Making the Most of Preservice Teacher Read A louds

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Abstract

This project was implemented in the fall of 2021 as part of an assignment for an undergraduate developmental reading course. The 18 preservice teachers enrolled in their second core block of methods coursework at Eastern Illinois University were instructed and evaluated on how to implement an interactive read aloud. Each preservice teacher selected a book from a group of 38 children’s books that reflected ethnically diverse cultures, gender identity, and family diversity. The course instructor modeled how to implement a read aloud which included how to select vocabulary to teach, asking thought-provoking questions, and creating dialogic structures for peer discussion. After implementing their read alouds, the preservice teachers were evaluated using the Interactive Read Aloud Scoring Rubric. As a result of these presentations and class discussions, preservice teachers gained both knowledge and confidence on how to successfully plan and implement a read aloud to their students.

Keywords: Pre-service teacher instruction, read alouds, literacy instruction
Making the Most of Preservice Teacher Read Alouds

Reading is the process of connecting spoken to written language and read alouds are a powerful tool to bridging these two processes (Burkins & Yates, 2021). When children are beginning to cross this bridge, listening comprehension plays an essential role in later reading comprehension as they expand their capacity to understand spoken language (Hogan et al., 2014). Burkin and Yates (2021) described it as a child’s ability to “hear” the print. When a teacher reads aloud to their students, they support language comprehension and expose them to new vocabulary and language structures, and offer students an opportunity to practice spoken language with their teacher and peers. The children’s literature utilized in this project reflected ethnically diverse cultures, gender identity, and family diversity. Moreover, it aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy and ATE’s Standards for Teacher Educators, Standard 2: Cultural Competence which in turn promoted the inquiry into different cultures and inclusivity (www.ate1.org).

Preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher preparatory program may understand the importance of read alouds; however, they may not be sure how to implement one that engages and promotes students’ critical thinking and reading comprehension. Kerry-Moran (2016) stated, “Preparing preservice teachers to approach read alouds with knowledge, confidence, and a seriousness of purpose is a central responsibility of teacher educators” (p. 662). A well-planned interactive read aloud goes beyond simply listening and observing beautiful, illustrated art; it is an opportunity for teachers to foster active listening, thinking skills, develop vocabulary, and engage students in meaningful dialogue with both their teacher and peers. Unfortunately, while preservice teachers understand the importance of interactive read alouds, the specifics of what components to plan for and how to implement are less clear (Fisher et al., 2004).
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this descriptive study was based on Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) Framework for Understanding Teaching and Learning. While there are many ways to organize teacher knowledge, the intersecting core concepts and skills of the framework can be articulated into three areas: Knowledge of Learners and their Development in Social Contexts, Knowledge of Subject Matter and Curriculum Goals, and Knowledge of Teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Figure 1

_A Framework for Understanding Teaching and Learning_


According to the framework, teachers must understand how their students learn and develop both knowledge and language within social contexts, curriculum content and goals,
pedagogical knowledge, diverse learners, assessment, and classroom management (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The purpose of this project was to prepare preservice teachers with the knowledge to effectively plan and implement an interactive read aloud. The expectation was to broaden preservice teachers’ knowledge in implementing an effective read aloud that fostered both critical thought and language development. Darling-Hammond stated, “These expectations for teacher knowledge mean that programs need not only to provide teachers access to more knowledge, considered more deeply, but also to help teachers learn how to continually access knowledge and inquire into their work” (p. 305).

The question guiding this project was how will preservice teachers’ confidence and knowledge of implementing read-alouds shift over a four-week period?

**Preservice Teacher Read Aloud Preparation**

Preservice teachers in preparatory programs learn how to write lesson plans, with a clear objective, implementation phase, and evaluation. According to McCaffey and Kisrich (2017), lesson planning is essential to keep teachers organized and focused on the learning objectives. Because an interactive read aloud offers a multitude of literacy benefits, planning strategically and efficiently is essential to maximize this instructional time spent with students.

