Changing Perceptions: Six Third Grade Teachers’ Experiences Integrating Economics With Book Clubs

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This dissertation, CHANGING PERCEPTIONS: SIX THIRD GRADE TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES INTEGRATING ECONOMICS WITH BOOK CLUBS, by SANDRA CRONIN, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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CHANGING PERCEPTIONS: SIX THIRD GRADE TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES
INTEGRATING ECONOMICS WITH BOOK CLUBS

by

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ABSTRACT

Due to the demands of federal legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in particular, social studies instruction has become increasingly marginalized in elementary classrooms (Bollick, Adams, & Willox, 2010; Heafner, Lipscomb, & Fitchett, 2014; Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Jones & Thomas, 2006; Morton & Dalton, 2007). One possible solution to this problem is to integrate social studies and reading instruction. This qualitative case study examined six third grade teachers’ perceptions of and experiences with social studies and reading as they attempted to integrate the two subjects through the use of economics book clubs in their classrooms over six weeks. The primary research question under investigation was: What impact does integrating economics with reading through book clubs have on six third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies? The researcher prepared for and led professional development, split into two sessions, to teach the participants about integrating curriculum and book clubs. Then, data was triangulated (Stakes, 1995; Yin, 2003) by using multiple sources which included three focus group interviews, anecdotal notes from weekly planning meetings, two professional development sessions, weekly written reflections from each participant, and weekly lesson plans. The
analysis of multiple data sets over time revealed that the participating teachers considered integrating economics and reading through book clubs a positive experience, an effective use of instruction time for both social studies and reading, and a meaningful approach to students’ active learning. While the teachers initially struggled to adjust to an integrated instructional method and many students being pulled out for special need services, upon observing students being highly engaged in learning, the teachers started to develop positive attitudes toward the curriculum integration and perceived the integrated book clubs as a worthwhile strategy to prioritize social studies instruction. The current study contributes to the field of social studies by providing empirical research on elementary teachers’ struggles and efforts with improving the state of elementary social studies instruction through innovative and integrated practices, specifically through the use of book clubs. The study also contributes to the field of social studies and reading content integration by focusing specifically on integrating economics with reading comprehension.

INDEX WORDS: Economics, Curriculum integration, Elementary social studies, Reading, Third grade, Professional development, Book clubs
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INTEGRATING ECONOMICS WITH BOOK CLUBS

By

SANDRA CRONIN

A Dissertation

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in
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Dedication

This dissertation, in addition to all my work toward my Ph.D., is dedicated first and foremost to my husband, Patrick. His unwavering support and belief in me has been beyond astounding. I have wanted to quit more than once, and it was his loving support and sacrifice that helped keep me going through my dark hours.

I also dedicate this work to my children: J.J., Daniel, and Ansleigh. My first day of class in my doctorate program was on J.J.’s first birthday. My defense is just after his tenth birthday. Daniel arrived just as my last summer class was finishing. Ansleigh arrived during the writing (and rewriting) of my research findings. I don’t know that any of them will ever truly realize how much work has gone into finishing this program with three young children. I can only hope that their father and I have set an admirable example of what two people can accomplish when they commit to each other and the same goals.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In my eighth year as a third grade teacher, just as I was thinking I finally understood my job, my calling in life, I sat in a staff meeting to hear my assistant principal, someone with twice my experience in the field of education, someone with whom part of the decision about whether I would be offered a ninth year of teaching lay, utter these words: “I don’t think social studies or science have a place in an elementary school. We are here to teach reading, writing, and math, period.” My head started to spin with questions. Apart from the state mandated curriculum, what about all the teachable moments that come with teaching a group of 22 eight- and nine-year-old children how to negotiate relationships with one another? Isn’t that social studies? What about all the teachable moments that involve trying to help these children begin to search for the answers to the questions of “why” that naturally come about as they begin the process of understanding the world around them? Surely, that counts as social studies, science, or, perhaps, both. Even though this moment came after I had already completed the first three years of my doctoral studies, intent on studying the field of elementary social studies, my purpose was suddenly redefined: Instead of focusing solely on how to teach social studies to children, I must also find a way to preserve elementary social studies as a content area.

How does one go about preserving an entire curricular area? Why choose to take up the seemingly losing end of this old and extremely complicated battle? Beyond the breadth and depth of content matter, social studies is the core of what makes societies work: how people relate to one another, how they decide which type of government is the best, how they decide when the time has come for a new type of government to take over, how they decide which laws are necessary and which laws are unfair, how they decide when a crime has been committed and what the punishment should be, how they decide which colors and symbols represent them, and
why communities settled in particular locations. The possibilities of what could be included in social studies are seemingly endless. Teaching young children the foundations of their own society, how their society compares and contrasts with other societies, and from where particular groups’ needs stem are but a few of the lessons that will inform students’ thoughts and decisions when the time comes for them to assume positions as citizens within their community. Schools must not fail in their responsibility to prepare children for their citizenship roles as adults.

Effective schools should operate toward the ideal of producing active, well informed citizens who are academically and politically prepared to participate in their communities (Callahan, Muller, & Schiller, 2010). However, the current state of schools is one in which assessing student and teacher performance in the areas of reading and math takes the forefront (Callahan, et al, 2010; Pederson, 2007). With the current emphasis on assessing reading and math, dedicated social studies instructional time has been pushed aside in the interest of providing as much instructional time for reading and math as possible. Teachers often face the internal struggle between fulfilling their role in the larger picture of teaching children how to be contributing citizens or teaching to the test, on which part of their efficacy as a teacher will be judged (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). Limited instructional time combined with pressure from administration are two major sources of influence in the making of this didactic decision (Wills, 2007). Integrating social studies with reading is one way to maximize instructional time spent on reading while maintaining social studies’ place in the school day.

This study will explore third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies when integrating economics concepts with reading through book clubs. The following question guides the current study: What impact does integrating economics with reading through book clubs have
on third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies?

Currently in the district where the study takes place, the school year is divided into four nine-week grading periods. In the school where the study takes place, social studies and reading have traditionally been taught as separate subjects. Reading instruction is allotted approximately two hours of instructional time per day, with an hour of that time devoted specifically to reading. In third, fourth, and fifth grades, teachers allot approximately 30 minutes per day for three weeks to social studies, which means 15 minutes of social studies instruction per day on average, before allotting that instructional time to science. This study will alter the current time allotment and teaching methodology by teaching both social studies content and reading simultaneously through the implementation of book clubs.

