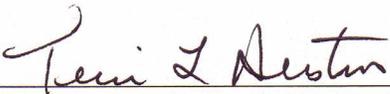


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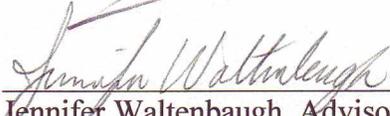
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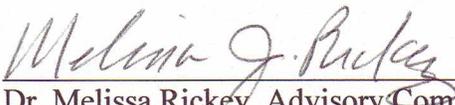
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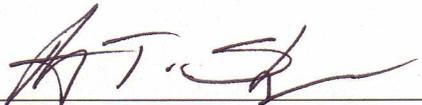
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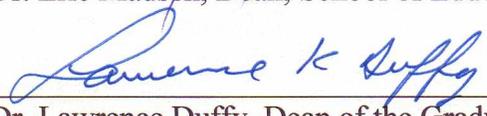
  
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*Dec 12, 2008*  
Date

BUDDY READING  
FOR READING COMPREHENSION GROWTH AND READING ENGAGEMENT

A  
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty  
Of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

By

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## Abstract

Teachers wonder how to motivate students to become better readers. Teachers of older remedial readers are challenged to provide reading material at students' reading levels relevant enough for them to want to read. Students are less likely to learn strategies to help them comprehend text if they are not engaged with the material. This project provided seventh grade remedial reading students a purpose for reading books at their level by reading children's picture books to first grade students. Prior to the buddy reading sessions, seventh grade students practiced reading with expression and fluency. In addition, their teacher taught cognitive strategies to assist comprehension. Concurrently, their first grade partners were exposed to the same strategies during classroom instruction. The seventh grade readers assisted their first grade "buddies" in applying the taught strategies during the sessions.

This research examined the interaction and engagement of students during buddy reading experiences. In addition, attention was paid to how students used the taught comprehension strategies during buddy reading. Conclusions were drawn from field observations, transcribed recordings, student work, and interviews indicating buddy reading had a positive impact on reading engagement and students' awareness of comprehension strategies to be used during reading.

## Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Signature Page.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Title Page.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Beginning the Journey.....	<i>1</i>
1.2 Mapping the Course and Determining the Quest.....	<i>4</i>
1.3 Organization of the Study.....	<i>6</i>
<b>Chapter 2 Review of Literature.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Initial Observations.....	<i>7</i>
2.2 Reading Tutoring.....	<i>8</i>
2.3 Reading Engagement.....	<i>9</i>
2.4 Explicit Instruction of Comprehension Strategies.....	<i>12</i>

	Page
2.5 Social Construction of Comprehension and Understanding.....	16
2.6 Summary.....	19
<b>Chapter 3 Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Design.....	21
3.2 Site Selection.....	23
3.3 Participants.....	24
3.4 Data Types and Collection.....	26
3.5 Data Analysis.....	28
<b>Chapter 4 Findings and Analyses.....</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	34
4.2 Instruction of Comprehension Strategies.....	36
4.3 Awareness and Application of Comprehension Strategies.....	42
4.4 Reading Engagement.....	80
4.5 Summary.....	92
<b>Chapter 5 Discussion.....</b>	<b>93</b>

Page

5.1 Speculative Conclusions.....93

5.2 Implications for Instructional Practice.....98

5.3 Implications for Further Research.....99

5.4 Final Thoughts.....101

**References.....102**

## List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1: Sara, Flora, and Catherine’s “Asking Questions” Graphic Organizer.....	48
Figure 2: Chris, Anna, and Dylan’s “Predictions” Graphic Organizer.....	51
Figure 3: Matt, Kayla, and Anthony’s “Predictions” Graphic Organizer.....	52
Figure 4: Anna’s “Visualizing” Graphic Organizer.....	58
Figure 5: Dylan’s “Visualizing” Graphic Organizer.....	59
Figure 6: Violet’s “Visualizing” Graphic Organizer.....	60
Figure 7: Catherine’s “Visualizing” Graphic Organizer.....	61
Figure 8: Kayla’s “Visualizing” Graphic Organizer.....	62

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This project, a celebration of the mentoring of those growing and stretching in skills by those more experienced and practiced, has often made me wonder at my first and best mentor, Virginia Triplett, my mom. I would not and could not be the teacher I am today if it were not for her example as a superior educator.

I would like to thank my husband, James, for asking me to move from stressing to planning, for listening to draft after draft, and for internalizing and appreciating this work and what it might mean for children as readers.

Finally, I would like to thank the participating students and teachers of this research who continuously put their best teaching and learning feet forward to support one another in the celebration of text, the construction of meaning, and the sharing of life.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### *1.1 Beginning the Journey*

Outside, it was a typical windy, slushy and muddy winter morning in South Central Alaska. On the lower-level of an elementary school, in a twenty by twenty square foot, windowless, kindergarten classroom, the only sign of nature's moodiness was the soggy tendrils and sneakers of the fourteen seventh graders who had tromped across the road, despite the weather, to read to their kindergarten buddies. The room, aglow with its full-spectrum lights, was warmed with the soft murmur of early-adolescent-alto voices and the kindergarteners' soprano voices sharing different pieces of children's literature, two by two.

Earlier in the school year, the seventh grade teacher approached me and explained that one of his classes, a remedial reading section, was compiled of seventh grade students who had not achieved proficiency on the state sixth grade standardized reading and/or writing assessment. He had shared his concern with a colleague who provided him with an idea. His desire was to provide these students the opportunity to experience literature at their reading level. He knew, however, that if he assigned an image conscious thirteen-year-old a book by Eric Carle or Mem Fox he would be met with resentment and resistance. Therefore, he wished for an authentic purpose for assigning children's picture books to his students and hoped that our small kindergarten classroom in the neighboring school would provide the audience for these readers.

During my three years working as a teacher in a remote village for the same school district, I encountered several intermediate and middle school students who were not reading at grade level. Finding literature that was at their reading level, while also engaging to them, was a challenge. Further, this subset of students seemed to crave a purpose for reading, perhaps noticeably greater than their more accomplished counterparts. Given this past experience, I found my colleague's desire to be reasonable and full of potential. We launched a weekly, thirty minute session in which each seventh grader read aloud a book to a kindergarten student. Prior to their visit, the seventh graders would practice their book focusing on decoding, vocabulary and fluency.

As our exploration of this buddy system pursued I found myself wanting to enrich the experience for my kindergarten learners so that academic goals were being addressed for them, as well as the seventh grade students. During my graduate studies I considered the lack of attention given to instructing primary students in comprehension strategies and began to believe that young children could simultaneously address the challenge of learning to decode material while also learning to employ comprehension strategies during listening and reading activities. At that time, I conducted an action project with a small group of first grade readers that indicated this was an area worthy of exploration. I had also drafted two units of study as a course assignment the semester before; one for seventh grade and one for kindergarten. During the completion of that project I grew familiar with Alaska's Grade Level Expectations for Reading at both grade levels. It occurred to me that there existed similarities in expectations for reading comprehension between the two levels. After some consideration, my seventh grade colleague and I

began to provide age-appropriate instruction for specific comprehension strategies in our separate classrooms. Then, the seventh graders prepared, along with their reading, questions to ask the kindergarteners that targeted the comprehension strategies.

The blustery morning described previously was one that followed several prior meetings between the two classes. The seventh graders had grown accustomed to quietly departing through the building's backdoor adjacent to the kindergarten classroom. However, their teacher, capitalizing on moments remaining in their class period, stopped the group of seventh graders in the foyer, before heading back to the middle school, for a quick debriefing. As they gathered in a small huddle, tucking *A House for Hermit Crab*, *Opossum Magic* and the like under their coats to protect them from the elements, one seventh grade reader burst, "My buddy made a connection between the story and their life without me asking!"

This comment was soon echoed by other seventh grade buddies. Many kindergarten students seemed to be independently transferring comprehension strategies during these buddy-reading experiences. Furthermore, it was evident that the seventh grade readers were not only able to formulate questions and listen to answers with regard to specific comprehension strategies, but they were also able to identify when the strategies were being employed. Finally, twelve out of fourteen of the seventh grade students went on to measure proficient on the state standardized reading and writing assessments. These initial observations and events indicated that a more formal and

defined implementation and exploration of remedial middle school readers and primary students as reading buddies was warranted.

During the summer that followed the initial implementation of the buddy reading experience described above, I began to mentally draft a proposal for a research project in which my new kindergarten class and my colleague's new seventh graders would be paired as buddies. In the interim, I was asked to forgo my kindergarten classroom and take the position of Title I Reading Specialist. This development led me to reconsider the implementation of such a project. However, a first grade teacher at the same school volunteered her class to serve as buddies to the seventh graders. It happened that she was the colleague who had originally suggested buddy reading as an option to the seventh grade teacher. Both teachers were willing and ready to continue the work from the last academic year and advocated for the direct teaching of comprehension strategies. The 2007-2008 school year allowed these two teachers time to experiment with the protocol and refine instructional strategies. Furthermore, it provided a year of further reflection and planning on my part, allowing the goals of study to be clearly defined for my own research experience during the Fall of 2008.

### *1.2 Mapping the Course and Determining the Quest*

Specifically, I aspired to observe a protocol for buddy reading between remedial middle school readers and primary readers so that the older readers mentored the younger readers on the use of comprehension strategies that they themselves were honing.

Additionally, the protocol included a way for the older readers to monitor the use of comprehension strategies by the younger learners during the buddy reading experiences. One goal was to engage the older remedial readers in their effort to access literature by providing them an authentic purpose for reading material at their level. In addition, it was hoped that the older readers would become more able to identify and use comprehension strategies to assist them in understanding while reading. Simultaneously, primary readers would be provided the opportunity to transfer comprehension strategies learned and practiced during their shared, guided, and independent reading experiences.

Through this endeavor, I hoped to better understand cross-age learning that invited older students to mentor the development of a skill, while concurrently honing their own usage of the same skill. In particular, I was curious to learn if such a setting and transaction would engage both sets of students sufficiently so that they mutually practiced comprehension strategies effectively. In doing so, I believed that this project would lead to a greater understanding of reading comprehension strategy instruction and assessment on both the primary and middle school levels

Specifically, the following central question was targeted: What impact does buddy reading between first grade readers and seventh grade remedial readers have on both sets of students' application of comprehension strategies? In order to form initial answers to this overarching central question, two subsidiary questions were addressed: What impact does buddy reading between first grade readers and seventh grade remedial readers have on reading engagement? *and* How do first grade readers and seventh grade

remedial readers transfer the use of comprehension strategies from direct instruction to buddy reading experiences?

### *1.3 Organization of the Study*

This chapter has briefly outlined the evolution of this research endeavor, presented the rationale for the design of the buddy reading project examined, and shared the questions that guided the design of the research. Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature used to clarify this researcher's understanding of the following: the value of cross-age tutoring structures; the need for reading engagement to exist for learning to take place; the case for the direct instruction of comprehension strategies; and the value of encouraging a social structure in which learners dialogue to promote enriched understanding of text. Chapter Three presents the methodological framework for the study including the research design, site selection, participants, data collection procedures, and analysis. Chapter Four explores the results of this exploration by sharing the voices, work samples, and reflections of the student and teacher participants. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes and discusses the meanings of the study, considers implications for future practice, and recommends ideas and areas for further research.

## Chapter 2 Review of Literature

### *2.1 Initial Observations*

Throughout the initial implementation of this buddy reading protocol during the 2006-2007 school-year, initial observations were made. My colleague and I recognized, through conversations and classroom discussions with students, that the seventh grade remedial readers were seemingly engaged in this reading activity. They indicated they felt purposeful and effective as reading buddies. When asked at the end of the year, “Is this something that should be continued with other classes?” they answered with a definitive, “Yes!” Furthermore, both grade levels seemed to show signs of applying the comprehension strategies explicitly taught during instruction in the context of the buddy reading transactions. In addition, the seventh grade students’ metacognition indicated greater complexity as they first applied their understanding of specific comprehension strategies by formulating questions, and then monitored the younger students’ ability to answer those questions. Therefore, a true mentor and apprentice relationship evolved between the younger and older students. As a result of these initial observations, three themes for further examination and a review of existing literature emerged. First, however, a brief review of literature examining reading tutoring will occur.

## *2.2 Reading Tutoring*

Several studies have concluded that benefits can be expected from the implementation of reading tutoring. Studies have indicated that academic gains can be expected by children who have experienced one-to-one tutoring (Labbo and Teale, 1990). This growth may be attributed to increased engagement of the learner and/or individualized instruction (Juel, 1996).

Besides being of benefit to the tutee, studies have indicated that cross-age tutoring may equally support the tutored and the tutor. Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik (1982) completed a meta-analysis of findings from 65 evaluations of school tutoring programs. Their analysis concluded that when a cross-age design of tutoring was employed, both tutees and tutors reaped positive gains with regard to academic performance and attitude toward reading.

Further research highlighted the effectiveness of cross-age tutoring when the tutors, themselves, were struggling readers. Jacobson et al. (2001) conducted a study of 21 remedial seventh-grade readers who tutored third grade students. The seventh graders based their tutoring on the strategy instruction that they were receiving in class. The conclusion was drawn that the seventh grade tutors expanded their own reading skills and enjoyment for reading through the experience. Paterson and Elliott (2006) examined the effect of tutoring on motivation and readers' sense of reading efficacy among struggling high school students as tutors, and second and third grade readers as tutees. They concluded that cross-age tutoring was a potentially cost-effective means of improving

attitude, motivation, and efficacy, as well as providing students an authentic setting to practice comprehension strategies in a safe and scaffolded environment.

