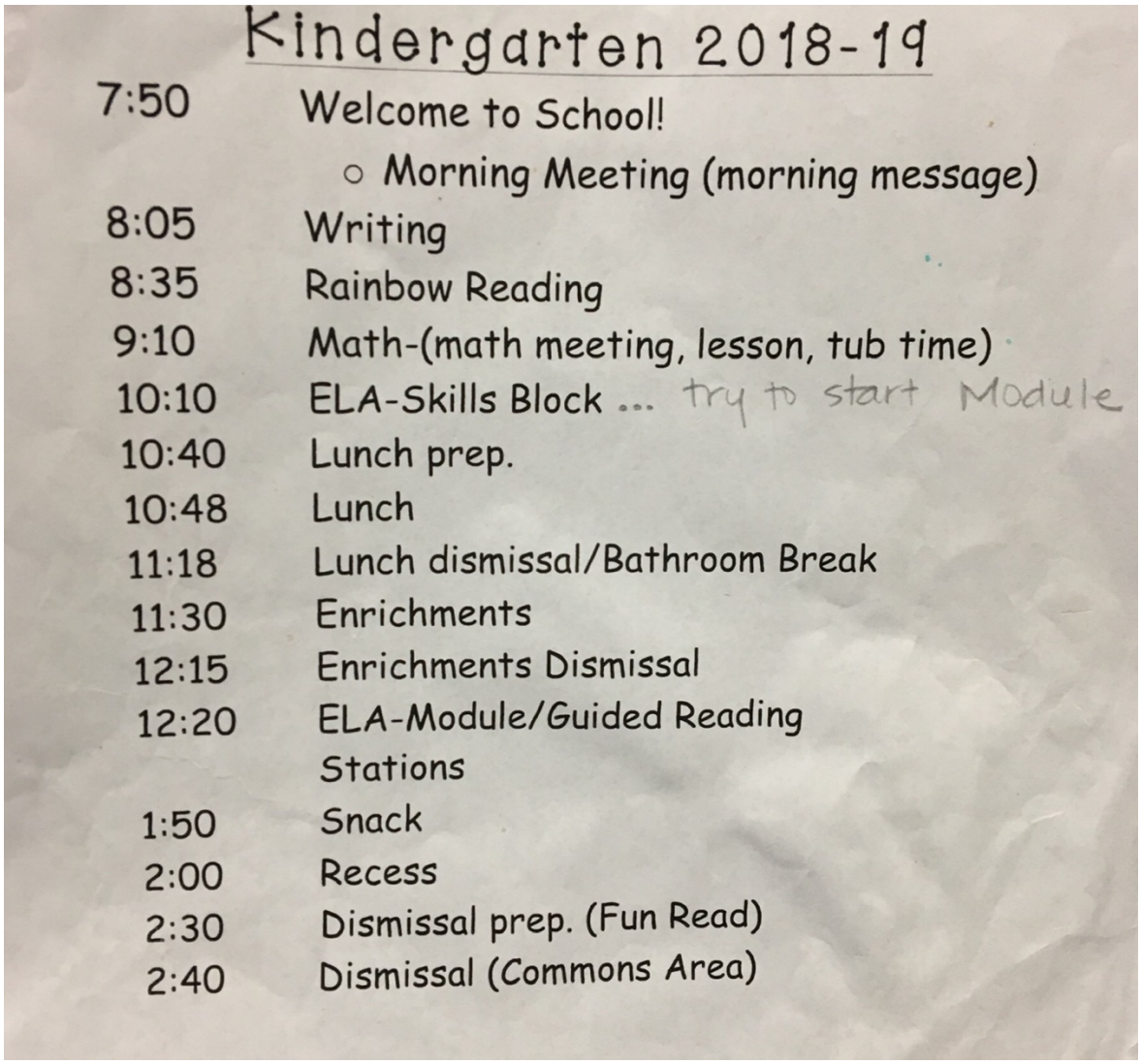


Figure 19. Vines Elementary kindergarten daily schedule.

Data Sources

This mixed methods comparative case study was designed to examine how children demonstrate agency in book choice in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. Most research phenomena can benefit from being studied from multiple perspectives, and this study was no exception. In order to fully understand how children demonstrate agency in book choice, and the factors that influence that choice, data were collected from a variety of sources.

Observations. The researcher conducted one "pre-observation" in which the researcher visited the classroom with the equipment as an introduction to the children in the classroom, and to determine the best possible placement for the equipment. The researcher conducted six additional observations during the time in which children would likely be in the book center in each of the four classrooms over a six-week period.

Observations were recorded using iPads with Swivl programming. Qualitative observations were conducted live, with field notes typed on a computer, while quantitative observations were derived from the recorded video. The field notes focused on the children's interactions with the text as they made a selection, as well as any dialogue that occurred between children and/or teacher during the selection process. The video recordings were used as needed to verify any dialogue and/or interactions for field notes. Qualitative observations were necessary to gain insight into the potential reasons a child may select a book. Specifically, the qualitative observations richly portrayed the conversations and interactions between the children and their teachers. These qualitative observations were also used to guide post-observation interviews with teachers.

Quantitative observations were used for the determination of the frequency of certain behaviors, such as how often children switched from one book to another. Using the video recordings of the observations, the researcher used the interval scan sample sheet, Appendix B, as a mode of determining behavior frequency. The second 20 minutes of the first observation at each site, the first 20 minutes of the third observation at each site, and the last 20 minutes of the sixth observation at each site were used to conduct the interval scan sampling.

Teacher interviews. At the conclusion of the observational phase, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with classroom teachers. These semi-structured interviews followed Spradley's (1979) approach which encourages interviewers to conduct the interview conversationally, rather than following a rigid structure. The interviews were conducted at the participant's convenience at a location where the teacher was comfortable, although most chose to be interviewed in their classroom. One teacher conducted her interview via Zoom. Each interview lasted no more than an hour, and was audiotaped. Vignettes from the observations and policy documents were used as prompts within the interview. The protocol questions found in Appendix C are reflective of the research questions.

Classroom libraries. Each classroom library was used as an additional data triangulation point, since the books available for children to read within the classroom are another form of choice often made by the teacher (Gambrell, 1996). The books were scanned using an iPhone and analyzed to determine the number of texts, the average copyright age, and the balance of fiction and nonfiction texts.

Artifacts. From classroom photos of the book rich areas to policy documents, these artifacts helped construct a broader context for the investigation of the phenomenon of emergent readers' book choice. I took photographs of each book area in the four classrooms, and teachers shared documents that they used to plan and/or guide their literacy instruction. I gathered additional policy documents, e.g. standards and evaluation requirements, as a means to understand the potential policy impacts on classroom culture and teaching pedagogy and guide my questions during the interview.

Policy documents. The main policy artifacts used for this data analysis were the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards ("ELDS"), the Tennessee English Language Arts Kindergarten Standards ("KS"), and the TEAM Portfolio documents. The ELDS were first adopted in 2004, and revised in 2012 to provide "a direct alignment with the content areas found in Tennessee's state English language arts" (TDOE, 2018d). The most recent version of the ELDS was updated in 2018, presumably for further alignment to the kindergarten standards, although that is not explicitly stated on the TDOE website. The previous versions of both the ELDS and the KS are not readily available through the TDOE website. To obtain a copy of the previous ELDS, the researcher had to contact both the TDOE and the State Board of Education. The TDOE stated that they did not maintain copies of previous standards (personal communication, 2020). The researcher was finally able to obtain a copy of the previous ELDS from the policy director of the State Board of Education.

There has been considerable change to both the ELDS and the KS standards since 2001. In general, the ELDS have been expanded and made more detailed from their first broad iteration. As noted in Table 2, engaging in purposeful reading from the 2001

standard became a much more specific standard in 2018 to include interact with text to support comprehension. Table 3 shows the more dramatic shift in KS from 2001 to 2018. While the 2004 standards focus on developing phonemic awareness and exploring texts, the 2018 standards are much more explicit in their expectations of children's ability to read sight words and read both informational text and literature.

Table 2: Comparison of Tennessee ELDS-4 year olds over time.

2004	2012	2018
TN 4.8.2.4 - Demonstrates good word awareness, calls attention to print in the environment, and recognizes some common words	RF.PK.3. Demonstrate word awareness by identifying familiar words in books and the environment and begin making connection that letters in words make sounds.	PK.FL.PWR.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills when decoding isolated words and in connected text. b. Recognize high-frequency words by sight, including own name and other familiar words in the environment
TN 4.8.2.5 - Routinely engages in purposeful reading and writing; Includes reading and writing activities in dramatic play; initiates writing notes to people; shows pride in writing attempts	RF.PK.4. Demonstrate awareness that books carry a message. Can retell the story events and overall theme in familiar picture books, by using illustrations (observing and discussing) to support "reading" the words in the text.	PK.F.5 Interact with text to support comprehension. a. Use illustrations to retell story events in familiar picture books.
	W.PK.1. With modeling and support, use a combination of drawing, dictating, and emergent writing to express a preference, opinion or idea about a specific topic or text.	PK.W.TTP.1 With modeling, prompting, and support, use a combination of drawing, dictating, and/or emergent writing to express a preference, opinion, or idea about a specific topic or text.

Table 3: Comparison of Tennessee kindergarten ELA standards over time.

2001	2018
K.1.07 Read some words by sight (e.g., the, has, an, can, run and color and number words).	K.FFL.PWR.3c. Read common high-frequency words by sight.
K1.05.a Recognize and name all upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet.	K.FL.PC.1d. Recognize and name all upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet in isolation and in connected text.
K1.13 Explore and experience various literary genres.	K.RI.RRTC.10 With prompting and support, read informational texts of appropriate complexity for Kindergarten. With prompting and support, read stories and poems of appropriate complexity for Kindergarten.

TDOE also notes in the TEAM Portfolio Training Document that "reading standard drives the content of the writing artifact and can be elaborated through dictation, audio, or video" (TDOE, 2018c, p. 36). This same document sends a mixed message to early educators by stating in the beginning of the document that the TDOE goal is for 75% of 3rd graders in Tennessee to be proficient in reading and that currently only 1/3 of 3rd graders are reading at a proficient level (TDOE, 2018c). Later in the text of the training document it also states "It is developmentally inappropriate to expect all students to reach level 6 or 7. The scoring rubrics are designed to capture student work in relation to the standard, not to drive instruction" (TDOE, 2018c, p. 39). Given the inconsistency in the text of the training document, it is likely that the verbal discussion of the Portfolio requirements did little to alleviate any pressure for early educators to meet growth standards which do not align with NAEYC's guidelines of developmentally appropriate (Neuman, 2000).

Each school has adopted different ELA curricula, based on requirements and guidance from TDOE, which are presented in Table 4, along with a snapshot comment from each classroom teacher. VPK programs, such as VE pre-kindergarten, recently adopted new curriculum and districts had the option to select from the following curricula: Big Day for PreK (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), Connect4Learning (Kaplan Early Learning Company), and Creative Curriculum (Teaching Strategies). Along with the curriculum, each district also provided guidance to classroom teachers around instructional practice and standards. At Jordan Elementary pre-kindergarten, guidance was given from the county Head Start office and when teachers planned collaboratively (Ms. Reed interview, December 6, 2018). The kindergarten teachers at Jordan

Elementary met to collaboratively plan for assessments, but their curriculum decision making was at a classroom level to meet children's developmental needs (Ms. Brown interview, December 6, 2018). At Vines Elementary kindergarten teachers were requested to sign a statement that they would maintain fidelity to the curriculum materials, while pre-kindergarten teachers were not asked to sign such a document (personal communication, October 30, 2018).

Table 4: Curricula snapshot.

Site	Curriculum	Teacher comments
Jordan Elementary Pre-Kindergarten	Creative Curriculum	Our curriculum kind of lays everything out for us.
Vines Elementary Pre-Kindergarten	Connect4Learning	Curriculums are great, they give us some guidance, but ultimately were the decision makers. So we are making those decisions in the moment about how the curriculum is going to be implemented. What I really, really liked about this particular curriculum is it is steeped in math and science.
Jordan Elementary Kindergarten	Successful Start; Wit & Wisdom	So Successful Start is a small group instruction for reading and writing. The groups are really supposed to be no bigger than 3 at a time. ...it is very intensive and you know, almost one on one. Almost. And so there is a reading portion and there is a writing portion and there is also a read to portion where it's done with small groups. (Successful start) is number one and (Wit & Wisdom) is going to be secondary, really. You know in a lot of ways the standards that have to do with like the analyzing and the all of that, that is going to be done through wit and wisdom more so than successful starts.
Vines Elementary Kindergarten	EL Education Language Arts Curriculum	Whole group has been kind of dictated for me which books I'm going to use, I don't have a choice in that so I'm just using what they tell and I'm going to assume that those were chosen um, because the standards are stated all through it so I'm assuming that they've picked those books so that they will meet those standards?

Procedures

Each site was observed 6 times for a total of 24 observations, beginning on October 18 and ending on December 4. Given the schedule variances between sites, the observation time ranged from 40 minutes to 60 minutes. Figure 20 provides detailed information on the timeline of the observations. Observations in school settings, like life itself, do not happen in a vacuum and several observations were rescheduled due to teacher illness, special programs, and various school functions. This is also indicative of the necessary flexibility for both teachers and children at the elementary school level, where there is a need to balance instructional time with extracurricular programming.

Jordan Elementary Pre-Kindergarten	**Jordan Elementary Kindergarten**	**Vines Elementary Pre-Kindergarten**	**Vines Elementary Kindergarten**
10/19/18 39 minutes	10/26/2018 58 minutes	10/25/18 52 minutes	10/25/18 35 minutes
10/23/18 45 minutes	10/29/2018 58 minutes	10/30/2018 50 minutes	10/30/2018 36 minutes
11/1/18 40 minutes	11/5/2018 56 minutes	11/8/2018 60 minutes	11/8/2018 8 minutes
11/9/18 55 minutes	11/15/2018 33 minutes	11/13/2018 60 minutes	11/13/2018 28 minutes
11/15/18 39 minutes	11/16/2018	11/29/2018 54 minutes	11/29/2018 57 minutes
11/26/18 50 minutes	11/26/2018 53 minutes	12/3/2018 50 minutes	12/3/2018 50 minutes
	11/30/2018 46 minutes	12/4/2018 18 minutes Observation of book checkout time.	12/4/2018 52 minutes

Figure 20. Timeline and length of observations.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of both a priori and inductive, grounded approaches (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2015; Charmaz, 2004). The code book in Appendix A and the interval scan sheet in Appendix B were developed as a part of my pilot study, which was conducted at a university early learning center. Both the code book and the interval scan sample sheet were developed using a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge. The code book and interval scan sheet were reviewed at the completion of the pilot study to determine if any codes needed revision. The code "uses book in service to another task" was amended to include children using books as a part of play prior to data collection in the current study.

Observations. The first round of analysis began with open coding the qualitative observations, and a second round of coding was done using an a priori approach with provisional coding. Figure 21 shows the cycle of coding that was used in this project. Miles and Huberman (1994) described provisional coding as "creating a provisional 'start list' of codes prior to fieldwork" and then using those codes as a guide during analysis. Both Miles and Huberman (1994) and Saldaña (2015) have encouraged drawing on both literature and pilot study when using provisional codes, which is how these provisional codes were developed. The initial codes from the qualitative field notes were then compared to the code book and interval scan sample sheet developed for the quantitative portion of the observations. The third round of coding was conducted using a condensed set of codes developed from the a priori provisional codes and the open codes as noted in Table 5. Due to the nature of behaviors observed, there was often play happening during

reading. In these instances, the behaviors were double-coded in both categories, rather than single-coded within the main behavior.

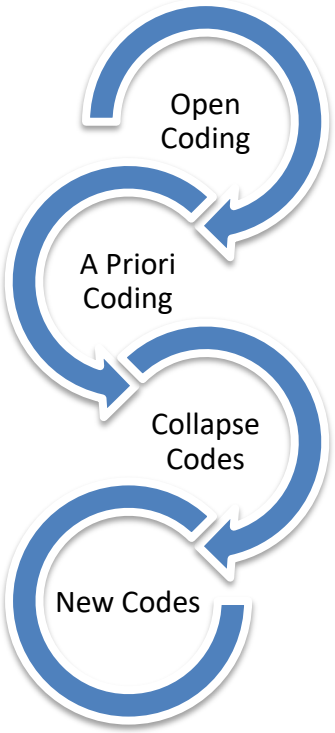


Figure 21. Cycles of coding of qualitative observations.

Table 5: Evolution of codes of qualitative observations.

Open Codes	**A Priori Codes**	**Collapsed Codes**
Book behaviors	Approaches	Book behaviors
Book opportunities	Browses	Reading
Play	Picks up	Talk
Reading	Sets down	Play
Talk	Puts back	
	Switches	
	Looks at cover	
	Flipping pages	
	Reads	
	Shows - peer	
	Shows - adult	
	Talks about - peer	
	Talks about - adult	
	Asks about - peer	
	Asks about - adult	
	Adult direction	
	Use for other task	

Teacher interviews. A similar process was followed with the teacher interviews, by beginning with open coding and then moving to provisional coding. The provisional coding in the teacher interviews was completed using provisional codes from the condensed set of codes developed in the qualitative analysis. Next, I analyzed both the open codes and the provisional codes to create a condensed set of codes. Table 6 shows these coding lists. The third round of coding was conducted using the condensed interview codes, and this coding process is outlined in Figure 22.

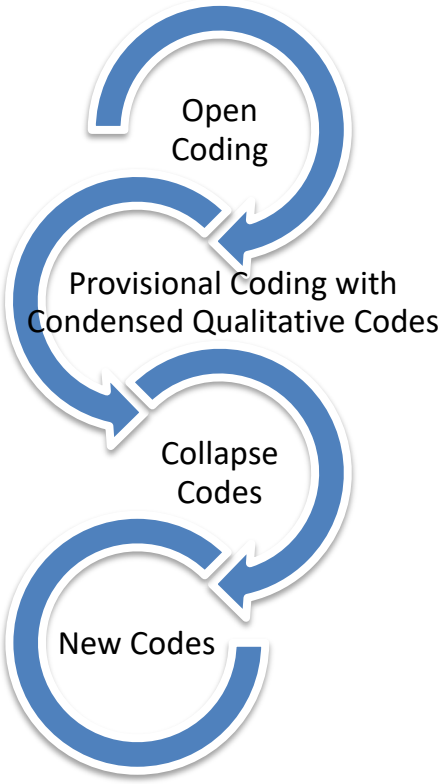


Figure 22. Cycles of coding of teacher interviews.