Teacher educators must prepare preservice teachers to successfully plan and implement an interactive read aloud with clear expectations, critical thinking questions, vocabulary instruction, and opportunities for dialoguing while also exposing students to a variety of children’s literature (Affinito & McGee, 2019; Freeman, Feeney, & Moravcik, 2011; Kerry-Moran, 2016). Affinito and McGee (2019) claimed, “Alloting time in our teacher preparation
classes to model the read aloud and its impact on instruction is critical so our teacher candidates understand and respect the power of reading aloud” (p. 13).

While planning for an interactive read aloud can be beneficial for students, how often do practicing teachers plan? and what implementation practices are associated with their read alouds? McCaffrey and Kisrich’s (2017) pilot study surveyed 63 preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers with varying years of teaching experience. The researchers surveyed their beliefs and practices for read aloud preparation, including book selection, implementation, and professional development training. In preparation for read alouds, 74% conducted read alouds daily while 50-70% of the surveyed teachers did not prepare ahead of time. The researchers stated, “Planning is an essential practice for quality instruction and read alouds are no exception” (McCaffey & Kisrich, 2017, p. 98).

Vocabulary development is a key component for reading comprehension and teacher educators need to teach preservice teachers how to select vocabulary to teach in and out of context. In Holmes and Thompson’s service learning project, The Steven Stahl 600 Book Kid Challenge, 90 preservice teachers engaged children in 36 read aloud sessions for vocabulary improvement. Participants discovered the most effective ways to engage students with targeted vocabulary instruction included holding up word cards, chanting text, and using facial expressions and gestures. Moreover, preservice teachers learned how to select and incorporate multiple strategies to engage students with vocabulary in multiple contexts. They discovered “reading aloud to students takes a lot of planning” and “they knew not to pick up a book and begin reading it without having first read it” (Holmes & Thompson, 2014, p. 41).

Wright (2019) outlined key features in her article, “Reading to Learn From the Start,” students should be “actively involved in thinking and talking about text,” which means the
teacher plans for these opportunities to take place (p. 4). The most effective read alouds are purposefully planned, which means the teacher selects a text that aligns with students’ cultural knowledge and takes time to preview the text. In the planning phase, teachers should determine the types of questions to ask, which help students think deeply about the text. Wright suggested providing students with child-friendly vocabulary definitions with a picture, prop, or action and allowing “active processing” of new words (p. 6).

Since reviewing the literature surrounding preservice and practicing teacher preparation and implementation, intentionally planning for interactive read alouds results in quality instruction. While there is not a definite protocol, key features should be addressed to maximize this instructional time with students.

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

The design of this study was mixed methods, quantitative data was collected through the Interactive Read Aloud Rubric. Participants were briefed on the rubric components as well as the instructor modeling how to plan and implement an interactive read aloud that aligned with the rubric. Qualitative data was collected from a survey before and after assignment completion to gather information about their confidence and knowledge of implementing a read-aloud. In addition, the instructor noted observational changes over time as participants completed their read alouds to the class.
Context and Participants

The project took place during the fall semester of 2021 as part of a class assignment for an undergraduate developmental reading course. There were 18 preservice teachers, 16 female, and two males, in their second core block of methods coursework. In the core 2 block, teacher candidates learn literacy, social studies, language arts content, and pedagogy. They also completed 45 hours of field placement supported by a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor. During this time, they utilize content learned in methods courses to plan and implement five lessons in their field placements. While preservice teachers are not required to implement an interactive read aloud, their cooperating teacher may ask them to read to students. The purpose of the assignment was to teach preservice teachers how to select vocabulary, write critical thinking questions, and incorporate opportunities for dialogue.

Instrumentation Development

The document was created and reviewed with preservice teachers before they conducted their read alouds so they could plan accordingly (see Appendix 1).

Before Reading

The purpose for the pre-reading activities were to give participants the tools needed to engage with the text and set a purpose for reading. The preservice teacher introduced the text and provided background information about the content, author, and illustrator. Preservice teachers learned how to engage participants by posing text-to-self questions which in turn motivated and engaged them to listen to the story. Additionally, preservice teacher selected two to five relevant vocabulary words to discuss out of context with student-friendly definitions. The vocabulary
selection process included showing preservice teachers how to discern between the words that would aid participants text comprehension.

