**Rationale for Choice Library and Sustained Silent Reading**

“Between 1996 and 2006, the average level of literacy required for all occupations rose by 14 percent. Both dropouts and high school graduates demonstrate significantly worse reading skills than they did ten years ago.”

 ~Kelly Gallagher, Readicide, 2009.

“I believe each of my students must craft an individual reading life of challenge, whim, curiosity, and hunger, and I’ve discovered that it is not too late in high school to lead a nonreader to reading. It’s never too late.”

 ~Penny Kittle, Book Love, 2013

**STANDARDS BASED:** GEORGIA STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE: ELAGSERL2: Determine a theme and/or central idea of text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. ELAGSERL3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. ELAGSERL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone.) ELAGSERL5: Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. ELAGSERL6: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

**STANDARDS BASED:** COMMON CORE: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-12.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/4/): Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-12.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/5/): Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-12.6](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/6/): Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-12.10](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/10/): By the end of each grade, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-12 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

**STANDARDS BASED**: NATIONAL COUNCIL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**ABSTRACT**: The majority of research cited below shows that children who were given a choice in reading scored higher in reading comprehension than when they were assigned a reading; likewise, children who read silently scored higher on comprehension measures than when they read aloud. Previous studies showed neutral results in testing the variability between reading silently versus aloud (Hawkins et al., 2011; McCallum et al., 2004); these findings also suggest that silent reading is optimal (Sanden, 2014). Data collected from students from both high- and low-income schools were used, and the results regarding the effects of choice and silent reading on reading comprehension were the same. As corroborated by other studies (Deci et al., 1981; Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Lewis et al., 1990; Reibstein et al., 1975), this study demonstrates that choice positively affects learning. Current practices in school literacy programs focus on assigned readings and often require children to read aloud. This research indicates that choice and silent reading are significant factors in improving reading comprehension scores. Because a major component of education is reading comprehension, children should be given the opportunity to enjoy reading and take ownership of their own learning. These goals can be accomplished by offering students a limited variety of reading options and by providing time to read independently. Results strongly indicate that comprehension is greatly influenced by choice and by opportunities to read silently

**1. Background for research**: Young readers who experience literature from an aesthetic stance are then eager to step out and consider the authors’ craft from an efferent perspective. When students have the opportunity to read fiction and nonfiction from an efferent stance, they learn to think critically about those texts, to evaluate the information as well

as to incorporate new knowledge into their existing schema. As Sipe (2008) points out, various researchers have approached the question of stance in different ways. In those studies situated in classrooms, what students are asked to do influences the stance they take and thus the reading experience that they have; context influences response. When young readers have the opportunity to think and talk about books as and after they are reading, they become critical readers. What teachers do, the context for reading that they create, shapes student response, and this is very clear in the many studies of classroom discussion of literature. As a result, through years of learning to read in English, students have managed to learn large amounts of vocabulary and every subtle grammatical rule by heart, but they cannot read well enough for information or for pleasure and relaxation, being able to decode only at the sentence level. Such a situation for teaching reading in classrooms leads to one obvious instructional issue: extensive reading is and should be part of the ELA curricula. Research presents an array of valuable insights dissecting the important components of reading instruction so that children are able to progress toward literacy. Barriers to literacy were outlined by Stanovich (1986). In his seminal review of the literature, he stated that children who read more slowly and with little enjoyment tend to read less frequently than those who read more fluidly and with more enjoyment, resulting in delayed vocabulary development and stunting their ability to read. According to Gardiner (2005), reading is a skill that students must come to enjoy; otherwise, it can impede their overall education. Children’s enjoyment of reading affects their reading success through all grade levels and into adulthood. For this reason, it is important to focus on how schools can improve children’s reading enjoyment levels in elementary school. This focus could improve literacy acquisition, and more specifically, reading comprehension. This research assessed the effect of choice on children’s reading comprehension and enjoyment. In a review of the literature, the author examined studies related to choice, silent reading versus reading aloud, and measurements of reading comprehension.