Table 6: Evolution of codes for teacher interviews.

Open Codes	**A Priori Codes (from Qualitative Observations)**	**Collapsed Codes**
Book opportunities	Book behaviors	Book opportunities
Play	Reading	Play
Instructional Practice	Talk	Curriculum/Instructional Practice
Standards	Play	Standards
Text Selection		
Curriculum		

Classroom text analysis. To understand what types of texts children choose and how they select them in a classroom setting, it is necessary to first determine the types of texts available for selection. To determine what texts made up the classroom libraries, the researcher used the LibraryThing app on an IPhone to scan the ISBN of each book within the classroom library area of each kindergarten site. Additionally, the book area within each "zone" or "center" at the pre-kindergarten sites were also scanned and included in this analysis, e.g. the researcher also scanned books that were in the dramatic play center. The inclusion of texts in the various centers of each pre-kindergarten class was based on the pre-observation, discussion with both pre-kindergarten teachers, and review of the literature. Once the ISBN information was collected, the researcher used Library of Congress data to determine the copyright and classification information for each text.

Chapter Summary

This study is grounded in the bioecological model of human development, literacy processing theory, and the transactional theory of literacy. I used the lens of these well-established theories to develop two new constructs: the bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice, and the rope of emergent reader motivation. These constructs build upon the work of previous emergent literacy scholars as a way to holistically view how emergent readers select texts.

This study is a mixed methods comparative case study of four classrooms of young children in East Tennessee. The body of data collected and analyzed for this study is derived from classroom observations, interval scan sampling, classroom libraries, teacher interviews, and policy documents. The data were analyzed following the data analysis

methods of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Miles and Huberman (1994). The next chapter will discuss the findings based on the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, the results of this mixed methods comparative case study are presented. The data were analyzed as a way to answer the following research questions for this study:

1. What behaviors do pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children exhibit when choosing books in the classroom?
2. To what extent and in what ways do teachers in the classroom direct children when they are choosing books?
3. What are teachers' reasons for adjusting or redirecting children's book choice?
4. How does policy influence teachers' decisions about access to texts?

In accordance with the methods in Chapter 3, the data were analyzed in several rounds of coding, and multiple data sources were used as a means of triangulation. The multiple data sources were purposefully analyzed beginning with the observation analysis, teacher interviews were analyzed next, and the final analysis involved the policy artifacts. The observations were analyzed first so the teacher input would not influence the observational coding. Once analysis was completed on the observations and teacher interviews, this data was visually mapped with the policy and text analysis data as a means of triangulation. Figures 21 and 22 show the evolution of the coding cycles. The codes used are summarized in Tables 5 and 6.

The findings in this chapter are presented in three major sections, beginning with vertical cases from each site that discusses the text analysis, book behaviors, teacher

direction, and teacher perceptions of policy. Teacher perceptions of policy encompasses the spectrum of educational policy that impacts their teaching practice, from federal mandates to local curricular choices. Data sources for each section are as follows: text analysis, book behaviors and teacher direction draw from quantitative and qualitative data, while teacher perceptions of policy draw from qualitative data. Figure 23 displays the cumulative total of codes from the final round of coding using the four collapsed codes of book behaviors, reading, talk and play, across the 24 total qualitative observations. Figure 24 displays the cumulative total of codes from the final round of teacher interview coding using the five collapsed codes of book opportunities, reading, play, curriculum/instructional practice, and standards. Using the observations captured on video, interval scan sampling was used to provide quantitative data for both book behaviors and teacher direction. The interval scan sampling used the a priori codes listed on Table 5.

Next, A horizontal analysis is presented to show the similarities and differences within each grade level. Finally, the analogy of a stage production is introduced as a way to understand how teachers influence emergent readers' use of agency in text selection.

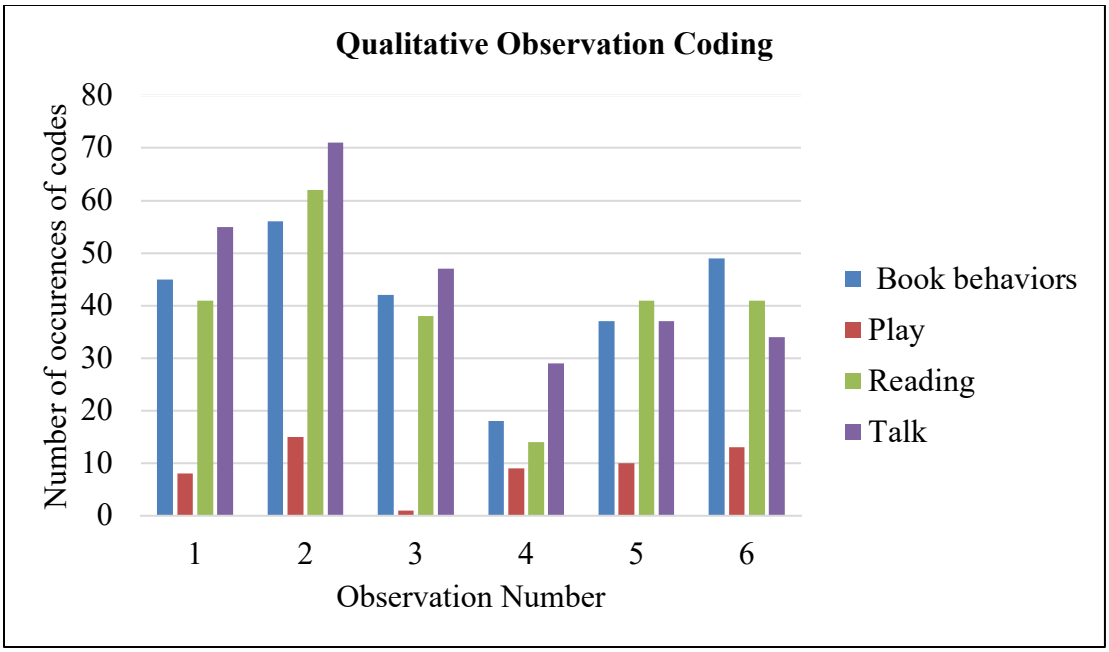


Figure 23. Cumulative qualitative observation codes.

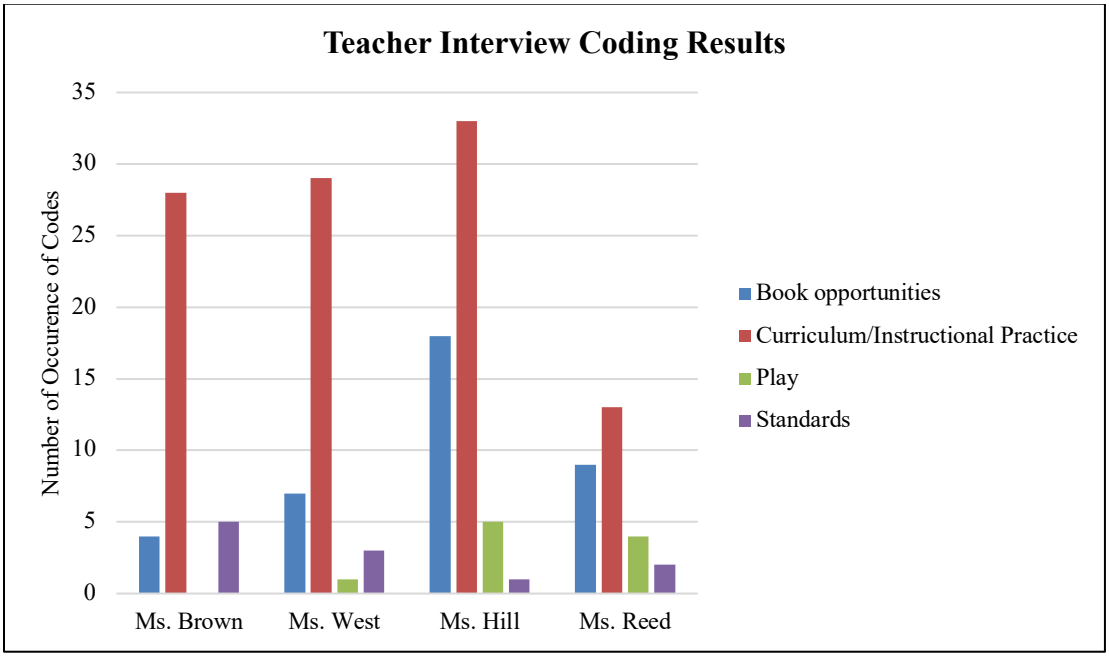


Figure 24. Teacher interview coding results.

Jordan Elementary Pre-Kindergarten

Observations. Classroom observations took place during "free choice centers" time which is noted on the schedule in Figure 9. Center time was a free choice period when children used a card with their picture to select which station they want to work in, and the only restriction on selecting the center hinged on whether the center is full. Each center had a different number of students allowed, but children are required to place their picture card on a center chart on the outside of the station that makes it simple to see if there is room in the center. Ms. Reed stated the children self-select which center they want to work in so that "they get to self-regulate and they are responsible. [referring to a child what might think] I was here I need to clean this up and move on somewhere else" (Ms. Reed interview, December 6, 2018). Because books were infused throughout the centers, children often would take a book from what is denoted as the "library center" into other centers or vice versa. The researcher video recorded the observations in the library center, while also noting in the field notes any book interaction that may have taken place outside the library center. Figure 25 shows the results of the interval scan sampling behaviors observed in the classroom over the select timed samples. Notable in these results is the lack of peer talk and the lack of adult direction.

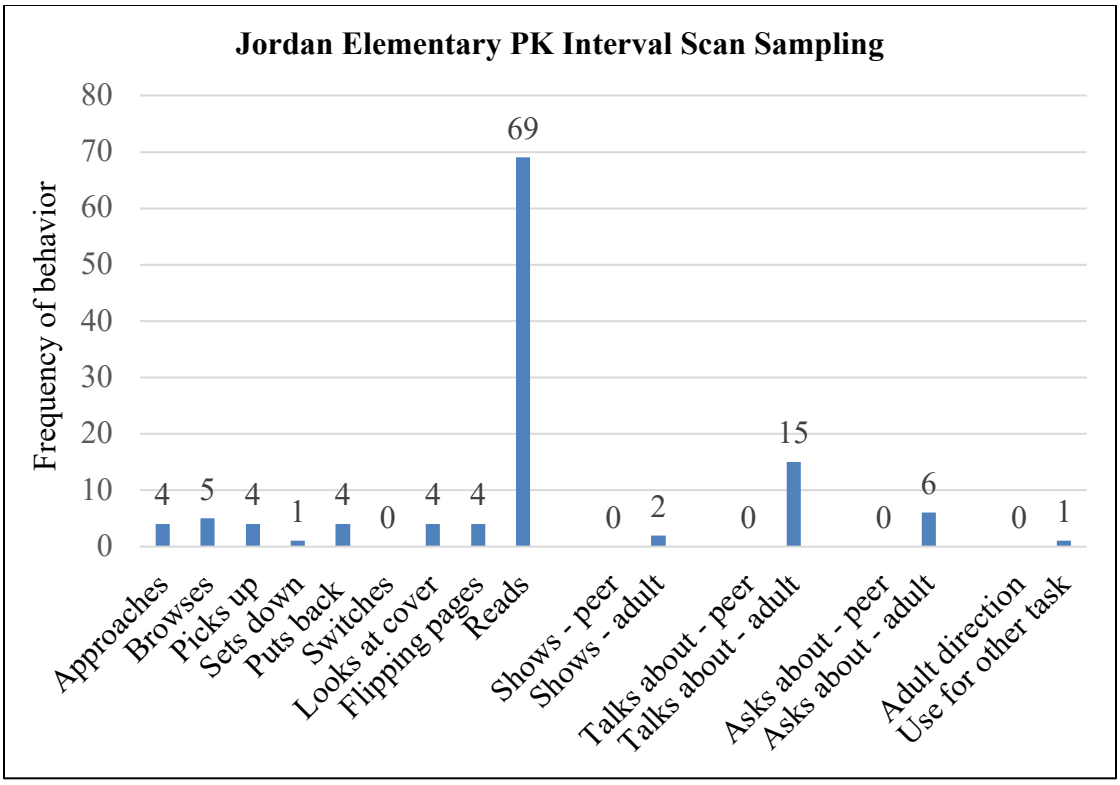


Figure 25. Jordan Elementary PK Interval Scan Sampling Results.

The qualitative field notes provide richer detail of the interactions with texts in Jordan Elementary PK, and detailed interactions between the teachers and children. Figure 26 displays the number of codes in each discrete category for the six observations at Jordan Elementary PK. While the library center is located directly by a table and chairs, the children were most often observed taking books from the library to the carpet to read alone or with a teacher.

In observations 1 through 3, the higher amounts of reading correspond with times that the lead teacher, Ms. Reed and/or the assistant teacher, Ms. Smith, were interacting with children around a text. These interactions were similar to those shown in Figure 27 and took place on the carpet used for large group time.

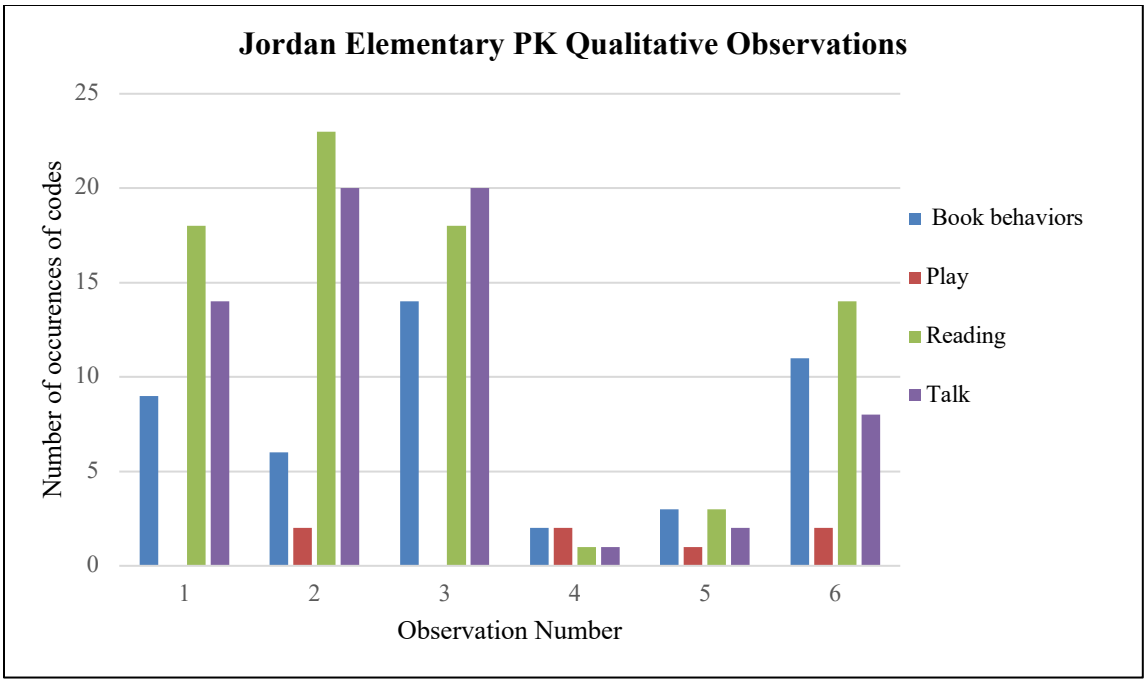


Figure 26. Jordan Elementary PK qualitative observation coding results.



Figure 27. Ms. Smith reading *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* to a child in the class.

Text analysis. The total number of texts available in the class was 42, with an average copyright of 2004. Ms. Reed explained that she tries to select books that are "going to catch their eye" (Ms. Reed interview, December 6, 2018). The books in the library and the centers are changed with each unit of study, although she went on to state that she may switch texts more frequently:

> …in between the unit of study if I see that the children are getting kind of 'meh' with them I'll either change them…and I may go over because we have books in every center and If I notice they aren't getting those books in engineering as much as they are here in the library I might just change those out. That way they're getting the fresh covers and they're maybe seeing the ones like 'oh I didn't know we had that'. (Ms. Reed interview, December 6, 2018)

Although Ms. Reed stated that book selection was based on the units of study, it was also evident during the observations that texts were selected that reflected the season and/or the holiday. As an example, around Halloween, the researcher observed children reading the following texts: *Little Boo*, *Halloween Mice*, and *Mrs. Broomsticks' School for Witches*. In December, children were observed reading the following texts: *Llama, Llama Holidays* and *Peppa Pig's Christmas*. The texts that are used in large group and small group are pre-selected as part of the curriculum.

Book behaviors. The book behaviors observed fall within the range of typical literacy development for children aged 3 to 4 years old, and most would be within what Chall (1996) characterized as Stage 0 of literacy development, when children pseudo-read and retell stories. According to Ehri (1995), these children would be considered in the pre-alphabetic phase. Children demonstrated an understanding of a variety of print concepts including how to handle books, directionality, that letters and words have meaning, and that illustrations correspond to text. Ms. Reed was observed reading a book with a child and stated "most books are horizontal, but this one is turned vertical", which language supports development of print concepts (field notes, October 29, 2018). Figure 28 shows a child holding a book the correct direction and holding one page at a time to turn the page.

In one observation, a child was observed turning a book over and upside down to better look at part of an illustration, and then once they finished looking at the illustration, they turned the book back the correct direction and continued to read. There was limited amount of switching observed when selecting texts, and most children were observed looking at the cover when selecting a text, as shown in Figure 29.



Figure 28. Child demonstrating understanding of print concepts in Jordan Elementary PK.