These scholars have paved the way for further examination of the potential advantages of a cross-age approach to reading tutoring. The intent of this work was to encourage the notion that cross-age reading tutoring, or reading buddies, can promote increased levels of reading engagement and comprehension strategy usage by both tutors, who are struggling readers, and their younger tutees.

### *2.3 Reading Engagement*

The depth of engagement by an individual during any activity, including reading, is dependent upon multiple internal and external factors, potentially including: environment; social context; emotional state; motivation; satisfaction (or lack thereof); and self-efficacy (Mathewson, 2004). The interpretation of *reading engagement* by preeminent scholars in the area of reading research is equally multifaceted. Guthrie and Ozgungor offered a holistic definition of reading engagement in *Instructional Contexts for Reading Engagement* when they wrote:

When students are using what they already know to build new understandings of the texts they read, they are engaged. When readers use cognitive strategies such as summarizing and self-checking, they are engaged. When students have the desire to comprehend and to share literacy socially in a classroom community,

they are engaged. In other words, engaged readers are motivated and strategic in their processes of constructing new knowledge from text. (2002, p. 275)

This characterization of reading engagement incorporated, as this research project aimed to do, the cognitive, motivational, and social aspects related to reading, or the *engagement perspective* (Baker and Wigfield, 1999).

By incorporating comprehension strategy instruction in individual classroom settings and the opportunity for transfer during buddy reading, this study examined the nature of students' cognitive engagement. A *mastery orientation*, described by Guthrie et al. (2004) encourages students to improve their capabilities and to focus on the immediate task. By utilizing this orientation, the tutors in this study were asked to observe changes in their own cognitive engagement and the growth of their younger tutee's cognitive engagement, rather than assuming a *performance orientation* in which one tries to outperform others (Guthrie et al., 2004).

Middle school readers are often perceived as reticent and even unmotivated readers, especially those that are struggling. This project approached motivation by observing the impact of providing struggling adolescent readers a younger audience, and hence, a potential purpose for reading material that was not necessarily age-appropriate, but approximated their reading level. The motivation, therefore, was *intrinsic* because it depended upon the tutors and tutees interest and desire to be involved in the mastery of the task (Guthrie, et al, 2004) likely due to the social contract that existed within the relationship.

Finally, it was possible that buddy reading in dyads and triads nurtured social exchange and dialogue, allowing for social construction of understanding. In order for a community of readers to establish and transact successfully and meaningfully, the readers need to come to the “circle” with a favorable attitude towards reading. Grover C. Mathewson contended in his 2004 work, *Model of Attitude Influence Upon Reading and Learning to Read*, that if the reader does not hold a favorable attitude toward reading, they may not hold the intent *to read*.

He concluded his work with implications for teaching which included the need to provide meaningful and scaffolded reading experiences. The tutors of this study were tasked with the meaningful responsibility of guiding a younger person’s understanding of literature. Scaffolding was laid carefully both for the tutor, who was provided practice with appropriately difficult reading material and explicitly instructed in comprehension strategies to assist in the understanding of the material; and for the tutee, perhaps not ready to decode the material but ready for instruction in, and then practice of, comprehension strategies through a listening activity.

Other suggestions from Mathewson (2004) pertinent to this research venture included: the effort to establish community goals and norms with children that support favorable experiences with reading; the sharing of reading material that stimulates feelings and ideas; providing texts of suitable difficulty; instructing students to use cognitive strategies that assist in deriving meaning from text; and to begin applying all of the above early in a child’s literacy development.

#### *2.4 Explicit Instruction of Comprehension Strategies*

Meaning is in the mind of the receiver. This seems a straight-forward and obvious assumption. However, underlying that assumption is that the receiver has done something active to create meaning. While many readers seemingly intuit what metacognitive strategies they need to utilize, it is a greater probability that somewhere in their experiences these strategies were modeled to them. For those readers who enter classrooms and have not had those natural experiences, there is increasing evidence to support explicit instruction of metacognitive strategies in order to enhance readers' construction of meaning (Baker, 2002; Duffy, 2002; Trabasso and Bouchard, 2002). Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, and Schuder (2004) found that students who were instructed in predicting, questioning and interpreting, visualizing, summarizing, and attending selectively to important information showed both short and long-term improvement in reading comprehension.

Furthermore, Brown, Palinscar, and Armbruster explained that, "it is very clear that we can train instructionally relevant cognitive skills even with subjects who would be regarded as recalcitrant" (2004, p. 805). All behavior is communication. Arguably, reluctant and reticent readers are communicating that they are not motivated to read because they are not receiving satisfaction from the experience. If readers are not engaged in active cognition, they are likely receiving little or no meaning, and therefore are bored, which may be communicated through undesirable and non-participatory behaviors.

Oliver Keene and Zimmerman (1997) and Tovani (2000) provided instructional approaches for teaching reading strategies so that students grew aware of what skilled readers do to make meaning. Both promoted the use of modeling, discussion, and graphic organizers as ways to develop readers' habits of maintaining cognitive interaction, including accessing prior knowledge regarding content, predicting, and questioning the text as they read. The use of modeling, discussion, and graphic representations of understanding that allow for transaction, social construction, formative assessment, and differentiation were encouraged. Both authors advocated that teachers should be moving students toward self-monitoring and self-remediation, necessary for readers to increase comprehension as independent readers (Cote and Goldman, 2004).

Amy Goodman (2003) provided a framework for comprehension strategy instruction that the participating teachers in this study adopted, in part, to assist them in organizing their planning and instruction. Goodman based her design on the works of Oliver Keene and Zimmerman's *Mosaic of Thought* (1997), *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement* by Harvey and Goudvis (2000), and *7 Keys to Comprehension: How to Help Your Kids Read It and Get It!* by Zimmerman and Hutchins (2003). Goodman presented important comprehension strategies in the form of the acronym ACTIVE in which the *A* stood for asking questions; the *C* for connecting to the text; The *T*, tracking down important information; *I* for inferring; and *V* for visualizing the text. The *E* in the acronym stood for "Eureka!" (Goodman, 2003) and referred to synthesizing, or connecting the information in the text to create a new idea. Goodman's work was driven by the need to move beyond the old

notion that students would eventually learn to comprehend on their own if provided a lot of reading experience. Her work recognized the importance of providing students with instruction regarding comprehension strategies in order that students use the strategies before, during, and after reading experiences.

However, Sinatra, Brown, and Reynolds (2002) added one cautionary note to teachers who slide, with their students, into the world of strategy instruction: Readers only have so many cognitive resources to allocate at one time. For example, they questioned whether or not attention to specific strategies during instruction and learning activities may actually draw attention away from other appropriate and needed strategies. Further, they considered the use of questioning to promote critical thinking as an implicit problem-solving approach to explicit instruction. However, they offered four suggestions for teachers opting to use strategy instruction with low-achieving readers. Of greatest importance to this project is: “Pare down the number of strategies and prioritize them” (p. 70). Heeding the advice of these scholars, strategies were taught, practiced, and applied one at a time.

Ruddell and Unrau (2004) explicitly broadened these parameters to include the role of the teacher, the classroom environment, and the classroom community as equal influences during the reading transaction in their work, *Reading as a Meaning-Construction Process: The Reader, the Text, and the Teacher*, which described their sociocognitive interactive model. Critical to this research endeavor and its design were the seven assumptions that underlie their model. They were:

1. Readers – even beginning readers – are active theory builders and hypothesis testers.
2. Language and reading performance is directly related to the reader’s environment.
3. The driving force behind language performance and reading growth is the reader’s need to obtain meaning.
4. Oral and written development, which affect the thinking process, contribute directly to the development of reading ability.
5. Readers construct meanings not only of printed manuscripts but also of events, speech, and behaviors as they “read” gestures, images, symbols, signs, and signals that are embedded in a social and cultural environment.
6. Texts are constantly reinvented as readers construct different understandings for them in a hermeneutic circle. Meanings for texts are dynamic, not static, as individuals, texts, and contexts change and interact.
7. The role of the teacher is critical in negotiating and facilitating meaning construction in the text and social context of the classroom (p. 1463).

Ruddell and Unrau’s seven assumptions accepted that students read, comprehend, and interpret text not solely by text alone. The dynamic construction of understanding was presented as a transaction between the text, the reader, his/her peers, teacher, the event

and setting. Therefore, providing students the opportunity to have purposeful experiences to socially engage over text was suggested critical to comprehension and interpretation.

Rudell and Unrau's (2004) work advocated for instructional practices that paid attention to: activating students' prior knowledge and beliefs; the use of metacognitive strategies; allowing students to hold authority in the meaning-negotiating process and to seek verification and validity for their interpretations from the classroom community; and instructional activities that support comprehension, discussion, and equity to create community. Through these practices students are given the opportunity to share in the meaning-making process as a community, are bound to strengthen their understanding and learning through shared ideas as the transaction spans beyond the teacher and the text. In doing so, students are able to experiment with their own ideas, listen to others, and renegotiate their own understanding (Wink and Putney, 2002). This leads to the final theoretical framework underlying this work.

### *2.5 Social Construction of Comprehension and Understanding*

Throughout my tenure as an educator, I have found the best professional development to be the informal, but deeply meaningful conversations I have engaged in with dear teaching colleagues. These impromptu dialectics often took place in the middle of the school day when teachers' minds were ignited into action by their observations of the complex learning behaviors of their students and the questions inspired by their observations. One friend in particular often repeated the same phrase as we shared stories

and quandaries from our classroom experiences. He would say, in a sing-song pattern so familiar to me now, “Learning is a social activity.” This project rested heavily on this notion. Children were given the opportunity to share literature, question and answer, and therefore evolve their understanding of the meaning of the text via social construction of understanding.

Halliday (2004) discussed the development of language in the work *The Place of Dialogue in Children’s Construction of Meaning*. Relevant to this research was Halliday’s conclusion that:

Meaning is created at the intersection of two contradictions: the experiential one, between the material and conscious modes of experience, and the interpersonal one, between the different personal histories of the interactants taking part. Thus from the ontogenesis of conversation we can gain insight into human learning and human understanding. (p. 143)

Halliday’s writing provided support for encouraging dialogue, conversation and exchange between the seventh and first grade readers of this study.

As my colleague stated, “Learning is a social activity.” For the purpose of this study the term *social* went beyond simply interacting and dialoguing with others, but was examined from a Vygotskian perspective. Vygotsky (1981) theorized that development, or understanding, first takes place between people, and then individually. Vygotsky imbued us with the understanding that the development of a child’s cognition takes place through social interaction because the child internalizes the very tools, such as speech and

symbol, that are at the core of the interaction (Wertsch, 1985; Leontiev and Luria, 1968). This transaction is intersubjective. Though many definitions have emerged for intersubjectivity, the explanation that best met the constraints of this examination came from Kozulin (1990) where intersubjectivity is defined as the “shared social world...between a child and an adult through the process of the negotiation of meanings” (p. 170). In this case, *adult* will be an individual with considerably more world experience and ability than the younger child. Buddy reading seemed a possible way to encourage the intersubjective development of understanding in a social dynamic.

The care and instruction of someone wiser and older, a mentor, assists greatly in the deepening of learning and understanding. Because learning is best done socially, in the Vygotskian sense, the participation of a more experienced and advanced individual, such as an older reading buddy, potentially encouraged development of other individuals involved. Vygotsky conceptualized the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development. Wink and Putney (2002) explained that Vygotsky “ recognized that children were able to solve problems beyond their actual development level if they were given guidance in the form of prompts or leading questions from someone more advanced” (p. 86). Vygotsky (1978) explained the zone as:

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with a more capable peer. (p. 86)

Reading teachers or reading tutors provided this leading, prompting and guidance of their students, who, it was speculated, would do the same leading and prompting of their younger counterparts. Buddy reading, in this design, created a triangulated view of the Zone of Proximal Development for, it included: the teachers' initial support of the use of comprehension strategies; the tutors mentoring of the tutees, potentially promoting a deeper social understanding through intersubjective exchange; and then, the teachers' using those conversations to further prompt learning and development.

## *2.6 Summary*

Teachers, always seeking ways to engage and instruct readers, particularly recalcitrant readers in need of remediation, should find the results of previous studies on cross-aged tutoring an indication that it was a practice worthy of further exploration. The theoretical framework of this literature review supported the themes of reading engagement, the direct instruction of comprehension strategies, and the social construction of meaning as critical to enhancing students' growth as readers. All three of these aspects were critical foundations of the instruction and buddy reading transaction. The buddy reading model examined aimed to provide students a purpose for reading, hence encouraging engagement. By encouraging engagement, it was believed students were more likely to practice the application of comprehension strategies during a reading activity. Finally, the social construction of understanding through tutoring and being

tutored was hoped to encourage reflection on the meaning of the text itself and deeper comprehension of the written word.

## Chapter 3 Research Methodology

### *3.1 Design*

In order to further understand this issue, a combination of case study design and Teacher Action Research was utilized. Bogdan and Biklen, in their work, *Qualitative Research for Education; An Introduction to Theories and Methods* (2003), defined the case study as “a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event” (p. 54). Specifically, an instrumental framework for design was employed. An instrumental case study is done in order to further explore what Robert Stake identified as “something else” (1995, p. 3) in his book, *The Art of Case Study Research*. In such a study, the object of study becomes an instrument that highlights the issue or problem being examined by the researcher. Therefore, the tangible constraints of this study; the subjects, setting, and events, served as an instrument for further examining the transaction between explicit comprehension strategy instruction and the transference of those strategies by the learners.

