

Winter 12-18-2020

## Using Inquiry to Raise Engagement During Third Grade Instruction

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*Dissertations, Theses, and Projects*. 441.  
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Using Inquiry to Raise Engagement During Third Grade Literacy Instruction

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to research the effects that using inquiry-based strategies have on independent reading time engagement and reading achievement for third grade students. The research will begin by identifying the level of engagement and reading achievement of a third-grade class. A third-grade class will receive lessons on using the inquiry process, and then they will be able to take control of their learning and will be able to read and create projects based off what they are interested in. This study will examine if these strategies and options will boost engagement for these third-grade students, which will potentially boost reading abilities as well. The results of this study show that implementing inquiry-based research projects will positively affect engagement during independent reading for most students.

## Using Inquiry to Raise Engagement in Literacy in a Third Grade Classroom

### Chapter One

#### Introduction

##### General Problem/Issue

The pressure is on elementary teachers to help their students improve their reading ability to meet grade level expectations while still developing student-centered activities that excite readers (Sandifer, 2011). Third grade is a time where students are expected to go from developing readers into more independent transitional readers. The amount of time which students are expected to be able to read independently increases. An issue that many third-grade students struggle with are staying engaged in their independent reading for the entire expected reading time. In third grade in our school district there is forty-five minutes built into our schedule where the teacher meets with small group reading groups, and the students have independent reading time. This forty-five-minute period is difficult for many students to stay engaged in there reading the whole time. At the start of the school year, we start by slowly building up to forty-five minutes of independent time, as we keep getting longer into that period more students became less engaged and focused on their reading. I have observed that some students would begin distracting other classmates, some students would switch to doing something else, some students would just flip through pages, and some would try to stay engaged but they would be bored and would easily get distracted by something else.

As an elementary educator I have seen that many of my students struggle with engagement during reading. With this period being so important for children to develop their reading skills, I wanted to investigate and implement ways that I can help students improve their engagement in reading. I especially wanted to investigate this topic, as many of the students who struggle with staying engaged are students who are also behind grade level expectations for

reading. In third grade we spend a large part of our literacy block with the students having independent reading time. If students are not engaged in their independent tasks during this time, they are losing valuable time where they could be improving their skills.

I believe a way to raise engagement is to allow students to have choice and really explore topics that they are interested in reading about. A way to let them explore what they are interested in is to teach inquiry skills and allow them to read and research what they are interested in. My goal is that researching about engagement will help find ways to keep students motivated to read during this time, which will help the students develop stronger reading skills. The purpose of this study is to research the effects that using inquiry-based strategies have on independent reading time engagement and reading achievement for third grade students. This research project is important as it will provide students with opportunities to read and research topics, they are interested in. This will hopefully allow students to raise their levels of engagement, which will in return help improve their reading skills.

### **Subjects and Setting**

Students involved in this action research will come from my third-grade classroom in the fall of 2020-2021 academic year. All students in my classroom will have the opportunity to be part of this research project if they choose to be. The class is in an elementary school that is in a city that has a population around 39,000. The school has between 650-700 students and has the following demographics that made up the student population during the 2019-2020 school year: White 67.7%; Black 11.9 %; American Indian 2.1%; Hispanic 10.1%; Asian .9%; Two or More Races 7.3%; Special Education 16.5%; Free and Reduced Lunch 37.4%; English Learners 6.7% The third-grade classroom that will participate in the study, currently has 17 students enrolled (These numbers are constantly changing with the COVID-19 Pandemic).

### **Research Ethics**

Permission for this action research project is being obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Minnesota State University of Moorhead and from my school district to conduct this study. Protocol from the school district and review board will be followed. Students and parents will be informed of the purpose of the study, time required, no risks, and benefits. There are no risks for being a part of the study. Students and parents have the choice to participate or withdraw from this research at any time. This information is included in the parent consent form, which will be given to parents, and must be signed before beginning any of the research. Students will also have the research project explained to them, and they will also have to give assent before the research begins. If parents or students decide to not participate at any point their will not be any consequences. All students will receive the same instruction and have the same opportunities to use inquiry and engagement strategies during their independent reading time. If students and parents decide to participate in the research project data will be collected and analyzed about the students' progress in reading. This will be completely confidential as numbers will be used instead of student names. All data and information for this research project will be locked in a desk drawer while it is not being used.