Figure 29. Child looking at the covers of texts in the Jordan Elementary PK library while making her selection.

The behaviors observed align with Ms. Reed's interview comments discussing children's book choice, when she stated "if they [the child] chose it …they're going to be more engaged and it is something that they have connected to" (Ms. Reed interview, December 6, 2018). Within these observed teacher-child interactions, most of the reading was done by the teacher, although the teacher often prompted the child with questions or asked the child to read something from a specific page in the text. In the excerpt below, Ms. Reed returned back to a previous strategy that was used and discussed during circle time about reading.

Child: Can I have my book?

Child: /grabs book/

Ms. Reed: Thank you for putting your things away.

Child: /opens book to title page/

Child: /starts reading/

Ms. Reed: Remember, what do you notice, what do you wonder? (field notes, October 23, 2018)

Teacher direction. Several vignettes showed that the teachers in Jordan Elementary PK encourage the children to self-select a text of their interest, with adult direction and guidance limited to encouraging children to select a text, rather than a specific text. For example, during Observation 1, Ms. Reed said to a child, "find a book, which book do you want to read?" and when the child picked a book from the book center, Ms. Reed followed up with "do you want to read on the carpet?" (field notes, October 19, 2018). There were no observations of the teachers encouraging a child to choose a different text. In observations 4 and 5, the book interaction was noticeably

limited compared to the other four observations. In these observations, the children were engaged in other centers and activities, e.g. working with a teacher to string beads for a necklace, and completing an art project. These hands-on activities rendered the teachers less available to read to children as they were in other observations.

Teacher perceptions of policy. Ms. Reed was in the unique position of being the only teacher that was not held accountable to evaluation standards from the TDOE. The observations aligned with Ms. Reed's interview comments regarding the prescriptive nature of the curriculum, which provides the teachers with specific language to use in large and small group settings. In this observation, a child in the class was reading and Ms. Reed was demonstrating the questioning technique that was a previously taught skill with specific language, to determine the child's grasp of the idiom "monkey see, monkey do", while also encouraging continued engagement with the text:

Child: opens book and starts reading "Monkey see monkey do"

Ms. Reed: What does that mean? Monkey see monkey do?

Child: I don't know.

Ms. Reed: This is what I think it means, if we see something we're going to do it.

Child: /walking away with book/

Child: My picture was in the wrong spot.

Child: /turning pages/ Monkey see, monkey do.

Child: Hey Ms. Reed, monkey see, monkey do!

Ms. Reed: Those monkeys. What is that? That's not a monkey is it?

Child: No.

Ms. Reed: Keep going back. What is that?

Child: I don't know! A possum?

Child: maybe it's a …

Ms. Reed: look at their faces, what are they saying or doing?

Child: I don't know…/turns page back to look again/

Child: Monkey, monkey.

Ms. Reed: I noticed that it's starting to rain, I wonder what they're going to do…

Ms. Reed: What do you notice here?

Child: The rain stopped! (field notes, October 23, 2018)

The repetition of technique previously used in large group time, aligns with Ms. Reed's description of the curriculum that "does have it all laid out so we are teaching it with fidelity" (Ms. Reed interview, December 6, 2018).

Vines Elementary Pre-Kindergarten

Observations. Classroom observations took place during "work time" time which is noted on the schedule in Figure 12. This free choice time was when children self-selected which zone they want to work in and the only restriction on selecting the zone hinged on whether the zone is full. Once they selected which zone they want to work in, they remained in that area for the entirety of their free choice time. At the beginning of the year children selected zones by color groups and then as the year progressed, Ms. Hill allowed children to individually self-select which zone they would like to work in. Before going to a zone, the children talked through with Ms. Hill what they would do, as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Ms. Hill: Where are you going to go today, Susie, in orange group?

Susie: house! (picks area)

Ms. Hill: Let's talk about your plan in house area. (field notes, October 30, 2018)

Each observation began in a similar manner with Ms. Hill and the children gathered together on the carpet, and the researcher video-recorded the book center during the observation periods. Figure 30 shows the results of the interval scan sampling behaviors observed in the classroom over the select timed samples. Notable in these results is the lack of reading, given there was observation of book behaviors. There was also a lack of talk, both between peers and teachers.

The qualitative field notes provide a broader view of the interactions around texts between children in Vines Elementary PK. There was a significant lack of time observed reading and interaction within the book area or with texts, as noted in Figure 31, which displays the number of codes in each discrete category for the six observations at Vines Elementary PK.

Notably, during half of the observations no reading was observed, in either the book center or any other zone within the classroom. Figure 31 shows an empty book center, while children play in the house zone. This image also shows the blue bin of books available in the large block area. Because the layout of the classroom was in large zones, children selected a larger zone and share their plan with the teacher that may have included a more specific activity within a larger zone (e.g., [child statement] I want to go to carpet zone and build a ship out of blocks). While the carpet zone was often selected, children did not necessarily state they planned to go to books, although they may have migrated to that area during their play. Although there was a lack of reading observed, the book children were most frequently observed reading was a class-produced

name book that featured each child and used the repetitive phrase "_____ is a friend." Figure 33 shows a child returning this class made text to the book center after reading it on a bean bag.

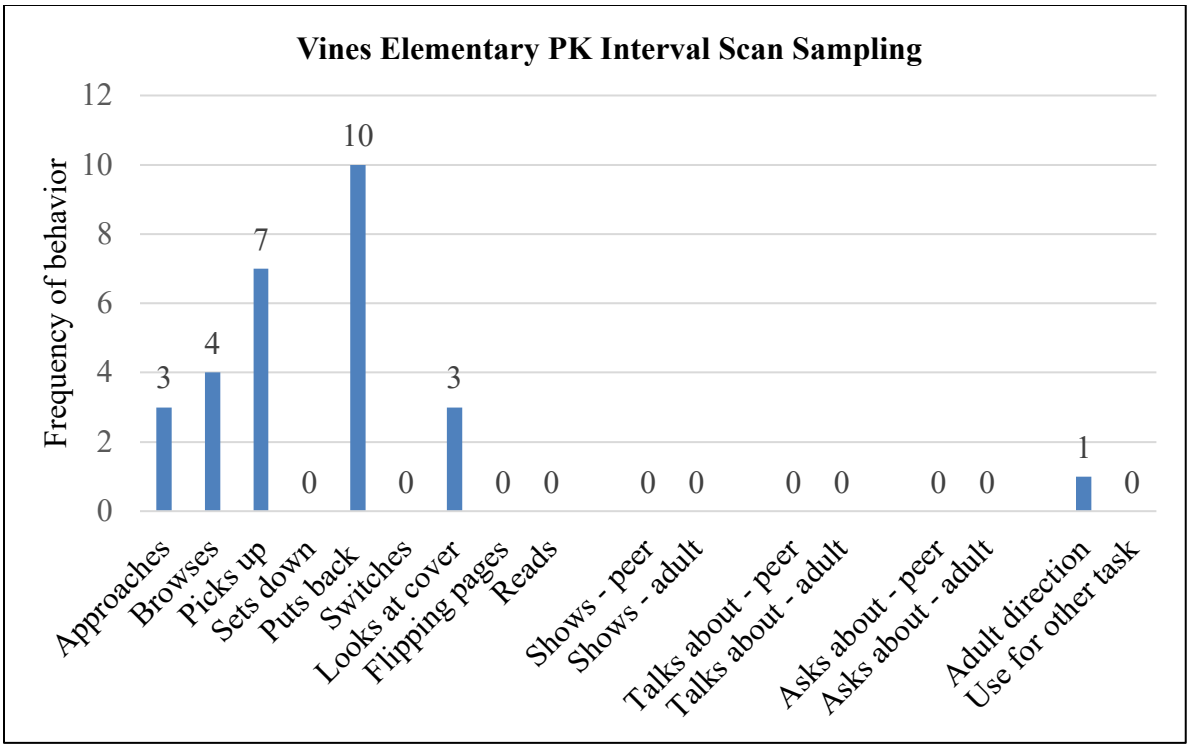


Figure 30. Vines Elementary PK interval scan sampling results.

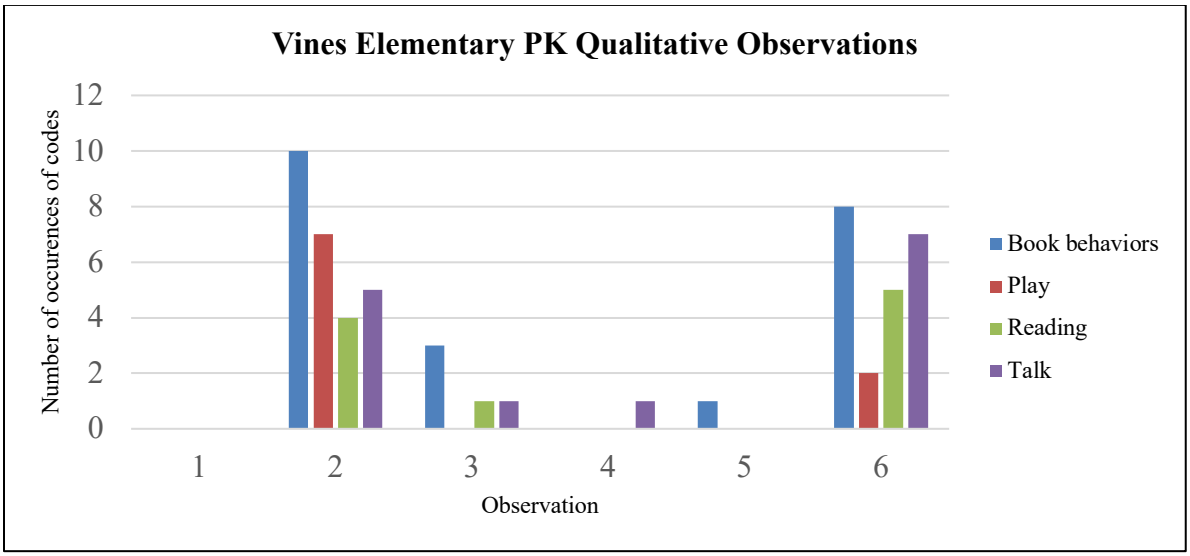


Figure 31. Vines Elementary PK qualitative observation coding results.



Figure 32. Children playing in the house center at Vines Elementary PK.



Figure 33. Child returning class book to book center at Vines Elementary PK.

Text analysis. The total number of texts available in Vines Elementary PK was 56, with an average copyright of 1994. Ms. Hill explained that at the beginning of the school year she selects texts for durability because the "book center is a place that is open during child choice time and you might not always be a space that you may monitor. So durability is a big characteristic, that's why we see a lot of board books there and also books that kids may have written" (personal interview, December 4, 2018). The books in the library center changed throughout the year as the need arises and move from board books to hard and/or paperback books. The books within zones as seen in the blue bin in Figure 32 are not changed with any frequency and Ms. Hill reasoned that "part of that comes back to they are durable as well and they can withstand kids using them for multiple purposes" (personal interview, December 4, 2018).

The text choices for large group instruction are mandated through the curriculum and Ms. Hill explained she has the opportunity to add supplemental texts. In describing how she selected supplemental texts with the required curriculum, Ms. Hill stated that "some of them are classics like Swimmy and some of them are newer to us. As we go through and see the responses from children we'll develop our own kind of avenue for implementation and that direction" (personal interview, December 4, 2018).

Book behaviors. Although there was relatively limited interaction with texts, those observed book behaviors fall within the range of typical literacy development for children aged 3 to 4 years old, and most would be within what Chall (1987) characterized as Stage 0 of literacy development, when children pseudo-read and retell stories. According to Ehri (1995), these children would be considered in the pre-alphabetic to partial-alphabetic phase. Although Figure 6, shows that no children in the class were

classified as ELL, that is due to ELL designation and instruction not beginning until kindergarten. There were several bilingual children in the classroom that would likely receive ELL instruction once they began kindergarten (Ms. Hill, personal communication, October 25, 2018). In the book area, the children frequently interacted with a felt board that had adhesive names for each child in the class. Children were observed reading the names, sorting them in different configurations, and placing them on the felt board. Figure 34 shows a child interacting with the names at the felt board. The usage of the children's names and their interaction with these name cards is supported by the work of Bloodgood (1999) who found that "for many children, names serve as important touchstones to controlling new understandings about letters, sound matches, and words" (p. 364).



Figure 34. Child interacting with names on felt board at Vines Elementary PK.

Children were observed using board books from the large block area in pretend play as in the excerpt below:

Ann, Beth, Cara all pick up books from book bin.

Beth: Cast a spell on me!

Cara: (to others) pretend I was the woman who got a spell into a wicked witch.

/All 3 holding onto books/

Beth, Cara: /standing up on blocks waving blocks as "wands"/

Beth: /opens book/ Magic magic turn them dead!

Ann, Cara: /repeating Beth./

Cara: /picks up Beth's book/ "This is the magic spell book" magic spell. Turn her into a frog!

Cara: Magic, magic let her have a tie around her!

Cara: Magic spell turn her into a tight ribbon. Whoooosh…

Cara: Magic, magic let her go! (field notes, December 3, 2018)

Teacher direction. Much of the talk observed from teachers was to provide general direction or guidance about choices during center time, rather than request children select or use a specific text. In the example below, the assistant teacher, Ms. Kay, provided guidance between two children who were disagreeing about what to play.

Ms. Kay: do you want to look at books? Do you want to build with blocks? Do you want to help Beth w/ her plan?

Susie: /nods/

Susie: Beth, can I help you w/ your plan.

Beth: No.

Ms. Kay: You guys can work together.

Beth: No.

Ms. Kay: Maybe you guys can work together…and sort them in groups? (field notes, November 13, 2018)

Teacher perceptions of policy. Vines Elementary PK, and all VPK programs in TN were required to select and implement a new curriculum in 2018, which includes required texts. As Ms. Hill explained in her interview, "we're implementing a new curriculum as dictated by the state department, so those books are the ones that we're choosing from for whole group", yet she went on in her interview to indicate that a curriculum should be considered a guide:

> Curriculums are great, they give us some guidance, but ultimately we're the decision makers. So we are making those decisions in the moment about how the curriculum is going to be implemented. It's not always going to be a common theme that you'll hear (pause) across even this school or across programs…But that seems, that's my stance. (personal interview, December 4, 2018)

Ms. Hill focused on the necessity for teachers to select books with "intentionality and purpose", but even if they are pre-selected, teachers must be able to "sell" them to children to entice them even if they wouldn't have selected the text personally.

Children were observed using books within play, which Ms. Hill highlighted as an essential part of her view of literacy development:

> So playing with books I think is a valuable, valuable stage in literacy development. Understanding concepts about print, understanding how books

> work, what we do with books, we get to play around with the notion before we actually get to the conventional reading. (personal interview, December 4, 2018)

This is intriguing because play is not mentioned within the TN-ELDS focusing on literacy, yet Ms. Hill has specifically noted that play can be a vehicle for developing literacy skills.

Pre-Kindergarten

Using the observations captured on video, frequencies were recorded for each site, the data was collapsed into two categories: pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Collapsing these into two broader grade-level categories helped give a better understanding of the frequency of behaviors within each grade level studied. The range of children present in the book area of each classroom ranged from 0-4, and the range of adults present ranged from 0-2. The majority of the intervals included only children present in the space. Figure 35 demonstrates the total frequency of the behaviors observed, with reading being the most observed behavior in the pre-kindergarten classes.

The pre-kindergarten classrooms both had similar schedules and opportunities for interaction with texts. Jordan Elementary PK contained smaller, more well-defined center areas, while Vines Elementary PK contained more of an open-concept center area. Both teachers spoke in their interviews about the essential nature of infusing texts throughout the pre-kindergarten classrooms, but there was very little time observed when children were reading within other centers (e.g. reading a book in the block area). Each pre-kindergarten was child-led during the center time, and there was little indication, in observations or the interviews, that teachers would encourage the children to engage in a specific center. The texts at Jordan Elementary PK in the library center were changed

twice throughout the study, while the texts at Vines Elementary PK were not changed. The Jordan Elementary PK was also the only site in the study that had books the teacher had checked out from the school library. Figure 36 shows a comparison between the texts available in both pre-kindergarten classrooms.

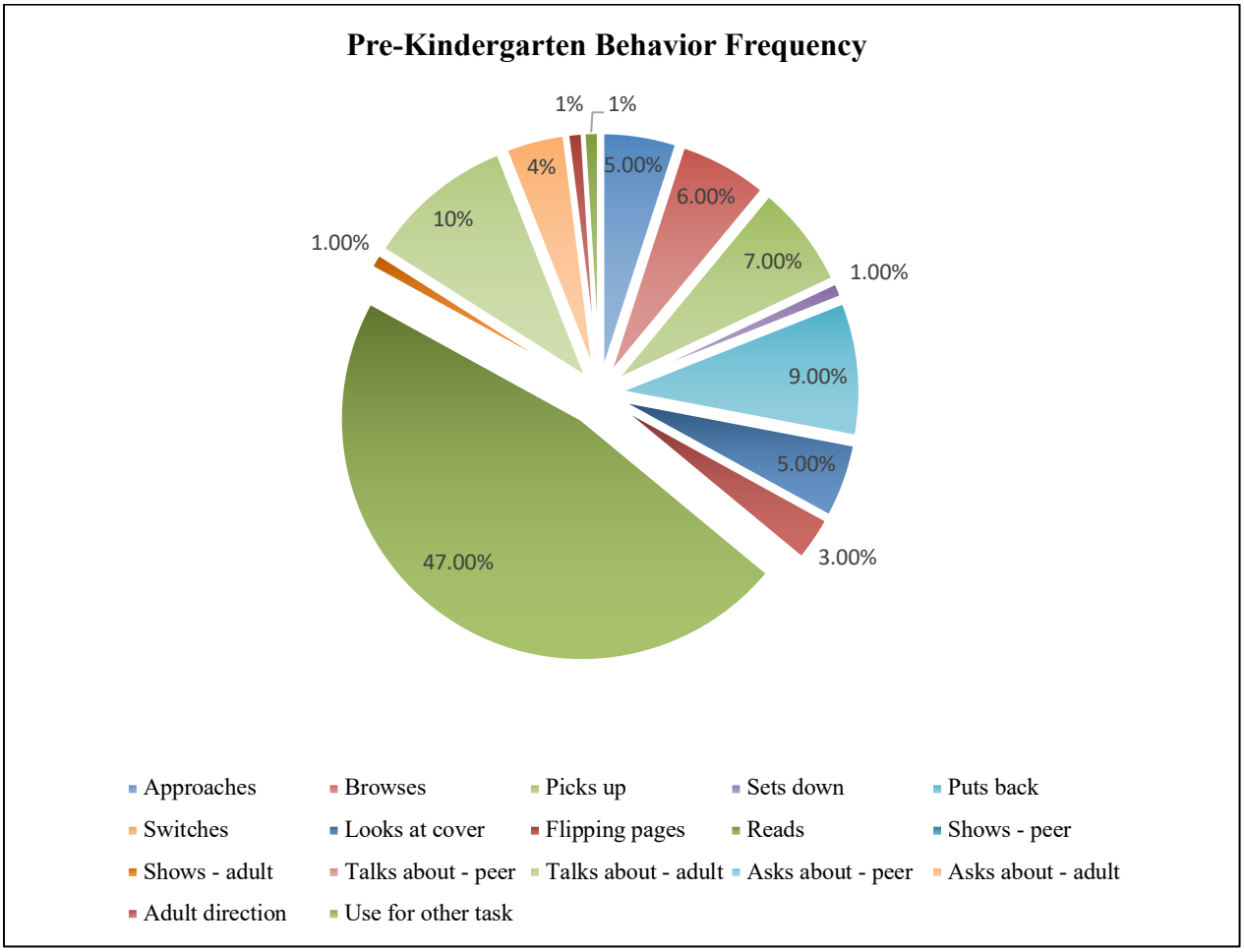


Figure 35. Percentage frequency of behaviors in pre-kindergarten classes.