Critical to inquiry in education is responsiveness to student learning. Research undertaken must be flexible and malleable so that the students’ best interest is held as the highest priority. Case study research lends itself to classroom inquiry because the researcher is able to modify the course of the research “as they learn about the setting, subject, and other sources of data through direct examination” (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 49). Therefore, the students and learning were the driving force behind the refocusing

of questions, design, and data analysis, protecting student learning as paramount throughout the research.

The need to be responsive and flexible during implementation dictated an exploratory stance during this research project. The desire was to refine, implement, and review (Johnson, 2005) an instructional strategy as one way to encourage the use of comprehension strategies by students during reading. Predictably, this inquiry led to some initial discoveries and most certainly, further questions. Berg (2004) explained, “the scientific benefit of the case study method lies in its ability to open the way for discoveries...It can easily serve as breeding ground for insights and even hypotheses that may be pursued in subsequent studies” (p. 258). Thus, the case study design was suitable in the classroom context, not only because it allowed for adaptation, but also because it held the capacity to illuminate the worthiness of the exploration, incite curiosities, and perhaps provokes subsequent explorations of similar projects. The classroom teacher’s work of discovering the most effective instructional strategies and adapting strategies for the greatest efficacy is never done. Therefore, the case study design’s emphasis on trailblazing encouraged the continued growth and honing of findings.

This research took place in a classroom in the thick of real learning and assessment. Hence, in addition to case study design, the process of Teacher Action Research was made use of. Andrew Johnson (2005) defined Action Research in his book, *A Short Guide to Action Research*, “as the process of studying a real school or classroom to understand and improve the quality of actions or instruction” (p. 21) Ultimately, the

goal of this research project was to discover ways, within a specific context, to refine instruction to better students' application of learned strategies. Teacher Action Research enables teachers to discover what students are capable of learning directly from them. Hubbard and Power illuminated the students' role in Teacher Action Research in their 2003 book *The Art of Classroom Inquiry; A Handbook for Teacher-Researchers* when they wrote:

Observational studies help the teacher understand the student's world from the *student's point of view* rather than from that of the teacher's own culture. Students are the informants in teacher research, helping us to learn both the recipes for behavior in their cultures and the learning strategies that they employ. And central to the role of informants is being an active collaborator in these research endeavors. (p. 1)

The use of this design feature allowed students to aid in the gathering of data while simultaneously providing data, assisting in the triangulation of data type and collection. Most importantly, it maintained the focus of the study on the students so that instruction and research remained responsive and formative.

### *3.2 Site Selection*

The site selection for this research project was determined based on previous experience and accessibility. The seventh grade teacher of this current study and I

initiated a similar cross-age buddy reading program during the 2006-2007 school-year which continued in the 2007-2008 school year with the same seventh grade teacher and a first grade teacher at the same elementary school. Therefore, an initial framework for implementation of the project was in place. Furthermore, my reassignment as reading specialist at this school provided easy access to the location and the participants. This elementary school served children in grades kindergarten through five. It was a Title 1 School with approximately 270 students (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2007). This study was conducted in one first grade classroom during visits by their seventh grade buddies, during planning sessions between the teachers, and interviews and focus groups.

### *3.3 Participants*

In order to explore the impact of cross-age buddy reading on students' use of comprehension strategies, three sets of participants were called upon to generate data. One set of participants consisted of three certified public school teachers. Mr. Walker (all names have been changed) was a seventh grade language arts teacher at the neighboring middle school. He had over ten years of experience in education and held endorsements in Social Studies and English. The other two teachers, Ms. Swift and Ms. Whitt, were sharing a first grade classroom at the selected site. Both had over ten years of teaching experience and each was certified in Elementary Education. Ms. Swift held a Reading endorsement and was Nationally Board Certified.

The second set of participants was drawn from a class of seventh grade students. This group of children attended school at a consolidated middle school of approximately 350 students (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2007). Mr. Walker reported that the students in this class did not score proficient in Reading and/or Writing on the Alaska State Standards Based Assessment at the end of their sixth grade year. Finally, the third set of participants was selected from a group of first grade students attending school in one classroom at the selected site.

The teaching participants were selected based on convenience sampling due to their availability. A convenience sample “relies on available subjects – those who are close at hand” (Berg, 2004, p. 35). Their consequential involvement as classroom teachers of the student participants made these teachers readily available. Student participants were selected using purposive sampling. A purposive sample is developed when the researcher uses knowledge about a specific group to choose participants who represent the unique population (Berg, 2004). This type of sampling allowed for a smaller segment of participants who, after initial field observations, suggested attributes typical of the wider population (Berg, 2004).

Ultimately, four triads of buddies were sampled. These four seventh grade students and eight first grade students seemed representative of the spectrum of participants as demonstrated by their level of engagement, ability to apply the comprehension strategies during buddy reading, and their ability to deepen understanding

of the text through dialogue. Each of the four seventh grade students was assigned two first grade students due to the larger numbers in the first grade classroom.

The potential participants of this study were familiar to me, to varying degrees, since we were all affiliated with the same school district. I felt fortunate to have, at my access, the three willing, engaged, and esteemed educators to serve as participants in this research. Mr. Walker and I had been colleagues, working for the same district, for the last eight years. I have known the first grade teachers for two years. The seventh grade students were the set of participants of which I had the least familiarity. Some of them knew of me through younger siblings who attended the elementary school. Finally, because I had taught at this elementary school for two years I had a trusting relationship with many of the first grade children and their families. Some are students I worked with through Title I Reading. Generally, it was easy to gain entry and trust with all participants.

### *3.4 Data Types and Collection*

Specifically, four types of data were selected for exploration and analysis. They were field observation, artifacts, interviews, and focus groups.

Field observations were conducted during two planning sessions between the seventh and one first grade teacher. Additionally, seven field observations were completed during the actual buddy reading sessions between the seventh and first grade

students. In order to maintain focus on the determined research questions and discovered themes, a structured note-taking guide was used during field observations. The designed form, based on suggestions from Robert Stake (1995), included space for needed qualitative and quantitative information, area for a narrative account describing participants behavior and language, and a section for commentary and coding during, and immediately following the session. Critical to the data collection during buddy reading field observations were the recordings of the four triads sampled. Each triad was recorded an average of four times with transcriptions of recordings immediately following sessions.

Artifacts were also selected as a critical type of data for collection. The potential transference of taught comprehension strategies was monitored during the field observations addressed formerly, as well as through the collection of graphic organizers completed by the seventh and first grade readers during buddy reading transactions. These Graphic Organizers, designed by teachers and borrowed from existing curriculum, were intended to be a way to observe the ability of both seventh and first graders in their application of comprehension strategies such as questioning, predicting, connecting, tracking down important information, visualizing, and inferring.

Semistandardized interviewing (Berg, 2004) was conducted toward the end of the data gathering phase with each teacher. Each teacher was asked questions in a systematic and consistent order. However, a semistandardized approach to interviewing provided the

freedom to probe beyond answers and elicit information specific to seventh or first grade instruction, depending on the participant.

Focus group, or small-group, interviews were conducted with the students. These occurred, just as the interviews with teachers, toward the end of data gathering. Focus group interviewing was flexible and allowed for observation of exchanges between participants (Berg, 2004). Furthermore, Graue and Walsh (1998) recommended small-group, or focus group, interviewing as an advantageous means for collecting thoughts from children because children were more at ease with peers than alone with an adult and they helped each other with answers. A semistandardized interviewing schedule allowed for probing and differentiation of questions specific to each age-group. However, the questions for each age group covered the same type of content.

### *3.5 Data Analysis*

Field observations and artifacts dominated during the data collection phase. It was critical, prior to final analysis and interpretation that this data remained organized and initial analysis maintained. A data log was maintained throughout the collection process. This encouraged accountability to the proposed timeline and assisted in monitoring triangulation of data types collected.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) addressed the question of whether to analyze data as it was generated or wait until the collection phase was completed to conduct analysis. They

concluded, “In our judgment, the beginning researcher should borrow strategies from the analysis-in-the-field mode, but leave the more formal analysis and interpretation until most of the data are in” (p. 148). By committing to some initial analysis in the field I was able to hone the focus of the research. In addition, on-going analysis assisted in discovering what interactions disclosed the most meaningful information and the most useful data types. Finally, analysis in the field laid the initial foundation for final interpretation. Therefore, notes were written during field observations and initial examination of artifacts; which allowed for speculation in conjunction with recording of events (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 151). These notes included references to emerging themes and relation to the research questions being posed.

Maintaining a data record was strongly encouraged by Graue and Walsh. They explained, “Many treatments of research skip over the process of constructing a data record and imply that analysis...is performed on raw data” (1998, p. 131). They cautioned that raw data can be messy, cryptic, and its relevancy can soon be forgotten. Since some analysis was performed during data collection throughout this project, a data record prevented the significance of initial analysis being lost due to poor description or my loss of the memory. Shortly following each field observation, notes were word processed and cooked – that is, reflected on shortly after the writing of the notes (Hubbard and Power, 2003).

Coding occurred during transcription of notes and copying of artifacts on two levels. Eventually, all four types of data (field notes, artifacts, interviews and focus group

transcripts) were coded systematically and objectively. First, comments made during the observation or transcription that addressed methodology or those regarding theories about what was happening were marked. As more data was collected, the second level, content analysis, occurred throughout the creation of the data record. Berg (2004) described content analysis as the examination of artifacts of social communication to identify special characteristics of messages. This analysis was of manifest content (content that is explicitly present in the data) and latent content (content that is implicit within the data) (Berg, 2004). Messages were coded to specify the messenger and audience as teacher, seventh grader, or first grader. Furthermore, content was coded to indicate its relation to reading engagement, direct instruction of comprehension strategies, and/or application of comprehension strategies. As more data was generated another category emerged, social construction of meaning, and was coded. Graue and Walsh (1998) concluded their section on the construction of the data record by reminding the researcher to “touch the data” (p. 145) so that the data record remains viable and useful. In doing so, the research was led by collected data, following the story of the manifest and latent content, and not by my fallible memory.

It goes without saying that data collection produced material to be organized and stored. At the onset, four main categories existed for filing. They were: reading engagement; direct instruction of comprehension strategies; students’ use of comprehension strategies; and of undetermined interest. As mentioned, undetermined interest turned into social construction of meaning. Within these main sections, each data type was filed unique to itself. For example, within the file marked *Reading Engagement*

there smaller files were labeled *Artifacts, Buddy Reading Transaction – Field Notes, Teacher Planning Sessions – Field Notes, Teacher Interview Transcripts* and *Focus Group Transcripts*. All data was word-processed and saved but immediately printed, initially analyzed, and filed as a hardcopy. When necessary, data was stored in more than one file as it in part or whole applied to more than one category. Furthermore, as data collection continued, categories were broken into subcategories and additional themes were added. A flexible filing system such as this allowed for the data to be looked at with renewed perspective upon each visit and to remain flexible to different sorting and classifying.

The rudimentary, yet significant data analysis done during the data collection phase laid the foundation for the stage after data collection – final analysis or *interpretation*. This, as described by Graue and Walsh, “is a complex, recursive, multistep process” (1998, p.160) that is “appropriately described as a bowl of spaghetti – tangled and holistic” (p. 159). This recursive approach maintained a contextualized examination of the research and assisted in “connecting interpretation to local contexts while embedding understanding within theoretical frameworks” (Graue and Walsh, 1998, p. 159). By simultaneously examining data with a deductive eye (moving from theory to specific conclusions) and an inductive eye (moving from specific observations to theory) it was my hope that interpretations of data emerged and were validated from a meeting of the two in the middle. Interpretation constructed a text and lead to the creation of a portrayal for the reader to contemplate.

During interpretation, and as a part of deduction and induction, coding of manifest content occurred through the continued examination of smaller units such as words and themes. However, at this point in data analysis, it was easier to code content in the forms of *concepts* and *semantics*. Concepts were defined as *conceptual clusters* or ideas present in participants' responses (Berg, 2004). Traditionally, concepts are identified as words grouped together to form ideas (Berg, 2004). However, the first grade participants of this study, at times, conveyed ideas using graphic representations such as drawings. These too were examined for relevant concepts, particularly those that indicated an attempted use of a specific comprehension strategy. The second larger unit coded for analysis was semantics. By employing semantics I was able to analyze how affected words and ideas were when they were expressed (Berg, 2004). This is of importance when working with children because they are still developing the vocabulary to express ideas and concepts. Therefore, the affect with which they expressed a word may have held more meaning than the word itself. Finally, the examination of concepts and semantics encouraged a holistic interpretation of the data and assisted in validating any analysis of latent content.

Berg (2004) offered a Stage Model for Qualitative Content Analysis. Berg recommended, during the process of interpretation, categories be counted allowing for the demonstration of magnitude and to assist in the discovery of patterns. Additionally, original data sorting done during the data collection and analysis phase were reevaluated and restructured if appropriate. Once the process of directly interpreting instances and aggregating categories was complete, interpretation was ready for its final metamorphosis prior to sharing the narrative and preliminary conclusions with readers.

