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Interactive read-alouds: Is there a common set of implementation practices?

The authors examined the read-aloud practices of 25 expert teachers to identify several common factors, then observed 120 additional teachers.

As every teacher knows, the benefits of read-alouds are numerous. Teachers conduct read-alouds to motivate their students to read and to build their topical knowledge about a specific subject (Hoffman, Roser, & Battle, 1993). Read-aloud texts, which are typically more difficult for children than their independent reading texts, are often followed by a brief discussion of the events and themes. The “ahhs” that follow when the session is over and the promise of more tomorrow demonstrate the joy associated with a good read-aloud.

When Artley (1975) asked teachers what they remembered most from their elementary school experiences, they consistently reported that teacher read-alouds were among their favorite memories. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) also found that middle school students reported similar favorites: They reported that independent reading time and teacher read-alouds made them want to read more.

Research and current practice continue to support the use of teacher read-alouds as a significant component of instruction across grade levels (Dreher, 2003; Martin, 1993; Richardson, 2000; Routman, 1991; Sipe, 2000; Trelease, 1989). The Commission on Reading (Anderson, Hiebert,

Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) stated, “The single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (p. 23). Realizing this, the read-aloud as a component of the reading program has been widely implemented, and according to the San Diego, California, City Schools literacy framework, teachers are encouraged to read aloud to their students every day.

While most educators agree that teachers should read aloud to their students on a regular basis, the specifics of how to conduct the read-aloud are less clear. The vast majority of the studies available on teacher read-alouds (e.g., Bintz, 1993; Elley, 1992; Ouellette, Dagostino, & Carifio, 1999) report only the outcomes of read-alouds. They rarely include a discussion of the processes that teachers use to implement the read-aloud. For example, Richardson (2000) said, “Read-alouds model expressive, enthusiastic reading, transmit the pleasure of reading, and invite listeners to be readers” (p. 3), and Daisey (1993) reported that reading aloud is one of the three ways that teachers can promote literacy for students of any age.

Why should teachers conduct read-alouds?

Many researchers have demonstrated that read-alouds are an effective way to introduce students to the joy of reading and the art of listening

(Morrow, 2003) while developing their vocabularies, experiential backgrounds, and concepts of print and story. Through a read-aloud, teachers can model reading strategies and demonstrate the ways in which the language of the book is different from spoken language (Hedrick & Pearish, 2003). Children's understanding of the patterns and structures of written language can be developed through read-alouds (Lapp & Flood, 2003; Strickland & Taylor, 1989). As children participate in read-alouds, they learn new words and ideas as they are exposed to a variety of genres in their written forms (Altwerger, Diehl-Faxon, & Dockstader-Anderson, 1985; Teale & Sulzby, 1987).

Perhaps the most researched areas of interactive read-alouds can be found in the literature on oral language development and motivation. As early as 1977, Flood demonstrated the positive motivating effects of read-alouds shared between parents and children. This was supported by Sulzby and Teale (2003), who reported on the impact of read-alouds on the motivation to read created among young children. Further confirmation for read-alouds as a motivating factor in reading was found by Gambrell, Palmer, and Codling (1993) in their work with third and fourth graders. Specifically, they found that choice was a motivating factor for reading and that the choices children made were often related to the teacher read-aloud.

In their review of the literature on oral language development, Pinnell and Jaggar (2003) demonstrated the importance of read-alouds in the growth of oral language for both first- and second-language speakers. This set of findings was also confirmed by British educators MacLure (1988) and Barnes (1992) in their work on oracy as communication in the United Kingdom. They found that read-alouds led to an improvement in language expression throughout all curriculum subjects. In an additional set of studies (Mandler, 1984; Nelson, 1986), researchers suggested that young children who experienced a number of read-alouds understood the components, structure, and function of narrative discourse. Nelson (1981) even argued that the experience of read-alouds enabled children to express themselves as individuals, connect with others, and make sense of the world.

What are the components of an effective read-aloud?

While the research is quite clear on the importance of instructing through read-alouds, studies are limited on addressing the question of how to conduct an effective read-aloud. In one study, Hoffman et al. (1993) presented strategies for enabling teachers to show children how to build upon their topical knowledge on a specific subject. In Jim Trelease's handbooks on read-alouds (e.g., 1989), he eloquently explained the importance of read-alouds but stopped short of providing an instructional model. Thus, the exact components of a read-aloud have been difficult to discern.