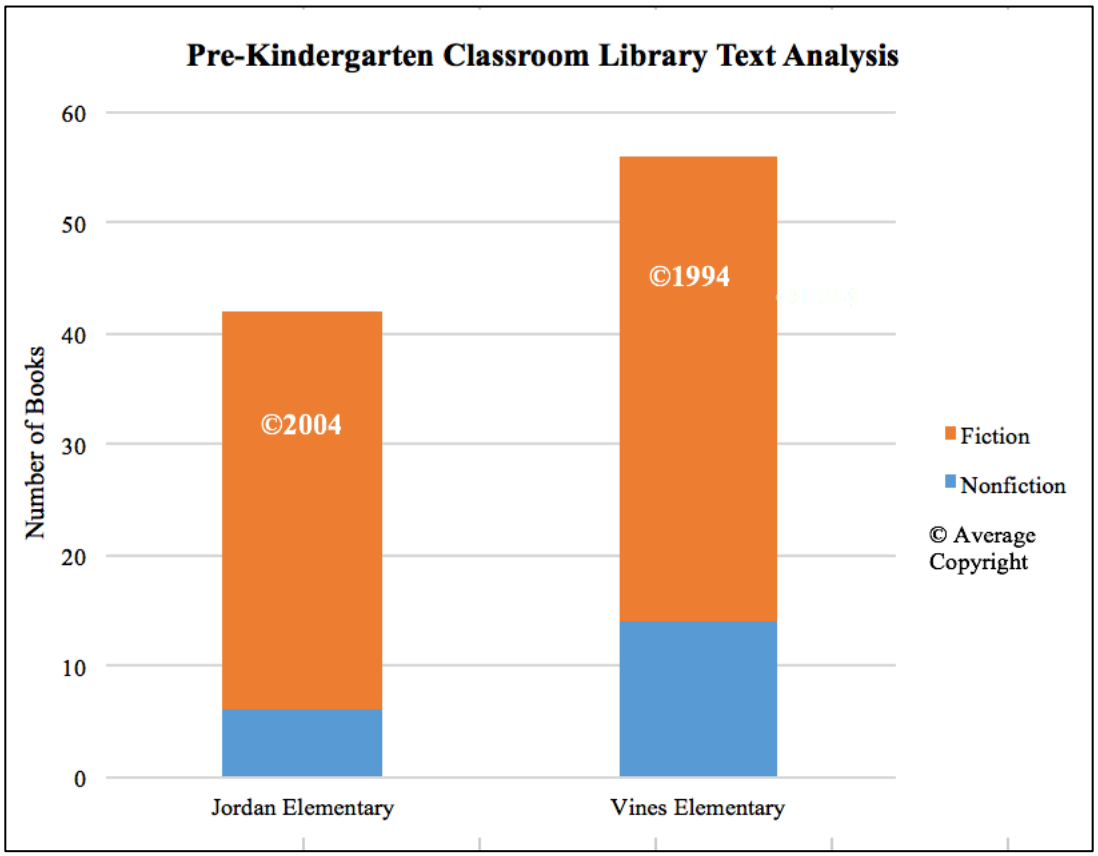


Figure 36. Variance in pre-kindergarten classroom libraries.

The starkest difference between these two classes centered around reading. Figure 37 displays the amount of codes for reading observed in both the quantitative interval scan sample and in the qualitative field notes. The amount of reading at Jordan Elementary PK was more than quadruple the amount that was observed at Vines Elementary PK. One possibility for the variance in reading between the two classes was the difference in class size. The class at Jordan Elementary PK had 8 fewer students, which likely allowed more opportunity for the teachers to read with the children during their choice time. The amount of talk was also varied between the two sites, with Jordan Elementary PK having a significantly higher amount of talk. The type of talk at Jordan Elementary PK was often centered around questioning and reading the texts, rather than adult direction.

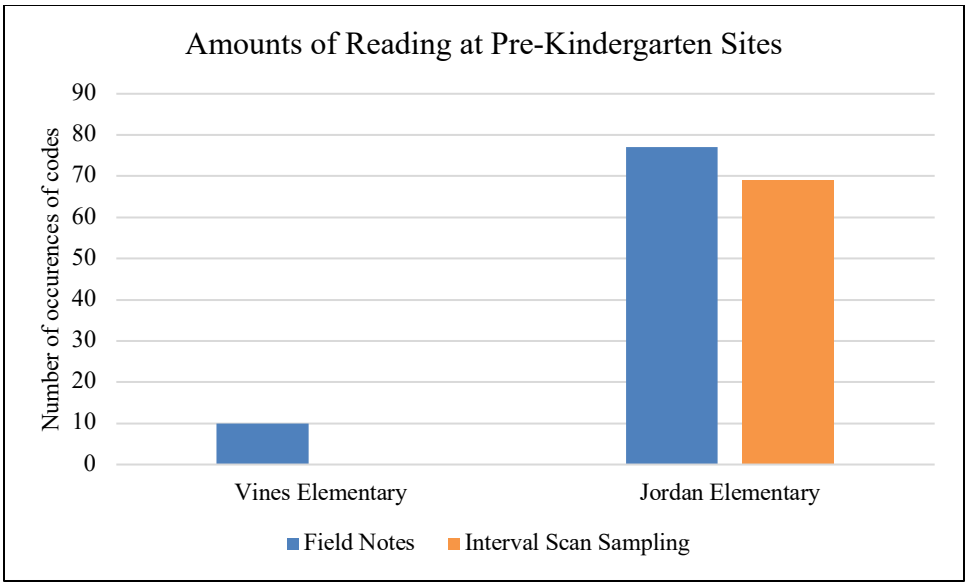


Figure 37. Variance in reading observed in pre-kindergarten classes.

Jordan Elementary Kindergarten

Observations. Classroom observations took place during "station time" which is noted on the schedule in Figure 15. This is the time when children in the classroom would have had access to select and interact with texts. The station time was broken into 15-minute increments, that were typically 45 to 60 minutes long, so that children had the opportunity to move throughout several stations in one station period and access all the stations throughout the school week. Figure 38 shows the results of the interval scan sampling behaviors observed in the classroom over the select timed samples. Notable in these results is the lack of adult talk and the high number of book decision making behaviors, e.g. looks at cover.

The qualitative field notes provide more insight into the book behaviors and interactions when children in the class were at the book center during center time. Figure 39 displays the number of codes in each discrete category for the six observations at Jordan Elementary kindergarten. As noted in Figure 38, observation 4 was an outlier for several reasons. That day the children had a slightly delayed start in station time due to a special Thanksgiving project, and there was a slight interruption in the middle of the station time due to a fire drill. Also notable is the results is the alignment between the amount of reading and book behaviors observed.

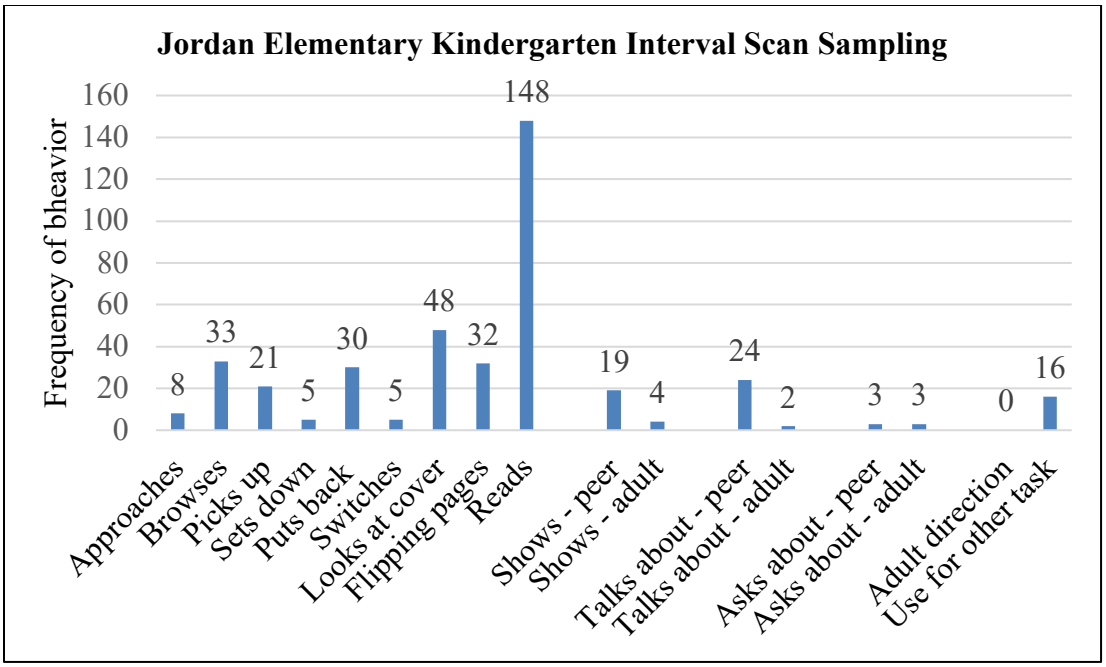


Figure 38. Jordan Elementary kindergarten interval scan sampling results.

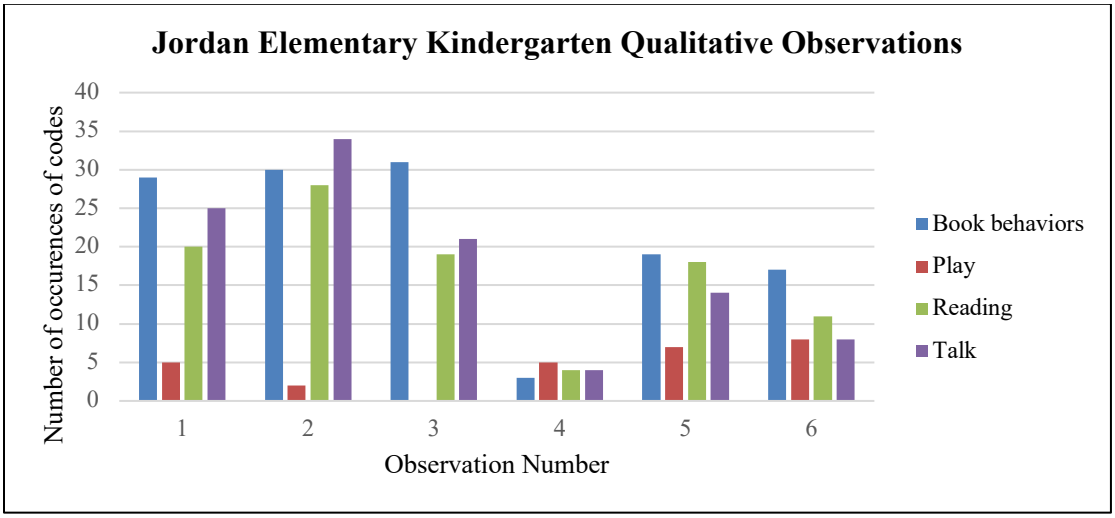


Figure 39. Jordan Elementary kindergarten classroom qualitative observation coding results.

Text analysis. The total number of texts available in the classroom was 202, with an average copyright of 2001. Ms. Brown explained that she tries to have many books so that "there are options so they can choose" (personal interview, December 6, 2018). The leveled readers available in the reading center changed as the year progressed and the children's abilities increased, Ms. Brown also changed out books based on season and interest, but mentioned the importance of having familiar texts in the library as well:

> I have some other books in there, like fairy tales because those are the stories, even though they necessarily can't read them, they know the stories if they've heard them a lot. If they've already heard those at home or we've read them here we've read *The Three Little Pigs* and *The Three Bears* and we've read some of those classic tales, they should be able to turn the pictures (pages) and tell the story out loud. (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

The texts selected for the additional book display tended to be more popular, current texts like *Pete the Cat* as noted in Figure 40.



Figure 40. Additional book display in Jordan Elementary kindergarten.

Ms. Brown explained that there is no required text within the Successful Start program that Jordan Elementary kindergarten uses for the ELA curriculum. In order to select a text for small group instruction, Ms. Brown relied upon the results of the children' scores on assessments, like the Record of Oral Language:

> …the kids that have lower language score those are the, I'm going to be really careful about the texts that I select for them, it's not going to be too lengthy, it's not going to have a return sweep, where they have to come around and read two lines of text just yet. So I choose based on the group and what they can handle, so that's how I group my kids based on you know language levels what they can handle and known words. (December 6, 2018)

Book behaviors. The book behaviors observed fall within the range of typical literacy development for children aged 5 to 7 years old and most would be within what Chall (1987) characterized as Stage 0 to 1 of literacy development, when children pseudo-read and also begin to read high frequency words. The children would also be considered in the partial to full alphabetic phase, according to Ehri (1995). Children demonstrated an understanding of print concepts and the majority were able to decode and read high frequency words within leveled readers from their browsing bags. Figure 41 shows a child in the class holding a book correctly and holding one page at a time to turn the page.



Figure 41. Child in Jordan Elementary kindergarten demonstrating understanding of concepts of print.

While the reading station held the library of classroom books, the children were most often observed reading books from their browsing bags. The browsing bags are pictured in Figure 42, and Figure 43 shows a child reading a book from his browsing bag. The browsing bags were filled with leveled reader texts that the children had previously read during small group instruction with Ms. Brown. Ms. Brown explained her rationale behind using the browsing bags during the station time:

> They have their familiar text that they have read in the small group, that they have in their browsing bags, so they take their browsing bags. And what I want them to do, doesn't mean they do it all the time, but what I want them to, is take their browsing bags and read their familiar texts first. I want them to read all of those because that is something that they're good at reading, and they should be successful at that, so I want them to do that first, read familiar text. (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

Although this instructional strategy implied that the children would have time to read texts from their browsing bags and then later freely explore texts in the library area, the majority of children were observed reading from their browsing bags rather than choosing texts from the library.



Figure 42. Browsing bags used in Jordan Elementary kindergarten.



Figure 43. Child reading from browsing bag.

Teacher direction. There was very little adult-child interaction observed during station time, because Ms. Brown was typically working with a small group at a table during that time. Most of the adult direction was similar to this direction from Ms. Brown as the children were beginning their station time:

> Ms. Brown: I took out the Halloween books, but I will be putting in the Thanksgiving books.
>
> Ms. Brown: Don't forget I took the chairs out of the reading station because the chairs were causing a problem. Let's have 1 stuffed animal…I think if we have them all out it gets us distracted. You should read out of your browsing bag first, and then you can choose to read other books off the shelf. (Field notes, November 5, 2018)

Teacher perceptions of policy. As discussed in the text selection section, Ms. Brown had a high level of autonomy within her classroom to select texts for teaching in small group, based on data she collected on the children in her class. This allowed her to fluidly change the reading groups in her classroom to meet the children's developmental needs. Although Ms. Brown noted that Successful Start is the primary curriculum, and that Wit & Wisdom is the secondary curriculum, she felt that Successful Start was focused more on the skills of reading and Wit & Wisdom was used to support the ELA standards. When asked about how she selects texts, Ms. Brown focused on the aspect of knowing the children in her class:

> …the books I choose for my kids (pause) I choose books that I know they're going to be interested in, like the books I read aloud, I'm going to choose the *Pete the Cat* because they think they're hilarious and we read them a million times

> because they love them or those classic fairy tales or the classic stories I'm going to choose those, because kids need to know those stories or poems… (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

Vines Elementary Kindergarten

Observations. Classroom observations took place during "station time" which is noted on the schedule in Figure 19. Figure 44 shows the results of the interval scan sampling behaviors observed in the classroom over the select timed samples. While reading is the highest observed behavior, it is notable that the observed book selection behaviors were much lower. This is possibly because there were fewer texts in the book station.

The qualitative field notes provide a broader overview of the behaviors observed, and focus in on some of the features of talk that occurred in the classroom. Figure 45 displays the number of codes in each discrete category for the six observations at Vines Elementary kindergarten. As noted in Figure 45, observations 1 and 3 had much lower reading interactions, and those also happened to be observations when there was no adult interaction in the book center. In observation 3, only one child was in the reading station for the entirety of the observation, and she spent the entire time playing with letter matching cards. There is also slightly more alignment between book behaviors and reading in the qualitative sample as compared to the interval scan sample. Ms. West was typically working with a small group during station time or circulating throughout all the stations. During the time period of my observations, Ms. West also had a student volunteer from the local high school and he would assist in the reading center. Figure 46 shows the student volunteering reading with a child in the class.