Emerging patterns were considered in relation to relevant literature and theory to consider whether or not findings encouraged conclusions from previous research and how findings compared to previous studies (Berg, 2004; Stake, 1995). Further, the linear, procedural, prescriptive approach to content analysis was transformed into a more analytical process of connecting descriptions to theoretical constructs (Graue and Walsh, 1998) and forming *naturalistic generalizations* (Stake, 1995) from the data to then be shared with readers. Naturalistic generalizations “are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (Stake, 1995, p. 85). In order for the reader to feel the offered generalizations are authentic, Stake offered ways to assist in the validation of naturalistic generalizations. These included: providing readers accounts of matters that are familiar to them so they can determine the credibility of the source; clearly share research methods used; and provide participants’ reactions to generalizations. Of critical importance to this study was Stake’s advice to share with readers adequate raw data (1995, p. 87) assisting the reader to feel they have sufficiently witnessed genuine artifacts and transactions of meaning among participating teachers, seventh grade students, and first grade students.

## Chapter 4 Findings and Analyses

### *4.1 Introduction*

This school year began, as it often does, with restless nights, multitudes of running mental lists of things-to-do, concerns about children posing particular quandaries, and the eternal excitement of the chance to live the cycle of a school year again and to teach better than before. However, added to that blend of anxiety and optimistic anticipation was the thought of implementing the research described formerly. Buddy Reading was about to launch its third year but with greater structure, a more targeted intent, and under a closer lens than before. Two of the three participating teachers and I had been involved in its evolution, in some manner, since the beginning of its onset. We all believed that it *seemed* to work in the past: It *seemed* we were instructing relevant comprehension strategies; It *seemed* to have provided students the chance to practice comprehension strategies in a meaningful setting; It *seemed* students were internalizing some of the strategies; and it *seemed* students were engaged and motivated to join in the reading experience. However, this year's implementation, with the added component of case study and action research, would provide us the opportunity to illuminate the nuances and accuracy of our assumptions.

Ultimately, I hoped, through a closer examination of instructional practices and buddy reading, we would begin to understand what impact buddy reading had on students' application and use of comprehension strategies. Additionally, I wondered how

students transferred comprehension strategies to buddy reading sessions and I questioned what impact buddy reading had on students' reading engagement. As I began to analyze and code the data generated by different teachers' and students' voices, certain concepts and issues began to emerge. These concepts and issues, evident in different forms of data, were then clustered and woven together. As I examined these conceptual clusters I recognized certain themes emerging, which will be highlighted throughout this chapter:

- Instruction of comprehension strategies creates awareness of comprehension and makes meaning-making visible to young readers.
- Students apply comprehension strategies with varying accuracy depending on the complexity of the strategy and their understanding of the intent of the strategy.
- Students assist one another in understanding text by socially constructing meaning.
- Students identify as readers, hold a desire to read, and enjoy reading when given context and a purpose to read.

In order to draw focus to these themes, and borrowing from Stake's (1995) recommendation of one way to share findings, two components of this model of buddy reading will be highlighted. By using the voices of teachers and students, first the instructional methods used to teach the comprehension strategies will be shared followed by an examination of the varying application of comprehension strategies including the

social construction of meaning. Finally, data indicating students' reading engagement will be shared.

#### *4.2 Instruction of Comprehension Strategies*

The intent of this particular buddy reading program was to incorporate the desired learning outcome of students practicing and applying comprehension strategies into the buddy reading experience. In order for this to take place; teachers had to instruct students in what the strategies were and how to use the strategies prior to the buddy reading sessions. I wanted to find out, directly from the participating teachers, what their hopes and goals were for their students as buddy reading participants so I asked them that question during their individual interviews:

Mr. Walker: I guess have several goals. I want them to practice fluency. I want them to be able to read something and read it several times with expression fluidly. I also wanted an authentic reading task so they see a purpose in reading because I think many of my students don't see a purpose in reading. Third, I wanted it to be a way for them to learn reading strategies in a sort of non-threatening environment with a text that was at their level of reading. I know that by having to teach it and by recognizing a first grader doing it, reinforces that strategy with them.

Ms. Swift: I hoped that the first graders would become more familiar with the things that they can be doing while they're reading or while they're listening to reading – the reading strategies that we want them to be engaged in all through their life of reading. It's just kind of an introduction to and practice of those. I don't think they'll be able to master them or use them completely independently –this year but by the second or third grade as they revisit the strategies they'll have some background knowledge. I think mostly it is an introduction to and participation with the strategies is what I hope they would gain.

As previously mentioned, Ms. Whitt, Ms. Swift's partner teacher, had a unique perspective as a participant. She had not been involved in the application and ongoing revision of this buddy reading program during its first two years. When asked what her hopes and goals were she explained that her entry into an existing protocol initiated a formulation of hopes and goals after had started. However, her willingness to invite buddies into her morning instructional block allowed observations:

Ms. Whitt: I feel like the outcomes have exceeded any expectations I would have had even if I had been the one to develop it (buddy reading) because I see the seventh graders talking to them (the first graders) about using strategies to get meaning out of the text and that it's hitting standards (Alaska State Grade Level Expectations) that first

grade teachers are touching on with them and that the kids are getting into the literature. The seventh graders are using ways to get those kids involved and interacting with the story. They're making it real and authentic and...it's social!

I was excited to hear Ms. Whitt use the term “social” as a way to describe the interactive nature of the buddy reading experience. As Ms. Whitt implied, the seventh and first grade students having common background knowledge of the strategies prior to the experience assisted them in socially constructing understanding.

While I was generally aware of the instruction that Mr. Walker and Ms. Swift were using to introduce the strategies to their students during their whole group instruction I was curious to hear them describe it in detail. Mr. Walker provided a description of what he did to generally prepare his students to be buddy readers, his weekly plan, and his instructional framework:

Mr. Walker: We have a read aloud procedures checklist of things they need to do before they read, things they need to do during, and things they need to do after. I think I modeled that first. I modeled what I did before reading a children's book, had them take notes in labeled columns, and we talked about what I did before during and after and then I showed them the checklist of what they need to and that was very helpful. They actually took the checklist with them the first time and made sure they were doing all of those things. I think

that helped them see there were different things they needed to before, during and after reading.

I'll have them read the book silently to themselves on Monday and write down words on a sticky note that they're not sure how to pronounce or what they mean. Tuesday they'll read the book aloud to a partner. On Wednesday they'll read it and prepare the graphic organizer and Thursday they'll read it to a partner and complete the graphic organizer with a partner.

I used an active reading protocol – we call it ACTIVE reading – it's an acronym for a variety of strategies. We've been working through one a week and that's been helpful. There are some activities I've done with some of them. Like with asking questions we did a question marathon. I'd read a page of a children's story and they'd write down as many questions as they could think of. We shared some of them. The goal was to think of as many questions as possible and then by sharing them hopefully they'd get an idea if they aren't doing those or asking certain kinds of questions. We read the *Wretched Stone* by Chris Van Allsburg (1996) and then made inferences or tried to make inferences from that by listing textual clues. They're being practiced primarily with whole group instruction and their children's books.

Ms. Swift delivered instruction to the whole group to prepare the first grade students. I also asked her to describe her instruction in detail:

Ms. Swift: I've prepared the kids with lessons that focus on the same strategies the reading buddies will be sharing. I do that in a whole group session and get them to practice the same strategy. We use the little prompt (also a prop) and I can hand it to them and they can say, "I wonder..." or "I predict..." and then fill in that sentence and that's really motivating for them. Then, when they get in their buddy reading session it's at least familiar for some of them – they can remember that session or that lesson that we did – It's really rewarding to see them actively participating, engaged in literature in answering questions, predicting... all those things that are important to readers.

I use a story that is usually related to the theme we're working on (for science or social studies) or the theme we're working on from our literacy unit for that week. I use a graphic organizer that's the same their buddy readers will bring or that's really similar to it. So, I'll read the story and we'll do the graphic organizer as a whole group as a poster or on the projector. Sometimes we do it as we go and sometimes we do it at the end, depending on the strategy.

Ms. Swift also explained that she foreshadowed the seventh grade buddies' use of the graphic organizer by telling her students, "When your buddies come they'll be doing these activities."

Mr. Walker and Ms. Swift's descriptions of their instruction pointed out the connection between their individual lesson planning and preparation of students for buddy reading. The similarities included modeling and practicing of the comprehension strategy of focus, using the same graphic organizers during class to prepare students and creating common language for students to practice and utilize during buddy reading.

I had intended to frequently observe teachers' planning sessions to assist me in drawing a correlation between instruction and buddy reading. Realistically, teachers are incredibly busy. Therefore, I observed and participated in two planning sessions with Mr. Walker and Ms. Swift. The first planning session took place prior to the start of the school year and lasted two hours. During this collaborative session we established what comprehension strategies would be taught using Amy Goodman's ACTIVE reading framework (2003). The strategies chosen were: asking questions; connecting to the text; tracking down important information; inferring; and visualizing the text. The *E* in the acronym stood for "Eureka!" (Goodman, 2003) and referred to synthesizing, or connecting the information in the text to create a new idea. It was decided this strategy did not lend itself to buddy reading due to the depth of analysis and time needed to apply the strategy appropriately. Also, asking questions was divided into two strategies. Students asked general questions during one session. During another session they asked

questions that encouraged their buddies to make predictions so that students would have the opportunity to practice predicting as a strategy. A possible order the seven strategies would be taught, what theme the children's picture books would have in common, and what language or prompts would be used to provide students a common language to apply the strategy was determined. The second planning session occurred shortly after the start of the school year and just prior to the beginning of the buddy reading. It was agreed the original order for teaching the strategies needed reworking. The first calendar placed visualizing the text first. This posed a concern because children were going to be asked to share text from a picture book without the illustrations. Mr. Walker and Ms. Swift realized that this might be a confusing way to start buddy reading and might even result in discouraging children from enjoying the experience. A final calendar of strategies, themes, and prompts was agreed upon. Once the calendar was determined and students and teachers alike had transitioned back to school, the work and excitement of implementing instruction and guiding students through buddy reading began.

#### *4.3 Awareness and Application of Comprehension Strategies*

Through the deliberate instruction of comprehension strategies, students became aware of types of thinking that could assist them in meaning-making. As I sorted and coded data, I started to speculate that students were growing in awareness of the strategies. I wanted to address awareness prior to presenting findings of application because it could be argued that awareness was the first step toward internalization of the

cognitive processes and application of the strategies during buddy reading and independent reading experiences. Ms. Swift, the first grade teacher, indicated recognition of this in her comments when asked, during an individual interview, what was noticed about students' application and transfer of strategies:

Ms. Swift: During whole group instruction of the week's strategy I see them using previous ones that we've introduced, not only the new strategy... and I'll point that out – “That's a great prediction,” or, “That's a great connection.” If we're working on main idea I'll say, “Can you think of what it's mostly about?” or “What was this section mostly about?” and they'll be using all of the other strategies, as well. I'll say, “Good readers make predictions,” or, “Good readers make connections.”

Furthermore, the seventh grade teacher, Mr. Walker explained the value of having a common language to increase students' awareness of their metacognition when asked if, overall, buddy reading has been a positive experience for his students:

Mr. Walker: Just that they're able to name the strategies and I see them use the strategies, some more than others, and that we have a common language of what things (the strategies) are and that there's this notion that ACTIVE reading *is* active – that we have to do things – it's not just sitting there – so we're making visible what happens in

good readers' minds. I think that's been evidenced in their use of the strategies and voicing what they are.

The teachers' comments were indicative that their students' were growing in awareness of their thinking while reading. The first and seventh grade students were able to confirm this growing awareness during focus group interviews. First grader students articulated this in an implicit fashion as we circled around a table and discussed their experiences:

Kim: Let's start by pretending it's a buddy reading day. What happens?

Violet: They (seventh grade buddy) ask you questions when they are done reading the book.

Kim: What kind of questions do they ask you?

Violet: Like the first one, the middle one, and the last one.

Kim: Like beginning, middle, and end (referring to tracking down important elements of fiction)?

Violet: Mmhm.

Kim: Think about your teacher when she reads a book to you when your buddies aren't there. What does she do to help you think about the book?

Catherine: They (Ms. Swift) ask you questions sometimes, like a prediction.

Anna: And like I wonder... (Referring to the class prompt for “Asking Questions”). Good readers, they read to you and then they ask you questions to get you thinking about the book.

The above comments encouraged the notion that the first graders were aware that reading was a cognitive and active process. The seventh grade students expressed their awareness of the strategies slightly more explicitly as shown in excerpts from their focus group interview:

Kim: What do your buddies do well during buddy reading?

Chris: They make good text-to-self connections. I know that. Anna always says, “Ooo. My dad goes to work and steps in puddles (referring to a book read during the session which focused on visualizing the text) all the time,” and stuff like that.

Kim: What seems challenging or hard for them?

Chris: Inferences.

Kim: What kinds of things did you learn or do with your books in class to get ready for buddy reading?

Emily: Read with a partner.

Chris: Yeah. We'd always read the books and we'd infer.

Emily: And make connections.

- Kim: What strategies have you practiced? You've practiced connections... We talked about that...
- Chris: Predicting.
- Emily: What you know... inferences.
- Chris: Tracking down information for details and also in a story.
- Sarah: Visualizing.
- Matt: Asking questions.
- Kim: I think that's about all of them. There have been about seven, right?
- Sarah: Yeah. Seven, I think.

It is possible that the growing awareness, stemming from classroom instruction and practice with buddies, allowed for students to, at times, successfully transfer comprehension strategies to buddy reading experiences. Teachers, as mentioned before, altered their plans so that strategies they speculated would be easier to transfer were taught during class and practiced during buddy reading early in the sequence and those that would demand more complex thinking were taught and practiced later. The only exception was the decision to move Tracking Down Information in both fiction and nonfiction before Visualizing because the seventh grade teacher's department was, as a whole, teaching summarizing and these strategies were the foundation for students'

practicing summarizing texts. As a result, strategies were taught and practiced in the following order: Asking Questions; Predicting; Connecting; Tracking Down Information for Elements of Fiction; Tracking Down Information for Main Idea and Details; Visualizing; and Inferring. Over the seven weeks of data generation and collection, approximately six hours (18 sessions) of buddy reading transactions, from the four triads sampled, were recorded during field observations and later transcribed. Additionally, field observations were conducted and the graphic organizers students completed during buddy reading were collected.