In our daily interactions with classroom teachers who conduct read-alouds, we wondered if simply reading the story aloud was sufficient or if there were specific guidelines that should be followed in order to maximize this instructional time. Realizing that a paucity of information existed on how to conduct a read-aloud, we decided to study the read-aloud practices of teachers who enjoyed the reputation of being exceptional models of read-aloud instruction and whose students consistently performed at or above the school norms on reading achievement. We decided that once we had identified the procedures of these "experts" as they conducted a read-aloud, we would next observe additional teachers to see if the procedures were used widely.

Participants

Phase I. Letters were sent to 65 district and site administrators throughout San Diego County who worked in urban schools. The letters introduced the research project and asked administrators to nominate one classroom teacher whom they believed was an "expert" in conducting read-alouds and whose students consistently demonstrated significant reading achievement.

The letter defined an expert as someone who the administrator would select as a model for other teachers to emulate, a teacher who regularly presented his or her instructional strategies in professional development forums, or one who was generally recognized for excellence in teaching. The letter defined significant reading achievement

among the expert's students as a class of children who consistently performed at or above the school average. Fifty-six administrators responded, and 45 identified expert teachers. From this group, 25 teachers representing 25 schools were randomly selected for observations.

Prior to conducting the planned observations, all of us observed one of the nominated "expert" teachers as he or she conducted a read-aloud in order to establish interobserver reliability among the researchers.

After establishing reliability among the researchers, each expert teacher was observed by two of us to identify the procedures they used to implement a read-aloud. Two researchers participated in each observation in an attempt to ensure the reliability of the coded read-aloud components being presented.

Phase II. A total of 120 teachers were randomly selected from a pool of 284 teachers in 15 schools in which San Diego State University faculty places student teachers. Grades 3 through 8 were represented. These teachers had not been nominated by administrators as experts but were consistently used as cooperating teachers for our student teachers. While each of these 120 teachers had at least 3 years of teaching experience, their teaching experience ranged from 3 years to 32 years, with an average of 8.3 years. Fifty-four of these teachers (45%) had master's degrees, slightly higher than the county average of 36%, and 103 of them were female. These 120 teachers were observed by two researchers as they conducted a read-aloud. The components of their read-alouds were noted and then compared to the read-alouds exhibited by the "expert" teachers.

Instruments

Observations. Teachers in phases I and II were observed while they conducted a read-aloud with their students. When observing phase I teacher experts, we collected observational notes in order to identify the components of a quality read-aloud. During phase II, we observed teachers reading aloud and rated them on a Likert-type scale on each of the components identified during phase I.

Interviews. Once the observations were completed, a random stratified sample of 18 phase II teachers were invited to participate in either individual or group interviews that we conducted in an attempt to better understand their planning and practice. This sample included three teachers from each of the grades. Prior to coming to the interview they were asked to note the components and sequence of the presentation of a read-aloud they conducted regularly in their classrooms and their reasons for doing so. During the interviews, participants and interviewers discussed the components that had been exhibited in the read-alouds of each of these phase II teachers. They were then shown the components of the model read-alouds presented by the expert teachers. Participants were encouraged to expand their responses whenever possible and to talk about why they had or had not employed the same procedures as the experts. All interviews were taped so the investigators could compare all of the responses from each participant.

Analysis. Data from phase I "expert" teachers were reviewed by the researchers for procedures that could be considered essential components of quality read-alouds. From these data, a rubric was developed that listed each of the essential components of a read-aloud. This rubric was then used to review the components of read-alouds described by the phase II teachers. Measures of central tendency were calculated across participants on the rubric. Finally, the interview data were used to explain and extend the observational findings. The interview transcripts were coded into categories of factors that emerged following multiple reviews of the data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Essential components of an interactive read-aloud

Data from the experts enabled us to identify seven components of an effective interactive read-aloud. All of the expert teachers included each of the following components during their read-alouds: (1) Books chosen were appropriate to students' interests and matched to their developmental, emotional, and social levels. (2) Selections had been previewed and practiced by the teacher. (3) A clear purpose for the read-aloud was established.