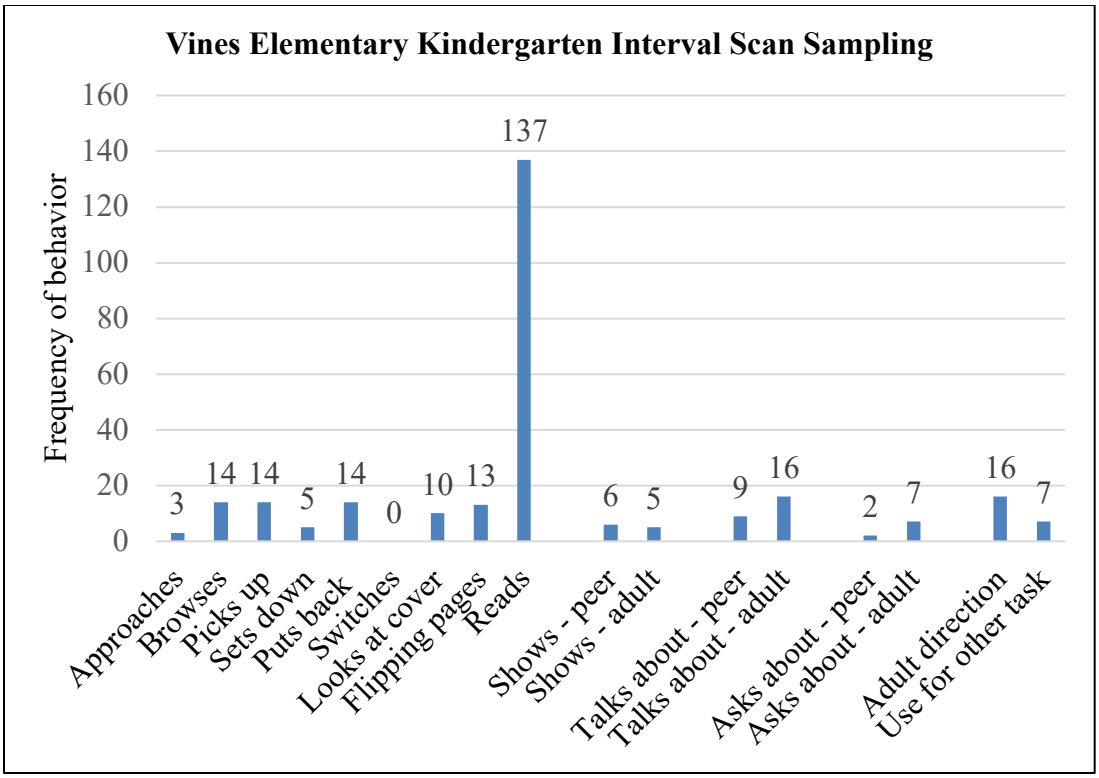


Figure 44. Vines Elementary kindergarten interval scan sampling results.

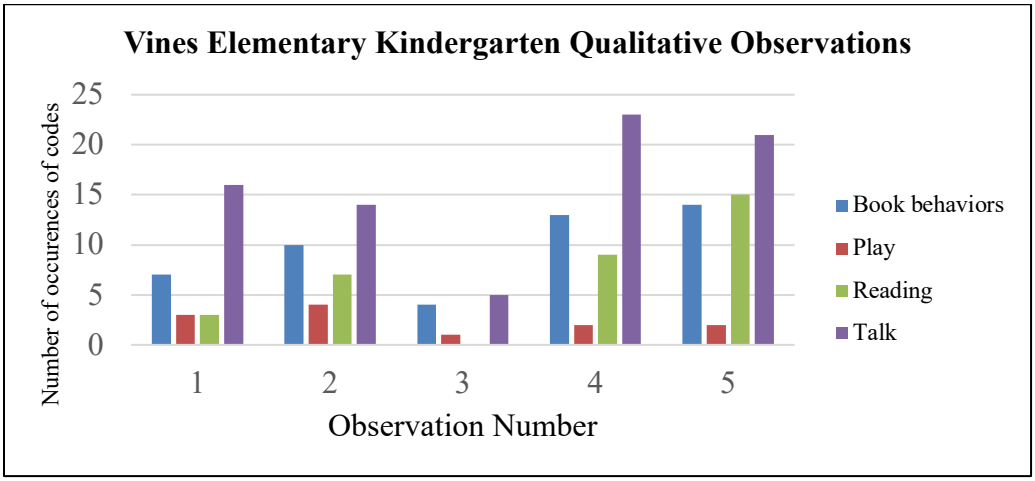


Figure 45. Vines Elementary kindergarten classroom qualitative observation coding results.



Figure 46. Volunteer reading with child in Vines Elementary.

Text analysis. The total number of texts available in the book station was 28, with an average copyright of 1994. Ms. West explained that the books in the library station change throughout the year based on children's reading levels and theme. Ms. West focused on the need for engaging texts as part of the selection for the texts she places in the reading station:

> I need to put some more leveled books, we need to get more into that so that they have more on their level, we just haven't made it to that point yet really, which is sad to me, usually by this time of the year we've already made it to that point. So, I have put out there now themed books because, especially with (child) because I'm not getting to read to them like I like to just sit down and read a fun book, not for any other reason, but that it's just a good book, and we're going to talk about it and read it, but I just want to lay down, read it, enjoy it and like it. We might read it once, and if you loved it so much we might read it again, you know what I'm saying? (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

The texts used for both small and large group instruction were mandated through the EL curriculum which was in its first year of adoption at the school. Ms. West shared that in the past there has been more flexibility to match children's developmental needs with curriculum, but with this curricular implementation the teachers are instructed to "play the music as its written" (personal interview, December 6, 2018).

Book behaviors. The book behaviors observed fall within the range of typical literacy development for children aged 5 to 7 years old and most would be within what Chall (1987) characterized as Stage 0 to 1 of literacy development, when children pseudo-read and also begin to read high frequency words. The children would also be

considered in the partial to full alphabetic phase, with a handful of ELLs considered in the pre-alphabetic phase, according to Ehri (1995). Figure 47 shows a child displaying the cover of a book to other children in the book station.

There were a broad range of skills observed, particularly since there were 7 children in the class that were classified as dual language learners, and those children also received ELL instruction one hour/per day. Emergent bilingual children commonly switch between languages (Reyes, 2006; Reyes & Azuara, 2013), which was observed when a child in the class was reading a book with English text, but making up a story to match the illustrations in Spanish (field notes, December 4, 2018).



Figure 47. A child displaying the cover of a book to other children in Vines Elementary.

Teacher direction. The majority of the teacher-child interactions were centered around classroom management, like this reminder from Ms. West: "remember if you want an animal you have to have a book to read to them" (field notes, October 25, 2018). There were also interactions like this one, centered around a teacher-created high frequency words binder:

Ms. West: You're on some hard pages. Let me show you some ones you can do…

Ms. West: Lisa I bet you can help Kelly!

Lisa: I eat…

Kelly: I eat…

Lisa: I swim…

Kelly: I swim…

Ms. West: Those are some things we can put on our chart.

Ms. West: Look what letter is that…what could we call that dog if it's on a P page?

Ms. West: /puh/ /puh/ /puh/

Ms. West: What is a baby dog?

//waiting//

Ms. West: Puppy.

Ms. West: Turn the page …we're going to use the word like.

Lisa: I like … pizza.

Kelly: I like pizza

Ms. West: I like the way you're working together! /Ms. West leaves station and girls continue working./ (field notes, December 3, 2018)

Figure 48 shows Ms. West working with a child in the reading station using the high-frequency word book.

Teacher perceptions of policy. Ms. West's perception of policy was influenced by her experience with a new curricular rollout at her school, and could best be described as a contradiction between theory and practice. She explained that the new curriculum is meant to be taught with 'fidelity' but that leaves little room for making adjustments to meet the needs of the students in her classroom (personal interview, December 6, 2018). Because the texts were completely dictated through the curriculum, she had little opportunity autonomously select texts for her classroom that may help meet the kindergarten ELA standards. Based on the building level requirement of fidelity to the curriculum, Ms. West clarified that she had to meet with the Literacy Coach in order to deviate from the curriculum content or schedule (personal interview, December 6, 2018). The tension between fidelity and developmentally appropriate practice is summed up by Ms. West when she stated "I'm struggling, as well as a number of people were struggling with how to do this curriculum and still be true to what we feel is appropriate and right" (personal interview, December 6, 2018).



Figure 48. Ms. West working with a child in the reading station.

Kindergarten

As previously noted, the interval scan sampling data were collapsed into pre-kindergarten and kindergarten categories, with the kindergarten results presented in this section. The range of children present in the book area of each classroom ranged from 0-4 and the range of adults present ranged from 0-2. The majority of the intervals included only children present in the space. Figure 49 demonstrates the total frequency of the behaviors observed, with reading being the most observed behavior in the pre-kindergarten classes.

The kindergarten sites both used a similar premise of station time as a way for children to move through various centers in the classroom and interact with texts. They both also had opportunities to visit the school library to check out books and take home classroom books in 'book bags'. Both teachers were purposeful in developing station time so that children would visit all stations throughout the week, which meant they would have at least one or more time in the library center. There were more texts available in the reading station at Jordan Elementary, and they were changed at least once during the observation period. Fewer texts were available at Vines Elementary and they were not changed during the observation period. Figure 50 shows a comparison of the number of texts available at both sites.

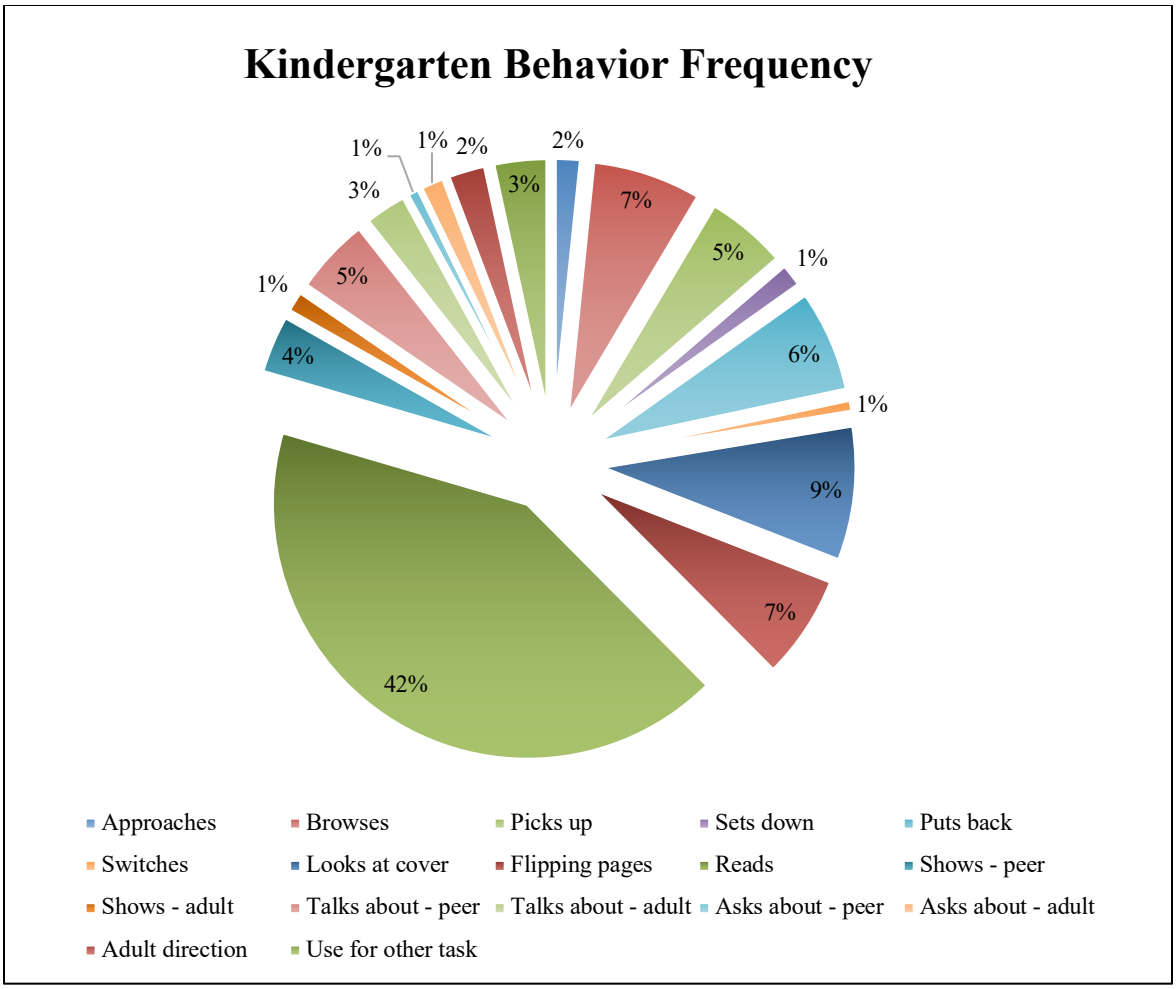


Figure 49. Percentage frequency of behaviors in kindergarten classes.

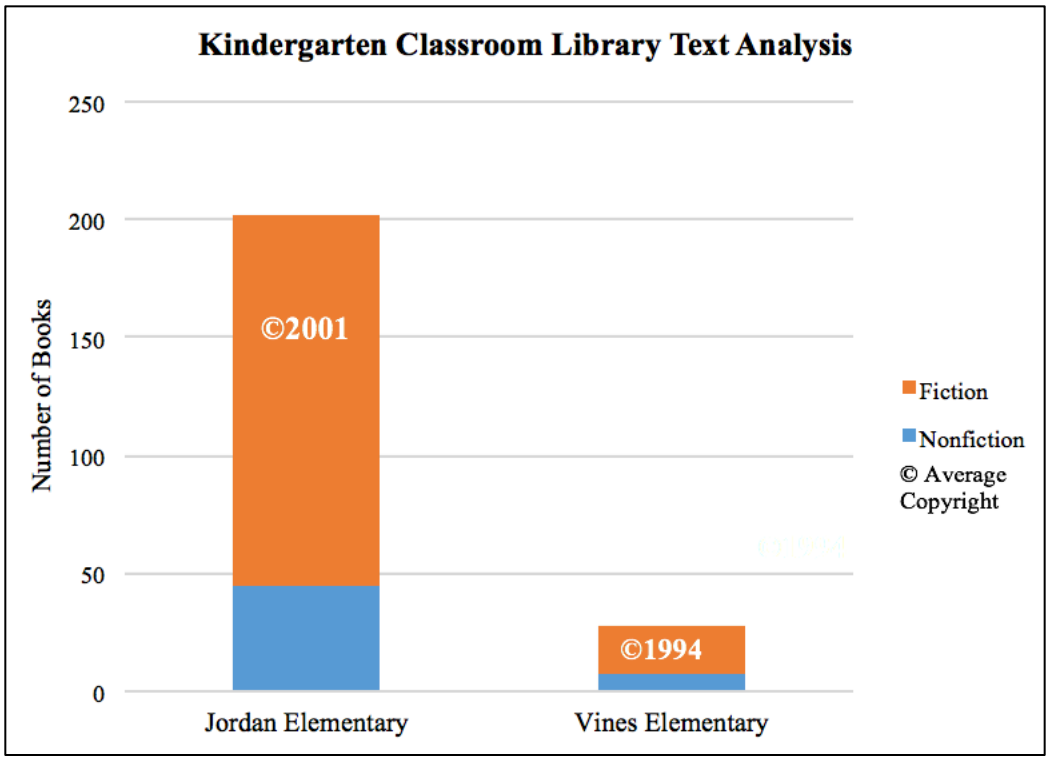


Figure 50. Variance of available texts in kindergarten classes.

While the amount of reading was similar in the interval scan sampling, the coding of the qualitative field notes show more reading occurred in Jordan Elementary kindergarten. Figure 51 shows a comparison of the amount of reading at both sites. The amount of talk was also similar at both sites and mostly focused on direction and classroom management, because both teachers were typically engaged in small group instruction while the children moved through their station time.

One key difference noted in the teacher interviews and instructional practice was the teachers' perception and understanding of their level of autonomy with regard to implementation of curriculum. Ms. Brown's comments could be summarized as describing the curriculum as a guide with a high level of autonomy, whereas Ms. West's comments described the curriculum as dictating her instructional practice which left little room for autonomous decision making.

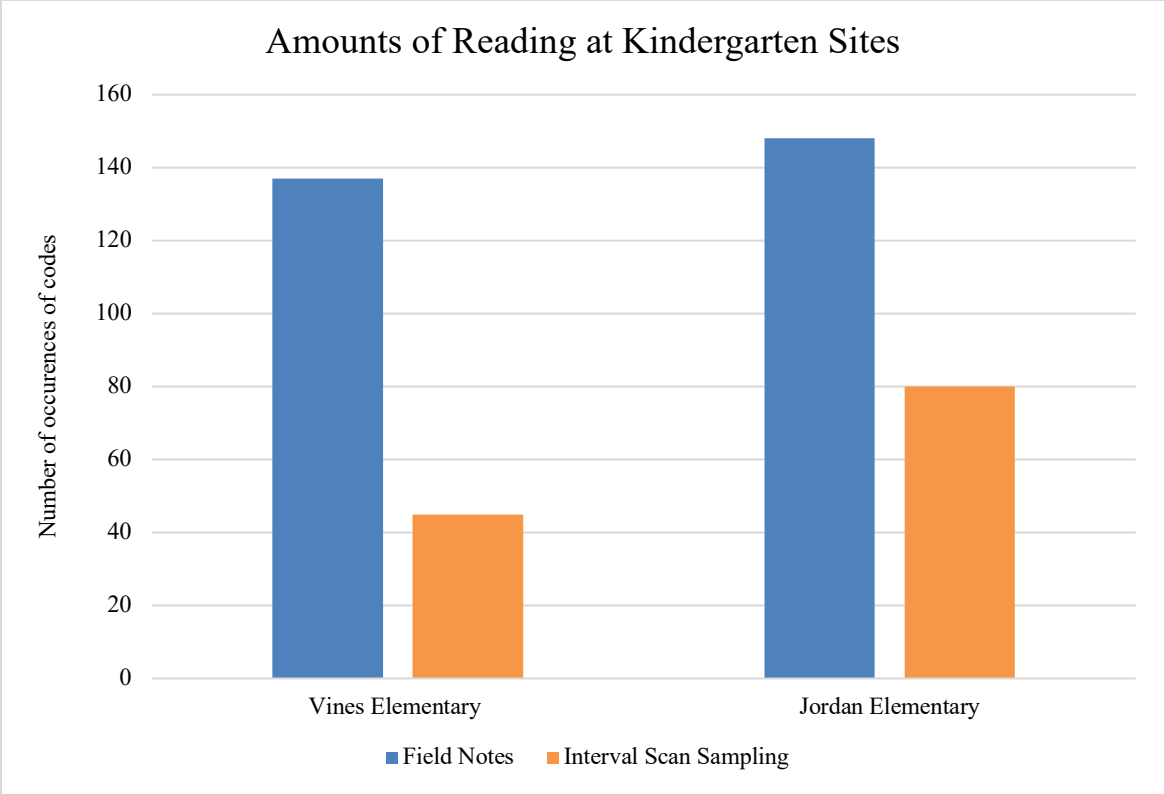


Figure 51. Variance of reading observed at kindergarten sites.