### Term List

**Engagement:** Refers to the amount of attention, curiosity, interests, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning and when they are involved in school tasks.

**Inquiry-Based-Learning:** Inquiry-based learning is an approach to learning that emphasizes the student's role in the learning process. Rather than the teacher telling students what they need to know, students are encouraged to explore the material, ask questions, and share ideas.

**Literacy:** Is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.

**Literacy Block:** The time in the school day where the learning is focused on literacy tasks.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Literature**

The purpose of this study is to focus on students who are struggling staying engaged in their independent reading time. In third grade we increase our independent reading time to forty-five minutes a day in our classroom. Many students struggle staying engaged for that entire time. Many of the students who are struggling to stay engaged are students who are behind grade level expectations for reading. I am concerned for students who are not able to stay engaged during this time will continue to fall further behind in reading. I want to investigate engagement to see if there are some strategies that I could implement to help boost engagement.

### **Literacy Instruction**

Literacy instruction is one of the most important educational activities that occurs daily in an elementary classroom, as it is usually what teachers and students spend the most time on throughout the day. Literacy instruction in classrooms includes reading, writing, spelling lessons and practice. Quality literacy instruction is important because it has strong impact on the success students will have. “Becoming a proficient reader by Grade 3 is a key predictor of future academic and career success, including high school graduation” (Prescott, Bundschuh, Kazakoff, Macaruso, 2018). The importance of becoming a proficient reader by third grade makes reading instruction especially important during these grades. Teachers are always trying to find the most effective way to teach reading. There are many different strategies that teachers try including teaching comprehension strategies, teaching vocabulary, teaching decoding skills, and many other strategies. According to research, “The research regarding effective literacy teaching highlights that effective teachers know how to combine methods and use a variety of materials and texts” (Pomerantz, Pierce, 2019). Teachers are always trying to find the right balance of using all the above strategies to help students become proficient readers.

### **Current Literacy Practices.**

In my current third grade classroom literacy has the most time designated out of all subjects on our daily schedule. Each day we have a fifteen-minute reading lesson followed by forty-five minutes of independent reading time and small group reading. We also have a twenty-minute word study time, and forty-five minutes of a writing lesson and independent writing time. The part of my literacy instruction that I am going to focus my research on is the forty-five-minute independent reading time. During this time in my classroom, I meet with small groups for targeted reading lessons. The rest of the class is reading independently during this time. Since I am working with small groups of students, it is up to individual students to stay motivated and to read during this time. I want to research and find ways to help students stay on task and be excited to read during this time.

### **Engagement During Literacy Instruction**

Engagement refers to the amount of attention, curiosity, interests, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning and when they are involved in school tasks. Since literacy instruction is crucial for elementary students it is important to help students be engaged during their reading to help them improve their skills. One place in my classroom where it is important that students are very engaged is during their independent reading time. This is a forty-five-minute time block where the students are working independently. If students are engaged during this time it is a fantastic opportunity for them to improve their literacy skills. If they are not very engaged in their work, it is a missed opportunity to keep developing their literacy skills. My goal through this research is to help them develop skills to stay engaged in their work.

### **Reading Motivation**

In every classroom there are students who are motivated to read, and students who are not motivated to read. Unfortunately, as students get older there are more students who are not

motivated to read. “Research has indicated that reading motivation declines as children grow older and this trend sets in at the end of elementary school” (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, Rosseel 2012, p. 1006). It is especially important to continue to think about reading motivation as the amount of time spent reading helps predict reading achievement and the knowledge of the world (De Naeghel et al., 2012). There are different types of motivation that students might feel towards reading. The most optimal type of motivation is intrinsic motivation, where students read for their own enjoyment and satisfaction. The other type of motivation is controlled motivation, where students read to obtain a reward or to avoid punishment (De Naeghel et al., 2012). Educators often have great intentions to try and motivate their students to read, but sometimes will end up pushing a reward or punishment instead of trying to build up the intrinsic motivation. Engagement and motivation are particularly important for readers to have as pointed out in a study where it says, “Without the skills of reading comprehension and the motivation for reading to learn, students’ academic progress is limited” (Guthrie et al., 2004 p. 403). Educators want to get to a place where students want to read on their own because they are interested and engaged in the book, they have in front of them.