**2. What the research says:**

Time: Students need time to read in class in order to create a habit of reading and set the stage for homework reading, and teachers need reading time to confer individually with students about their choices, stamina, engagement, and goals. Students need time to discuss choices with classmates, time to analyze their progress, and time to practice fluency & comprehension strategies under the direction of the teacher.

Choice: Students need to make choices in reading that reflect their interests because interest drives engagement. Teachers should encourage wide reading in all genres as well as students who pursue an author or genre study. Allow students to reread favorite books and to abandon a book that no longer interests them (Kittle).

Several notable studies discuss choice and satisfaction. Lyengar and Lepper (2000) revealed that people are more likely to make a choice when offered six or fewer choices, rather than 24 or 30. Participants were given a choice of topics for a college essay. One group was given a large number of choices (i.e., 30), while another group was offered a small number of choices (i.e., six). Participants reported greater satisfaction with their selections when their original set of options had been limited. Although this study was conducted using college students, similar results may be found among other age groups. This research supports the idea that a reasonable number of choices improves the likelihood that participants associate enjoyment with their decisions. Choice creates a feeling of ownership; however, limits need to be considered when administering choice for optimal outcomes (Lyengar & Lepper, 2000). According to Campbell and Donahue (1997), teachers reported student interest and choice to be factors in test performance. Eighth and twelfth graders who were given a choice in reading more positively perceived those readings. Despite these positive perceptions, statistically significant results were not seen when twelfth-grade students were given a reading comprehension test for the choice reading, while slightly statistically significant negative results were seen among eighth graders. Although these results showed that students did not score better on reading assessments when given the opportunity to choose their books, the findings did show that student perceptions of the assignments were more positive. A study by Reibstein, Youngblood, and Fromkin (1975) suggested similar results to those found by Lyengar and Lepper (2000). Those who had been given a greater selection expressed higher levels of satisfaction with their choices compared to those with no choice. The study suggests that choice increases perceived freedom, thereby increasing satisfaction with one’s choice. Choice is an important factor in individual satisfaction. Student choice in learning enhances determination, ownership, motivation, and involvement (Vitto, 2003). According to Krashen (as cited in Sanden, 2014), silent reading improves the skills needed for comprehension. The study showed that elementary-aged students in SSR programs performed as well as or better in reading comprehension measures than did students in traditional reading comprehension programs.

The Fraumeni-McBride study’s data show that children who were given a choice in reading scored higher in reading comprehension than when they were assigned a reading; likewise, children who read silently scored higher on comprehension measures than when they read aloud. Previous studies showed neutral results in testing the variability between reading silently versus aloud (Hawkins et al., 2011; McCallum et al., 2004); however, this study’s findings also suggest that silent reading is optimal (Sanden, 2014). Data collected from students from both high- and low-income schools were used, and the results regarding the effects of choice and silent reading on reading comprehension were the same. As corroborated by other studies (Deci et al., 1981; Lyengar & Lepper, 2000; Lewis et al., 1990; Reibstein et al., 1975), this study demonstrates that choice positively affects learning. Current practices in school literacy programs focus on assigned readings and often require children to read aloud. This study indicates that choice and silent reading are significant factors in improving reading comprehension scores. Because a major component of early elementary education is reading comprehension, children should be given the opportunity to enjoy reading and take ownership of their own learning. These goals can be accomplished by offering students a limited variety of reading options and by providing time to read independently. Future research is needed on direct practices that may improve phonics instruction and other mechanical aspects of literacy; however, results strongly indicate that comprehension is greatly influenced by choice and by opportunities to read silently. While this study presents broad implications, limitations include research design (i.e., small sample size, specific location); further research with larger sample sizes in different geographical areas may strengthen findings. Various components of reading comprehension that are important for literacy acquisition need to be considered, including formal assessments that measure comprehension within the context of choice (Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007).

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