As a novice researcher, I made the decision to start small with regard to gathering data and increase collection overtime. I opted to conduct a field observation, record one buddy reading triad, and collect the completed graphic organizers during the first session. The first strategy for focus, as mentioned before, was Questioning. My field notes explained:

Prior to this meeting, first graders had been practicing questioning as a comprehension strategy. The stem used with their teacher was, “I wonder...” Seventh graders also prepared questioning prompts for their first grade buddies by locating sections that they could ask, “What do you wonder...?” about.

Within three minutes of beginning partnering seventh grade and first grade buddies, all groups were settled and reading. First grade and seventh grade students were asking questions. Seventh grade student, Chris, asked, “So, what’s happening?” Anthony, a first grader, asked, “What happened?” Another first

grader said, “I wonder how it looked like a light. (Then, to her first grade classmate) Okay, what’s your question?” He responded, “I wonder if that lightening bug can really go fast.”

Furthermore, the graphic organizers provided additional data that the comprehension strategy was in use by the seventh and first grade students during the transaction. Here, Sara, seventh grade student, was able to prepare prompts that solicited questions, in the form of “I wonder...” statements, from her first grade buddies as seen in Figure 1.

## Asking questions

Questions types: (in the text / in my head)

Question	type	Student responses
What do you wonder about... Miss. spider?		I wonder... That she's going to have lots of friends
What do you wonder about... The tea party?		I wonder... that she has alot of cake & tea
What do you wonder about... why do you think that they don't want to drink tea with miss. spider?		I wonder... Thier Scared to drink tea!

Figure 1. Sara, Flora and Catherine’s “Asking Questions” Graphic Organizer

The second session focused on the strategy of making predictions. Everyone, including me, seemed more confident about their role on this second Friday. I decided to continue with my field observations, record two triads, and collect the graphic organizers prepared by the classroom teachers. Seventh grade students prepared questions to provoke predictions about the fictional stories they were sharing. My field observations, with observer comments and self-reflexive comments in brackets, noted:

Within four minutes of entering the elementary school all pairs of readers were settled and reading. [Amazing!] Emily (seventh grade) was asking prediction questions from her graphic organizer within 3 minutes. She said, “What does it look like will happen?” Violet responded, with sadness in her voice, “He’s going to cry.” Another seventh grader asked of the book, “What do you predict will happen when they divide into 3 lines?” [This question was a great application on the seventh grader’s part – however, it was too complex for the first graders to answer in the way he was hoping – he was looking for the answer to the math problem embedded in the book]. The first grader replied, “I predict he’ll be the line leader!” [Great response!!! Despite the sophistication of the book, he was able to apply the strategy using personal experience and reasonable thinking!]

It seemed that students were actively and effectively applying the strategy of predicting.

Further data from transcriptions supported this:

Chris: (Reading a story about a bug going to an annual ball in the hopes of reigning as king of the ball) What do you guys think the dancer is going to do next?

Anna: He's going to dance at the Annual Ball.

Chris: Why do you think he's gonna dance at the Annual Ball?

Dylan: To win.

Anna: For the challenge.

Chris' question provoked reasonable and thoughtful predictions from the first graders. Furthermore, evidence of the conversation was found when comparing the graphic organizer. Chris was unable to return and check predictions with his first grade buddies because time ran out. However, what was critical was that there existed a link between the transcribed conversation and the constructed document, validating that the transfer was accurately portrayed on the graphic organizer as seen here in Figure 2. Matt also demonstrated the ability to formulate questions that elicited reasonable predictions. Furthermore, the following exchange demonstrated how students were using each other's ideas to increase their own understanding:

Matt: What do you think the fly's going to do?

Anthony: Eat the gwass.

Matt: Huh?

Anthony: (Deliberately) Eat the grrrwass.

Matt: Eat the grass. Why do you think he's gonna eat the grass?

Kayla: Because he's really hungry.

Matt and his first grade buddies, Anthony and Kayla's, conversation was evident in their jointly completed graphic organizer as shown in Figure 3.

### Asking prediction questions

Question	Student responses	What happened?
What do you predict... the dancer will do?	I predict... that the bug is going to dance at the annual because... he wants to win	
What do you predict... Hercules will do?  Hercules will do?	I predict... he will dance with the dancer.  because... he was jealous	
What do you predict... about the bug at the party?	I predict... that he will be the winner.  because... he's so excited.	

Figure 2. Chris, Anna, and Dylan's "Predictions" Graphic Organizer

## Asking prediction questions

Question	Student responses	What happened?
What do you predict...the fly is going to do	I predict... eat the grass  because... he is really hungry	he was disturbing people
What do you predict...where the fly is gonna get the food?	I predict... get side by the grass.  because... he is really hungry	in the house and eat cake
What do you predict...the fly is going to do when he goes to bed	I predict...at night he will sleep in the grass because... because he likes flowers	sleep in the clean under wear

Figure 3. Matt, Kayla, and Anthony's "Predictions" Graphic Organizer

The third Friday focused on making connections between the text and self, the text and other texts, and the text and the world. Seventh grade students used a graphic organizer that asked them to select six aspects of the story they felt their buddies would aptly make connections to. They were also asked to identify what type of connection, text-to-self, text-to-text or text-to-world, the readers were making. I continued my field observations and recorded seventh grade reader, Chris, and his buddies for a second time. I also recorded Emily and her buddies for the first time. My field observations focused on the need I felt to isolate and finalize the selection of the triads to be sampled since the weeks seemed to be flying by. My field notes explained:

I settled in next to a triad I had not paid much attention to. I did this because I had emailed teachers with four triads I was considering selecting for close observation and asked if there were others less gregarious and likely to capture my attention that I should observe. Ms. Swift encouraged me to take a look at Sara, Flora, and Catherine. Because this was my third observation out of seven, it was my goal to finalize the selection of triads for examination.

Sara was writing on her clipboard. She had already started asking Flora and Catherine to make connections. Flora was up on her knees in the chair, leaning in and touching the book. Catherine was leaning against Sara with her head cocked in front of her so that she could closely examine the book. At one point in the book Sara asked, “Does this remind you of your brothers or sisters?” Catherine replied, “It reminds me of when my sister was lost in Wal-Mart.”

Although Sara and her buddies were quiet and contemplative, their relevant and insightful responses here and overtime indicated they were a good group for study. Sara’s graphic organizer demonstrated an understanding of how readers make connections between their own lives and the text because five out of six of her prepared prompts were those that would most likely lead to text-to-self connections. Through an examination of the other three selected seventh grade participants’ graphic organizers, it was discovered that 17 out of 18 of their selections from the text for prompting provided the first grade buddies opportunities to make connections between their own lives and the text. Chris

and Emily's prompts, found in the transcriptions and on their graphic organizers, were included in the above count.

Teachers articulated students' readiness to make connections between themselves and literature during their interviews. Ms. Swift stated that the strategies most easily applied by her students included making connections. When I asked her partner teacher, Ms. Whitt, what she noticed about the first grade students' transfer of strategies during buddy reading, she explained the strategy of connecting to text seemed to come naturally and build understanding for her first grade students:

Ms. Whitt: I definitely saw that they were responding if they were working on making connections. You know, (giggling) the first graders always have a story to tell so they were really engaged with that. This is really great, especially for second language kids. I feel like any way you can help them make a connection and get a picture in their mind is a win/win. It's going to build their understanding.

Mr. Walker also identified that his students were easily able to make connections between text and their own lives and expanded on why his students may be challenged to make other types of connections:

Mr. Walker: Making connections – text-to-self connections, of course, is very easy for them. They have a harder time with text-to-text. Many of them know what it is but many of them haven't read many texts. We've added in movies or TV shows and they are able to do that

because so many of them have movie and TV texts in their minds. Text to world, also, has been a little harder for them to connect to what's happening in the world and how that connects to what they're reading.

As the seventh grade student, Chris, was earlier reported as saying, "They make good text-to-self connections. I know that." It is possible that Chris was not only recognizing what the first graders did well, but also what he himself finds frequently happening in his own mind.

As the fourth and fifth sessions of buddy reading transpired and recordings were transcribed, I began to notice that the first three strategies introduced seemed to have continued presence in the dialogue between seventh and first graders as they shared fiction and nonfiction books. The fourth and fifth sessions of buddy reading focused on identifying elements of fiction and finding the main idea and details within a piece of nonfiction. Buddies approached these strategies with varying levels of sophistication and this will be presented shortly. However, another strategy that seemed easily transferred was visualizing the text while reading.

During this sixth session, seventh grade students presented a typed copy of the story *Puddles* by Jonathan London (1997). No illustrations were provided. Seventh grade students read the text and were supposed to stop at two points in the story, allow first graders to draw a picture of what they had visualized for that section of text, scribe the first graders' comments about their pictures, and then continue to read. Seventh grade

students, Emily, Matt, and Sara, all followed this protocol. Interestingly, Chris thought he was supposed to read the story in its entirety and then return to the two prompts and allow children to visualize and draw. The experience was unique for the first graders who were used to having illustrations to guide their understanding:

Chris: Today we are going to be reading a puddles book.

Anthony: But you don't have a book.

Chris: I know. Sounds silly, doesn't it? But you're gonna have to draw them out, though. So, when I get to the end of the story I'm gonna read this page again to both of you. And there's two sheets here so one of you is gonna write a picture and the other is gonna write a picture about what you think... what your imaginary picture is.

Chris, although not following the protocol designed, was able to communicate the idea of visualizing in kid-friendly language and his buddies were able to visualize and draw portrayals of their visualizations. Chris' buddies, having heard the whole story, opted to draw about a section of the text not selected as a prompt despite the fact that Chris did reread the prompt to them prior to asking them to visualize. It could be speculated that Anna and Dylan chose a section of text more meaningful to them, and more relevant to their own experiences than the text selected by me when I created the tool. In fact, during the reading of the story, Anna and Dylan had a conversation about the part they chose for their drawing. The pictures drew portrayed this text from the story: "We kneel and watch worms squirm and stretch and leave tiny trails in the muck like sloppy writing." As

shown in their graphic organizers, Figure 4 and Figure 5, this wasn't the selected text, yet the quick drawings of their visualizations showed successful visualizing. This was contrasted to Violet's drawing and description, Figure 6, which clearly matched the text. Both Catherine and Kayla's pictures, Figure 7 and Figure 8, suggested that a mental picture of the text had been formed. However, as mentioned earlier, they were eager to connect to the text through real and imagined experiences from their own lives.

At the pond, it's time for the frogs  
to play! And we want to play  
with them. *Leap frog, leap!*  
*Leap frog, leap!*  
*Hop, flop - plop!*

I'll read this page again. Listen to the words and visualize a picture in your mind so you can draw a quick picture of your thinking in this box.



Tell me about your picture: The worm is making a  
trail in the mud.

---

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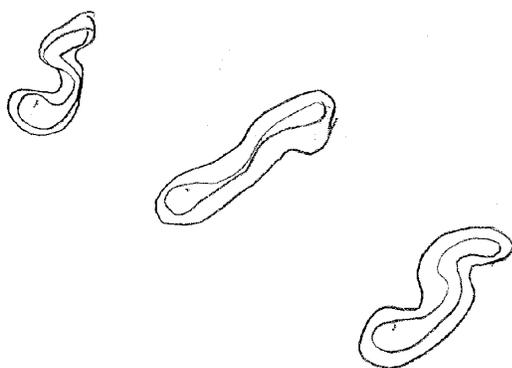
Figure 4. Anna's "Visualizing" Graphic Organizer

At the pond, it's time for the frogs  
to play! And we want to play  
with them. *Leap frog, leap!*

*Leap frog, leap!*

Hop, flop - plop!

I'll read this page again. Listen to the words and visualize a picture in your mind so you can draw a quick picture of your thinking in this box.



Tell me about your picture: *Three worms are making  
slaps writing in the music.*

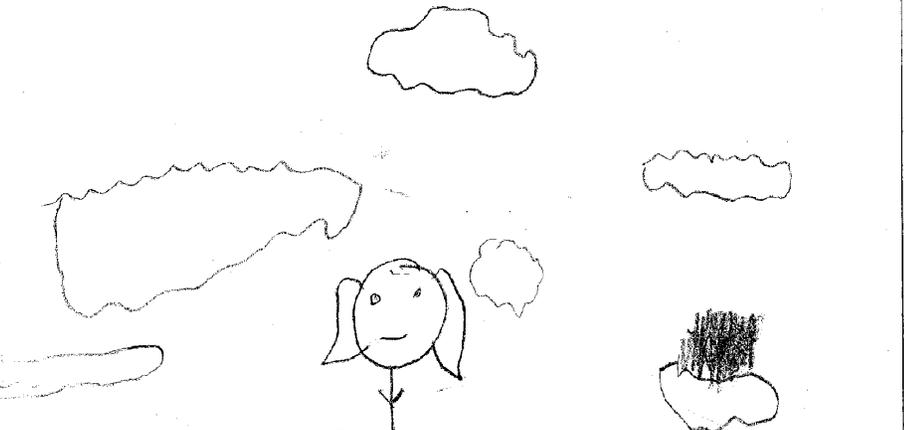
Figure 5. Dylan's "Visualizing" Graphic Organizer

*Puddles!* Big ones, little ones,  
long ones, skinny ones -  
pieces of sky  
on the ground.