### **Student Goals**

Another study looked at engagement in students and how it connected with goals, mindset, and comprehension (Cho, Toste, Lee, Ju 2019). They looked closely at evidence that showed the way struggling readers perceived the text had an impact on their engagement and comprehension. The findings of this study found that the effects of having a growth mindset or fixed mindset fully depend on achievement goals and engagement. The researchers said, “It is essential that we foster students’ interests and enjoyment in reading by instilling a growth mindset and helping students to set mastery goals toward learning and discouraging the adoption of performance goals” (Cho et al., 2019 p. 1226). When reading with an ability goal in mind you

are really trying to learn all about that subject, hopefully it is a topic of interest, and your goal is to become an expert on that topic. Performance goals are when your goal is to read a challenging text, or to finish a certain number of pages. This study found evidence that proficiency goals help students develop growth mindsets, which allows them to tackle challenging texts, be more engaged in their reading, and comprehend better” (Cho et al., 2019 p. 1239).

### **Differentiating During Literacy Instruction**

Classrooms everywhere are truly diverse places. Teachers have classes that are formed from students from diverse cultures, experiences, home lives, and academic ability. Teachers must adapt their lessons and instruction to meet the needs of all students in their room. Differentiating lessons ensure that students are provided with opportunities to be successful in the classroom and help them grow as learners.

#### **Struggling Readers**

When thinking about signs of struggling readers, one of the first signs that might point out a struggling reader is their level of engagement during those subjects. According to a study, “the issue of engagement is an important one, given the evidence suggesting strong linkages between engagement and achievement in reading and the key role of student interest in promoting higher reading achievement” (Little, McCoach, Reis 2014, p. 385). According to a study and a recent National Assessment, only 36% of all fourth graders are proficient in reading (Kent, Wanzek, Al Otaiba 2017). Every single year that I have been a teacher I have experienced struggling readers who are over a whole grade level behind. According to Mathes and colleagues, “the most important responsibility of educators in the primary grade is to ensure that all students become competent readers” (Mathes, Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, Francis, Schatschneider, 2005 p. 148). This statement is a real concern to me as I have noticed students who come in behind in reading, often do not progress as much throughout the year as their

classmates even though they are receiving additional support and time. Something about the current process is not working for these students and they are at a significant risk if they are not able to become competent readers at this early age. There is also a big transition from the early elementary grades to the upper elementary grades when it comes to the content that is being taught for reading.

### **Gifted and Talented Readers**

In every classroom there are also students who excel academically and are above grade level for reading. These students need challenges and instruction that pushes them to keep becoming better readers. Little also talked about how there are engagement issues presented to gifted readers as well. She pointed out how talented readers are often given less instruction, and receive less differentiation, so they often will read easier books for them, and tend to struggle when they are given a challenging text that pushed their reading abilities (Little et al., 2014).

## **Inquiry Based Learning**

Inquiry based learning is a wonderful way for students to have an opportunity to oversee their learning. Inquiry based learning is a strategy that teachers can help students improve on their academic skills while students get to have choice over what they are learning about. During inquiry-based learning students will develop questions about topics that they want to learn about, and then they will have opportunities to look through sources to answer those questions. Inquiry based learning is a terrific way to raise engagement in an elementary classroom.

### **Inquiry**

Using inquiry in a classroom is a fantastic way to provide students in opportunity to take control of their learning. “Inquiry means allowing students to become much more involved in the decisions about what to study and what sources and activities are necessary for learning” (Tower 2000 p. 550). According to a study, “Throughout the processes of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, children learn to think” (Daniels, Hamby, Chen 2015 p. 10). Students can think deeply about topics that they are interested in and inquiry gives them a chance to ask questions that they wish they knew more about. “In an inquiry-based classroom, students take an active role in all areas of decision making and assessment” (Tower 2000 p. 550). Students are more engaged because they feel involved with what they are learning, and they will be more excited to show what they have learned because they will be involved with designing a way to show their learning.