The school where the study takes place is located outside of a large metropolitan city in a southeast State. It is one of 27 elementary schools in its district as of the 2015 - 2016 academic year. The district adheres to the State Performance Standards (SPS) to guide curriculum planning and instruction for social studies, and the Common Core State Performance Standards (CCSPS) to guide curriculum planning and instruction in reading. The statewide standardized assessment of the SPS and CCSPS was the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). This assessment fell under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Under this umbrella of policy, the students of the participants in the current study were required to pass the reading portion of the CRCT in order to pass third grade. By fifth grade, students were required to pass both the reading and math portions of the test. Students in third through eighth grades were also tested in the areas of English/Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science on the CRCT. With the priorities set for elementary teachers in this district within the state through a long line of legislation, many teachers felt an obligation to marginalize social studies
instructional time to attempt ensuring their students would pass the highly prioritized portions of
the CRCT (i.e. reading and math). Teachers feeling obligated to marginalize social studies in
favor of high stakes subjects is, unfortunately, a problem in many other states as well (Pederson,
2007). Looking first at the history of social studies in the United States will show why social
studies concepts remain a vital portion of elementary students’ education.

**Background of the Study**

**Historical perspective.** Education in the United States began as a means of passing on
survival skills and cultural knowledge as well as gender role knowledge among the first
Americans (Urban & Wagoner, 2004). Much like the methods and pedagogy that can be found
in today’s classrooms, positive rewards and increased levels of responsibility were used to
motivate young learners to master their lessons. While the education system in the United States
has endured many changes, both desirable and less than desirable, consistency of purpose has
remained. A common thread tying the roots of the earliest education in the United States
through more than three centuries of change, growth, and development to our current state
of education is the theme of preparing our young to actively participate in adult society (Ross,
2006; Urban & Wagoner, 2004; Watras, 2002).

The concepts and skills now referred to as social studies, especially citizenship and
history, have been a contentious discussion in the field of education with regard to which aspects
to teach at which age (Bohan, 2003). Many students, especially boys, left school during their
later elementary years to earn income for their family (Urban & Wagoner, 2004). Learning
about adults’ roles and civic responsibilities early in school was of high importance, because
children took on adult roles at comparatively much younger ages than they do today. In 1896,
John Dewey’s experimental school was based on this very premise: that children need to learn how to solve problems and make judgments (Bowling Green State University, 2012) which are two skills essential of productive, contributing citizens.

At the turn of the 20th century, as child labor laws began to affect the length of students’ attendance in school, child development theory began to change the social studies curriculum. Instead of teaching children as much about adults’ roles in society and survival skills at as early an age as possible, an approach referred to as “Expanding Horizons” began to take hold (Wade, 2002). This view of elementary social studies curriculum is outlined in concentric circles, with the focus on “self” in kindergarten. The curriculum broadens each school year to include family, neighborhood, community, state, nation, and ending with the world. This broadening approach to social studies curriculum was based on child development theory of the time that suggested instruction should begin with the child’s immediate surroundings and build outwards to the increasingly less familiar.

The “Expanding Horizons” approach began when travel and technology were new and comparatively undeveloped by today’s standards (Wade, 2002). Children rarely left their local community. Tales of other places in their own state, let alone other places in the nation or world, seemed exotic. Beginning with a child’s immediate family and surroundings, and then expanding the scope of content was a logical way to teach social studies concepts. However, the expanding view of social studies curriculum began to lose favor in the late 20th century as both travel and technology became much more advanced, especially with the onset of the Internet. Students now have access to places, pictures, and video at the click of a button. In the state of the current study this view of social studies curriculum remained until the State Performance Standards replaced the Quality Core Curriculum in the 2008-2009 school year for third grade.
In 1983, under the leadership of President Reagan, A Nation at Risk (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education) was published, which introduced the public to how the United States’ educational system compared to the rest of the world (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). This report drove the need for the educational reforms named in the federal Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) of the 1970s. When the implications of these two documents combined, the need for stronger emphasis on math and science came to light, because “Earlier educational initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s attempted, largely unsuccessfully, to improve student performance, indirectly through the imposition of funding formulas or formal regulatory requirements” (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002, pp. 1-2).

Current perspective. With the reforms put forth by the ESEA and A Nation at Risk proven ineffective through the late 20th century, the ESEA legislation was revisited, and renamed, by federal legislators under the leadership of President George W. Bush. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 marks a significant change in elementary education between the 20th and 21st centuries (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002; Wade, 2002; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). This legislation has driven widely encompassing curriculum and pedagogy changes for in schools. NCLB’s focus on increased accountability is credited with sparking the current standards-based movement (U.S. Department of Education). As Wills and Sandholtz (2009) discuss, the original goal of this legislation was to improve teacher quality and effectiveness thereby improving student learning. The actual results, however, have been a polarization of priorities, a focus on standardized tests and quantitative indicators of school performance, and confusion about the best way to serve students’ needs. NCLB specifically mentions reading and math as areas of accountability (U.S. Department of Education, No Child Left Behind). The emphasis NCLB places on these subjects has led
schools, especially low performing schools, to focus their priorities on those subjects alone (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Pederson, 2007). Due to limited financial resources combined with limited instructional time each day, many teachers have opted or have been directed to omit social studies entirely from their day (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Zhao & Hoge, 2005).

Directly related to this study is the impact of NCLB on educational research. Since the authorization of NCLB in 2001, empirical research in the areas of reading and math increased while research in the area of elementary social studies decreased (Center on Education Policy, 2009). Elementary social studies is not the only victim of this legislation; the fine arts, also excluded from the federally mandated measures of student success, have also seen less financial resources, instructional time decreases or elimination, and research (Gullatt, 2008; Marshall, 2005; Mishook, & Korhnhaber, 2006; Taylor, 2008; Toren, Maiselman, & Inbar, 2008). Unlike elementary social studies, however, the importance of the fine arts has continued to gain recognition from classroom teachers. Very recent years have seen an increase in curriculum integration research demonstrating the effect of including fine arts activities in daily lessons as a means of maintaining the importance of the fine arts to elementary education.

**Statement of Problem**

While social studies began its journey as a means of passing on survival skills, today it is a very broad compilation of topics that many have difficulty defining. Without beginning to delve into the content and lessons a teacher might include under each of the umbrella of social studies, educators can easily see that the topics extend beyond the traditional ideas of geography, culture, history, government, civics, and economics. These themes are clearly established in all elementary grades’ social studies standards in the State Performance Standards (SPS). While the
middle school and high school SPS carry more in-depth content, the NCSS’ themes are present in the SPS as well. Since research for the current study began, the state has adopted the Common Core State Performance Standards (CCSPS). The content of the social studies standards at each grade level, kindergarten through high school, remains as it was under the SPS, however for sixth grade through high school, the CCSPS tie literacy to the social studies standards.