(4) Teachers modeled fluent oral reading when they read the text. (5) Teachers were animated and used expression. (6) Teachers stopped periodically and thoughtfully questioned the students to focus them on specifics of the text. (7) Connections were made to independent reading and writing.

The following examples of each of these components were observed as the expert teachers conducted a read-aloud. The only other component that was frequently, but not unanimously, observed was an invitation to gather together in the front of the room. We excluded this finding from our list of essential components because it was not used by all of the experts.

1. Text selection. Each of the 25 expert teachers clearly selected the text based on the interests and needs of the students in the class. For example, in one of the fifth-grade classrooms, the teacher was reading *Love That Dog* (Creech, 2001). Following her read-aloud, the students in this class talked excitedly about poetry and about their pets. In one third-grade classroom, the teacher read *Enemy Pie* (Munson, 2000) as the students listened intently. They asked questions about some of the words and shared stories about the problems they had had with peers in the past.

Teachers were consistently observed selecting high-quality children's literature for their read-alouds. Often these were award-winning books such as Newbery or Caldecott winners or books that had received notice in some way (e.g., the International Reading Association's Teachers' Choices, California Young Reader Medal, National Book Award). See the Sidebar for a list of common read-aloud books by grade level.

2. Previewed and practiced. The teachers previewed and practiced the text. Their practice of the text allowed them to pause effectively during the read-aloud to model fluency, and their pauses offered opportunities for questioning. During the reading of *Enemy Pie*, the teacher paused at several key points to ask questions that encouraged students to predict what came next. According to the observational notes, "The teacher has a number of sticky notes on the pages with her questions and prompts written on them. She clearly has read this book before and thought about places to pause and engage her students." Their practice of preparing

COMMON READ-ALLOUD BOOKS BY GRADE LEVEL

Grade 3

Enemy Pie by Derek Munson
My Name Is Maria Isabel by Alma Flor Ada
Amber Brown series by Paula Danziger
The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes
Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Grade 4

Shiloh series by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl
A Bad Case of Stripes by David Shannon
Stone Fox by John Reynolds Gardiner
The Whipping Boy by Sid Fleischman
Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez by Kathleen Krull

Grade 5

Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling (multiple grades)
Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan
Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink
Ella Enchanted by Gail Carson Levine
In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson by Bette B. Lord
Follow the Drinking Gourd by Jeanette Winter

Grade 6

The Giver by Lois Lowry
Number the Stars by Lois Lowry
Hatchet by Gary Paulsen
A Wrinkle in Time by Madelene L'Engle
Petey by Ben Mikaelson

Grade 7

Holes by Louis Sachar
Faithful Elephants by Yukio Tsuchiya
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis
Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind by Suzanne Fisher Staples
Tru Confessions by Janet Tashjian

Grade 8

Who Will Tell My Brother by Marlene Carvell
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor
The Devil's Arithmetic by Jane Yolen
Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
Stuck in Neutral by Terry Trueman
Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida by Victor Martinez
The House That Crack Built by Clark Taylor

the text also allowed them to select difficult vocabulary as was demonstrated during the fourth-grade reading of *Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster* (Frasier, 2000). In this case, the teacher previewed some of the more difficult words in the book before

her read-aloud. She also stopped periodically while reading and asked students to write specific words in their vocabulary journals. Following the read-aloud, students defined the new words in their vocabulary journals, created sentences with these words, and then sorted them by spelling patterns and conceptual similarities (e.g., Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1999).

3. Clear purpose established. A third area of consideration for quality interactive read-alouds exhibited by the experts was the teacher establishing a clear purpose for the book and lesson. The expert teachers consistently demonstrated this component during their read-alouds. For example, a seventh-grade teacher reviewed the purpose of the lesson with the class when she started the read-aloud of chapter 26 of *Holes* (Sachar, 2000). She reminded the students that they were focusing on two comprehension skills: inferencing and predicting. Just before beginning to read, she asked her students to "retell the previous chapter and make predictions about this chapter to a partner." There was a large poster board on the wall with information about inferencing and predicting that she referred to before reading and again after reading the chapter. Of course the teacher also wanted the students to understand the story and the theme, but her focus for the time was on these two comprehension strategies.