### **Inquiry Based Instructional Model**

To help raise engagement during our independent reading time, students will have the opportunity to use an inquiry based instructional model. “The benefits of inquiry-based instruction are well documented; students hold more ownership and control of their learning, develop their metacognitive skills and are more motivated and engaged in learning tasks” (Ness

2016, p. 190). Inquiry-based classrooms are driven by students' questions and wonderings, instead of teacher driven instruction. This type of instruction has shown to raise engagement and ownership but there are also academic advantages as well, "When asking questions, students are involved in multiple processes requiring deeper interactions with text. As they pose questions, students become focused readers with stronger understanding of the written text" (Ness 2016, p. 190). The asking question aspect of inquiry-based learning helps students to be more engaged and focused on their reading. Ness closed her article by saying, "When teachers create time and space for children's questions, powerful learning and interactions occur" (p. 194).

### **Preparing for Inquiry**

Inquiry is not always the normal mode of teaching in the elementary school, so for it to be successful in the classroom it is important to help prepare students for the inquiry process. An important first step is to plan time for question development. Elementary students need time to explore their interested topics to produce strong inquiry questions, and many students do not have many experiences with asking meaningful questions so it will be important to spend time helping them learn that skill (Tower 2000). Students will also need a variety of resources at their availability to be successful with inquiry. Especially if the students are working on inquiry projects during their reading time it will be important to have a variety of books, magazines, online articles, and other online sources available for them to read. Another important piece to help prepare for inquiry projects is for the teacher to model a research project from start to finish (Tower 2000). The teacher should provide an example of thinking of a topic, developing inquiry questions, finding resources, reading, and taking notes, and designing and creating a final project. This modeling step will help show what is expected of students. The last piece that must be in place before students begin is excitement and ownership for the students (Tower 2000).



Students really need to feel excited and feel like this is their project for them to be very engaged in this work.

### **Conclusion**

Engagement is a big part of reading that many elementary students struggle with. Students of all reading abilities can struggle to stay engaged with their text for a wide range of reasons. There is a strong connection between engagement and reading success, so it is important that we continue to push to help students engage in their reading. Many students will read something if they are instructed to, but as educators we want to develop strong reading habits where students want to read. Struggling readers often struggle with staying engaged while they read. While there are many things that struggling readers need to work on, engagement is an important piece as it will help foster a love for reading that can help struggling readers catch up. Using inquiry-based learning is a way to provide students with an opportunity to have more choice in their learning and can help raise engagement and excitement in learning. Students need to be taught the inquiry process, but once they know how to do it, they can use it to help take control of their learning.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Question**

Through my first two years of teaching third grade, I have seen that third graders have a challenging time staying engaged during their independent reading time. I also have seen students like to read books about topics they are interested in and like to create projects to show what they have learn. This information led me to create the research question: How will implementing inquiry-based research projects affect engagement during independent reading and reading ability in third grade students?

#### **Action Plan**

My research question focuses on the effects that inquiry-based research projects will have on engagement during our independent reading time. The first step of my action plan will be teaching whole-group lessons of how to use the inquiry process. I would model thinking of topics that I am interested in. I would model writing a list down, and then choosing one topic that I really want to find out more about. Then I would go back to our classroom library and select a book about the topic. I would tell the class that today all I am going to focus on is creating questions that I have about my topic. I would model reading the book and writing down questions that I had. At the end of the book, I would review all my questions, and I would decide if I was still interested in learning more about this topic. If I was still interested, I would move onto the next step of the inquiry process. Students would have an opportunity to try this skill out during their independent reading time.

The next step of my action plan would begin the next day and we would start our mini lesson by brainstorming sources that we could find information about our topics. These sources would include classroom library, school library, online books, online resources, and asking a

teacher for help. I would then model the next step of the inquiry project where the students can pick their inquiry topic and then record the main question they want to answer (See Appendix A). I would model picking strong questions to research. Then I would take a book about my topic and I would teach a strategy of how to take notes while reading. Today we would focus on jotting a note on a sticky note and placing it on our paper when we find a fact that answers our question. The third and fourth day I would again focus on the note taking aspect of the inquiry project. I would also model using different resources like online sources and online books.