**During Reading**

When a preservice teacher began reading their story to the class, they stopped periodically to ask questions. These questions required participants to describe, explain, compare, evaluate, infer, and predict based on the text and illustrations. While reading, preservice teachers also stopped to review preselected vocabulary in context and discuss how the meanings of these words related to the story. During these times as preservice teachers posed their preplanned comprehension questions, participants were allowed to discuss their thinking with peers.

**After Reading**

The purpose of the after reading activities were for the preservice teacher to lead participants in a discussion about the text to assess, clarify any misunderstandings, summarize key events, and extend their thinking. During this time, participants responded with personal reflections and preservice teachers could delve back into the text if needed.

**Read Aloud Materials**

The selection criteria for reviewing then purchasing the children’s literature for this project was based on the approval of Illinois’ Culturally Responsive Teaching Standards in December of 2020. With the adoption of these standards, preservice teachers needed to understand cultural and community diversity and learn how to incorporate students’ experiences, cultures, and community resources into their instruction ([www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net); Huck, 2009). Culturally
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Diverse texts align with those recommendations for implementing culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Wright, 2019).

The 38 books obtained from an internal departmental grant were selected based on the following recommendations: (1) Texts and illustrations that reflected ethnically diverse cultures, gender identity, and family diversity, (2) Dual language formats of English and varying languages (Arabic, Yiddish, and Spanish), and (3) Various genres (see Appendix 2). For example, one preservice teacher chose to read “The Bagel King” (Larsen, 2018). The vocabulary he chose to focus on in his read aloud were the Yiddish words, mensch, oy, schmutz, tuches, and zaida found throughout the story about the special bond between a grandparent and grandchild. In another read aloud, a preservice teacher read the book “My Hair is a Garden” (Cabrera, 2018), and located at the end of the story is a section for “Caring for Black Hair,” she shared this information with participants.

Data Collection

The primary data collection for this study consisted of responses to three surveys (pre- and post), instructor observations, and rubric scores to measure the convergence of these data sources.

The 11-question presurvey gathered information about participants’ experience and confidence level in conducting a read-aloud with question samples: (1) “Have you ever read aloud to a group of children?” (2) “Do you feel confident reading aloud to children? Why or why not.” In addition, the survey questioned participants on their background knowledge of the importance of reading aloud to children with questions such as: (1) “Why do you think it is important to read aloud to children?” (2) “Do you think there is a connection between listening
and reading comprehension?” (3) “Why do you think it is important to ask children questions during read-alouds?” (4) “What kinds of questions should you ask?” and (5) “Do you think read-alouds are important for vocabulary development, why or why not?”

Each participant was graded on their read-aloud using the Interaction Read-Aloud Presentation Scoring Rubric (see Figure 1). The rubric was shared with preservice teachers before they conducted their read-alouds so they could understand the expectations and the assignment components that needed to be addressed. The rubric was divided into two sections, Pre-reading Strategies and During and After Reading. In the Pre-Reading Strategies section, the participant introduced two to five vocabulary words from the text and shared definitions and taught the selected vocabulary within the context of the story. Furthermore, they utilized the cover art and title to question and promote engagement and student interest. During reading, participants developed questions and created opportunities for students to speak and listen to their peers’ responses. In the final section, participants created questions to ask students to summarize and recall the text’s main events.

After completion of the 18 read-alouds, participants completed a 12-question post survey which asked similar questions to the presurvey about their confidence level, knowledge of read-aloud importance (listening comprehension, vocabulary, and questioning) with an additional question: (1) “Why do you think it is important to create opportunities for students to engage in dialogue with their peers?” There were questions to assess their learning during the assignment and future read-aloud planning such as: (2) “Did you find this assignment helpful for you to implement read-alouds with your students?” (3) “Can you describe how completing a peer response form on your classmates helped you with implementing your read-aloud?” (4) “Did the
rubric help you prepare for your read-aloud? How so?” and lastly, (5) “In the future, when you get ready to read aloud to your students, how will you prepare?”