In other curricular areas, such as reading and math, the foundations of child development theory are clear. Textbook type informational texts are not used with emerging readers. Long division and geometric proofs are also not included in curricular standards for young elementary children. In relation to the current study, the SPS require third grade students to understand the three branches and three levels of government, to be able to explain the difference between a representative democracy and a direct democracy, to identify the four types of production resources, and to understand the importance of the influence of Ancient Greece on the United States’ government. The challenges for teachers, besides the challenge of making instructional time for social studies a priority, include understanding the content themselves and ensuring lasting understanding that students can demonstrate on a standardized test up to six months after instruction.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to further empirical research in the field of social studies concerning teachers’ perceptions of social studies by integrating economics with reading through book clubs. While the field of research and practical literature concerning curriculum integration is growing, the body of empirical research with regard to this particular group of participants, third grade teachers, is fairly limited. A growing body of literature in the area of curriculum
integration focuses on another curricular area that is important to student learning: fine arts (Gullatt, 2008; Marshall, 2005; Mishook & Korhnhaber, 2006; Taylor, 2008; Toren, Maiselman, & Inbar, 2008). Authors of another increasing body of literature on the topic of curriculum integration discuss the idea of integrating various components of technology into curriculum (Friedman, 2006; Hakes & Eisenwine, 2003; Ikpeze & Boyd, 2007; Taylor & Duran, 2006; Whitin, 2009). While some of the above literature does include social studies, the research does not focus on the integration of social studies and language arts at the elementary level. The current study helps fill this gap. The current study also helps the field by providing research in the area of elementary economics instruction.

Third grade teachers were chosen as the participants in this study for several reasons. First, the researcher has been a third grade teacher for more than ten years. Second third grade is the first year social studies is included in the annual state-mandated standardized test, the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). Third, as a result of the CRCT, in the school where the study was conducted, third grade is the first year of emphasis on social studies content instruction. Fourth, again due to the CRCT, reading instruction is different in third grade than in earlier grade levels. The students are required to read the entirety of the CRCT independently in third grade. In first and second grades, in years where the budget allows testing in first and second grades, the students are required to read only the reading passages independently. The teacher reads the questions and answer choices aloud. Therefore, in third grade, there is a much greater focus on independent reading comprehension skills across a variety of genres, as opposed to a focus on decoding and phonics skills in the earlier grades. Fifth, in the county where the study is being conducted, third grade is the last year of a comparatively small class size, with a cap of 23 students versus 28 students in fourth and fifth grades. These reasons combine to make
third grade unique from the other elementary grades, and, therefore, an interesting group to study.

**Research Question**

The research question under exploration is: What impact does integrating economics with reading through book clubs have on third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies? Case study methodology was employed to explore answers to this question. Data included focus group interviews, weekly written reflections from each participant, weekly lesson plans, and anecdotal notes from group planning meetings. In addition, the researcher led two professional development sessions to help the participants build common understanding of curriculum integration and book clubs. As will be discussed more in the method section, individual interviews were not used in this study. The researcher and the other participants had worked and known each other for several years at the time data was collected. The researcher wanted participants’ candid, honest reflections, and thought written reflections would help participants respond more openly than through a one-on-one interview.

**Definition of Terms**

**Curriculum integration.** The purpose of the present study is to examine third grade teachers’ perceptions of integrating social studies with reading through book clubs. The need for integrated curriculum has been long established (Jacobs, 1989). Before the teachers’ perceptions can be examined, the meaning of the term “integration” must be addressed. Curriculum integration is defined as meeting all included objectives and standards across content areas during the same lesson, while taking care not to emphasize one content area over another (Morris, 2003, p. 164). This basic definition is shared by other researchers (Brophy & Alleman,
2008; Hinde, 2005; Keane & Zimmerman, 2007) who emphasize the importance of teaching and assessing learning objectives for all of the subjects the teacher is attempting to integrate. Rather than only assessing, for example, literacy objectives taught using a social studies text, the teacher must attend to both social studies and literacy standards and objectives. For example, reading *Saturday Sancocho* by Leyla Torres (1999) is an excellent springboard for a lesson about bartering. However, simply reading it to or with a social studies class is not integrating curriculum. By the same token, reading this story and only discussing bartering is also not integrating curriculum. Both literacy and social studies standards need to be overtly addressed to make the lesson a truly integrated one. This lesson lends itself well to teaching and assessing bartering in social studies and sequence of events in reading. Literacy skills and content knowledge about bartering need to come from this lesson, not just one or the other.

**Standards.** The Common Core State Performance Standards (CCSPS) and the State Performance Standards (SPS) were of integral importance to the current study. The lessons taught during this study were driven by the CCSPS for the literacy standards and the SPS for the social studies standards. According to the State Department of Education’s website built specifically to address CCSPS:

Performance standards provide clear expectations for assessment, instruction and student work. They define the level of work that demonstrates achievement of the standards, enabling a teacher to know "how good is good enough.” Performance standards incorporate content standards, but expand upon them by providing suggested sample tasks, sample student work and teacher commentary.

**Book Clubs.** Integrating social studies and reading instruction took place through the implementation of book clubs in the current study. Book clubs, also known as literature circles,
are groups of students who have in-depth discussions about literature (Literacy Circles Resource Center, 2010). Book clubs can be student- or teacher-driven. Students in each book group are typically assigned roles which ensure participation and focus. For example, one member may take on the role of “word wizard” and find unknown words or assigned vocabulary words. Another member may be in charge of asking questions to lead the conversation, “discussion director.” Other possible roles can include but are not limited to: researcher, illustrator, time keeper, etc. Book clubs may all be reading the same book, they may be reading different books that have a common theme, or they may be reading books of the groups’ own choice. The lesson objectives guide the choosing of books for club use. In the current investigation, book clubs were used as described previously.

Social Studies. The term ‘social studies,’ even for many teachers, draws a vague picture of students reading textbooks, taking lecture notes, and answering questions, all in a very isolated, independent manner. These types of approaches do not paint a clear picture of the curriculum content, skills, and educational goals that make up the complex nature of social studies. “The social studies are the study of political, economic, cultural, and environmental aspects of societies in the past, present, and future” (The National Council for the Social Studies, 1998). The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has provided a College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for State Standards to help states revise their standards. (NCSS, 2013). The State Performance Standards also identify 17 information processing skills in addition to content standards. These process standards include skills such as finding the main idea and supporting details, putting events in chronological order, and analyzing artifacts, which not only support the framework issued by the NCSS but can also be used in other curricular areas.
Theoretical Framework

Constructivist theory guides the current study. Vygotsky is one of the most important constructivist theorists. Constructivist educational theory is built on the premise that learners actively build (or construct) their own meaning. The assistance teachers (or facilitators) provide in helping learners build upon their own foundation, Vygotsky called “scaffolding.” The scaffolding must be built within each learner’s ZPD, which is the level at which maximum learning can be achieved. Although Vygotsky is not credited with coining the term “scaffolding,” it is used to describe how the teacher builds instruction within the ZPD. Just as a construction crew builds scaffolding to support a new wall until the building is ready to stand on its own, a teacher “scaffolds” support around a student’s learning until he or she has reached a new level of independence.