Once students understand the idea of finding sources and taking notes, we would spend the next day talking about how students can create projects to show their classmates what they have learned during their inquiry project. We would brainstorm this as a class, but some examples would include a poster, slideshow, writing a report, movie, diagram, speech, and any other ideas that they produce. I would model an example or two to show students what the finished project could look like. The students would then sign up for an inquiry project (See Appendix B). The signup sheet will help students keep their thoughts organized, as well as show me who is using this strategy. Once all the mini lessons have been taught the students can know use their independent reading time to use this inquiry strategy.

### **Data Collection Plan**

My research project is focusing on finding strategies to raise engagement and stamina during the literacy time of reading and writing. My goal of using a strategy to raise engagement and stamina is that it will help improve reading and writing scores for all students, especially for my students who are entering the year behind grade level. Data collection will begin at the start of the year with our normal assessments. The first reading assessment is a Benchmark Text Level where the students will read a leveled passage and then answer comprehension questions about the passage. This data source will supply me information of if the student is at grade level for

reading, as well as give me a baseline of their fluency, and comprehension skills. The next assessment is the AIMS Web oral reading fluency assessment. This is where students will read two one-minute passages at grade level to show where their fluency level is at.

During this research project I will be teaching strategies to raise engagement and stamina during work time for students in reading and writings. One way that I will collect data on engagement is by doing engagement inventories with my class. I will do an engagement inventory (See Appendix C) at the start of the research project and then I will complete one every few weeks to track the progress. Engagement inventories are completely observational. I will have a sheet of paper and will look around the room every five minutes and track how many students are on task, and how many students are not on task. This data source will show evidence to see if students are increasing engagement and stamina from the strategies that I am teaching. Another data source that I will be using for this research is conversations with students during their work time. While students have work time, I will be circulating and having conversations with the students about their work. These conversations might include what they are working on, the strategies they are using, if they are enjoying what they are working, reasons why they are not working on their work, and other thoughts and feelings that have about the strategies and work. This data source will give me student feedback and interaction to see if their engagement is improving and will help find students that are still struggling with stamina and engagement. At the end of the research project, I will again text level my students to see if they have made adequate growth during this period, I will also complete one last engagement inventory with my class. My goal is that the strategies I teach will help raise students' engagement and stamina, which will in return help students improve their reading skills and help my struggling students catch up.

The last way that I will collect data is through our inquiry project rubric (See Appendix D). This rubric will follow all the steps of the inquiry process that I have taught in the classroom. The students will be rated on how they select their topic and how they develop their essential questions. The rubric then looks at the research part where the students will be assessed on how they select sources, their level of engagement in their reading, and the notes they take during their research. Lastly, the rubric looks at the presentation of the information. Students will be graded on how they organize their information, and how it stays connected to their topic and essential questions. Every time that students complete an inquiry project they will be graded on this rubric. I will be able to compare the progress that each student makes throughout the year each time they complete a project by looking at each part of the rubric.

### **Ethical Issues**

All students will have the opportunity to use these inquiry engagement strategies whether they decide to take part in the study or not. All students will be present for the whole-group lessons, so no students will miss any teaching if they decide not to take part in the study. Students and parents who decide to participate in the study will be anonymous and all their data will be confidential.

### **Limitations**

The big limitation of the research project is that it will be taking place during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Throughout the school year students might be involved in online learning, hybrid learning, or full in-person learning. With this uncertainty of how often students will be in school learning may affect this research project. Students will receive lessons on the inquiry process, and they will have the opportunity to complete inquiry projects on their own. The lessons and the student projects may occur in the classroom, or they may occur at their homes depending on whichever learning model our district decides to be in. Also, throughout the year

our distract may decide to change learning models for the safety of students and staff, so their will need to be flexibility for these projects as well.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Results**

#### **How will implementing inquiry-based research projects affect engagement during independent reading and reading ability in third grade students?**

The purpose of my study was to try and find ways to raise engagement in my third-grade students during their independent reading time. My research focused on seeing if inquiry-based research projects raised engagement during their independent time. To see if engagement increased, I needed a baseline of engagement for my classroom. I conducted an engagement inventory in my classroom to collect that data. An engagement inventory is where I observed the behaviors of my students for fifteen straight minutes during their independent reading time and tracked their on task and off task behaviors. The on-track behaviors I looked for included reading and writing about their reading. The off-track behaviors I looked for included talking, looking around, flipping pages, and walking around. Since our school is currently in the hybrid model, where only half my class comes each day, my initial engagement inventories took place on two days, September 29th, and September 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Table 1.0***Initial Engagement Inventory*