Upon returning from a four-week practicum placement in various elementary classrooms, participants completed a practicum reflection which consisted of 14 open-ended questions with two pertaining to reading aloud: (1) Did you implement a read-aloud during your practicum? If you did, what did you do to prepare and (2) How did the assignment we completed in class help you prepare and implement a read-aloud to students.

While preservice teachers presented their read alouds to the class, the instructor observed and completed their Interactive Read Aloud Presentation Scoring Rubrics for all 18 participants.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study began with the researcher reading and reviewing all written responses to the pre- and post-surveys and read-aloud observations. The purpose was to uncover and understand the participants’ understandings, experiences, and confidence in implementing an interactive read-aloud. An inductive grounded theory was employed to uncover “a truth” out of the empirical data collected without speculation or preconceived attitudes of the researcher (Johansson, 2019). The participants’ responses to the pre-survey and two post-surveys began with open coding. For each question, the 18 responses were examined, named, and categorized into discrete elements found in the data. The next step was axial coding, in which the researcher developed the concepts into categories and organized and grouped them to identify any possible relationships among these categories. The last step was selective coding, where the researcher selected one central category that captured the essence of the research and answered the research question (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).
The scores from the completed rubrics are highlighted in Figure 2. The mean was calculated as well as standard deviation from the mean.

Figure 2

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Results

The survey results were coded and sorted into four categories: Experience and Confidence, Read-Aloud Benefits, Questioning and Dialogue, and Assignment Reflection.

Experience and Confidence

This category encompasses participants’ experience and feelings of confidence with implementing an interactive read-aloud to their peers and students during their field placements. In the pre-survey results, when asked, “Have you ever read aloud to a group of children?” All but
one participant had some experience with reading to children. When asked, “Do you feel confident reading to children?” Not all answered yes to this question. Of those who felt confident, they enjoyed reading aloud and understood how to use their voice to engage students. Those who did not feel confident reading aloud responded:

“I have never felt comfortable reading aloud in public because of anxiety, embarrassment of mispronounced words. Words I don’t even know, the speed of my reading, and being forced to read in school when I was younger was traumatizing.”

The post-survey results concluded with almost all participants feeling their confidence increased after implementing their read-aloud presentation, one participant’s response:

“I found this assignment to be very helpful to me. I now have the confidence to read out loud to anyone. I was anxious about this project but now I am more relaxed about read-alouds, I’ve gained confidence.”

While students presented their read-alouds to the class, the researcher observed and completed their Interactive Read-Aloud Presentation Scoring Rubrics. During the first three read-alouds, participants remained at the front of the room. After each presentation, as a group, we discussed the strengths and areas for improvement. A conversation ensued about the classroom being their domain, and to move around the room and connect the book to their students. They began to understand the importance of proximity during instruction as means to keep students engaged and interested. As a result, participants began moving throughout the room, and the last presenter said, “I am in control of the room when reading so I was able to walk around with confidence.”
During another observation, participants introduced vocabulary before reading and did not include the previously introduced vocabulary in the context of reading the story. Furthermore, some participants failed to question and build background and immediately began reading the story. These oversights may be attributed to nerves, one participant’s post-survey response: “I personally get nervous reading in front of people. I have been working on reading aloud to kids so I am becoming more comfortable.”

Upon returning from their four-week field placements, participants’ responses to their post-survey practicum reflection survey conveyed their confidence had increased. From the results, 11 out of the 18 had conducted an interactive read-aloud with students. According to their open-ended responses, one reported on their survey, “I was confident with the students and confident about doing what I was doing and that is something I gained from the read-aloud we did in class,” Another participant responded to the question with the following response, “Doing the assignment we completed gave me the confidence to read to the students. I didn’t feel nervous to read aloud to the class. I was ready to do so. I was extremely prepared to ask questions on the reading and allowing them to reflect with other students.”