Policy Analysis and Teacher Perspectives

While there were numerous policy documents analyzed, this section will focus on the Tennessee ELA standards and the teacher perspectives discussed in the interviews. Based on the data collection of the previous iteration of the Tennessee ELA standards for pre-kindergarten, there has been a significant expansion of the standards over the past fifteen years. Figure 52 highlights the change in the number of standards with each change to the standards per grade level. The chart begins with 2004, as that is the first year there were adopted ELDS for pre-kindergarten. This analysis focused on reading specific standards, e.g. phonics and word recognition, and did not include writing, e.g. production and distribution of writing. The data for kindergarten shows a decrease in the 2018 standards, but that can be attributed to Tennessee's adoption of Common Core ("CC") standards as a part of RTTT, then their subsequent repeal and adoption of Tennessee ELA standards. Although it appears there was a decrease in from 2012 to 2018 in standards, the actuality is CC standards had separate, but duplicative strands for literature and informational text, so would be more realistic to consider the decrease from 38 to 20, rather than 48 to 20.

Additionally, the content of both the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten standards in the same timeframe were analyzed. In addition to changes in the number of standards, there was also an increase in detail within the standards and some phrases previously attributed to kindergarten were shifted to pre-kindergarten. Of particular interest to this study, is the fact the kindergarten standards used in 2004 referred to children as "emergent readers" and had a learning expectation that children would "develop and

maintain a motivation to read" (TDOE, 2001). No other subsequent standards mention motivation to read.

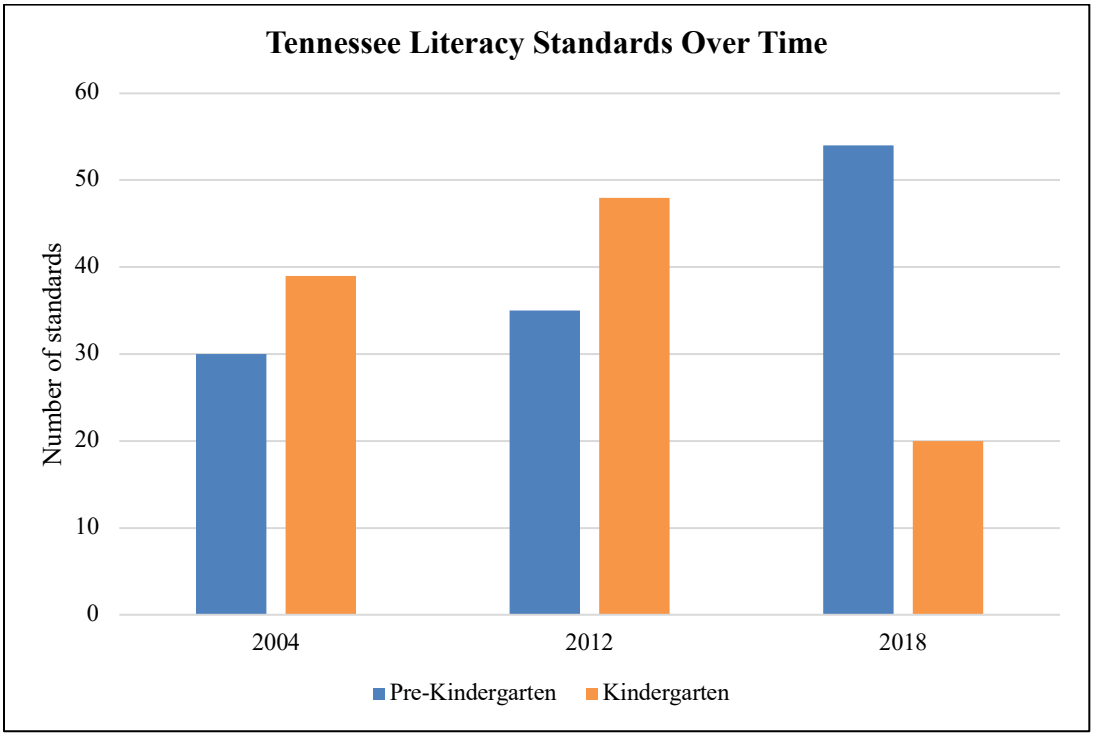


Figure 52. Change in the number of Tennessee literacy standards, including sub-standards, from 2004-2018.

While standards and curriculum are not necessarily interchangeable terms, because the TDOE mandates curricula from which districts can select, and the discussion of these terms were often entwined in the interviews, post-analysis I condensed standards and curriculum into one category under 'policy'. Figure 53 illuminates the number of times the teachers discussed policy and instructional practice within their interviews. This figure notes that Ms. Hill is the outlier with her discussion of practice double that of policy, but that could be in part due to her additional role in the district as preschool supervisor. Ms. Reed's interview showed an interesting reverse of the trend of the other three teachers, possibly due to the combination of the usage of a scripted curricula and lack of formal teacher education training.

The discussion of the teachers during the interview process revealed that their thoughts on policy and instructional practice could be tied to their autonomy as teachers. Both Ms. Reed and Ms. West mentioned in their interview the goal of 'fidelity' to a dictated curriculum, while Ms. Hill and Ms. Brown viewed the curriculum as more of a guide. The other common theme amongst the three licensed teachers, who are required to complete the portfolio evaluation, was the feeling of a lack of time within the day to include developmentally appropriate activities that scaffold literacy development, like songs and rhyming. While teachers did not explicitly state in their interviews that they felt policy directly impacted their instructional practice or children's access to texts, the interviews revealed that teachers understand policy does play a role in how they carry out instruction.

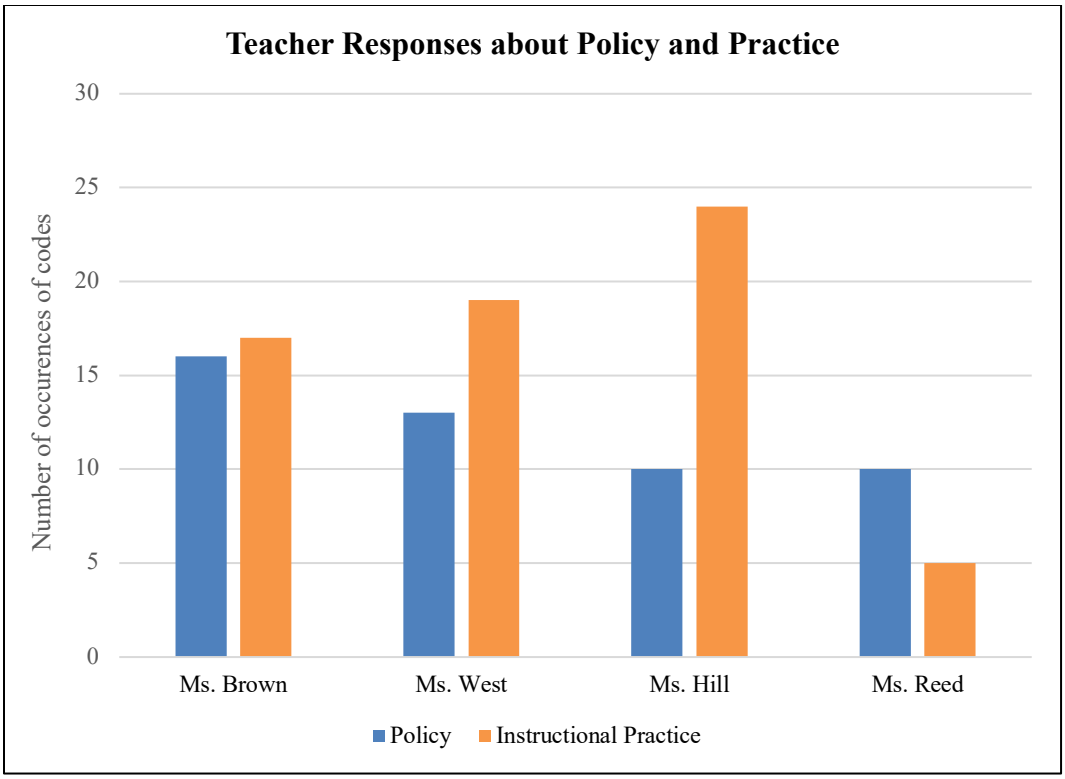


Figure 53. Teacher interview responses about policy and practice.

Emergent Reader Motivation as a Stage Production

Patterns emerged throughout the data analysis that demonstrated that the work that goes into understanding how teachers' influence emergent readers' use of agency in text selection seems to fall under one of two umbrellas, one that is observable and one that is invisible. Using the analogy of a stage production, the four research questions can be categorized as either onstage, backstage, or set. Similar to a play, the onstage theme describes what was observable during classroom time, and the backstage theme describes the invisible work by teachers that may not be seen during a classroom observation. The onstage theme helped answer the explicit ways teachers directed children in book selection, but the backstage theme helped to illuminate the ways teachers' direct children in the behind the scenes work, from text selection to instructional practice. This work is often not visible during an observation but became visible during triangulation of the data. Finally, the set of a stage production in this analogy could be considered the policy, which influences all the action on the stage.

Summary

In this chapter, the data analysis was presented as vertical cases for each classroom, and then presented as horizontal cases across grade level. The categories of each vertical case were text analysis, book behaviors, teacher direction, and teacher perceptions of policy. These categories were a result of the patterns that unfolded during data analysis. The culmination of all of the data analysis resulted in my realization that emergent reader motivation in a classroom can be understood through the analogy of a stage production. In the next chapter, I will share my reflections on the findings and how

they fit within my theoretical framework, the bioecological of emergent reader motivation, and the literature.

Chapter 5: Reflections

Introduction

In this study, I brought together the work of previous scholars (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Clay, 1982, 1991, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1978) to develop a bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice (see Figure 5), and develop the rope of emergent reader motivation (see Figure 4). Both of these models honor the developmental continuum of literacy, with an understanding that literacy does not develop within a vacuum, nor does it begin only once a child enters a formal classroom. Using a mixed methods comparative case study, I sought to understand how policy and teachers influence the ability of emergent readers to demonstrate agency when selecting books within their classrooms. Through this framework, I sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What behaviors do pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children exhibit when choosing books in the classroom?
2. To what extent and in what ways do teachers in the classroom direct children when they are choosing books?
3. What are teachers' reasons for adjusting or redirecting children's book choice?
4. How does policy influence teachers' decisions about access to texts?

Similar to my understanding that emergent reader motivation is made up of many strands, I used multiple sources of data to better understand how emergent readers select books and how teachers impact these choices. Observations, interval scan sampling, classroom

texts, policy documents, interviews, and other artifacts were collected and analyzed to understand how emergent readers demonstrate agency when selecting texts.

In this chapter, I will use the bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice as a way to frame my understanding of the findings and discuss how these findings align with the literature. In Figure 54, I have added an additional layer to the previously presented bioecological model of emergent reader motivation to explain how the data sources and the research questions connect to the bioecological model.

Following the pattern of Bronfenbrenner's work (1979, 2005), the discussion will begin at the center, with discussion of the children's book behaviors in the microsystem. The discussion will continue outward through the model with discussion of the instructional practice in the microsystem and mesosystem and conclude with policy changes that have impacted the macrosystem in macrotime. Next, I will discuss the implications of this study, and whom they may impact. Finally, I will conclude by posing questions that may guide future research on emergent reader book choice.

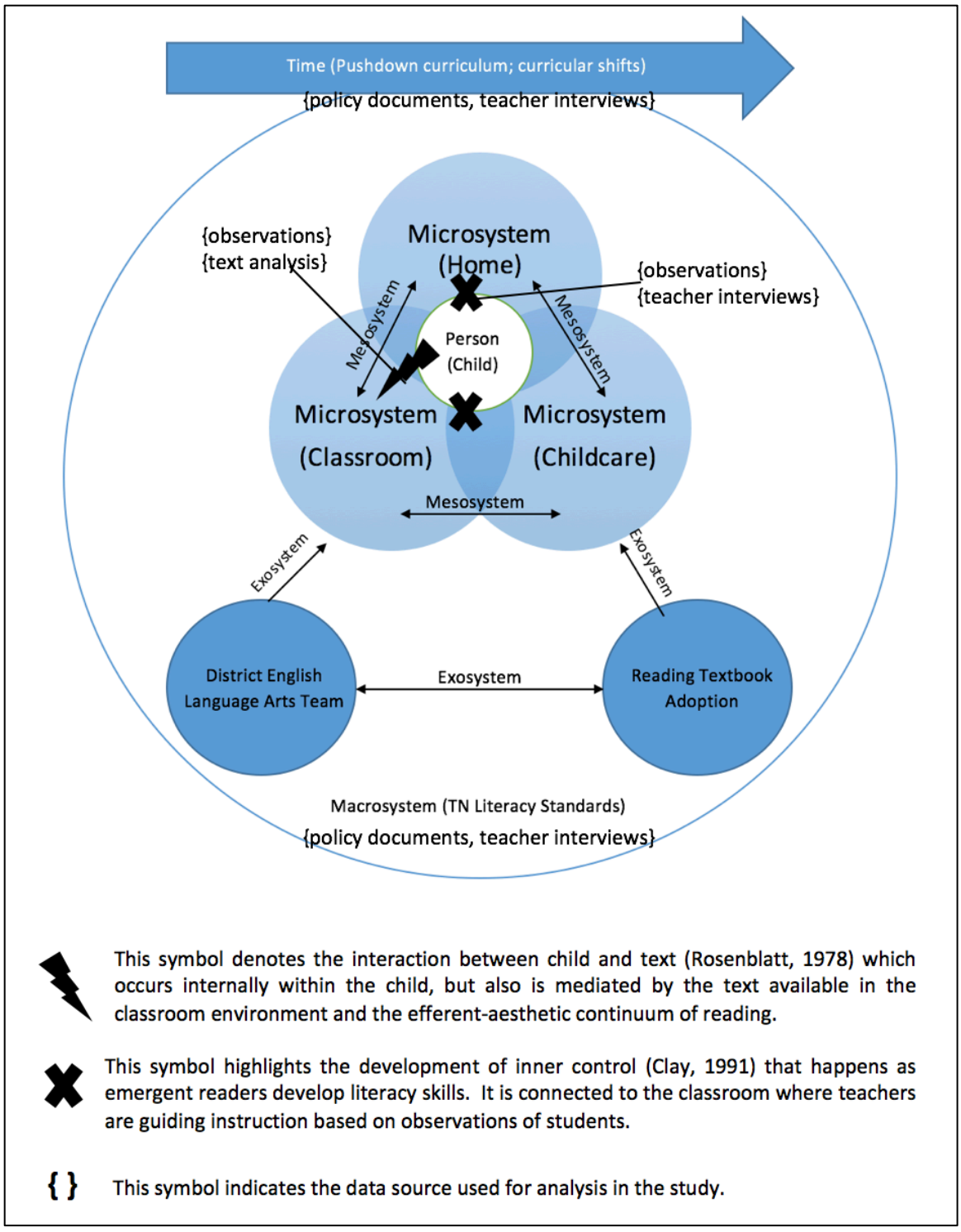


Figure 54. A bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice with data sources.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Book behaviors in the microsystem. The discrete book behaviors observed in the microsystem correlate to the following research questions:

1. What behaviors do pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children exhibit when choosing books in the classroom?
2. To what extent and in what ways do teachers in the classroom direct children when they are choosing books?

The behaviors exhibited by this study's pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children during book selection are similar to that of anyone choosing a book. They often began by looking at the cover of the book and then either selected the book or moved on to make another choice. In the interval scan sampling the most frequent book behaviors were 'puts back' in pre-kindergarten and 'looks at cover' in kindergarten. When children did open a book during a book selection, they appeared to be focused on the illustrations rather than the text. These findings align with the emergent reader continuum of literacy development, when children first begin with using visual cues and then develop processing strategies that allow the reader to direct their attention to text features (Clay, 1991). Even in Jordan Elementary kindergarten, where children were first instructed to select books from their browsing bags (which they had previously read), they were observed taking all the books out of their browsing bags, looking at the covers, and then making a choice of which book to read first.