In the case of the current study, constructivist theory applies to both the teachers participating in the study and the students they teach. The researcher uses constructivist theory in planning the professional development (see chapter 4) in which the teachers will participate before implementing integrated book clubs with their students. During professional development, the teachers construct their own understanding of curriculum integration. The researcher and participants also use constructivist theory in planning the book club lessons for their students. The students build their understanding of the economics concepts through the integrated book clubs. Furthermore, constructivist theory guides the data collection methods used throughout this study. Vygotsky viewed constructivism as the interaction between the individual and the social surroundings (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the individual constructs more knowledge by interacting in the social environment than by simply reading or listening to a lecture. In this study, participating teachers were engaged in group dialogues through
professional development and focus group interviews sharing thoughts, ideas, and experience, thus constructing new knowledge and understanding of their interested topic.

Summary

Over time, teachers’ ability to maintain instructional time for social studies has been waylaid by legislation pulling focus, and often resources, away from social studies. The problem of marginalizing social studies has reached the point where social studies content has become optional, or even absent, in many elementary schools. However, many teachers continue to recognize the value of social studies lessons, and look for ways in which to ensure time for social studies instruction gets preserved in the elementary school day. One way in which social studies instructional time can be preserved is to integrate it with another content area, like reading. Book clubs are one instructional strategy for integrating social studies with reading. The current study examines six third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies and reading as they use book clubs to integrate economics with reading in their classrooms.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature in this chapter reveals a need to maximize social studies instructional time in the elementary school day. First, the background and importance of elementary social studies will be discussed along with the reasons for its shrinking importance in the spectrum of the contemporary elementary curriculum. Next, elementary language arts curriculum will be discussed including why integrating social studies lessons with reading is an easy and practical solution for maintaining time for social studies instruction. Book clubs, as an integrated teaching strategy, will be defined and discussed. Instructional ideas pertinent to the current study will follow the discussion of reading. Finally, reasons for the current gap in empirical research on elementary social studies will be discussed, illustrating the contribution of the current study in helping to fill this gap.

Social Studies

History of elementary social studies. “The most recent archeological scholarship suggests that the first inhabitants of the North American continent crossed over the Bering Land Bridge around 15,000 B.C.” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 1-2). This event can arguably be considered the dawn of education in the United States. The primary form of education at the time differed greatly from the current school system, although the primary purpose remains very similar: passing on survival skills and cultural knowledge to the next generation (Urban & Wagoner, 2004). Much like the methods and pedagogy that can be found in today’s classrooms, positive rewards and increased levels of responsibility motivated young learners to master their lessons. The education system in the United States has certainly endured many trials, tribulations, and changes over time. Whether the system has come out better is fiercely debated.
However, a common thread ties the roots of the earliest education in the United States through centuries of change, growth, and development to our current state of education: the theme of preparing our young to actively participate in adult society (Fleming, 2011; Ross, 2006; Urban & Wagoner, 2004; Watras, 2002).

Since the earliest days of teaching children basic survival skills, the education with which United States’ schools provide their students has been the subject of much debate. When formal schools began in the 18th century (1700s), citizenship skills were an important tenant of learning in elementary schools (Fleming, 2011; Urban & Wagoner, 2004). Students, especially boys who were the only students with voting rights at the time, attended school for only a few years before going to work to contribute to the family’s income if necessary. They needed to learn everything possible about their civic responsibilities while they were in school. Elementary social studies, therefore, played a very important role in the school day. However, due to relatively recent policy changes at the federal level, elementary social studies finds itself in the completely opposite role in today’s classrooms. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) emphasizes reading, math, and science, with the high-stakes of passing the test or failing the grade. Therefore, social studies has taken a distant back seat (U.S. Department of Education) and even in some cases, as discussed later in this chapter, eliminated completely. What happened to cause such a remarkable change?

Bohan (2005) described the elementary social studies curriculum at the turn of the 20th century. By 1905 the Committee of Eight, a group assembled for the purpose of creating a report describing educational trends in elementary history, the field of elementary education had recognized the need to teach American history earlier in a child’s school career than middle school and high school. The National Educational Association (NEA) and the American
History Association (AHA) recognized that only a minority of students were still in school by the time history was taught in high school. They realized that if students were to learn about and from the past, the past needed to be taught in elementary school, which most children attended.

Another critical issue brought to light by Bohan’s (2005) article was addressed more subtly. As mentioned earlier, the Committee of Eight discussed the elementary social studies curriculum because the elementary school years were when the largest number of students attended school. By the time the children were old enough for middle school or high school, they were also old enough to work and contribute to their family’s income. Today, the elementary social studies curriculum has been largely marginalized (Bolick, Adams, & Wilcox, 2010; Halvorsen, Duke, Brugar, Block, Strachan, Berka, & Brown, 2012; Heafner, Fitchett, & Lambert, 2014;) and arguably trivialized. School systems are afforded this “luxury” because child labor and mandatory school attendance laws compel parents to send children to school until they are at least 16 years old in the state where this study takes place. While citizenship standards can be found throughout state’s present social studies curriculum, most of the “nuts and bolts” of citizenship education are not taught until the upper level social studies curriculum courses.

While consistency of purpose has remained throughout the history of American education, exactly what children need to know to become productive adults and contributing citizens has changed drastically. The very first Americans (now referred to as Native Americans or American Indians) taught their children survival skills along with their community roles and responsibilities (Urban & Wagoner, 2004). Throughout the nineteenth century, citizenship roles and knowledge of government and geography were taught through the elementary years when children were most likely to attend school (Bohan, 2005). Through the
twentieth century, as society changed with the suffrage, reduction of child labor, and civil rights movements and mandatory attendance laws took effect, the approach to elementary social studies education began to change. The “expanding horizons” approach to elementary social studies education became prevalent throughout the United States (Wade, 2002). The expanding horizons approach applies Urie Brofenbrenner’s concentric circle theory of child development by beginning with concepts of self in kindergarten, family in first grade, neighborhood in second grade, community in third grade, regions and the United States in fourth grade, and the world in fifth grade (Wade, 2002). However, throughout the twentieth century, American life and the ways and speed at which people receive information along with the amount of information available at any time of day has changed more drastically than perhaps any other century in history. Such rapid information availability, along with federal and state policies, has brought about yet another change in thinking about the way elementary social studies should be taught.

**Current state of elementary social studies.** The over-arching purpose of education in the United States is, and has been, to prepare children to participate actively in adult society (Ross, 2006; Urban & Wagoner, 2004). With this purpose in mind, it is a small wonder that social studies curriculum has become the subject of much debate (Evans, 2004; Ross, 2006). The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013) has written a framework to help states revise their social studies curriculum standards. This framework is organized into four dimensions of an inquiry arc that include developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, many states edited and revised their social studies standards that focused on content and adopted performance-based standards. Instead of
focusing solely on content knowledge, performance standards seek to determine how well students can apply what they have learned. Currently, the district in this study is involved in the Race to the Top grant from the federal Department of Education. Math, reading, and language arts standards are evolving even further to Common Core State Performance Standards (CCGPS). John Dewey’s theory of child development can be found in the pedagogical changes that have followed the change in standards. John Dewey (1916) advocated for pedagogy that helped students apply their knowledge in practical, “real life” situations. Adopting performance standards and using performance assessments follows this theory.