Read-Aloud Benefits

This category covered participants’ knowledge of the benefits of reading aloud which include vocabulary development and the connection between listening and reading comprehension. With the pre-survey questions: “Do you think reading aloud to children helps them become better readers?” “Do you think read-alouds are important for vocabulary development?” and “Do you think there’s a connection between listening and reading comprehension?” All participants answered “yes” to these three questions. When asked about the importance of reading aloud to children, participants responded that reading aloud improves
comprehension and listening skills and expands word identification and meaning. The connection between listening and reading comprehension, most participants thought that when students hear new or unfamiliar words being pronounced during a read-aloud, they would be able to recognize these words in print.

In the post-survey results, when asked, “Why do you think it’s important to read aloud to children?” participants thought it deepened vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, modeled what good reading sounds like, increased reading fluency, and promoted critical thinking through questioning and dialogue. In the post-survey question “How does reading aloud develop students’ vocabularies?” participants responded that read-alouds expose and deepen students’ understandings of vocabulary in context. One participant said, “Students are exposed to more vocabulary, the more they read and listen to books. This will help them expand their vocabularies.”

When asked about the connection between listening and reading comprehension, participants linked good listening comprehension to good reading comprehension and thought these two skills build off one another. One participant’s response: “Students must listen and understand so they can read and understand. They must be critical listeners and readers.”

**Questioning and Dialogue**

Questioning and dialogue consisted of surveying participants’ understanding of the importance of questioning, what kinds of questions to ask, and creating opportunities for students to discuss their responses with peers. For example, in the pre-survey questions: “Why do you think it’s important to ask children questions during read-alouds?” and “What kinds of questions should you ask?” participants thought questions helped students comprehend and promoted
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Student focus and engagement. The kinds of questions to ask included those that involved making predictions and inferences about story elements (plot, characters, setting), and vocabulary/word meaning.

In the post-survey questions regarding what kinds of questions to ask, participants responded with those that promoted critical thinking (application, analysis, and evaluation), text-to-self, world, and text connections, and word meaning. One participant said, “I think it’s important to ask questions during read-alouds to help make sure your students are understanding and listening.” While another responded to the open-ended question with, “Questions that get students to think about deeper meanings or different scenarios – like what will happen next.”

When giving students the opportunity to dialogue with their peers about text questions posed by the teacher, participants said it helps students build off each other’s ideas and promotes critical thinking, engagement, confidence, and builds relationships. According to participants’ responses, “Engaging in dialogue helps students stay engaged with the book. It keeps them focused” and “They (students) might not share things with the whole class, but they are more willing to one-on-one with their peers.”

While observing the read-aloud presentations, I noticed that when the presenter asked participants to think of a personal connection to the text and talk to a partner, there was an increase in engagement and conversation. For example, when reading “The Bagel King,” a student asked, “Turn to your partner and tell them your favorite bagel and why.” I witnessed close to 100% engagement and how excited they were to respond to this question.

Participants returned to class after their field placements, nine out of the eleven that conducted read-alouds reported they understood the importance of questioning students
throughout reading to promote critical thinking, comprehension, and engagement. In response to
the open-ended question on their post-practicum survey, one participant responded, “Students
seemed to be engaged with my excited reading tone. Asking questions throughout really helped
to focus the students and make them think.” Another stated, “If it were not for the read aloud
assignment we did in class, I would have just simply read the book without asking questions or
keeping students engaged. The assignment definitely helped me get through the read-aloud.”

Participants reflected on how the assignments helped them feel prepared on knowing what kinds
of questions to ask and when to ask them.

**Assignment Reflection**

The post-survey included questions about how this assignment was useful for
participants, and all participants found this assignment helpful for their future read-aloud
practices.