In a fourth-grade classroom, the walls were covered with information about character analyses. In addition, there were a number of language charts hanging on the walls (see Roser & Martinez, 1995). The teacher had clearly established the purpose in this classroom to be character analysis when she read aloud a chapter of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl, 1964).

4. Fluent reading modeled. A fourth component, similar to the second component of text previewing, focused on the teacher providing a model of fluent oral reading. It was observed that teachers had practiced the book and were familiar with the sequence of the text. Pronunciation errors were rare. For example, in a fifth-grade classroom the teacher was reading aloud *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Rowling, 1999). As the researcher notes suggest, "He knows all the names and the invented words. He pronounces them all correctly and doesn't stumble over them. He has

really practiced this book." The fluent oral reading model was similarly demonstrated during a reading of *A Bad Case of Stripes* (Shannon, 1998) in which several of the characters' names are difficult to pronounce. The teacher "read the book flawlessly. Her prosody engaged the students and they were captured as she presented chunks of text. The flow, rate, and quality were fantastic."

As noted by Eaton (1913),

This ability to read aloud so that literature shall be lifted from the dead page of print into complete expression should be far more than it is at present a prerequisite for the teaching of English. Teachers too often fail to appreciate that all real literature is addressed to the mind through the ear, not through the eye word-symbols are merely convenient for transmission and that since this is so the ear must be appealed to if the student is to understand literature aright, or to appreciate at all the sensuous beauty which is latent in it. (p. 151)

5. Animation and expression. An interesting component witnessed in all of the expert classrooms was the level of animation and expression the teacher used during the read-alouds. While this is difficult to measure and document, it was obvious to the observers that students in these classrooms were engrossed in the books that their teachers were reading as a result of this animation and expression. They exhibited this animation and expression by changing their voices to denote different characters' emotions and various moods the author was suggesting. They also used movement, hand gestures, facial expressions, and props to provide the animation and expression that seemed necessary to fully engage students. Whether because of the text selection, the vocal inflections, the questioning, or some combination thereof, we are unsure, but these classrooms were places in which children loved to listen to their teachers read. Some of the comments from the observational notes included, "The kids followed their teacher around the room with their eyes as he talked" or "they laughed at jokes in the books as she read them, clearly following along with the text" or "as she read *The Children We Remember* (Abells, 1983), several students had tears in their eyes. The look in their eyes told it all, they wanted their teacher to tell them that the children had been saved. Their faces changed visibly when she read 'but some children survived.'"

6. Discussing the text. Another component that the expert teachers consistently demonstrated was the strategic use of book discussions that occurred before, during, and after the read-aloud. While many of the expert teachers had sticky notes on the pages of the book with questions on them, others paused periodically to ask interesting questions about the text. The expert teachers in this study used a balance of efferent and aesthetic questions (e.g., Cox & Many, 1992) during their read-alouds. They wanted their students to understand the information and details presented in the text (efferent). They also wanted their students to engage with the text and make connections between the text and their own lives (aesthetic). For example, during a read-aloud of *The Raft* (Lamarche, 2000), the teacher provided each student with four index cards. One card said *Yes*, another *No*, another *Grandmother*, and another *Nicky*. As the teacher read the book aloud to the class she asked questions and encouraged all of the students to hold up one of the cards for the answer. At one point, she asked a student to predict what might happen next in the story. She then asked the whole class to hold up a *Yes* card if they agreed with the prediction or a *No* card if they thought something else might happen. At another point in the story, the teacher asked who was riding the raft. She seemed to do this because the text was a bit ambiguous and she clearly wanted her students to engage, move, and use their cards. Every student held up the card that read *Nicky*. At another point, she asked the class, "Can you see yourself doing this?" Still later, she asked, "Have you ever been on a raft?" One of the students who had her "yes" card held up was called on to explain her raft trip.

A third teacher held up the book *Smoky Night* (Bunting, 1994) and said, "Turn to a partner and talk about what you see on the cover—discuss the title as well as the illustration." In a sixth-grade classroom the teacher finished reading a chapter of *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) and turned to the students and said, "Think a minute about life with no crime. Sounds good, right? What would be the price of a society like that? What would you have to give up to have a life with no crime?" Each of these discussions was facilitated by the expert teacher but provided students the opportunity to share their thoughts, reactions, expectations, predictions, or concerns about the book that the teacher was reading.