As discussed earlier, social studies is widely acknowledged as a lower priority in the elementary instructional day than language arts, math, and science (Jones & Thomas, 2006). The marginalization of elementary social studies is largely due to the exclusion of social studies from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (Heafner, Fitchett, & Lambert, 2014; Jones & Thomas, 2006). The emphasis the NCLB legislation has placed on language arts and math has brought considerable research efforts forth to inform pedagogy to include finding out how much time teachers spend on each subject (Jones & Thomas, 2006; Morton & Dalton, 2007). In the 1997 - 1998 school year (before NCLB), teachers reported spending 11.0 hours per week teaching language arts, which accounted for 35% of instructional time, and 4.9 hours per week teaching math, which accounted for 15.4% of instructional time (Morton & Dalton, 2007, p. 2). By the 2003 - 2004 school year, teachers reported spending 11.6 hours per week teaching language arts, which was 35.5% of instructional time, and 5.4 hours per week teaching math, which was 16.5% of instructional time (Morton & Dalton, 2007, p. 2). These statistics demonstrate a measurable increase in instructional time for the content areas of top priority after NCLB took effect. The same report shows that teachers reported teaching social studies 2.8
hours per week, 8.7% of instructional time, in the 1997 - 1998 school year, and 2.5 hours per week, 7.6% of instructional time, by the 2003 - 2004 school year (Morton & Dalton, 2007, p. 2), demonstrating a marked decrease for social studies instructional time.

As previously discussed, the content that falls under the social studies umbrella imparts the skills necessary, and provides an historical foundation upon which future decisions can be made, for students who will become future voters, employees, tax-payers, and citizen leaders. These statistics, noting an increase of instructional time for language arts with a simultaneous decrease of instructional time for social studies, demonstrate the importance of the current study.

**Professional development.** Professionals in the field of education, whether they are paraprofessionals, teachers, or administrators, expect to attend professional development regularly to keep their skills current. In the state where the current study took place, the State Professional Standards Commission, the information on a new program adoption, teachers held the autonomy to decide which professional development to attend. As firsthand witness and participant, the researcher attended, and observed the other study participants attend, professional development that they could directly apply in their classrooms to influence student learning and achievement.

Dangel, Dooley, Swars, Truscott, Smith, and Williams (2009) studied the change in a Research I university’s teacher education program as a result of involvement with a Professional Development School (PDS). Among their findings was the recognition that university-based participants reflected more on their practice and learning from professional development if they had direct contact with K-12 students than did the university based participants who were administrators and did not have direct student contact. Later, Dangel and Hooper (2010) studied pedagogy employed by teachers in a PDS. They found that the teachers who used a higher level
of constructivism in their instruction had students who scored higher on a standardized assessment. Based on these findings, professional development planners should prioritize teachers’ time in professional development that teaches constructivist instructional strategies.

For the current study, the researcher planned professional development for the participants to make sure everyone carried mutual understandings of both authentic curriculum integration and book clubs before beginning the lessons with students. Realizing the participants would apply what they learned in professional development with their students just a few days after participating in the professional development, the researcher knew she needed to carefully plan the content using a constructivist approach, just as she intended the students’ lessons to stem from a constructivist approach.

**Elementary economics.** As the researcher will more thoroughly explain in Chapter 4, the researcher chose economics as the strand of social studies to integrate with reading through book clubs for the purpose of this study. She chose economics because, at the time of the study, it made up 40% of the social studies standardized test for the state, yet contained the concepts the researcher and participants found most difficult to help students master (Bohan, 2003). The researcher and participants actively sought out alternate teaching strategies to help actively engage students in constructing understanding of these economic concepts.

Grimes, Millea, and Thomas (2010) examined the economics preparation of K-12 teachers in Mississippi. Their review of literature showed that Mississippi required elementary teachers to have one social studies methods course for certification, but not a specific economics course, which in turn contributed to teachers’ lack of efficacy with economics instruction. Their actual study revealed that elementary teachers’ economics literacy was not significantly different from that of a graduating high school senior. They also found that professional development on
the topic of economics did make a difference in teachers’ economics literacy. This study highlights the importance of the current study’s inclusion of economics on the social studies side of the integrated curriculum.

**Teacher efficacy.** Beyond the increasing emphasis on reading, math, and science and the decreasing emphasis on social studies, teacher preparedness and content knowledge in social studies must also be considered. Teacher efficacy is defined as, “teachers’ beliefs about their own capacities as teachers” (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 202). Teacher efficacy has been studied since the mid-1970s. Results of study questions related to how strongly teachers believe they can influence the outcomes of student learning correlated to how willing teachers are to try new techniques, how stressed teachers are, and how long they stay in the field. One piece of teacher efficacy is how confident a teacher feels with his/her teaching ability. In turn, in the fields of social studies and science, a piece of a teacher’s confidence comes from the teacher’s comfort level with his/her content and pedagogical knowledge. Both preservice teachers and administrators also cite content knowledge as a defining characteristic of an effective teacher (Minor, Onweugbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002).

The factors of elementary teachers feeling less prepared to teach social studies than reading and math along with time pressures squeezing social studies instruction out of the day appear to combine to make an environment where omitting social studies from the elementary school day becomes desirable, as well as required. In short, teachers are bothered less about omitting a subject they feel less prepared to teach. Why do teachers feel less prepared to teach social studies? According to Lanahan and Yeager (2008), social studies methods instructors identified six obstacles they need to face before they can teach preservice teachers about social studies. The six obstacles include: 1. preservice teachers’ negative perceptions of social studies.
based on their own experience as an elementary student, 2. preservice teachers’ perceptions that teaching other subjects is better than teaching social studies, 3. preservice teachers’ confusion over the definition of social studies, 4. preservice teachers’ hesitation to accept social studies instruction as a tool for social change, 5. preservice teachers’ perceptions that the amount of social studies content is overwhelming, 6. and finally, preservice teachers’ classroom placements in a grade level where social studies maintains a place in the day coincide with their methods course (Lanahan & Yeager, 2008, p. 10-11).

At an urban, research I university located in a large, metropolitan area in a Southeastern state, for the Fall 2011 semester, the Early Childhood Education Department offered one undergraduate course in social studies methods while offering three courses in reading, which means preservice teachers at this university enter the field with three credit hours of social studies and twelve credit hours of reading courses. Similarly another research I university located in a smaller city in the same Southeastern state, requires students in their undergraduate elementary teaching program to take four courses focusing on early childhood literacy and one on elementary social studies, resulting in a similar split in the number of credit hours between reading and social studies. With such a gap between available courses, it is small wonder that teachers feel so much better prepared to teach reading than social studies.