<b>Student</b>	<b>Track</b>	<b>Fall Text Level</b>	<b>Fall ORF</b>	<b>Total Times off Task</b>	<b>Total Times on Task</b>
<b>1</b>	A	P	125	3	12
<b>2</b>	A	G	28	6	9
<b>3</b>	A	G	24	6	9
<b>4</b>	A	P	98	5	10
<b>5</b>	B	M	94	1	14
<b>6</b>	B	L	75	6	9
<b>7</b>	A	N	90	6	9
<b>8</b>	B	G	29	8	7
<b>9</b>	B	P	98	5	10
<b>10</b>	A	O	98	9	6
<b>11</b>	A	G	28	10	5
<b>12</b>	A	D	14	10	5
<b>13</b>	B	G	27	8	7
<b>14</b>	B	H	18	11	4
<b>15</b>	A	N	89	6	9
<b>16</b>	B	P	156	3	12
<b>17</b>	B	N	104	8	7

Notes:

1. Student Number represents each student
2. Track means if the student comes to school on our A hybrid days or our B hybrid days
3. Fall Text Level: Represents the students reading level at the start of the school year. Level M is the beginning of third grade target
4. ORF: Means Oral Reading Fluency, which is the correct words per minute.
5. Total times off/on task: Students were observed for 15 minutes. Every minute students were marked off task or on task.

After the initial engagement inventory, I started teaching inquiry lessons to see if these strategies would help improve engagement during independent reading time. During the middle of my research, I completed another engagement inventory to track progress of the student engagement.



**Table 2.0***Second Engagement Inventory*

<b>Student</b>	<b>Track</b>	<b>Total Times off Task</b>	<b>Total Times on Task</b>
<b>1</b>	A	2	13
<b>2</b>	A	4	11
<b>3</b>	A	5	10
<b>4</b>	A	7	8
<b>5</b>	B	3	12
<b>6</b>	B	4	11
<b>7</b>	A	3	12
<b>8</b>	B	6	9
<b>9</b>	B	4	11
<b>10</b>	A	10	5
<b>11</b>	A	9	6
<b>12</b>	A	8	7
<b>13</b>	B	7	8
<b>14</b>	B	9	6
<b>15</b>	A	5	10
<b>16</b>	B	2	13
<b>17</b>	B	6	9

## Notes:

1. Student Number represents each student
2. Track means if the student comes to school on our A hybrid days or our B hybrid days
3. Total times off/on task: Students were observed for 15 minutes. Every minute students were marked off task or on task.

After the second engagement inventory I continued to allow students the opportunity to complete inquiry projects during their independent reading time. When students finished their project, they would present their project to their classmates. My research wrapped up during the first week of November, where I completed one last engagement inventory and text leveled the students once more.

**Table 3.0***Final Engagement Inventory and Current Reading Level*

<b>Student</b>	<b>Track</b>	<b>Text Level</b>	<b>Total Times off Task</b>	<b>Total Times on Task</b>
<b>1</b>	A	Q	1	14
<b>2</b>	A	I	5	10
<b>3</b>	A	I	4	11
<b>4</b>	A	Q	3	12
<b>5</b>	B	N	3	12
<b>6</b>	B	M	4	11
<b>7</b>	A	O	2	13
<b>8</b>	B	I	4	11
<b>9</b>	B	Q	5	10
<b>10</b>	A	Q	6	9
<b>11</b>	A	I	7	8
<b>12</b>	A	E	8	7
<b>13</b>	B	I	6	9
<b>14</b>	B	H	8	7
<b>15</b>	A	P	4	11
<b>16</b>	B	Q	3	12
<b>17</b>	B	P	6	9

Notes:

1. Student Number represents each student
2. Track means if the student comes to school on our A hybrid days or our B hybrid days
3. Text Level: Represents the students current reading level. Level N is our current goal.
4. Total times off/on task: Students were observed for 15 minutes. Every minute students were marked off task or on task.

The table below represents the change in the number of times students were engaged from the initial engagement inventory to the final engagement inventory.