It's time to puddle-jump!

*Splash splash splash!*

I'll read this page again. Listen to the words and visualize a picture in your mind so you can draw a quick picture of your thinking in this box.



Tell me about your picture: There was long puddles  
skinny puddles and people  
splashing.

Figure 6. Violet's "Visualizing" Graphic Organizer

*Puddles!* Big ones, little ones,

long ones, skinny ones -

pieces of sky

on the ground.

It's time to puddle-jump!

*Splash splash splash!*

I'll read this page again. Listen to the words and visualize a picture in your mind so you can draw a quick picture of your thinking in this box.



Tell me about your picture:

it is a Big puddle  
it was fun.

Figure 7. Catherine's "Visualizing" Graphic Organizer

*Puddles!* Big ones, little ones,

long ones, skinny ones -

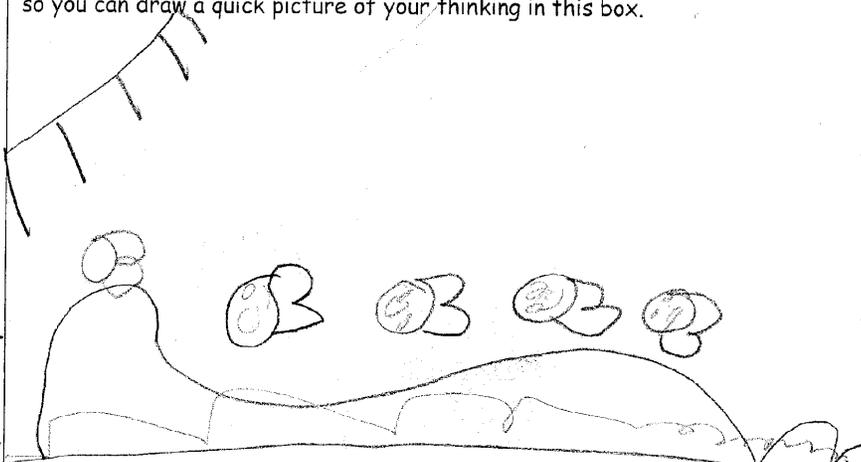
pieces of sky

on the ground.

It's time to puddle-jump!

*Splash splash splash!*

I'll read this page again. Listen to the words and visualize a picture in your mind so you can draw a quick picture of your thinking in this box.



Tell me about your picture: I like to go to the pond.

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Figure 8. Kayla's "Visualizing" Graphic Organizer

Furthermore, Matt's conversation with his buddies, one of them being Kayla, yielded examples where Matt *and* the first graders continued to focus on connections as much as on visualizing the actual text:

Matt: (After reading the prompt) Okay. What does it remind you of?

Anthony: Um...that I go outside.

Matt: Okay. Draw that you are outside. (To Kayla) What does it remind you of?

Kayla: My sisters and me playing in the puddles.

Matt's probing and Anthony and Kayla's comments were related to the text but were implicit examples of text-to-self connections. This type of exchange continued when the second prompt was attempted:

Matt: (After reading the second selection of text) Okay. What does it remind you of? Draw it.

(Pause while first graders draw)

Matt: Okay. Tell me about your picture, Kayla.

Kayla: That I love to go to the pond.

Exchanges, such as Matt, Kayla, and Anthony's from the transcribed conversations above and other exchanges from the other three triads encouraged me to wonder how often students were utilizing these previously learned strategies. As the

buddy reading sessions continued, and I began initial analysis, it became evident that the strategies of asking questions, making predictions, and making connections were being employed by students, particularly first grade students, even when they were not the strategy explicitly taught in class or focused on during buddy reading sessions.

As I read over transcriptions I began to highlight and code where students were using the language or the semantics of the comprehension strategies to support their understanding. Next, I examined the data generated after the first three sessions for an indication that these three strategies were being successfully practiced even when they were not the strategies focused on during classroom instruction or buddy reading. During the fifth session in which students concentrated on finding the main idea and supporting details, a total of 61 concepts from the 12 student participants were coded as the application of any strategy. Of those 61, 12 concepts were coded as the application of questioning, 16 were coded as predictions, and 21 involved students making connections between the book and their own experiences. I offer this data not as a measurement but simply as a way to share the prevalence of such transactions. One such transaction came from Chris, Anna, and Dylan when reading a book about ants:

Dylan: (Questioning the text) Where's the dead bug? That one?

Anna: That's a worm.

Chris: Uh-huh.

Anna: Wait. Here's the dead bug. Right here.

Dylan:           What kind of bug is that? (Questioning)

Anna:           They have that in the Philippines in my grandma's house...they  
                    have a lot like that (text-to-self connection).

Not only was Dylan questioning and Anna connecting, but it was evident the three participants assisted one another in making meaning of details presented in the text, potentially increasing their understanding of the ideas offered.

While students' discussions and graphic representations suggested an ability to transfer strategies of questioning, predicting, making connections, and visualizing there were three comprehension strategies in which the data indicated students were growing an understanding of, but had not necessarily internalized as, tools for constructing meaning from what they were reading. Those strategies were: tracking down elements of fiction, taught fourth; tracking down main ideas and details in nonfiction, taught fifth; and inferring, taught seventh.

By the fourth session, which focused on identifying elements of fiction, students were able to easily transition into buddy reading time and initiate reading and discussion of the comprehension strategy selected for practice. I entered the room, rushing as I transitioned from teacher of reading to researcher, and found students were nestled in nooks and crannies around the first grade classroom. A couple of triads were working in the hallway. An intimate buzz of exchange filled the spaces.

A story map was used for seventh graders to record first grade students' responses regarding the basic plot, setting, characters, conflict, and resolution within the shared story. I continued to collect data through field observations, recordings, and graphic organizers. I approached Matt, Kayla, and Anthony who were lying on the floor filling out the graphic organizer for the book *William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow (1985):

Matt:           Okay. So what was the conflict?

Kayla:          He was being made fun of?

Matt:           He was being made fun of? Who was making fun of him?

Kayla:          The brothers.

Although Matt acknowledged Kayla's input, he had already determined the response he was looking for. His graphic organizer stated, "The dad didn't let William get a doll because he is a boy." While Kayla's response was a detail that supported the conflict, it was not, as Matt determined, the central conflict. Therefore, Matt recorded his own understanding because Kayla was not fully able to identify the element.

This same type of transaction, concerning plot, occurred between Chris and his buddies, Anna and Dylan who had read *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox (1989):

Chris:           What happened in the beginning of the story?

Dylan:          The cricket guy.

Anna: Can we see it one more time?

Chris: This? (holding up the book)

Anna: Yeah. But don't read it. The end? ... Did you say the beginning or the end?

Chris: The beginning.

Anna: Did he talk about the old people's houses? I mean, yeah...the old people? He knows it's all about –

Dylan: – the old people.

Chris wrote, "In the beginning he explained how the old people lived." Dylan and Anna were working together to puzzle out the best answer they could. Chris approximated their comments with something closer to an accurate portrayal of what happened in the beginning of the story when a young boy describes the elderly he visits at a neighboring nursing home.

A final example of attempted transfer of tracking down important elements of fiction came from Sara, Flora, and Catherine. Sara read *Owen* by Kevin Henkes (1993):

Sara: The setting... where did the story take place?

Flora: He took the blanket and...

Catherine: Can we talk about the characters?

Sara: Wait. It took place outside and... (voice trails off while writing).

Flora: He took the blanket everywhere.

Sara: Okay. Who are the characters?

Catherine: The characters are the mouse and the mom and the dad.

Sara, although not provided the responses she was looking for, wrote the setting and the characters' names on the graphic organizer. Catherine and Flora were able to provide details from the story, connect information from the story to elements, and even refer to an element. However, their responses signaled a developing, but not mastered, understanding of the elements. Sara, with a more developed understanding, was able to provide Catherine and Flora with questions to assist them in reflection. Furthermore, she was able to use her knowledge to recognize what was missing from their responses and fill in the holes. This suggested that Sara had to think about the strategy on two levels. First, she had to determine what answer was accurate and second analyze the proficiency of Flora and Catherine's responses.

I designed the story map with the hope that seventh graders would be able to utilize it to guide their summarizing of fiction. Based on the seventh grade students' ability to complete the information on the graphic organizer it is possible that they had started to internalize and understand the different elements of fiction. It may have been too much information for the first graders to organize, resulting in cognitive clutter or overload, rather than helping them understand and remember. Ms. Swift validated this in

her interview when she mentioned that this seemed a particularly challenging task for her students stating, “That might be something to revisit – how we approach tracking down elements of fiction.”

During the fifth session students were asked to read nonfiction picture books and track down main ideas and details. I was curious to see, having conducted initial analysis of tracking down information for elements of fiction, how students would construct responses when tracking down main ideas and details. Seventh grade students used a graphic organizer, framed as a concept web with a bubble for the main idea in the center, and four bubbles stemming from the center bubble for details. A box for the subject was located above the web. After reading a book about butterflies Emily guided Violet and Rachel through the graphic organizer:

Emily: Do you know what a subject is? (Pause) I think the subject was about how butterflies live, don't you? Let's write about that.  
(Pause while Emily is writing) Do you know what the main idea is?

Violet: What?

Emily: It's about butterflies.

Rachel: Butterflies...

Emily: What was a detail? Do you know? (Pause) What does the butterfly drink?

Violet: Nectar.

Emily: Good job. So, do you want me to write nectar on the detail?  
Butterflies drink nectar?

Rachel: Yep.

Emily: Now. Okay. What do butterflies live in? Er...how do they change?  
Er...I mean, where do they go?

Rachel: Um...um...a twig or a leaf.

Emily: Good job. That's where they hang from but what do they live in for  
a little bit?

Rachel: In the chrysalis.

Emily: Good job.

Emily continued throughout the session to prompt and probe for accurate details to support her determined main idea. As she asked for the detail regarding the chrysalis she gave the impression that she herself was trying to negotiate what detail she was looking for. Similar transactions occurred as Matt, Chris, and Sara worked to complete the graphic organizer with their buddies using paraphrasing language such as, "So, you mean..." and explicit questions like, "Do you think the main idea was how ants live?" However, they also rephrased their own questions, just as Emily did, as if organizing their own thinking while working to assist the first grade students in doing the same. As

found when students were looking for elements of fiction, the seventh grade readers did have a more sophisticated understanding of the strategy. This allowed them to coax and encourage the first grade participants to respond at the level that they could, still utilizing important information from the text. The seventh grade students' support provided the first graders opportunity for reflection and consideration of the content.

Mr. Walker, when asked during his interview what strategies posed a challenge for his students, indicated that tracking down information in nonfiction and fiction continued to be an area worthy of more practice for his seventh grade students:

Mr. Walker: Tracking down information has been a difficult one for them. You know, identifying what's important and what's a detail. We've worked on writing summaries from that and they still struggle. Many of them have a really hard time picking out the main events that happened and what could be left out and they'd still understand the story. So, that's been tough.

Participating teachers all expressed a desire for students to start transferring skills to their independent reading experiences. It seemed the seventh grade students were acquiring practice tracking down information with approximated success using children's literature, yet, not quite proficient in applying the skills independently, as reported by Mr. Walker.

The seventh and final session observed provided students the opportunity to practice making inferences. This also posed, as reported by teachers and seventh graders alike, to be the most challenging strategy for students to apply. Students were asked to fill

out a chart with three columns. The first column asked for “Text Clues.” The second column asked students to consider what they know in relation to the clue, and the third was a place for students to record their inferences.

Contrary to tracking down information, seventh grade students seemed to lack an understanding of what an inference was. Approximately half way through Chris, Anna, and Dylan’s experience, seventh grade reader, Matt, popped over to ask Chris a question:

Matt: (In a hushed voice) Chris, what does inference mean?

Chris: Inference means you guess what’s gonna happen next.

Ironically, the day I interviewed the seventh grade students, Chris addressed this within moments of the four seventh grade students and me entering the office where we were to conduct the interview. With an embarrassed and apologetic smile he blurted, “Oh, yeah! You know what? I made a mistake last time. I thought inferences were predictions!” Chris’ ability to use the language of comprehension strategies assisted him in recognizing his accidental application of one for the other and, presumably, allowed him to begin recognizing the difference between the two. However, it was apparent that Sara and Emily experienced the same disequilibrium that Matt and Chris had. This was evidenced by their lack of probing and clarification of first grade responses. Sara read *Froggy Plays Soccer* by Jonathan London (2001).

Sara: Okay. What are some text clues?

Catherine: Froggy, um...kicked it.

- Flora: He kicked it into the tree.
- Catherine: He used his hands.
- Sara: Okay. What do you know about soccer?
- Catherine: You can't use your hands.
- Flora: You have to use your feet.
- Catherine: Not your feet because that's cheating.
- Sara: So, what's the inference?
- Catherine: Um...inference?
- Flora: Inference?
- Sara: Mhm.
- Flora: He got a goal and then he cheered.
- Sara: Okay. What is another text clue?

The above account is almost precisely what Sara recorded on the graphic organizer and what was explicitly in the text. Flora and Catherine seemed unclear about the intent of the questions and, unlike past transactions, no attempt was made by Sara to redirect their thinking. Emily, Rachel, and Violet's experience held similarities to Sara, Catherine, and Flora's:

Emily: What's a clue?

Rachel: The girl helped him.

Emily: What about, "He wants a dog."