7. Independent reading and writing. The final component observed was the expert teachers' ability to connect their read-aloud to independent reading or writing that was occurring during the day. Some of the expert teachers provided students with journal writing time immediately following the read-aloud. Others provided a specific prompt and asked students to comment on it in their writing. Still others encouraged students to select books for their independent reading that were related in some way to the read-aloud—by either genre, author, or theme. The expert teachers consistently ensured that the text that they read aloud was not an isolated event, but rather a part of their whole literacy instructional program. In one of the fourth-grade classrooms, the teacher was reading *Shiloh* (Naylor, 1991). Following her read-aloud, one of the learning centers involved students researching on Internet sites that explored animal abuse. In another area of the classroom, students were reading informational packets from the local animal shelter about care for maltreated pets.

Each of these seven components was regularly observed in the lessons designed by the expert teachers. One additional characteristic, asking children to sit in the front of the room during a read-aloud, was done in over half of the classrooms. While this may become an important characteristic of an effective interactive read-aloud, many teachers continue to allow students to remain at their desks while the teacher reads.

How widespread are these seven components?

Following the analysis and identification of the essential components of an interactive read-aloud that were used by "expert" teachers, we observed 120 additional teachers to determine how widespread these practices were. The findings included in Table 1 illustrate how consistently the components of the "expert" teachers' read-alouds were used by the additional teachers. These teachers were highly consistent in including animation and expression, book discussions, and text selection. They were rated fairly consistent at establishing purpose. For example, during a third-grade read-aloud of *Olivia* (Falconer, 2000), the teacher "read with exceptional emotion in her voice." The observational notes also indicate that the teacher moved in step

TABLE 1
Current implementation of interactive read-alouds

Item	Not apparent (%)	Some consideration (%)	Thoughtful (%)	Masterful (%)
Text selection ($x = 3.15$)	15	10	20	55
Previewed and practiced ($x = 2.50$)	27	13	43	17
Clear purpose established ($x = 2.67$)	18	26	27	29
Model of fluent oral reading ($x = 2.42$)	14	39	38	9
Animation and expression ($x = 3.33$)	2	9	43	46
Book discussions ($x = 3.17$)	3	11	52	34
Connection made to independent reading and writing ($x = 1.99$)	54	12	15	19

with the character, paced around the room, asked a number of prediction questions, and invited students to write their own ending for the book during their center time. However, the data suggest that these teachers did not consistently preview and practice the books, provide models of fluent reading, or connect their read-alouds to other literacy activities.

In terms of previewing, practicing, and modeling of fluent reading, a number of teachers stumbled while they spoke, mispronounced words, or emphasized part of a sentence that altered the meaning. For example, during a read-aloud of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the teacher mispronounced several of the text-specific words including *Diagon Alley*, *Dedalus*, and *Gringotts*. Another teacher repeatedly looked up from the book he was reading and made eye contact with specific students who were misbehaving. As a result, he had several false starts, repeated lines, and made mistakes. We are aware that the presence of two researchers in the room may have affected the performance; however, we have worked with this teacher and most of the others for many years. We also noted a few teachers who attempted to fluently read and discuss a book that they had not read previously. For example, during a

discussion of the book *Who Will Tell My Brother* (Carvell, 2002), the teacher burst into tears when the dog was killed and apologized to the class with a comment, "I didn't think that would happen." While the emotion was authentic and probably good for these eighth graders to see, this interrupted the flow of the reading of the story and shifted the focus from listeners' interpretation of and response to the book to the teacher's response. A practiced teacher would have shown the emotion through voice modulation rather than disrupting the story with tears.

The notes on the connections between the read-aloud and other literacy instruction are filled with the comment "channel surfing." By this, the observer was noting that the classroom appeared like a television that was being controlled by someone else. As one note indicated, "It's like watching a TV when you don't control the remote. Things are happening, but they switch rapidly and don't seem to relate to one another." In other words, there was not a clear focus for the read-aloud or a transition to the next classroom event. Teachers began read-alouds without much connection with what was occurring in the classroom before and ended the read-aloud with an abrupt switch to a new activity

or lesson. For example, in a sixth-grade classroom, as the teacher finished reading page 90 of *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Cushman, 1994), she said, "That's it for today. It's time for social studies; does anyone remember where we left off? [Several students raised their hands.] Go ahead, Justin, read."