**Table 4.0**

*Change in Engagement*

<b>Change in On Task Behaviors</b>	<b># Of Students</b>
<b>-2</b>	1
<b>-1</b>	0
<b>0</b>	2
<b>1</b>	1
<b>2</b>	8
<b>3</b>	3
<b>4</b>	2

Notes:

1. Change in on task behaviors represents the number of times students increased or decreased in engaged reading in a fifteen-minute time.
2. # of students represents the number of students who increased/decreased by that amount.

The other main data I collected was the based off the rubric I created for the student's inquiry projects. I graded the students on eight distinct categories that represented skills they learned about the inquiry process. All the students that elected to participate in the research completed at least one inquiry project. Most students were able to complete two inquiry projects during the research window. A few students were unable to complete two projects for various reasons that involved them missing in-person school days because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students were not given their score, but all students received feedback on their projects and were told places that they could make improvements for the next time. The table below shows the student scores on the rubrics, as well as their change in scores if they completed multiple projects

**Table 5.0***Inquiry Project Rubric Scores*

Student	Track	Inquiry Project Score 1	Inquiry Project Score 2	Change in Score
1	A	26	29	3
2	A	18	20	2
3	A	16	21	5
4	A	23	25	2
5	B	21	22	1
6	B	24	23	-1
7	A	24	Not Completed	Unavailable
8	B	15	17	2
9	B	27	25	-2
10	A	25	Not Completed	Unavailable
11	A	17	Not Completed	Unavailable
12	A	11	Not Completed	Unavailable
13	B	14	16	2
14	B	18	Not Completed	Unavailable
15	A	19	17	-2
16	B	21	24	3
17	B	20	25	5

Notes:

1. Student Number represents each student
2. Track means if the student comes to school on our A hybrid days or our B hybrid days
3. Inquiry Project Score 1 refers to the students first project score on the rubric (Appendix D). Inquiry Project Score 2 refers to the students second project score on the same rubric.
4. Change in score refers to the change from the first project to the second project.

**Interpretation**

The results of my research showed that implementing inquiry strategies does raise engagement during independent reading time for most third graders. The data shows that while working on inquiry projects that fourteen of my seventeen students involved in this study showed that they were more engaged in their reading time. The data also showed that during the initial engagement inventory only five of my students were able to stay engaged for at least ten of the fifteen minutes. This improved to eleven students were able to stay engaged for at least ten of the fifteen minutes. This is the result that I expected as it makes sense that students are more

engaged in their reading when they can choose topics that they want to research and learn more about. These results also align with the literature I read. “In an inquiry-based classroom, students take an active role in all areas of decision making and assessment” (Tower 2000 p. 550). I have noticed over the past weeks that students in my classroom have taken more of an active role in their independent reading time. One item of my data collection that I would change if I did the research again is, I would conduct more than one engagement inventory at the beginning and more than one at the end of the research. I noticed throughout the research that there were days where students either were less engaged than normal, or more engaged than normal. With researching third graders it would have been nice to have a few more data points at the beginning and end to truly find out the impact the inquiry strategies had on their engagement.

One part of my research that did not work out or show if it had a true impact was the effect the inquiry had on student achievement growth. With limited time this year I was only able to text level my students to see if there was improvement from their fall text level. While most of my students have improved text levels there is not any data that shows the reason, they improved was the inquiry projects. I can hypothesize that the engagement strategies have helped them improve their reading skills however, there are many additional reasons for why they are improving in reading. The students are receiving whole group reading lessons, the students are participating in small group reading groups at their level, and students are back in a routine reading every day. All of these have an impact on students reading improvements, so it would be difficult to say how big of an impact the inquiry strategies had on their reading achievement improvements.

The last tool I used to track data was the inquiry project rubric. After looking at this data I found that most students who completed two inquiry projects improved from the first project to the second one. The data shows that nine students out of twelve who completed two inquiry

projects improved on their project. This shows that most students are improving using the inquiry process and are becoming more engaged in their thinking during this time. This rubric does show where students are making gains in asking and developing questions, as well as comprehension skills when you look through their note taking.

One challenge when looking at and interpreting this data for this year is that my class was in the hybrid model the entire time where half of my class would come each day. This was a challenge as students only were in school for half of the normal days that they would be there on a normal year. This created issues for students as some students were not able to complete a second project, and because of the pandemic some students struggled to pick up where they left off on their project after they had been gone from school for more than a week. I also wonder if their engagement inventories would have looked different if all the students had been present at the same time, compared to only half of the class being there at a time.