Violet: Yeah! Yeah! He wants a dog.

Emily: Okay. He wants a dog. What do you know about dogs?

Rachel: He likes dogs.

Emily: Do you know what "inferences" means? (No response) Okay.  
Dogs are fun.

Rachel: The boy likes dogs.

Although Emily made effort to incorporate the language of the strategy, her dialogue was also void of the kind of questioning and probing used previously. This served as another indicator that the strategy of making inferences was yet to be understood by both seventh and first grade participants.

I was not surprised by this. Inferring required students to connect their prior knowledge to an observation and then synthesize the information into a logical assumption about the meaning of the text. Any one of these skills in isolation would likely take practice. Teachers corroborated this evidence with their own observations. Ms. Whitt described making inferences as difficult for the first graders with a deep sigh. Her partner teacher concurred:

Ms. Swift: The most difficult one was definitely making inferences. I think just more exposure to inferring – It’s hard for the first graders to recognize they’re doing it.

Mr. Walker expressed the same sentiment regarding his seventh grade students’ ability to make inferences from texts and reflected on the frustration this created for students:

Mr. Walker: If we go to the buddy reading experience that Friday and my students don’t fully understand the strategy or what it is they’re supposed to do – I think that’s frustrating to them because they’re kind of clueless about what it is they’re supposed to be doing with their buddy. The main one was inferences because it’s sort of a higher order thinking skill.

When we’re learning the strategies sometimes they’ll ask do they (the first grade buddies) know this? I keep going back to inference, maybe because it was last week but they’ll say, “Do *they* know this stuff?” because they are struggling with it and I’ll say, “Well, they’re learning it. It’s going to be kind of difficult for us to teach this one, but we’ll do it.”

All three teachers indicated an awareness of what their students were able to do and what their students seemed most challenged by. At the heart of teacher action research is the willingness of the teacher to recognize what revisions of instructional strategies must be made to increase student learning. Therefore, it became critical I share

the voices of the participating teachers as they expressed goals and ideas for their ongoing instruction and the desire to increase the efficacy of the buddy readers' transfer of comprehension strategies during independent reading experiences and buddy reading:

Mr. Walker: Eventually, and this is just the first quarter, but as we recycle through these we're going to – the next step maybe is to really focus on how do they do these things with their books. And it will continue to be reinforced with their reading buddies. They can name the strategies now. They can do them with children's books and now I want them to be able to name and do them with their own books independently.

I think as we continue to do this we're going to get better and better at finding solid evidence that they're able to apply them (comprehension strategies) or being able to diagnose which ones they're having trouble with and coming up with activities to help them apply them to texts at their level. I think in the evolution of this program, it's much more structured with different reading strategies now, and I'm really happy with that. I think as we continue I really want to focus on the specific transference (of strategies) to the specific text we're reading as a class or they're reading independently.

Mr. Walker recognized that his students were beginning to practice application of strategies during independent reading when he stated:

Mr. Walker: Although *actually*, now that I think about it, they write a weekly response letter on Fridays to their independent reading and I started adding in – like when we taught summarizing they had to add that and then they had to add in one question they asked themselves and how it helped them and then when we learned connections they had to add that – what’s a connection you made and what type was it and how did it help you. I was trying to get them to apply the strategy and name it for me. That was part of their weekly assessment of independent reading.

Ms. Swift also expressed a desire to increase opportunities for independent practice:

Ms. Swift: We have a reading log that has some of the reading strategies on it but they’re not really able to do that independently. But in small groups if they’re listening to a story at the listening center, I would come over and – it wasn’t consistent just with the time management – but I’d come over and say did you predict or make any connections while you were listening to the story? Some of them would circle, maybe, I made a prediction.

Eventually I’d like them to be able to do that when they’re reading their own books with their book boxes because they *do*

respond – they do a picture and they put the title and the author and they rate the book. Unless an adult can come over and ask them what strategy they used... That's like our ultimate goal for them to be able to say, I was using predictions and this was my prediction. It's just having the time to support that with first graders is hard and maybe by the end of the year we could come up with some kind of system to do that more regularly.

I'd like to be more organized and have a component where they are more independent. Maybe that comes after their buddy experience as an introductory experience. Then they have it independently but with support – beginning to show they can do it individually – and keep spiraling that throughout the year with the different strategies so they have multiple exposures to the strategies.

Furthermore, teachers expressed possible ways the seventh graders might evaluate which strategy would be useful given a specific text. When asked what the high points of buddy reading had been, Ms. Swift also postulated this future application:

Ms. Swift: I guess a high point that I look forward to is what we've (other participating teachers) talked about – maybe finding a way to let the kids choose a way for their reading buddies to respond depending on the story. They'd be more involved– You know,

(speaking from a student's perspective) you can really make predictions when you read this story or I think my buddy would be able to make connections to the story so the seventh grader reader would pick the graphic organizer. We may do that over the next month or so now that we've done all of the strategies once.

Ms. Whitt shared a desire for the first grade students to have more time for debriefing and closure after the experiences:

I wish that there was more flexibility so that I could – you know – it wasn't so strict that we had to be done right at 10:30. Twenty minutes is a good amount of time in that I think most of them get to read their stories and go through their strategies but you know sometimes it's like "Oh! Time to go! Say goodbye to your buddies!" I don't have that sponge time because of Walk to Read (when first grade students go to work with other teachers for small group reading instruction). There is not time for closure. In the future – the schedules are always so tight but if there was a way...

Interestingly, Mr. Walker cited the short debriefing time between he and his seventh grade students first when asked what the high points of the experience had been. This suggested Ms. Whitt's desire for this component to be incorporated for her students as an idea worth revisiting as teachers look for ways to better the experience.

Throughout their interviews teachers presented themselves as reflective practitioners. When asked if there was anything she would like to add, Ms. Swift concluded:

Ms. Swift: I'm excited to improve on what we're doing with the base of what we've set. What we've started is almost like the beginning even though we've been doing it for a few years and it changes and it's more organized this year, but there's still so much more we can do. I think we can really improve the experience and what they gain from it academically, but not take away from the positive experience that they're having.

Mr. Walker, Ms. Swift, and Ms. Whitt indicated a dedication to reflection and recursive teaching practice so that buddy reading, what they agreed was an instructionally relevant experience for students, could be improved upon through: assessment; re-teaching of all the strategies, specifically the more difficult strategies; further practice with increased student initiative; independent practice; and providing students time to debrief and reflect on the experience.

#### *4.4 Reading Engagement*

One of the subsidiary questions asked in this study was: What impact does buddy reading between first grade readers and seventh grade remedial readers have on reading

engagement. I borrowed Guthrie and Ozgungor's (2002) definition of reading engagement that described engaged students as those who have "the desire to comprehend and to share literacy socially in a classroom community" and who are "motivated and strategic in their processes of constructing new knowledge from text" (p. 275). As I visited and revisited the voices of teachers and students for evidence of engagement I discovered concepts that expressed the desire to share stories and reading experiences, a sense of purpose and identity as readers, recognition of strategic cognition, and overall affect toward the experience.

Mr. Walker described the evolution of his students desire to participate as buddy readers:

Mr. Walker: I'm not sure how enthusiastic they were the first time. I think there was a little nervousness about having to perform an authentic task. Many of them don't identify themselves as readers so to have to do that in a performance setting – maybe there's a little trepidation. And then, now, as we lead up to the week as they get their new books on Monday there's general excitement and interest. Now they know their buddies so when they're choosing books they're thinking about what their buddy might like which wasn't something I had anticipated exactly but now we talk about that. It certainly wasn't in the plan ahead of time but I think it's important...audience.

Mr. Walker's comments suggested that his students were anticipating the sharing of literature with their buddies and considering the books that would create, for their buddies, a desire to engage. Seventh grade student, Emily, addressed this when asked how she thought her buddies felt about buddy reading and what made her think so:

Emily: I think they like it a lot because when I walk through the door they're always running up to me like, "What book are we reading? What book are we reading?"

Ms. Swift commented on this excitement when asked if, overall, buddy reading had been a positive experience for her students:

Ms. Swift: Just their excitement when they know their buddies are coming...their just... (giggling) they can't sit still! They're out of their seats! They're running to the door to see if they're there yet! I think it's one of the most exciting times in the school day for them or...or in their first grade life – to have an older buddy come and share that experience with them.

Ms. Swift and Ms. Whitt's students indicated this as true and specifically mentioned reading as the highlight when asked what their favorite part of buddy reading was:

Rachel: That they read to me a lot.

Anthony: That I like my buddy and he reads me a story every time.

Violet: I like my buddy because they read a book.

Kayla: It helps you so when you're big then you'll get a little kindergartener and you'll help them.

First grade students were able to identify reading as the central focus of the experience. While they expressed affection for their buddies, it was embedded in the context that their buddies shared literature with them.

Mr. Walker, when asked to describe his students' behaviors during buddy reading explained:

Mr. Walker: They're all focused. I look around the room and they're all on task. None of them are not reading the book or not trying to engage their buddies. There's virtually zero off task behavior which is pretty amazing, actually, now that I think of it.

Teachers and seventh graders did express there existed some challenges keeping first graders on-task. When asked to describe their students, Ms. Whitt and Ms. Swift commented that this group of first graders was particularly energetic, at times easily distracted, and enthusiastic. These attributes may have contributed to Ms. Swift's observation that, on occasion, first grade readers had to be redirected:

Ms. Swift: Just the nature of some of the kids... they'll kind of drift off and walking through I'll kind of point them back to the book.

Ms. Whitt described the same kind of monitoring and encouragement of staying on task:

Ms. Whitt: I really rarely have to do any redirecting – sometimes I’ll say, “Scoot in a little bit.” Maybe a couple of kids are sitting too closely to another group so they might get a little distracted by another group and I’ll have to focus them a little.”

Seventh grade students reported that paying attention was a challenge for their first grade buddies. With the help of Mr. Walker, students had problem-solved and created strategies to assist their students with attending which included asking students to find different objects or characters in the story. Chris and Emily described other strategies:

Chris: Well, I try to say, “Come on guys. Let’s not get off task.” And that usually gets them...because I’m a lot older than them and (said with humility and a slight blush) they probably look up to me and all that.

Emily: I usually say, “Pay attention.” That’s how I do it with my little brother...I’ve got experience...

Not only did Chris and Emily’s comments show they were working to encourage their buddies to stay on-task, but they also expressed that they recognized their purpose was to engage their buddies as an authority, based on maturity and experience. Mr. Walker supported this notion:

Mr. Walker: They see themselves as instructors or teachers. They have a purpose and I don’t think any of them are taking it lightly.

It seemed the seventh grade students and participating teachers perceived and intoned the seventh grade readers' role of expert and authority:

Ms. Whitt: I see the seventh graders in a teaching role. They are the buddies for the first graders but they are really taking on this role. I see them coming prepared having gone over the books and having pre-learned the strategies.

When asked, "What have you learned about reading for yourself?" Matt explained how his buddies provided him motivation and purpose with an almost confessional tone:

Matt: It helped me become a better reader. Like, sometimes I was too lazy, but since those kids were there...

Mr. Walker, when addressing whether or not buddy reading had been a positive experience for his students, discussed the increased identity as readers that his students were developing. He also shared an anecdote about Matt and his increased understanding of himself as a reader:

Mr. Walker I think just making them feel like readers, which many of them have not. So, I think there's some sort of...I don't want to say self-esteem but, vision of themselves or identity...I think it helps some of them to see themselves as viable readers when their buddies say, "You're the best reader!" They *feel* that and I think many of them haven't felt that before. In fact I had one student, Matt, he said, "I

never liked reading before.” He was reading a book on soccer and he’s really in to soccer. He said, “I never liked reading until I read this book on soccer and now I really like reading.” He was kind of perplexed when he said it like, wow, that’s weird. I think some kind of cognitive dissonance was taking place where he’s like, I’m not a reader but I like it and I’m doing it and I’m teaching this kid how to do it... You know, it was evidenced in the tone of his comment. He was surprised by it (chuckles) which to me is clear evidence that it’s a positive thing.

When answering the same question, Ms. Whitt also shared thoughts on readers holding purpose and identity but included reflection on the strategic nature of this particular buddy reading program:

Ms. Whitt: I’ve done buddy reading where they come over and they just read and that’s great too because they read for enjoyment...but for the older kids to read with purpose to improve their understanding in a low risk format with picture books and using those strategies...It’s a positive experience which is important because who is going to learn if they feel disinterested...if it’s not fun? You know, it’s fun and it’s meaningful...It’s kind of interesting to see what standards they are working on for first graders but are also relevant to seventh grade just at a more complex level.

Additionally, Ms. Swift discussed the strategic nature of the buddy readers' transactions when providing comment on why she felt buddy reading had been a positive experience for the involved students and describing her experience with buddy reading:

Ms. Swift: They are motivated to engage in literature and they are using strategies in different settings and they're excited about listening to stories...I think that modeling that the seventh graders do...you know that modeling of reading...I think it is just so positive.

It's really rewarding to see them actively participating and engaged in literature...in answering questions...predicting...all those things that are important to readers.

It seemed all three teachers were in agreement that students as buddy readers were engaged in reading on an affective level and also a cognitively strategic level:

Mr. Walker: It's been a good motivator for students because they enjoy it, they look forward to it *and* they see the purpose of learning the strategies in class because they know they're going to then be modeling and teaching those to the first graders.

While I was interested to find data supporting teachers' observations of students being cognitively engaged, I was curious if first and seventh grade students also could articulate this aspect of buddy reading. When Anna, Dylan, Flora, and Catherine were asked what

their favorite part of buddy reading was, they implied an understanding of the importance of being thoughtfully engaged:

Anna: They read to you and then it makes you learn reading.