Quickly selecting a text based on familiarity was another observed behavior. Children would select a text that they had read previously (e.g. *Pete the Cat*) and were able to successfully read based on previous shared reading experiences. Selection of a

familiar text allows children the opportunity to 'read' a text, even if they may not be able to fully decode all the words within it. This is supported by the work of Clay (1972, 1982, 1991, 2014), Chall (1996) and Teale and Sulzby (1986). In this excerpt from Jordan Elementary kindergarten, a child has a *Pete the Cat* stuffed toy and is reading a *Pete the Cat* book from memory, presumably based on previous reading:

> Beth: /Runs to reading area and grabs *Pete the Cat* stuffed animal. Then runs behind me and selects *Pete the Cat*./
>
> Joe: /Gets browsing bag./
>
> Joe: I have nothing in my bag.
>
> Beth: Probably because you put yours upside down.
>
> Beth: /rocking and reading a level reader she picked up/
>
> Joe: Pete the cat is going to sit in the middle!
>
> Beth: We're going to read to you.
>
> Joe: Wait, I'm going to get that…
>
> Joe: Wait, Pete the Cat wait, I have a favorite book /selects a different *Pete the Cat* book./
>
> Joe: /sings/ My buttons, my buttons, my four groovy buttons.
>
> Beth: /Closes book and puts back in bag./
>
> Beth: /Carries bag away, then stops./ I want to read it again real quick I love it (level reader*)*!
>
> Beth: I have to sit next to you (to Joe).
>
> Joe: (singing) my buttons my buttons. (reading) Oh no! the button popped!
>
> Joe: Goodness no…buttons come and buttons go!

Beth: Sit on your bottom (to Pete toy).

Beth: /reading from level reader/

Joe: he's laying down he wants to lay down! He's tired!

Beth: No said Sam here is…

Joe: /bouncing Pete around/

Beth: sit on your bottom, you're interrupting (to Pete toy). Pete, now!

Beth: /continues reading/

Joe: /reading/ how many buttons are there? /singing/ my buttons my buttons my zero buttons.

Beth: /puts book back in browsing bag and returns it to bucket./

Beth: I'm finished! (field notes, October 26, 2018)

Play was another common behavior exhibited by the children when selecting texts, as noted in the vignette above, when Beth was giving direction to the *Pete the Cat* toy. In the two kindergarten classrooms that had additional items, such as stuffed animals or whisper phones available in the reading area, these items were often used in play or during text selection. This behavior was observed in over half of the observations in both kindergarten classrooms. In Figure 55, a child is interacting with a stuffed mouse while making a book selection.



Figure 55. Child selecting a book while interacting with a book character toy.

In all the classrooms, there were occasions when the children were observed using books as part of play, from pretending to be witches to pretending to be a family with a baby. While reading was not necessarily the goal of the play, the children were interacting with and using books in a way that potentially helped strengthen or further develop their understanding of concepts about print, such as directionality. These concepts of print are generated through the child and the play, which opportunities for interaction are described by Clay (1989) as "the child is the creator of awareness, not the teacher. The child works at analyzing print in such a way that the cues from various sources agree. In that analysis the child pays close attention, tries new responses, notices new features, puzzles over these, thinks s/he understands" (p. 275).

The ability for the children to play with texts and develop concepts of print organically, rather than in a structured, teacher-led manner is an opportunity for children to develop self-efficacy and is supported by the work of Ryan and Deci (2000). This is also supported by the work of Turner (2000), who found that some degree of choice can be motivating for first graders during reading tasks. NAEYC (2000) supports the use of play as a recommended teaching practice during the preschool years and into kindergarten and states that children should have "opportunities to engage in play that incorporates literacy tools, such as writing grocery lists in dramatic play…" (p. 16). This vignette from Jordan Elementary kindergarten shows how the children are incorporating literacy practices into their dramatic play:

Sue and Ben laying under rug pretending to be asleep.

Ben /pretend baby talk/

Katie goes over to books and picks level reader out of bin

Katie guys I'll read you a story about a bed.

Katie this is how you do the story.

Katie holding book to show them pages.

Sue and Ben crawling around pretending to be babies.

Katie /holding book/ I'm going to read to you. (field notes, November 16, 2018)

Within this section it is also necessary to discuss the lack of book interaction in the VE pre-kindergarten class. Although the lack of such interactions is concerning on one level, when viewed more broadly, the freedom for children to demonstrate agency in their choice of activity during their work time is supported by the work of Ryan and Deci (2000) and Schiefele (1991) on self-determination theory and motivation. Allowing the children to freely choose the center they wished to interact in, without the confines of sending children directly to the book center allowed them greater opportunity to develop autonomy. This is supported by Ms. Hill's explanation of her child-focused teaching pedagogy:

> I follow children's leads a lot….We have a lot of things that make the work complex with young children nowadays, what does high quality look like? What are high quality interactions? What is rigorous? What do you kids need to know? …we just have to watch kids all the time. (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

Text access in the microsystem and mesosystem. Text access in both the micro and mesosystems also helps answer the following research questions:

2. To what extent and in what ways do teachers in the classroom direct children when they are choosing books?

3. What are teachers' reasons for adjusting or redirecting children's book choice?

The texts teachers make available to the children in their classroom serve as the initial phase in how teachers impact book choice (Gambrell, 1996). As noted in the text analysis, the range of texts available in the four classrooms varied widely, with Vines Elementary kindergarten having only 28 texts and Jordan Elementary kindergarten having almost triple that amount. The frequency with which new texts were available also is a factor; both Jordan Elementary classrooms had texts changed during the study, while Vines Elementary classrooms did not have new texts introduced into the book center.

All of the teachers mentioned in their interviews the need to have engaging and interesting texts in the book center. This reflects the previous work by Deci and Ryan (1991, 2000), De Naeghel et al. (2014), and Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) on the essential nature of a classroom environment that is welcoming and provides opportunity for autonomous interaction with texts. Both kindergarten classes mentioned the inclusion of leveled readers, using a guided reading leveling system to provide leveled reader texts as an option for children. Ms. Brown explained her system for including and changing the leveled readers in the classroom library:

> Some of the books are leveled with the letter leveling which is a little different from successful start, but I kept them with the guided reading levels. So for instance so I have A through D and I'm going to keep that like that until I feel like I've got people that are out of. I still have a few people in A and I want to give them that option, but as we start to move up the levels then I'll start putting in the

> level E books and the level F books so I don't necessarily have those out yet because I don't even have anybody in a D yet so when I do I'll move those in. I have those leveled books that should be books that they should be able to read. (personal interview, December 6, 2018).

Similarly, Ms. West expressed her concern that she had yet to have leveled readers in her classroom library, "well I need to put some more leveled books, we need to get more into that so that they have more on their level, we just haven't made it to that point yet really, which is sad to me, usually by this time of the year we've already made it to that point." (personal interview, December 6, 2018).

Another common theme centered on text selection was familiarity, and Ms. Hill's rationale for not changing books frequently was rooted in developing familiarity, which she focused on in her interview:

> … those kids knew where they could find that book. Wait a minute I know what book we need for this we need this book to go play and they knew to go look in the book baskets and I think they even knew it was in the carpet one. the books can go to any basket and the kids have experience with every basket, what I really see nearing the second semester with some of the book reads is I want to read the book about the cat, I want to read the book about the cat and I know where it is and it is *Cookie's Week* (title), it's in the writing basket. So they become familiar with the text and then they are seeking out the ones that they want to hear over and over again, and then eventually they're choosing those books to read on their own. (personal interview, December 4, 2018)

This echoes Clay's (1991) belief that access to familiar text can be a key way for children to develop effective reading behaviors, she highlights that when this opportunity is available children are "allowed to learn to be readers, to read in ways which draw on all their language resources and knowledge of the world, to put this very complex recall and sequencing behavior into a fluent reading of the text" (p. 184). Clay (1991) further states that "even fledgling readers need opportunities to put together those few responses they have already learned" (p. 184). The opportunity for re-reading texts is also supported by Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of literacy in which each reading of the texts is considered a new interaction and the same text can be read at varying points of the efferent-aesthetic continuum.

Another common thread that all teachers discussed were the opportunities children had to access text beyond what was deemed station time or center time. These opportunities varied between sites and classrooms, and these interactions are classified as mesosystems that highlight the interactions between the various microsystems that the children move through, e.g. classroom and school library, and classroom and home. Both classes at Vines Elementary had the opportunity to check out books from a library of free texts once a week to take home in a book bag. This is a collection separate from the school library, and the teachers are assisted by the Family Resource Center in maintaining the collection. Ms. Hill offered some insight into the collection:

> We just take a lot of hand me down books and we place in the library and those books when they go home do not always come back. So it's our position that even if books are not coming back we do not limit children's ability to continue to check out. So those books dwindle, so we are constantly, scavenging for more

> books. They're not always, I also say that they're not 100% appropriate for young children. Not that they're inappropriate content, just saying that they might not be the high quality children's' literature because often we just need to replenish the books, and so how we do that is with books that other grades might be getting rid of or are being given to us from McKay's or whatever. (personal interview, December 4, 2018)

Figure 56 shows the Vines Elementary community library and Figure 57 shows Ms. Hill conducting a checkout time with some of the children. Ms. Hill typically selects a smaller number of texts from the resource library and brings them into the classroom from which the children can choose, which exhibits another form of direction in text selection.



Figure 56. Vines Elementary community library.



Figure 57. Ms. Hill conducting library checkout with books from the community library.

Children in Vines Elementary also had the opportunity to visit and select texts from the school library, but those books were unable to go home with the children. At Jordan Elementary kindergarten, the children would visit and select books from the library that they could take home with them. There is a clear distinction in the texts the children take home in their book bags versus those from the library, as demonstrated by Ms. Brown in this comment:

> Our librarian is wonderful and she opens the library every morning before school so kids can go in there every single morning, and if they want to change out books every day they can. They can bring their book back and get a new book every single day if they wanted to. So she has that option available for the kids and that's been really powerful. I think because she'll sit and read with them in the mornings and things like that, so that has been a positive, but then in the classroom usually the books that I send home would be the books they've read with me and they take those home every day. (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

The books children read with Ms. Brown are leveled reader texts that the children did not self-select, but were selected by Ms. Brown as part of small group instruction and were similar to the texts that are available to children in their browsing bags.

Instructional practice in the microsystem. The microsystem of the classroom and the instructional practice of the teachers within that microsystem is a third layer that also helps answer research questions:

2. To what extent and in what ways do teachers in the classroom direct children when they are choosing books?

3. What are teachers' reasons for adjusting or redirecting children's book choice?

In all of the classrooms, the instructional practice included well-established routines that children understood and generally followed when interacting in the book areas. The majority of talk and direction from teachers during book selection was focused on task management. Figure 58 displays the type of talk and excerpts from the field notes.

The instructional practice and talk focused on classroom management was much more evident in the kindergarten classroom observations, while the instructional practice and talk in pre-kindergarten was focused more on the interaction with text and questioning to discover more about the text and functions of text. There was not a single observation of a teacher asking a child to choose a different book after they had made a book selection, although in Jordan Elementary kindergarten there were frequent reminders given to children that they should read from their browsing bag prior to selecting a book from the library.

Type of Talk	Example	Number of Times Coded
General Direction	Use your words and tell him not to hit your book.	34
Book Choices	I took out the Halloween books but I will be putting in the Thanksgiving books. Some friends had books they wanted to continue reading, they're on the desk.	13
Instructional Practice	Remember, if you want an animal you have to have a book to read to them. Remember, when you go to reading station you can take your library book with you.	25
Reading Talk	/pointing at pictures/ Do you remember what those are called? When they carve the pumpkins?	49

Figure 58. Matrix of types of teacher talk.

The instructional practice observed in some classrooms did explicitly impact children's book selection. Ms. Brown provided each child in the classroom with their own book bag (see Figure 41) and these were used in the reading station and contain teacher selected texts:

> …they also do have their familiar text that they have read in the small group that they have in their browsing bags so they take their browsing bags. And what I want them to do, doesn't mean they do it all the time, but what I want them to take their browsing bags and read their familiar texts first. I want them to read all of those because that is something that they're good at reading and they should be successful at that so I want them to do that first, read familiar text. Then they can choose (from the library of books). (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

While this instructional practice may be rooted in sound research on text familiarity and repeated readings, it also limited the time in which children could freely choose a text from the classroom library. There were numerous observations in which children only read books from their browsing bag and did not have enough time to select a text from the library.

Policy impacts in the macrosystem over macrotime. Both macrotime, which Bronfenbrenner (2006) describes as the focus "on the changing expectations and events in the larger society" (p. 796) and the macrosystem of the Tennessee literacy standards help answer the final research question:

4. How does policy influence teachers' decisions about access to texts?

Policy document analysis. Over the past 5 years there has been considerable change in education policy from both the state and federal levels, which has trickled

down into individual classrooms. Generally, the standards have shifted from a broad to specific, e.g. from a broad standard of exploring various types of genres (TDOE, 2004) to a more detailed standard that states children will read with prompting and support informational and literary texts (TDOE, 2018d). For pre-kindergarten classrooms, the literacy standards have doubled and for kindergarten classrooms, the literacy standards have increased then decreased. The policy analysis also showed that the many of the standards from kindergarten have now become pre-kindergarten standards, as noted in Table 7 (TDOE 2009, 2018d). This aligns with the previously reported findings of Bassok, Lathem, and Rorem (2016) regarding the 'push-down' curriculum from first grade to kindergarten.

Shifting standards. The responses in the teacher interviews, combined with the policy analysis, and observations, helped determine the response to this question and focused on the three teachers who are required to teach Tennessee standards. Even though Ms. Brown, Ms. Hill, and Ms. West didn't feel that the shifting standards changed how they selected and used texts in their classroom, their interview transcripts revealed that the increase in standards was linked to time pressure. When discussing the standards, Ms. Hill focused on the fact that many of the standards mention with support, and that "in preschool and kindergarten it's about what do the adults know about what this standard is asking children to do and how do we choose materials that help support that" (personal interview, December 4, 2018). Yet, she later when on to mention that lap reading is a time when teachers provide opportunities for children to develop these skills and that there is not enough time in the day to do lap reading.

Table 7: Examples of 'push-down' ELA curriculum from kindergarten to pre-kindergarten.

2009 Kindergarten Standard	**2018 Pre-Kindergarten Standard**
Recognize words that have the same beginning and ending sounds.	Identify whether or not two words begin or end with the same sound.
Segment one-syllable words into individual sounds and blend the sounds into whole words.	Begin to blend and segment onsets and rhymes of single-syllable spoken words.

Overall, the availability of texts as a means of adjustment or redirection was linked to both instructional demands and autonomy. In one classroom, a teacher had to place a book, that was not part of the mandated curriculum, behind chart paper so it would be out of sight if the literacy coach or administrator came into the classroom. For example, Ms. Brown noted that the secondary curriculum used at Jordan Elementary, Wit and Wisdom, has been selected and influenced by the shifting standards:

> Like today in our Wit and Wisdom we talked about text evidence and so we went through and talked about how you may know this fact about pigs, but if it doesn't say this in the text that we're reading we are not going to put it on our chart. So we're going to try to find the things that are only in there. So with what we do, (sigh) you know I don't know that, the standards have influenced obviously the where we're at with what has been selected for us, wit and wisdom, but I don't feel like the books I'm choosing to pick up and read to them. I mean sometimes yes, but mostly no. I would say I choose the books that I know the kids are going to like or the books that are rich in vocabulary and rich in language and that's the purpose I'm going to choose, not necessarily because of the standards. (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

The tension evident in Ms. Brown's explanation above is not uncommon (Gallant, 2009; Rose & Rogers, 2012), a similar tension was noted in the interview with Ms. West. In explaining the rollout of the new curriculum, Ms. West explained that "in the past we felt like we had a little more flexibility and (it was) more like, yes teach it and keep the integrity of the curriculum, but you can also make adjustments as needed for your students" (personal interview, December 6, 2018).

Time pressure. All three of these teachers have extensive education, training and teaching experience, and their interview statements illustrate the macrotime effect of policy changes throughout their teaching careers in which they have experienced various standards and curricular changes. This feeling of time pressure and lack of time for certain activities are supported the study by Bassok, Lathem, and Rorem (2016) that found significant reductions in the amount of time spent on art, science or music activities. For example, Ms. Brown expressed regret over not having adequate amount of time for certain classroom activities:

> I do feel like there is more pressure now than there used to be. I felt like we used to have more freedom in kindergarten years ago that there was more opportunity and this isn't necessarily literacy related, but I feel like there was more opportunity for the arts to occur. I felt like we did more songs and things that I don't quite have time for anymore and I feel like songs are a huge thing in helping with literacy if you learn to sing a song…(personal interview, December 6, 2018)

Similarly, Ms. Hill lamented the lack of time for lap reading, "which I think is just a necessary part of reading to young children or with young children in a preschool classroom. I think we don't do enough lap reading. I think we really need to do more of it" (personal interview, December 4, 2018).

The microtime discontinuity was expressed by Ms. West with regard to the expectations for all that the children and teacher should do in the day:

> Ms. West: So it's on paper, and I get that everything fits in just perfectly, if nobody has their shoe untied or needs a band aid. If everything is going perfectly

> it all fits in there, except when real life happens…you're like oh we aren't even in our classroom at 2:45, we are on the bus, so (trails off)…
>
> Researcher: So lost time?
>
> Ms. West: Yeah, I don't want anybody to think that we're not trying to, that we're just slacking around or you know, we're just not, we're working hard while we're in there. But there is time in the day where we are not hitting it. We're eating a snack, because we ate lunch at 10:40, and we are hungry again at 1:45. (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

The time pressure of both the kindergarten teachers can be connected to their thought processes in text selection for the book centers in their classrooms. This supports the macrotime aspect of the bioecological framework (see Figure 54), which influences and impacts all of the other systems within the framework. Ms. West very clearly had an idea that the time in the book center should be one in which children had freedom to read and select a book:

> not for any other reason, but that it's just a good book and yeah we're going to talk about it and read it but I just want to lay down, read it, enjoy it and like it. We might read it once and if you loved it so much we might read it again! (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

This 'freedom' echoes Rosenblatt's (1978) efferent-aesthetic reading continuum, in which the aesthetic focus is on the reader's experience while interacting with the text.

Similarly, Ms. Brown talked about the need for choice in the book station, but the majority of the time in the reading station was focused on reading teacher-selected texts.