When asked to describe how the assignment was helpful, some participants commented
on how it allowed them to practice conducting a read-aloud, how to select questions to ask, and
implementation practices/structure (see Table 2). The assignment allowed participants to practice
a read-aloud with their peers. One responded, “I’m glad that I was able to have practice since
I’ve never done it before and was happy to have feedback so that my future students can benefit
from my reading.” In terms of question selection, participants commented on how the
assignment helped them figure out the kinds of questions to ask and how to facilitate discussion.
One student responded, “It made me realize how important they (read-alouds) are and taught me
why we don’t just read a book aloud without questioning.” Participants commented on how the
assignment taught them how to plan and implement an interactive read-aloud.
When asked about how the peer response form helped with implementation, participants said it helped them improve their focus by watching others which affected how they conducted their own read-aloud. “It made me think deeply about the parts they did well” and “Hearing the compliments from others helped me know what I needed to implement with my own read-aloud.” In addition, they appreciated feedback from someone other than the teacher.

The final post-survey question was: “In the future, when you get ready to read aloud to your students, how will you prepare?” The responses included previewing the text, using sticky notes to create engaging questions, focusing on vocabulary development, and creating opportunities for student-to-student dialogue. One response was, “I will read through the books and make notes for myself about where I want to ask questions and what questions I want to ask.”

On the post-practicum survey, all eleven participants stated how the assignment increased their confidence, so they felt prepared because they were given a good structure of what a read-aloud looks like for both the listener and reader. Furthermore, they reported how the in-class practice helped them prepare, “I felt my read-aloud lessons were some of my best!” and “The assignment was one of my favorite things I’ve learned this semester, and it was super helpful to do in front of real students.”

The instructor’s observations were noted that during the first three read alouds, preservice teachers remained at the front of the room. After each presentation, as a group, we discussed the strengths and areas for improvement. A conversation ensued about the classroom being their domain, and to move around the room and connect the book to their students. They began to understand the importance of proximity as means to keep students interested and engaged. As a
result, during the remaining read alouds, preservice teachers began moving throughout the room and sharing illustrations with participants.

During another observation, preservice teachers introduced vocabulary before reading and did not include the previously introduced vocabulary in the context of the story. Some even failed to question and build background and immediately began reading.

The instructor also noticed that when the preservice teacher asked participants to think of a personal connection to the text and talk to a partner, there was an increase in engagement and conversation. For example, when reading “The Bagel King,” a preservice teacher asked, “Turn to your partner and tell them your favorite bagel and why.” The instructor witnessed close to 100% engagement and how excited participants were to respond to this question.

The mean for the rubric scores was 22.89 and the standard deviation was 2.56.

**Discussion**

To answer the study’s research question, “How will preservice teachers’ confidence and knowledge of implementing read-alouds shift over a four-week period?” Even though all but one participant had experience conducting an interactive read-aloud, not all felt confident in their delivery skills. Some were more visibly nervous than others; however, they did comment on the post-survey how the assignment increased their confidence. There was a shift in their positioning from the front of the room to walking around approaching and connecting with individual students; they began to understand how their proximity increased student engagement. Preservice teachers needed this practice to feel more confident. According to Kerry-Moran (2016), teacher educators are responsible for making read-aloud expectations clear, exposing preservice teachers
to a variety of children’s literature, and modeling effective read-alouds. Participants felt prepared and confident to conduct a read-aloud with students during their field placements.

Prior to reading aloud, participants understood the importance and benefits of reading aloud to children. They understood the relationship between listening and reading and how read-alouds fostered vocabulary development. Listening comprehension utilizes the same language processes as reading; however, it is free from the cognitive demands of decoding printed text (Hogan et al., 2014). While children listen to a story, they are exposed to new vocabulary, and they may learn and retain more words when teachers provide child-friendly explanations (Wright, 2019). At the conclusion of the project, participants mentioned that reading aloud modeled “what good reading sounded like,” which helps young children experience the way reading “feels to fluent readers” and that “they discover reading is joyful” (Wright, 2019, p. 8). In addition, they mentioned how the types of questions promoted critical thinking and there was a shift in the types of questions (text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text). Participants selected texts from ethnically diverse cultures, gender identity, and family diversity because children need to make text-to-self connections for comprehension to occur. When teachers read and discuss books that have characters that “look” like their students, it makes these connections even deeper and more meaningful. Furthermore, culturally diverse texts align with those recommendations for implementing culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014, Wright, 2019).