Dylan: The writing.

Flora: They give us questions and then we write the sentences.

Kim: What makes you like that?

Flora: Because we can learn.

Catherine: The question...

Kim: What do you like about the questions?

Catherine: They ask you and you get to say the answers.

I was surprised that these four didn't talk, as the other four first graders had in their focus group interview, more about their buddies and enjoying the books. The comments above made me wonder if the first grade students enjoyed applying the comprehension strategies because they too were beginning to feel proficient at making meaning and enjoyed the opportunity to display their growing abilities as readers who use strategies to understand.

Along with the previous data shared regarding application of strategies showing the seventh graders were engaged in using them, they also answered that completing the graphic organizer for their picture book with another seventh grader assisted them in

thinking about the strategy for their own use. When asked what kinds of things they did to help their buddies understand books and stories better they explained:

Chris: I'd probably help them...like they'd say they didn't really know so I'd give them a couple of clues and then they'd get it.

Emily: Ask them questions.

Matt: I told them what it's a little bit about.

Emily: I would ask questions before we read, like on the cover, like what's this...and predictions...

The seventh grade students signified an understanding that to be engaged with text meant to be thinking in ways that would assist in creating meaning for them and their first grade buddies.

I was generally curious how students felt about buddy reading on an affective level. Student participant of both grade levels expressed a positive feeling about buddy reading. This was indicated when I asked the first grade students what they would say to another first grade student who was going to have a buddy. The first three comments are from the first focus group and the last three are from the second group:

Kayla: They are good readers.

Rachel: They are so nice to me.

Anthony: Our buddies help us.

Anna: That's cool!

Flora: That's *nice*!

Dylan: They'll read to you.

The seventh grade students also expressed positive sentiment about their buddies, reading, and the relationship. The seventh graders also referenced positive feelings, enjoyment from the relationship, and included the importance of feeling safe:

Chris: If you're, like, reading to another person that's your age it would be kind of boring.

Matt: But with little kids...

Chris: It would be more fun.

Chris: And they don't really point out the mistakes and stuff.

Furthermore, I asked them what they would say to another seventh grade student who was going to have a buddy:

Emily: It's great!

Matt: Wonderful.

Chris: It's fun.

Emily: It gives you great experience.

Sara: It's *good*.

Kim: What's great and wonderful and good about it? What makes it feel that way?

Emily: The buddies.

Matt: The expression...like makes it more fun.

Chris: Yeah. Like the buddies look up to us.

Emily: Like they care.

Chris: Yeah. It's like they're your brothers and sisters.

Emily: Like they care a lot for you. They're like, "Oh! Let's read! Let's do this!"

Matt: It makes me feel like reading to the world.

These students, especially the seventh grade buddies, expressed a depth of enjoyment and fondness for the experience I had not anticipated. I felt the academic content of comprehension strategies in the experience was still critical; however, I was intrigued and moved by the impact buddy reading seemed to have on the seventh grade readers' motivational and emotional engagement during the reading experience.

#### *4.5 Summary*

As I travelled through time, examining artifacts, listening again to the voices of the participants, and again reading their conversations and reflections to discover what findings were represented worthy of analysis, I was encouraged by the positive impact buddy reading had on students' indicated level of reading engagement. Additionally, I heard and read examples where students were conversing and dialoguing with each other to enrich their individual understanding of the various strategies' intent, and perhaps more importantly, their understanding of text. Furthermore, I observed evidence that students were aware of and practicing the comprehension strategies in an authentic and purposeful setting. By the end of the data generation phase, the weaving of a portrayal of the experiences findings, and analyzing the threads of those findings it seemed safe to suggest that buddy reading had positively impacted students' reading engagement and their use of taught comprehension strategies in ways that encouraged them to strive to find meaning and understanding from written word.

## Chapter 5 Discussion

### *5.1 Speculative Conclusions*

I use the word *speculative* in the above heading not to be coy, but to keep the focus of Case Study research at the forefront of conclusions offered. Case study design was chosen because of its nature to lay the foundation for future examinations of similar cases. Three years ago this version of buddy reading began its evolution. The first two years provided us, Mr. Walker, Ms. Swift, and me, the opportunity to form tentative assumptions about the value of buddy reading. The beginning of this third year gifted us the chance to closely examine our assumptions of students' engagement and application of taught comprehension strategies through case study and teacher action research. We know more now than we did before. It is hoped that conclusions offered here will encourage further study of buddy reading for reading engagement and comprehension strategy application. Also, elements of teacher action research were employed so that, while buddy reading was the case, student learning stayed at the core. In order to make this layering possible, the following two subsidiary questions were asked that warranted observations of students: What impact does buddy reading between first grade readers and seventh grade remedial readers have on reading engagement? *and* How do first grade readers and seventh grade remedial readers transfer the use of comprehension strategies from direct instruction to buddy reading experiences? Speculative conclusions will be offered regarding these two peripheral questions so that thoughts and reflections can be shared considering the central question: What impact does buddy reading between

first grade readers and seventh grade remedial readers have on both sets of students' application of comprehension strategies?

This buddy reading program was started because Mr. Walker wanted to offer his striving seventh grade students a reason for reading material at their instructional level. Mr. Walker expressed, during his interview, that in the past many of his students had not identified as readers or found reading experiences meaningful. Therefore, his students were less likely to be cognitively, motivationally, or socially engaged as readers (Guthrie and Ozgungor, 2002; Baker and Wigfield, 1999). The comments of teachers and students alike indicated that the students' level of reading engagement was impacted by buddy reading.

Students shared that they cared for their buddies and felt a sense of responsibility to their buddies. Furthermore, students expressed enjoyment of the process which supported the findings of Jacobson et al. (2001) when they studied remedial seventh grade readers and also found students expressed increased enjoyment and a feeling of efficacy while reading.

In addition to an emotive response toward their buddies, students and teachers implied students were engaged readers because they expressed feeling, or showed through excited behaviors, a desire to share literacy experiences (Guthrie and Ozgungor, 2002). Seventh grade students were found to adopt the role of expert during the reading experiences and felt purposeful. Therefore, their motivation became intrinsic because they perceived a social contract between themselves and the first grade readers (Guthrie

et al., 2004). Finally, because students were motivationally and socially engaged, they were able to cognitively engage as they attempted and practiced taught comprehension strategies. This was shown through their expressed awareness during focus groups, during the actual buddy reading conversations, and work with graphic organizers.

Based on these observations and their connections to existing research and theory, it seemed reasonable to conclude that buddy reading between remedial seventh grade readers and first grade readers encouraged reading engagement, when engagement is understood as desire to share books and reading experiences strategically and socially.

This buddy reading program and study were influenced by a theoretical framework that included the recognition that comprehension and understanding best occurred when they were socially constructed. This social construction of understanding seemed to be the way, or how, students engaged in literature and the transference of comprehension strategies to buddy reading experiences. Halliday's theory that, "from the ontogenesis of conversation we can gain insight into human learning and human understanding" (2004, p. 143) was recognized in the interactions between the older and younger students. The seventh grade tutors and the first grade tutees of this project engaged in the material and conscious world of the printed text, each intrapersonally experiencing the words, the illustrations – ultimately, the story. However, the interpersonal experience of discussing their metacognitive activity, specific to a comprehension strategy, intertwined their immediate experience with past experiences. Therefore, conversations of perception and understanding ensued during buddy reading.

These conversations potentially led to a greater understanding of the text and the taught comprehension strategy by the students.

It also became evident that older students were encouraging their own development and understanding and also impacting the development of the first grade students. Kozulin's definition of intersubjectivity was applied where intersubjectivity is the "shared social world... between a child and an adult through the process of negotiation of meanings" (1990, p. 170). In this case understanding was first encouraged between students through direct instruction by teachers in classrooms and then by the mentoring of younger children by more sophisticated students. Finally, students, both older and younger, were provided the opportunity to experience and deepen their understanding of the text in a social way. I discovered that three comprehension strategies were easily applied by both sets of students in an intersubjective way. Internalization of those strategies seemed evident in their continued and unsolicited application throughout future sessions. However, three additional comprehension strategies involved more prompting and encouragement of first grade students by the seventh grade tutors. In these transactions, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development came into play (1978). The first grade readers would not have been able to attempt those more difficult strategies independently, yet with the guidance and encouragement of their older counterparts, they were able to attempt and approximate application of the strategies and their development, was perhaps, nudged. As Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik (1982) found typical in their meta-analysis of tutoring programs, it seemed that both the tutors and tutees were benefiting on an attitudinal level and also an academic level.

Ultimately, it was my hope to draw some conclusions about the impact buddy reading had on students' application of comprehension strategies taught during direct instruction. As I contemplated the conclusions drawn above about increased reading engagement and social construction of meaning during buddy reading, I recognized that buddy reading was an opportunity for students to practice the application of comprehension strategies. Although success varied depending on the complexity of the strategy, they were able to demonstrate an understanding, or initial understanding of six out of seven of the instructed strategies. They were able to do this because they were motivationally, socially and cognitively engaged. Furthermore, students expressed they felt safe to try and err in a supportive setting where they were free from scrutiny and judgment. Buddy reading experiences, because engaging, increased students' attention to instruction and hence, awareness of what active and successful readers could do to make meaning.

Teachers shared, through a variety of comments, they wished for their students to use strategies during their independent reading experiences. They also recognized it was early in the academic year and their students had only briefly been exposed to each strategy. As reflective practitioners, they expressed ways they hoped to encourage independent application by expanding on what was in place. I did not build, within my study's design, a way to examine independent application. Therefore I was left inconclusive about what impact buddy reading had on students' ability to apply comprehension strategies outside of buddy reading. However, I felt I could speculate that because buddy reading increased students' awareness and provided them authentic

practice of what readers do to construct meaning, independent transfer may come easier for students as they are provided more exposure and opportunity to do so.

### *5.2 Implications for Instructional Practices*

Researchers and theorists have made a compelling argument for explicitly instructing cognitive strategies to developing, striving, and practicing readers (Baker, 2002; Duffy, 2002; Trabasso and Bouchard, 2002; Brown, et al., 2004). This study adopted that belief and teachers should be encouraged to incorporate strategy instruction for comprehension in their planning and delivery. Goodman's ACTIVE reading framework is a straightforward and memorable way to assist students in learning and applying the basic strategies involved in this research endeavor.

As I reflected on the findings of previous research on cross-age tutoring and what was found through the observations and voices involved in this study I have come to believe incorporating a buddy reading program into students' academic experiences is worthy of consideration. This program is fortunate to have a middle school and elementary school within walking distance of one another. However, teachers might consider using older students in the same building. Furthermore, because engagement was impacted so positively, students of any reading level, not just those in need of additional support, could potentially benefit from buddy reading experiences. Also, if students are being taught comprehension strategies and need opportunity for practice,

buddy reading may be a great venue. Additionally, buddy reading may be a possible way to lay the foundation for future independent practice.

Sinatra, Brown, and Reynolds (2002), as previously referenced, encouraged teachers to remember that students have only so many cognitive resources to allocate at one time. It may be appropriate to slow down the rate at which strategies are taught and to be ever aware of which strategies students use with ease and those that prove more challenging. Teachers of this study recognized that they would spiral and revisit strategies throughout the year. This proved a necessary instructional implication when it was discovered that some strategies come more easily than others.

Finally, if teachers chose to use graphic organizers during buddy reading experiences I would recommend that they have older readers complete the graphic organizer independently as a way to assess independent application. Next, I would encourage the older readers to record what their younger buddies say during buddy reading. In doing so it would produce an assessment of each student's attempt at utilizing the strategy.

### *5.3 Implications for Further Research*

As the teachers suggested in their interviews, this felt like only the beginning. A growing body of research indicated that tutoring was a valid instructional practice and teaching comprehension strategies yielded positive impact on students' ability to

understand and make meaning. It was my hope that this research endeavor would spark an understanding of how comprehension instruction and buddy reading, or tutoring, can come together. I anticipated that this would shed light on further questions for exploration for me or others who might be interested in generating data and insight to similar practices.

Mr. Walker, the seventh grade teacher, and his seventh grade students made reference to fluency and reading with expression on several occasions. It would be interesting to look at the impact that buddy reading has on these two areas of reading that often influence comprehension.

This research took place over seven weeks, approximately a trimester, of comprehension instruction and buddy reading sessions. I feel as though we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. I believe that an examination spanning the full academic year would be far more illuminating with regard to comprehension strategy application. If such an undertaking were launched, more insight might be gained about how students apply strategies overtime after they have been taught, practiced and taught again. Also, a component for studying how students apply strategies independently could be built in so that their independent practice could be monitored and also compared to their practice during buddy reading.

#### *5.4 Final Thoughts*

Whatever practices or questions are inspired by the findings of this research, I hope, above all, the awareness that we learn what students can do directly from them is carried in the readers' understanding and in my ongoing practice. Students were purposeful and dedicated participants in this study because they felt the tasks asked of them were relevant and meaningful. Teachers were reflective and responsive because they saw the impact their instruction was having, not just in isolated classroom experiences, but also when their students were asked to negotiate the content of instruction in socially dynamic learning experiences. Through it all, I learned, from the standpoint of a teacher-researcher, the value of asking questions, staying sensitive to the surprising answers that might be offered, and never underestimating the impact of people, whether teachers, students, or researchers working together. For, it is when we learn and talk with each other that the deepest level of understanding is established for each of us individually (Vygotsky, 1981).

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