Discussion

These data suggest that classroom teachers are skilled at presenting many of the components of a read-aloud that were characterized by their colleagues who were considered, by their principals, as "experts" at conducting read-alouds. The two populations differed on prior practice of the selected text and the connecting of the read-aloud to other classroom events. Because of lack of practice many of the teachers struggled with fluent reading. They also did not assign appropriate independent literacy activities to introduce or extend the focus of the selected text. We believe that attention should be placed on ensuring that students understand the purpose for the read-aloud, both in text selection as well as when asked to apply comprehension strategies, because it is through the read-aloud experience that students can be exposed to the power of the writer's language patterns; introduced to new vocabulary, concepts, and text structures; and "turned on" to the joy of reading. Because children move from hearing to reading to telling to writing original stories that include the literary patterns to which they are exposed (Peck, 1989), the read-aloud is paramount in a child's literacy development.

In terms of practice, students need a fluent oral model. We know that there is a difference between language that is written down and language that is spoken. The ability to fluently read text silently does not equate with the ability to fluently read text aloud. In other words, being a good reader is not sufficient. Teachers must also become good orators so that they can "tell the story" as they read it. This takes practice and coaching. We encourage teachers to practice reading selections aloud so that when they present them to their students they will be able to read with clarity and expression. They should also be able to use natural voice modulation to illustrate key points and changes in emotions without interrupting the listeners' "transfer of imagery" (Lipman, 1999) as they personally

visualize the story. Teachers need to be well practiced because their voices are the vehicles that so fluidly convey the story and enable student listeners to develop their personal images and responses. On the basis of these findings, we encourage teacher educators to consider modeling read-alouds for their preservice student teachers and requiring those students to practice read-alouds as part of their teacher preparation program.

With practice and comfort in reading aloud, teachers are more likely to focus on the purpose of the text. We observed that when teachers introduced the target book by sharing an overview and a focus, students seemed to better understand the purpose for listening. Expert teachers used the setting of purpose as an anticipatory set or prereading activity. We noted that this also increased student engagement with the text and ensured that the book discussions were focused and lively. Their thinking and talking were enhanced as they listened to and talked about books with their teacher and peers. During the conversations many of the expert teachers created word walls and charts of selected story vocabulary and student responses. These charts were referred to later when teachers read texts with similar topics or texts by the same author. Charting of and later use of "story time talk" is of major significance in literacy instruction (Roser, Hoffman, Labbo, & Forest, 1992).

Because reading for enjoyment is a significant reason for read-alouds, students need to be told often that one of the purposes of reading or being read to is enjoyment. Teacher educators may want to focus their lesson plan assignments for their future teachers on establishing the purpose of the read-aloud rather than allowing future teachers to view read-alouds as an optional activity or a break from the routine of the classroom.

At the conclusion of this two-part investigation we were left with the following questions that we believe should be investigated as we move toward a fuller understanding of the power of read-alouds in literacy development: (1) Do children tend to select the books that their teachers have read to them for independent and home reading programs? (2) Do children tend to learn the vocabulary words that are included in the read-aloud books more fully than other vocabulary words that they are taught? (3) Do children exhibit traces of the writing style of the authors of their read-aloud books? (4) Do

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children exhibit extensions to their learning that come directly from their read-aloud books? We plan to study these questions and invite others to join us.

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The cat in the stack

Many libraries in the United States belong to the Library Cat Society, founded in 1987 to encourage readers to "curl up with a good cat." Cats greet patrons in about 125 American libraries. "Library cats just create a nice, warm atmosphere," says filmmaker Gary Roma, producer of *Puss in Books: Adventures of the Library Cat* and owner of Iron Frog Productions in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The stand-up comedian maintains an online state-by-state directory of these resident felines (<http://ironfrog.com>).

"The cats attract children to the library and the elderly who maybe can't have pets in their apartment," Roma says. "Books, libraries, and cats just go together."

Adapted from Attoun, M. (2004, March 14-20). Library cats. *American Profile*, pp. 6-7.

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