Bolick, Adams, and Wilcox (2010) echoed this gap in preparation of preservice teachers for language arts instruction versus social studies instruction, and added another piece to this puzzle. The puzzle piece they added was that of the backgrounds of the instructors of the teachers’ preparation courses. The professors of literacy courses studied by Bolick, Adams, and Wilcox (2010) had a strong background in literacy education while the professors of social studies methods courses had stronger backgrounds in many other facets of elementary education.
besides social studies. This study implies that one possible reason teachers graduate college relatively weaker in social studies instruction is because their professors were relatively weaker in social studies instruction. Bolick, Adams, and Wilcox (2010) found the recommendation of integrating the two, reading and social studies, seemed to be the way to fill the gap while not only keeping teachers in their comfort zone, but also multitasking the time devoted to reading instruction.

**Standardized testing.** How does the pressure of standardized testing affect curriculum priorities? In elementary social studies, perhaps more than any other subject, there is heated debate over what to teach more so than how to teach (Robelen, 2010). Districts and individual teachers, presumably, design daily lessons based on a state-mandated set of standards. Writing lessons based on the state’s standards is, however, often neither as easy nor as straightforward as it sounds. Lesson planners must consider who wrote the standards. What was the political agenda? Whose interests were put first? Whose story is the history trying to tell? Are the standards balanced or biased? After these questions are answered about the state standards, they must also be considered for the district as a unit, and then for each social studies teacher.

Heafner, Lipscomb, and Rock (2006) studied the effects of testing pressure on the priority placed on elementary social studies by looking at neighboring states. They studied standardized tests in North Carolina, which does not include social studies in their state-mandated standardized test, and South Carolina, which does include social studies in their annual testing. The results of the data were in keeping with schools’ response to increased demand. In South Carolina, “75% indicate 30-45 minutes or more” (p. 151) per day of social studies instruction, while in North Carolina, “67% report 30-45 minutes per day” (p. 151) of social studies instruction. When asked to provide reasons for the length of time spent teaching social
studies, North Carolina teachers’ answers to why they spend such a limited amount of time on social studies included too little instructional time and a focus on reading. South Carolina teachers’ answers to why they spend more time teaching social studies included not only a personal feeling that social studies is important, but also that it is included in the state test and must be taught.

Do Heafner, Lipscomb, and Rock’s (2006) results mean that better citizens will come from South Carolina than North Carolina? Will South Carolina produce adults better able to function and contribute to the government and economy? Perhaps that is a study to be conducted in another decade when the children affected by this fight over which curriculum is more important are adults paying taxes and making decisions at the polls. Curriculum integration is also an answer for filling this gap. Reading instruction is required and tested in all states due to the No Child Left Behind legislation. Integrating social studies in even part of those lessons would help ensure that the next generation of citizens is better informed.

The current study seeks to find the impact of integrating curriculum on teachers’ perceptions of social studies. Jacobs (1989) has established the need to integrate curriculum at all levels. Integrating two or more curricular areas into one lesson seems an easy way to ‘buy’ more instructional time in the day. So, why are teachers resisting the idea? McBee (2000) cites lack of professional development in integrated teaching techniques, already limited curriculum development and planning time, and limited teaching resources. McBee (2000) followed ten elementary teachers in a variety of settings and grade levels to find their perspectives on teaching lessons in an integrated way. All of the teachers reported spending more time preparing integrated lessons than they spent preparing for isolated content lessons. However, all teachers also reported feeling the extra time was worthwhile because the students seemed more engaged
in the lessons, learned to make connections in new ways, and retained information better.

Holloway and Chiodo (2009) conducted a mixed methods study to find out if social studies is being taught in elementary school as little as current theory holds. Their study found that curriculum integration was the main vehicle of social studies instruction in kindergarten through third grade, while dedicated time blocks for social studies lessons held their place in fourth and fifth grades. Holloway and Chiodo (2009) interviewed teachers to follow up on their quantitative data, and found that all the teachers they questioned held strong personal feelings about including social studies concepts in their lessons, regardless of pressures to allocate the majority of their instructional time to reading and math. Integrating social studies with other subject areas allowed the participants more time to include hands-on activities than teaching social studies in an isolated time block would.

Like Holloway and Chiodo (2009) suggest, the current study also focuses on integrating social studies with reading. As discussed in Chapter 1, for a lesson to truly be integrated, content in both subjects needs equal instruction and assessment. Therefore, a discussion of language arts in a broader context is followed by a narrowed focus specifically on reading.

**Language Arts**

**History of elementary language arts.** The importance of language arts instruction cannot be argued. Language arts is at the core of the purpose of elementary instruction. “Language arts’ refers to the many means by which we communicate feelings, ideas, and information through language,” (Jensen & Rosen, 1987, p. 377). The CCSPS include reading, writing, conventions (traditionally referred to as grammar), listening, speaking, and viewing under their elementary language arts standards.
Like elementary social studies, elementary language arts has a long, well-documented past (Benson, 2008; Thompson, 2001; Willis, 1997). However, unlike social studies, the elementary language arts curriculum debate has revolved around pedagogy and instructional theory, as well as content. Although elementary language arts has certainly evolved over the history of education, unlike elementary social studies, language arts has maintained its place as a top instructional priority. The proverbial pedagogical pendulum has historically swung back and forth between the integrated, whole language approach and a more compartmentalized, so-called “balanced” instructional approach where skills in each area of language arts (reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing) are taught separately (Jensen & Rosen, 1987; Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Moorman, Blanton, & McLaughlin, 1994; NCTE & Strong, 1972). While reading has gained the most prominent place in the elementary school day due to its prominent place in the NCLB Legislation (United States Department of Education), debate continues over the role of grammar in daily lessons.

One method of language arts instruction historically popular in elementary schools is using basal reader programs (Jensen & Rosen, 1987). These programs included reading skills (i.e. phonics and recall), grammar, spelling, and perhaps a couple other language arts skills. Basal programs were often used to teach language arts skills in isolation from one another with little, if any, crossover to other language arts or content curricular areas. In direct contrast with basal reader programs is the whole language movement (Goodman, 1989; Moorman, Blanton, & McLaughlin, 1994). Whole language is different from basal reader programs because it teaches language arts in a very integrated, authentic way (Moorman, Blanton, & McLaughlin, 1994).