At the end of the project, participants understood that letting students discuss their questions with each other led to increased student focus and engagement. Therefore, when read-alouds are thoughtfully planned for these conversations, students can articulate their thinking and understandings of the text and listen to the perspectives of others (McClure & Fullerton, 2017).
Lastly and most importantly, participants understood the importance of planning an interactive read-aloud. They could not just pick up a book and read it without previewing the text first, generating questions and opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions, and selecting key vocabulary to teach. Even though 50-70% of teachers do not prepare before conducting a read-aloud, teachers must plan for efficiency (Hisrich & McCaffrey, 2021; Wright, 2019). Participants in this project mentioned that they would take the time to plan and conduct an effective read-aloud for their students in the future.

The average score of the graded rubric for 18 participants was 22.89 out of a possible 25 points.

Implications for Teacher Educators

Because there is a lack of structure in how read aloud practices are implemented (Baker et al., 2013), the researcher suggests that teacher educators organize a similar assignment that addresses the following components: vocabulary selection and instruction, question creation, and opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions. Then preservice teachers can receive direct instruction and practice implementing a read aloud with their classmates. Affinito and McGee (2019) claimed, “Alloting time in our teacher preparation classes to model the read aloud and its impact on instruction is critical so our teacher candidates understand and respect the power of reading aloud” (p. 13). This study exemplified the importance of planning and taking time to practice read alouds in class so that participants would be versed in how to plan and implement a read aloud effectively.

“Planning is an essential practice” (McCaffrey & Hisrich, p. 98). When reading to students, preservice teachers should prepare and plan accordingly. Careful thought and planning as to what book will be read, depends on who is in the classroom. When teachers select a book
that applies to the demographics in their classrooms, it will increase interest and engagement.

Secondly, teachers select vocabulary and provide instruction in and out of the context of the story and definitions should be in kid-friendly language. The questions generated from the text and illustrations should be those that require students to recall, understand, apply, analyze, compare, evaluate, infer, and predict. Lastly, teachers should create peer-to-peer interactions that foster discussions where children share their thinking and learn to listen to others’ perspectives.

**Conclusion**

Teacher educators have a responsibility to take the time to teach preservice teachers how to plan, implement, and understand the importance of reading aloud to students. In designing this project, the researchers had two goals in mind:

(1) Expose preservice teachers to various multicultural children’s literature and
(2) Provide a structure for planning and implementation that encompassed vocabulary selection and development, question creation, and opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions.

The goal of this study was to measure the impact of a read-aloud assignment on participants’ confidence and knowledge of implementing a read-aloud over a four-week period. The goal was the hope when these preservice teachers became future teachers, they would remember this assignment and read-aloud process and maximize their instructional time with students. To conclude this paper with two quotes from participants that sum up what reading aloud to students means to them:

“The more exposure to reading, the better” and “If they (students) are being read to then they will grow up with reading in their lives.”

Preservice teachers enrolled in a developmental reading course understood how to artfully implement a read aloud and discovered reading to students is a joyful experience. They
received instruction and most importantly, practiced and gained confidence implementing a read aloud. Moreover, they learned how to select meaningful vocabulary to teach and how to create questions that promoted critical thinking while also being exposed to texts from ethnically diverse cultures, gender identity, and family diversity.

In addition, they understood that letting students discuss their questions with each other led to increased student focus and engagement. When read alouds are thoughtfully planned for these conversations, students can articulate their thinking and understandings of the text and listen to the perspectives of others (McClure & Fullerton, 2017).

Lastly and most importantly, participants understood the importance of planning an interactive read aloud and how it leads to quality instruction. They could not just pick up a book and read it without previewing the text first, selecting key vocabulary to teach, generating questions, and creating opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions. Even though 50-70% of practicing teachers do not prepare before implementing a read aloud, teachers must plan for quality and efficiency (Hisrich & McCaffrey, 2021; Wright, 2019). Preservice teachers in this project mentioned this assignment was one of the most beneficial activities they completed all semester. The instructor felt confident that she had provided preservice teachers with a meaningful and useful assignment to utilize in their future practice.
Interactive Read aloud Presentation Scoring Rubric

**Before Reading:** Pre-reading activities are used to give students the tools needed to engage with the text. Prior to students reading the text the teacher introduces the text (provides background information, information about the author or illustrator). The teacher helps the children make connections to their lives and motivates them to want to read. Children are provided the opportunity to survey the cover and make predictions and vocabulary is introduced and discussed.