### **Results Conclusion**

Implementing inquiry-based research projects will positively affect engagement during independent reading for most students. Allowing students to have choice of what they want to read and what they want to research raises their motivation and their engagement. I also noticed that having the students present their projects helped motivate them to their best on the project and helped them stay engaged. My research was inconclusive on whether inquiry projects will improve reading achievement for students. I do believe that the inquiry projects have been part of the reason students have been improving, but I am unable to determine how much impact the projects have on the improvement. My research also determined that providing students with multiple opportunities to practice using inquiry allows them to improve at the process.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Action Plan**

#### **Next Steps of Teaching:**

Completing this research project has really helped me grow as a professional. One of the biggest ways that this study will impact my professional practice is the thought process that went through the entire project. This study was all about reflecting on my teaching and trying to produce a way to make an improvement on the way I taught something in my classroom that would make a positive impact on my students. I think this study has really helped me strengthen my reflective practices and now makes me notice other places in my teaching that I want to improve. Completing this research project has given me the confidence to take a problem in my classroom that I have and dig into some literature to look for solutions, and then be willing to try different ideas to see what works best for my students.

This research project has also solidified in my mind the importance of providing opportunities where students have choice in what they are learning about. When thinking about all the material we cover in school I really am going to work to find chances for students to have their choice. Using inquiry projects allow students to take control of their learning and become experts on topics that they are interested in, and they also are great ways for the students to practice their reading and writing. I am going to continue to have students work on inquiry projects and I am going to continue to use the rubric to provide feedback for them to keep helping them grow.

#### **Sharing the Results**

My action plan for sharing my results will focus on spreading the message of finding ways to keep students engaged during their independent reading time. The first group of people that I will share my results with are the students' parents. I will explain the process that we

worked through and then I will explain the change in engagement I saw in their child while they worked on their inquiry projects. I also hope that at conferences that the students will have the opportunity to share the projects they created with their parents. I would also share these results with any other teachers that serve students in my classroom, for example special education teachers or title intervention teachers. I would share my results with them so we could collaborate and think about what worked well for our shared students, and what could we improve to make the experience better for those students. The next group of people that I will share my findings with is my third-grade team. We have scheduled meetings times each week, and I will use one of these to share what I have been working on and share the results I have found. I will explain how I led the students through the inquiry process, and I will share the resources I created for the project. I will then offer support or answer any questions if any of my team members chose to try out these strategies. I would also share my study and results with my school administration. I would remind them about what my research question was and would explain the results that I found. I would also share what my next steps of learning will be after completing this project, and I would offer to share my project with other staff members in our building. Lastly, if an opportunity ever arose, I would be willing to share my research with other educators at a conference. I think engagement is such an important topic for all educators to have conversations about, so any chance to share what I found from my research I would participate in.



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Appendix A

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Inquiry Project:

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Inquiry Question(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Record Notes in the Box Below**

## Appendix B

**Inquiry Project**

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

How are you going to get your books? (Circle one) Mr. Ellingson Mrs. Martin Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

Who is going to work on this inquiry project? (check one box)

- I am going to work alone.
- I am going to work with a partner. \_\_\_\_\_ is my partner.

Essential Question:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How are you going to teach others and share your information? (check one box)

- Google Slideshow
- Poster
- Speech
- Flipgrid
- Video
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How long do you think this project will take to complete?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you going to use your entire read to self-time to work on this each day? Or are you going to only do this part of your read to self-time?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which days of the week are you going to work on your inquiry project?

\_\_\_\_\_



Appendix D

## Inquiry Project Rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

	Outstanding (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Limited (1)
Topic Selection: Student picks a topic in a relevant category.				
Essential Questions: Student develops appropriate questions that they want to find more about the topic.				
Research: Student uses a variety of resources to find information of their topic.				
Research: Student takes notes on information they find on their topic				
Research: Student is engaged in deeper reading looking for answers on their topic				
Presentation: Student organizes their information to present to the class.				
Presentation: Student answers their essential questions during their presentation.				
Presentation: Student stays on topic with the information they present.				