One of the areas included in elementary language arts instruction is that of grammar, or the mechanics of standard written and spoken English (Jensen & Rosen, 1987). Through the
development of elementary curriculum, grammar has struggled to become integrated across subject areas instead of being taught as an isolated set of skills (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; NCTE & Strong, 1972; Walmsley & Walp, 1990). The importance of grammar to written English cannot be denied. Indeed, universities and the entire enterprise of academia and research across all disciplines rely on scholars communicating research and theories through the medium of written English. As early as 1935, there was much debate about NCTE’s (National Council of Teachers of English) recommendation to teach grammar in conjunction with writing as opposed to an isolated, structured subject of its own accord (Kolln & Hancock, 2005).

While all aspects of language arts instruction are vital to the educational system, this review of literature focuses on reading since it is the focus of the research question. Adult literacy measures indicate overall progress of a society world-wide (California Literacy, 2012). Basing judgment on whether adults can read and write single words (such as their own name) indicates a worldwide adult literacy level of 99% (California Literacy, 2012). However, basing judgment on whether adults have attained functional literacy, the adult literacy rate drops to somewhere between 40% and 50% worldwide (California Literacy, 2012):

The phrase functionally illiterate describes those persons over the age of fifteen who are unable to read well enough to read a daily newspaper and comprehend it, or to read well enough to understand a simple contract, or a basic letter concerning their children’s school needs, or the pamphlets that are enclosed with prescription drugs that explain side effects and precautions. (California Literacy)

To address this concern, reading stands out as the key component of NCLB (U.S. Department of Education). In the state of the current study, in response to the requirements set forth by NCLB, each year students in grades 3 through 8 must take the Criterion Referenced Competency Test
(CRCT), which tests students’ knowledge in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 are required to pass the reading portion of this test to earn promotion to the next grade. Therefore, all students in the state of the current study should have attained the level of adult functional literacy as defined above by the time they enter high school, proven by passing CRCT scores.

While the success and level of advancement a society has attained may be measured by the number of adults considered functionally literate, attaining the level of functional literacy could hardly be considered the final goal of the United States’ working population. Even the application process for a minimum wage job requires the job seeker have a functional level of literacy. For jobs paying higher wages, applicants must be able to read better than the functional literacy baseline. The desire to hire employees whose reading level exceeds the minimum level of adult functional literacy creates demand for school systems to produce graduates meeting that need.

**Current trends in elementary language arts.** In the county where the present study takes place, Balanced Literacy is the program of choice for language arts, which is a recent shift from the four blocks method (Cunningham, Hall, & DeFee, 1998). Balanced Literacy integrates all areas of language arts (reading, writing, conventions, viewing, speaking, and listening) with each other, and lends itself to easily integrate other content areas with literacy instruction. In the county of the current study, reading instruction shifts in third grade from learning to read (i.e. decoding, phonics, etc.) in the lower grades to reading as a means of learning across content areas in the upper elementary grades.

In the state of the current study, the depth and breadth of elementary language arts is vast in both directions. Kindergarten starts with basic concepts of print (i.e. letter identification,
phonological awareness, and uses and understands oral language). By the end of fifth grade, student expectations include providing evidence of their understanding of a variety of literary genres, reading at least a million words during the school year, using technology to produce fully developed essays across four genres of writing, and viewing a variety of media to inform their knowledge base). The standards in first through fourth grades increase students’ skills in all language arts areas accordingly.

The English-Language Arts standards for third grade students represent the midpoint of skills between kindergarten and fifth grade. As stated earlier, by third grade the ideas of teaching and learning how to read fall into the category of remediation. On-target third grade students can use previously learned word decoding skills to figure out unknown words in text. They understand enough word skills (i.e. prefix, root words, suffix) along with using context clues to gain meaning from unknown words in texts. Students’ essays become more well-developed as students increasingly understand the differences between the narrative, informational, persuasive, and response to literature genres. Students’ listening, speaking, and viewing skills also become more sophisticated. With so many skills available for consideration through a research study, teachers could easily become overwhelmed with choice. Since third grade is the first year of shifting instructional focus to reading comprehension, as opposed to word decoding, and the increased pressure of passing the reading CRCT to be promoted (as opposed to placed) to the fourth grade, the language arts area of concern for the current study will be reading comprehension.

*Best practices.* Teachers continually hear about “Best Practices,” talk about “Best Practices,” and know they must use “Best Practices” or face unsatisfactory job performance evaluations or worse. Defining and naming teaching strategies that might be considered “Best
Practices” seems to be taken for granted (Yeager & Davis, 2005). “Best Practices are defined as strategies, activities or approaches that have been shown through research and evaluation to be effective and/or efficient,” (Florida Department of Education, Best Practices in Florida’s Colleges). In the interest of evaluating prior research on Best Practices to guide the current study, the researcher read numerous articles related to elementary reading comprehension strategies. A summary, evaluation, and description of their relationship and applicability to the current study follows.

How do teachers learn Best Practices and learn how to use them? As discussed above with social studies, teachers first learn and practice using reading Best Practices as preservice teachers in college (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010). Barnyak and Paquette (2010) maintain that a teacher’s belief system about reading affects how he or she will teach reading, and a teacher will only make a change to the way he or she teaches if a change has been made to his or her belief system first. These researchers used a Likert-type pretest/posttest questionnaire with preservice teachers at two universities to find if there would be a statistically significant change in beliefs about reading instruction as a result of completing a reading methods course about teaching reading to kindergarten and first grade students. Of the 24 questions posed in the survey, the only one to return a statistically significant increase in the preservice teachers’ beliefs was a question about whether it is important to teach first grade students comprehension skills. While responses to the other questions showed in increase in the Likert scale responses, they were not statistically significant increases.

Barnyak and Paquette’s (2010) study implies that as they enter their own classrooms, preservice teachers and teachers need to be aware of their own belief systems about reading and the importance of using a variety of research-based instructional strategies. Like the preservice
teachers who participated in Barnyak and Paquette’s (2010) study, the teacher participants in the current study have strong beliefs about using Best Practices reading instruction like book clubs (Dail, McGee, & Edwards, 2009). The teacher participants in the current study have participated in informal book clubs, so they are familiar with this interactive model of literature discussion. When planning the current study, the researcher will consider the findings of Dail, McGee, and Edwards (2009) about teachers carrying their own beliefs about reading when deciding upon exploratory and guiding questions for focus group interviews and weekly reflections as participants carry their own experience from book club membership over to becoming a book club facilitator.

Graham and Hebert (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of a different reading instruction Best Practice: writing to improve reading comprehension. Citing the inability of federal policy (i.e. NCLB) to produce the improved reading rates sought by the legislators who wrote the policy (p. 711), Graham and Hebert (2011) looked for a different way in which schools could truly improve reading comprehension. After evaluating 11 studies, Graham and Hebert (2011) found a statistically significant average effect size that confirmed that writing about what students read does improve comprehension. When they analyzed 21 studies on the topic of writing skill instruction, Graham and Hebert (2011) found, again, a statistically significant average effect size confirming that writing skill instruction also improves reading comprehension in grades 4-12. In their third, and final, finding, Graham and Hebert (2011) found another statistically significant average effect size that the more writing has a greater positive effect on students’ reading comprehension. Graham and Hebert’s (2011) meta-analysis shows that three different aspects of writing instruction improve reading comprehension, thus making it a Best Practice as defined above. With regard to the current study, Graham and Hebert’s (2011) study points to the strong
recommendation of adding writing components to book club lessons. The researcher will introduce the findings of this study as participants collaborate over book club lessons.