**During Reading:** The text (story) is read to students. Teachers stop periodically to ask questions that relate to text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections, as well as opportunities to describe, explain, compare, evaluate, infer, and predict based on text and illustrations. Preservice teachers should make sure to create language development breaks for students to discuss their understanding with peers. There should be intended breaks to discuss previously introduced vocabulary in the context of the story.

**After Reading:** The teacher leads the students in a discussion about the text (story) to assess and extend their comprehension. Preservice teachers invite students’ personal responses and clarify any misunderstandings by delving back into the text.

### Pre-Reading Strategies—Setting a Purpose for Reading (10 points)

- Two to five relevant vocabulary words were selected (Include the definition of each vocabulary word)
  - 2
- The words were taught in a meaningful contextual format
  - 2
- Title and cover art were used to make predictions
  - 2
- Students’ prior knowledge was determined, and appropriate background knowledge shared
  - 2
- Students were motivated to read text
  - 2

### During & After Reading – Language Development, Engagement, and Critical Thinking (15 points)

- **Language Development** - Taking time for planned and incidental conversation; giving children time to practice articulating ideas, listening and asking relevant questions with peers.
  - 5
- **Comprehension** - Asking quality questions for text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-self connections; ensuring that students have opportunities to recall, understand, apply, analyze, compare, evaluate, infer, and predict based on text and illustrations.
  - 5
- **Summarization** - Summarized story’s main ideas and vocabulary, clarified any misunderstandings by delving back into the text. Students are able to retell the main events of the story.
  - 5

### TOTAL POINTS

/25
### Appendix 2

*Participant Book Selections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author/Illustrator</th>
<th>Genre/Diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coyote: A Trickster’s Tale from the American Southwest</td>
<td>Gerald McDermott</td>
<td>Folktale/Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie’s Plaid Shirt</td>
<td>Stacy Davids/Rachael Balsaitis</td>
<td>Fiction/Gender Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When We Were Alone</td>
<td>David A. Robertson/Julie Flett</td>
<td>Fiction/Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Dance</td>
<td>Maurie J. Manning</td>
<td>Fiction/African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut</td>
<td>Derrick Barnes/Gordon C. James</td>
<td>Fiction/African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am Enough</td>
<td>Grace Byers/Keturah A. Bobo</td>
<td>Fiction/African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Red Lollipop</td>
<td>Rukhsana Khan/Sophie Blackall</td>
<td>Fiction/Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bagel King</td>
<td>Andrew Larsen/Sandy Nichols</td>
<td>Fiction/Jewish Traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Undefeated</td>
<td>Kwame Alexander/Kadir Nelson</td>
<td>Poetry/African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Two Blankets</td>
<td>Irena Kobald/Freya Blackwood</td>
<td>Fiction/Multicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Hair is a Garden</td>
<td>Cozbi A. Cabrera</td>
<td>Fiction/African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmella Full of Wishes</td>
<td>Matt de la Peña/Christian Robinson</td>
<td>Fiction/Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for Bed, Miyuki</td>
<td>Roxanne Marie Gallyez/Seng Soun Ratanavanh</td>
<td>Fiction/Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Are You From?</td>
<td>Yamile Saied Méndez/Jaime Kim</td>
<td>Fiction/Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Big Book of Families</td>
<td>Mary Hoffman/Ros Asquith</td>
<td>Nonfiction/Family Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma and How She Got Her Name</td>
<td>Juana Martinez-Neal</td>
<td>Fiction/Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat</td>
<td>Javaka Steptoe</td>
<td>Nonfiction/Multicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamers</td>
<td>Yuyi Morales</td>
<td>Fiction/Hispanic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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