She even used her own reading motivation as an example, as she explained any type of redirection she would make to a child:

> Now sometimes I can talk to specific kids and say why don't you choose a book out of the A tub today or why don't you look for a book in the A tub? Or you should probably be trying some of those books in the D tub, like I can kind of give suggestions to them, but really I want them to have choice, because I know there is going to be kids who could read a D who are going to choose an A just for fun, but I don't want to. Like I can read some harder texts too but that doesn't mean that's what I want to read all the time, sometimes I want to read the easy book just because I like it. (personal interview, December 6, 2018)

This contradiction between pedagogy and observed practice was evident in the majority of the classrooms and can possibly be linked to the range of autonomy available as teachers navigate usage of scripted curricula. This negotiation is not uncommon in the current educational reform climate (Smagorinksy, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002; Eisenbach, 2012).

Because the instructional practice in Ms. Brown's classroom is for children to read from their teacher-selected texts prior to selecting texts from the library, this may place the children in a more "efferent" state of Rosenblatt's continuum. The children were observed reminding each other that "you have to read from your browsing bag first" (Jordan Elementary kindergarten field notes, 10/26/18, 10/29/18, 11/5/18, 11/27/18) which makes the act of reading task-oriented, rather than one focused on the emotive aspect of interacting with a text.

Conclusions. In this section, I will provide a brief summary to the answers to the research questions that have been discussed in detail in both Chapter 4 and herein.

1. What behaviors do pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children exhibit when choosing books in the classroom?

Children, like many adults, pick up, look at the cover, flip through pages of books, regardless of their selection of a book from a pre-selected book bag or from a bookshelf where they have free choice. They often seek out familiar books which allow them the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of concepts of print while reading or re-telling a story they know. Children also often engaged in play while choosing books, by making up dialogue with animal toys, like the mouse from *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*.

2. To what extent and in what ways do teachers in the classroom direct children when they are choosing books?

Teachers direction when children are choosing books in a classroom is largely limited to instructional practice via reminders within the classroom setting. While all the teachers were strong proponents of choice and opportunity for children to demonstrate agency in book selection, that was not always observed in practice. When direction was given to children, there was no observation of teachers encouraging to select a book for either afferent or aesthetic purposes. The instructional practice observed set limitations on the children's agency in book selection by providing pre-selected books for the children. Teachers also direct book choice by the type of materials that are available within their classroom libraries, which varied widely across classrooms.

3. What are teachers' reasons for adjusting or redirecting children's book choice?

There was no observation of redirecting a child's book choice, but the ways in which children have opportunities to access text are based on teachers' instructional practice. The teachers clearly articulated that they wanted children to have access to books that were both 'on their level' and books that the children selected based on their own motivation. Any perceived adjustment or redirection would happen in a behind the scenes manner, by teachers' pre-selection of texts for the children.

4. How does policy influence teachers' decisions about access to texts?

The increase in standards, evaluation requirements, and level of autonomy have varying levels of influence on how teachers' make decisions about children's access to text. The three teachers accountable to Tennessee standards and portfolio evaluation all raised similar concerns about the lack of time within the school day for activities that support literacy development, e.g. lap reading, rhyming, and singing. Additionally, the level of autonomy varied based on how the standards and curricula were interpreted at the building level, from strict fidelity to scripted curriculum to using the curriculum as a guide that could be adapted to meet individual children's developmental needs. Although the teachers did not explicitly state that policy influenced their decisions about access to text, analysis of their interview transcripts revealed that policy does influence access to texts in a variety of ways.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to understand how emerging readers demonstrate agency when selecting books within their classrooms and to understand the bioecological

factors that play a role in those choices. I have interpreted the results using the bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice – a novel construct of a well-known model that acknowledges all the complex factors in text selection of emergent readers. The findings of this study have particular implications for providing opportunity for emergent readers to select texts and educational policy. In this section, I suggest the implications of text choice and policy for teachers, administrators, and policymakers, based on my perception of the data and findings.

Implications for teachers. The physical aspects of selecting a book, e.g. looking at a cover, flipping through pages, and looking at the name of the author, may seem inconsequential, but they provide opportunity for emergent readers to develop or strengthen their concept about print. Across all classrooms, book selecting behaviors were higher than the amount of reading, but closely matched with reading. This slight variance between behaviors also displays that children do have a modicum of choice, even if they are choosing from pre-selected texts. At this microsystem layer, teachers should continue to provide opportunities for children to navigate bookshelves, different sizes and types of texts as a way to strengthen their concepts of print.

Developing autonomy is an essential tool in continued educational motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2001; Schiefele, 1991). Without opportunity to develop autonomy and transact with texts across the efferent-aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1978), it is unlikely children will develop into "book lovers" that educators hope all children will become. Even providing choice in a limited capacity can encourage emergent readers to develop the idea that reading is mostly task-oriented, efferent stance, rather than an emotive stance (Rosenblatt, 1978). Reading can, and should, be both, and the same text

can be read differently in each transaction. The transactional aspect is particularly significant for emergent readers because their transaction with the same text is impacted not only by their emotive stance, but also by the flourishing of their literacy skills. Teachers of young children must continue to seek out ways to give children the ability to choose and interact with a wide variety of texts.

The broader, macrotime implications for teachers indicate a need for teachers to become more active participants in the policymaking process. Rather than being reactive, teachers must become proactive so that they can use their professional training and experience as a means to change policy. In the position statement, *Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education*, NAEYC clearly states that advocacy is one of the four roles of an early childhood educator and that they must "Speak out against unfair policies or practices and challenge biased perspectives. Work to embed fair and equitable approaches in all aspects of early childhood program delivery, including standards, assessments, curriculum, and personnel practices" (2019, p. 8). None of the teachers within the study expressed that they had participated in any advocacy role, although the interview protocol didn't address advocacy, it didn't appear organically within the interview.

Implications for administrators. Administrators at the district and building level are often the interpreters of policy mandates from the state level for classroom teachers. These roles uniquely position them to advocate for and help implement developmentally appropriate practice. As noted in the teacher interviews, administrators can use these opportunities to either support or undermine teacher autonomy in their classrooms,

particularly during the implementation of new curriculums. This experience was aptly summarized by Ms. Hill when discussing the new curriculum implementation:

> When I can make decisions about how and when and where I'm going to read stories across maybe a certain timeline…I feel like I have more buy in as to how it's going to work with the kids this year…. Now if its dictated or if its suggested, those are two different. Isn't that human nature? Like you might want to say, have you ever considered? That's one of my ways to put it. Have you considered this or thought about this? I'm wondering your insights about this? Or we don't care what your insights are, these are the books you're going to read. (personal interview, December 4, 2018)

When administrators require teachers to follow a mandated curriculum in a prescriptive nature it devalues their expertise and does not allow them the opportunity to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual children in their classrooms. This creates a quandary between following a scripted curriculum and acknowledgement of literacy development, which Ms. West experienced and described as "struggling with doing what is right for my kids and doing what I am told to do" during the first year of a new curriculum (personal interview, December 6, 2018). Positive administrative support is also a key to teacher retention (Tickle, Chang, & Kim, 2011). Providing support and opportunity for teachers to allow time in their very full schedules to create space in which children can freely interact with texts is one way to help ensure children opportunity to become more proficient and motivated readers.

Implications for policymakers. Clay (1991) reveals the difficulty with education policy that is developmentally inappropriate and requires all children to conform to the same timeline of literacy development:

> If school entry in a particular society carries with it an expectation that children will learn about literacy, then school programmes must, at one and the same time, allow some children to catch up with preschool literacy experiences while also working with others who are building on to a rich literacy learning background. (p. 93)

As the data revealed in this study, even the teachers most committed to providing empowering choices to the children in their classrooms can fall short of their goal due to systemic pressure based on both increasing standards, and lack of developmentally appropriate standards. The concerns raised by the kindergarten teachers in the study echo those previously raised in other scholarly work about the increased standards for children in kindergarten (Gallant, 2009). Although the recent study by Le et al. (2019) found that exposure to advanced ELA content correlated to higher academic outcomes, the authors note that they "cannot definitively say whether it was exposure to advanced content per se that accounts for the observed gains in the achievement and social-emotional skills of the children and not simply exposure to highly effective teachers" (p. 1275). Given the interwoven nature of the standards and the portfolio requirements, which evaluation methods were not included in the Le et al. (2019) study, it is possible that in Tennessee children may be demanded to perform skills beyond their normal developmental level for portfolio assessments. The combination of the increasing number of standards and the amount of data collection required for the portfolio evaluation are two probable causes

for the common thread of lack of time and time pressure for the three teachers who were required to complete portfolio evaluations.

There is a clear need for state policymakers to acknowledge and understand the reality that literacy development happens on a continuum and not at a given age, if there is any hope of achieving the lofty goal of "75% of third graders reading on grade level by 2025" (TDOE, 2018c). The data also confirmed that "different pathways through space and time lead to different outcomes" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 825). It is impossible for policymakers to expect identical outcomes when the pathways and systems surrounding children and teachers are so widely varied, yet the standards and the evaluations do not acknowledge this fact, and rely on an obsolete model of reading readiness. Without a change in current policy, the current trajectory may continue with macrotime impacts continuing to impact both teachers and children.

Future Paths

This study shows there is an interconnectedness to emergent reader motivation, as shown in the bioecological model of emergent reader motivation and choice, and the rope of emergent reader motivation. While this study took a holistic view of the emergent readers and their interactions with texts in a classroom setting, the voices of the emergent readers themselves were not within the scope of this study. Future work using the methodology of this study and combining it with a survey tool, such as ERMAS, could provide greater understanding of the behaviors and motivation of emergent readers.

The complex nature of reading motivation has been studied in depth with students in older grades, perhaps because of the oft used analogy that prior to third grade students are considered learning to read rather than reading to learn. This narrative normalizes the

false dichotomy that minimizes the developmental interplay between the two processes and gives less credence to emergent readers and aspects of their motivation. It may be beneficial to understand how teachers view motivation in emergent readers and how teachers' text selections directly impact motivation. Although the teachers in this study stated their support for autonomous choice, there was a disconnect between these stated pedagogical beliefs and the observed instructional practices in the classroom. Further study of teachers of young children focusing on this disconnect could provide understanding that could inform both pre-service and in-service teacher development.

The role of administrators as interpreters of policy and standards is another layer that was not within the scope of this study, but deserves future consideration. As observed in this study, the administrators' interpretation of standards allowed for varying degrees of teacher autonomy which also influenced children's access to texts. This interpretative role also can be studied from a power differential lens.

Another facet that raised interest in this study is that with the exception of Jordan Elementary PK, the classroom library texts were all books that belong to the teacher, and none were sourced from the school library. The average copyright date ranged from 1994 to 2004 in the classroom libraries. It may also be worthwhile to understand why teachers don't avail themselves of the variety of text resources available within their school, particularly if they lack more current texts in their classroom libraries.

A Final Note

This study arose as a culmination of my lived experiences as an elementary school librarian, a local policymaker, a scholar of emergent literacy, and a mother of young children. I wondered what opportunities emergent readers had to choose a book

that may pique their interest, whether from the familiar rhythmic pattern of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* or the enticing illustrations of *Pete the Cat*. Were there even such opportunities, given the increasing demand in both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten standards? Did teachers consider the autonomy and motivation of emergent readers?

As a result of this study, I found that children did have opportunities to demonstrate agency when selecting texts, but in a much more limited capacity than I had hoped when I began this work. Their ability is limited both by instructional practice and the amount of texts available within their classroom. The time pressure experienced by kindergarten classroom teachers is linked to increasing instructional demands across standards, including literacy, and increasing evaluation demands. The data collected further supported the bioecological model of emergent literacy voice and choice (see Figure 54) which I developed as a way to collectively view the experience of emergent readers. At the conclusion of my data analysis, I realized there was another essential strand to the rope of emergent reader motivation, policy. The revised version of the rope of emergent reader motivation is shown in Figure 59.

The teachers all believed in the power of children interacting with texts of their own choosing, and that these reading experiences should be joyful. I learned that in spite of the tension between developmentally appropriate pedagogy and practice, teachers were committed to providing access to a variety of texts to the children in their classrooms. The texts they provide in their classroom are a foundational aspect of children's literacy development.

Given the current trajectory of educational reform, based on the evolution of early literacy related standards, it may be unlikely that emergent readers and their teachers will experience a shift to more developmentally appropriate standards that honor the continuum of literacy development. Yet, I continue to be heartened by teachers who are committed to putting texts in children's hands and doing so in a way that will provide them opportunities to develop autonomy and motivation to read. Once upon a time, the kindergarten standards included developing and maintaining a motivation to read, and my hope is that standard will return in a later chapter in Tennessee's educational history.

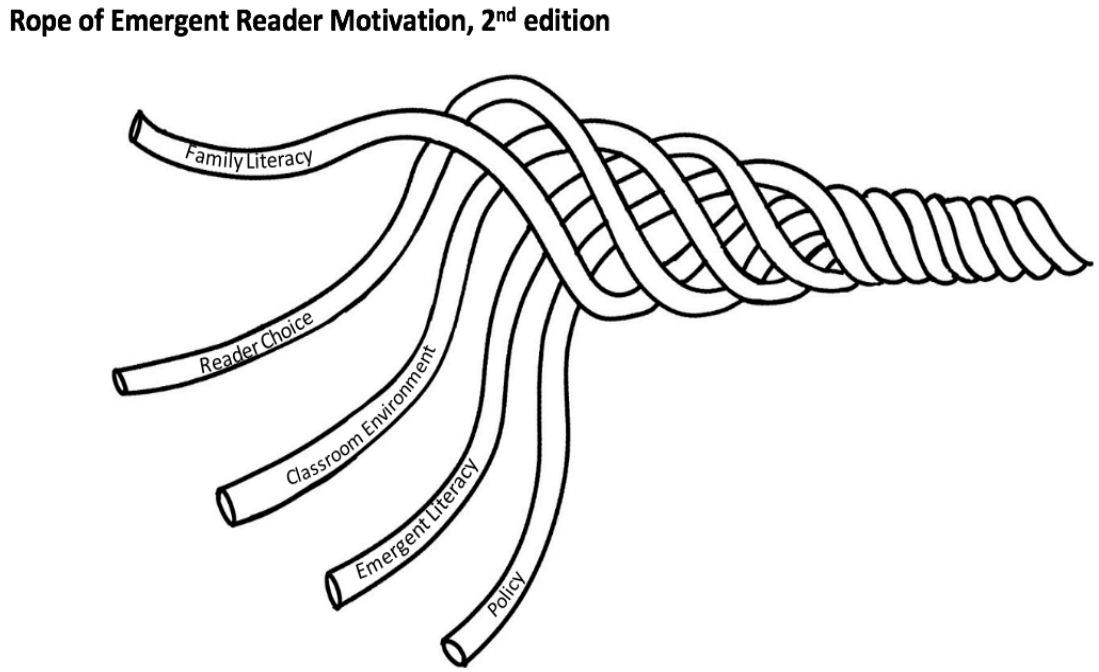


Figure 59. Enhanced rope of emergent reader motivation.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Code Book

Approaches book shelf/book basket.
Child moves toward book shelf/book basket.

Browses book selections.
Child visually browses books and may thumb through books. The child does not physically pick up a single book.

Physically picks up book.
Child physically picks up book.

Sets book down.
Child physically sets book down (not in correct place).

Puts book back.
Child physically puts back in book basket independently or after interaction with teacher or peer.

Switches one book for another.
Child has one book and picks up a different book.

Looks at cover.
Child looks at a book cover for at least 5 seconds.

Flipping through pages.
Child is flipping through pages of a book, slowly or quickly, but is not engaged in reading/pretend reading.

Reads book.
Child reads book aloud or acts like is reading book aloud. Child can be reading alone, with a peer or with an adult.

Shows book.
Child shows book to peer or adult.

Talks about book.
Child talks about book to peer or adult (e.g. this book is funny!).

Asks a book question.
Child asks an adult about a book title or book topic (e.g. do we have a butterfly book?).

Adult direction.
An adult provides specific direction to a child about a book selection.

Uses book in service to another task.
Child uses book to complete another task (e.g. finds a book to use as a model for spelling a word).

Appendix B

Quantitative Data Collection Instrument

Date: **Time:** **Obs. #:** **Page:** **Initials:**

	0.00	0.15	0.30	0.45	1.00	1.15	1.30	1.45	2.00	2.15	2.30	2.45	3.00	3.15	3.30	3.45	4.00	4.15	4.30	4.45
# Children present																				
# Adults present																				
Approaches																				
Browses																				
Picks up																				
Sets down																				
Puts back																				
Switches																				
Looks at cover																				
Flipping pages																				
Reads																				
Shows - peer																				
Shows - adult																				
Talks about - peer																				
Talks about - adult																				
Asks about - peer																				
Asks about - adult																				
Adult direction																				
Use for other task																				
	0.00	0.15	0.30	0.45	1.00	1.15	1.30	1.45	2.00	2.15	2.30	2.45	3.00	3.15	3.30	3.45	4.00	4.15	4.30	4.45

Notes:

Appendix C

Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

-Tell me about your teaching background.

-Tell me about how you select books for the book center.

-Tell me about how you select books to use for small group instruction.

-In our observation we noticed you guided a student away/toward _____ book, can you tell us more about that?

-Do you think student choice impacts reading development? Please expand your thoughts.

-The Tennessee literacy standards for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten use the terms analyze, assess, evaluate, and delineate, which is a shift from previous standards. Can you describe if, and how, this impacts the types of books available to students in your classroom?

Vita

Amber Rountree was born and raised in southeastern Ohio by her parents, Karen and Jeff Pritchard, alongside her siblings, Ian, Addie, and Kinsey. Amber's education roots run deep: her great-grandfather was a school superintendent, one grandmother was her fourth grade teacher, another was a school bus driver, and her mother served as a middle school librarian. She earned a B.S. in Child and Family Studies from the University of Tennessee, and a M.S. in Library Science from Florida State University.

While working as a school librarian at Knox County Schools, Amber was moved to action to support education policies that were developmentally appropriate and research-based. This led to her successful election to the Knox County Board of Education, where she served from 2014-2018. During Amber's school board service, she became further invested in educational research and decided to pursue her Ph.D. in Education, with a concentration in Literacy Studies. Her research interests include emergent literacy and education policy. Amber's public education advocacy continues as she raises her sons, Teddy, Holt, and Milo with her husband, Bart.