Like Graham and Hebert (2011), Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) also conducted a meta-analysis of reading instruction Best Practices. However, Slavin et al. (2011) specifically examined instructional practices targeting elementary-aged struggling readers. Upon reviewing 97 studies, Slavin et al. (2011) found that the best possible reading instruction includes high quality classroom instruction first. When needed, high quality one-on-one remediation for the readers most at risk produces the best long-term result. To make either program work, continued professional development aimed at changing classroom programs is required. Professional development that supplied more and/or better technology, other curriculum ideas, or intervention strategies that did not change daily classroom practices proved less effective.

The key finding from Slavin et al. (2011) in application to the current study is to use a best practice that will alter how the participants regularly teach in their classrooms. As mentioned above, the participants have been members of informal book clubs, but have not adopted book clubs as an instructional practice. Chapter 4 will address further the professional development that participants will attend prior to implementing book clubs in their own classrooms. This professional development, following Slavin et al’s (2011) findings, will alter the participants’ daily classroom activity from their current norm.

In the process of searching for literature applicable to the current study, the researcher found many other articles similar to those described above (Bishop & League, 2006; Bryce, 2011; Falk, 2005; Kitano & Lewis, 2007; Kourea, Cartledge, & Musti-Rao, 2007; Mathes, TORGESSEN, & Allor, 2001; Nes, 2003; Ouellette, DaGostino, & Carifio, 1999; Padak & Rasinski, 2006; Shaw, 2003). These articles focused on themes such as students with disabilities or
struggling students (Berringer, Abbott, Vermeulen, & Fulton, 2006; Bishop & League, 2006; Falk, 2005; Nes, 2003; Ouellette, DaGostino, & Carifio, 1999) or on integrating reading with a subject other than social studies such as science or technology (Bryce, 2011; Devick-Fry & LeSage, 2010; Friedman & Hicks, 2006; Mathes, Torgesen, & Allor, 2001). With such a wide variety of best practices in reading to choose from, the researcher chose to add to the field of literacy literature from the perspective of teachers shifting from isolated content instruction to integrated curriculum teaching methods while incorporating suggestions from the literature into the instructional planning for this study. A discussion of the instructional theory influencing this study follows.

**Constructivist Theory**

In planning the current study, the researcher had to juxtapose herself between a classroom teacher attempting to maximize instructional time and a researcher recording her own and her colleagues’ experience adopting a new instructional technique. From both stand points, constructivist theory guides the current study. The meaning of the term *constructivism* has become muddied by overuse, but is generally used to mean a learner builds, or constructs, his or her own knowledge (Harlow, Cummings, & Aberasturi, 2006).

Vygotsky viewed constructivism as the interaction between the individual and the social surroundings (Vygotsky, 1978). In Vygotsky’s interpretation of constructivism, the richness of gains from the social experience outweighs the sum of the contributions from each individual member. Therefore, the individual constructs more knowledge by interacting in the theory specifically applies to this study follows.

**Vygotsky’s theory.** Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who lived 37 years at the
turn of the 20th century. His work was unavailable in the U.S. until the middle of the 20th century, when the first translated work became available. Vygotsky’s diverse interests in child development and psychology included educational development and learning, abnormal development, and culture’s role in development of children (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky’s constructivism guides the current study because the participants will interact in a very specific way to construct meaning of a new instructional technique. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, data will be collected to illustrate how participants’ perceptions of both social studies and reading will change as a result of the meaning they construct during the course of adopting book clubs as an integrated instructional technique.

The piece of Vygotsky’s work most relevant to the lesson planning stage of the current study is that of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): “It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).” As the researcher has already used book clubs to integrate social studies and reading in her own classroom, she will serve as the “more capable peer” among the group of teachers adopting this instructional strategy in addition to utilizing this guided approach to learning with students.

In the school where the current study takes place, reading instruction specifically targets the ZPD. Teachers use the STAR computer adaptive reading test (Renaissance Learning) and/or the Fountas and Pinnel (F&P) (2011) assessment to determine a child’s independent reading level. Once the teacher has determined the student’s independent level, the frustration level is also determined. The frustration level is the level at which the student cannot orally read or does not understand the passage read. The ZPD is in between those two levels. Each child’s ZPD
earns consideration when the teacher chooses books relevant to the current social studies content, as in the case of the current study. For the teacher to assess two content areas using one lesson, reading and social studies, the reading level at which each child can fairly be assessed must be a primary consideration when choosing which books to use.

Pieces of Vygotsky’s theory that teachers, the researcher of this study included, use when planning instruction for students are also relevant to planning the professional development portion of this study. Warford (2011) discusses Vygotsky’s idea of ZPD in terms of the teacher’s ZPD, or Zone of Proximal Teacher Development (ZPTD), which “... denotes the distance between what teaching candidates can do on their own without assistance and a proximal level they might attain through strategically mediated assistance from more capable others” (Warford, 2011, p. 253). In contrast to the way in which children cognitively progress from having expert guidance to self-sufficiency, teachers progress through professional development in a seemingly opposite way. Professional development for teachers needs to consider the teachers’ prior knowledge and allow them choice in how to construct new knowledge via self-reflection (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011; Lempert-Shepell, 1995; Warford, 2011). “... it is necessary to understand that unlike ZPD which starts with other-regulation ZPTD starts with teachers’ self-scaffolding and moves toward other-regulation” (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011, p. 1553).

When planning professional development for the current study, the researcher must be aware of the difference in learning between her third grade students and the teacher participants. Where book club lessons with students can culminate in a reflective activity where students demonstrate how much they have learned, the professional development sessions where participants will construct their ideas for including book club lessons in their instruction should
begin with the participants reflecting on their own practice.

**Integrated Teaching Strategies for Social Studies and Language Arts**

Teachers integrate social studies and literacy through writing assignments (Brophy & Alleman, 2008). From a literacy standpoint, “It does support progress toward literacy goals: Frequent reading of informational texts … leads to better progress in literacy than a literacy curriculum focused heavily on fiction” (Brophy & Alleman, 2008, p. 39). However, teachers need to be mindful of the content they choose to integrate in this way. Teachers of very young children (Pre-K and Kindergarten) often choose folklore, fairy tales, fables, etc. as vehicles for teaching both literacy and citizenship. If this is the only way these teachers “sneak” social studies into the curriculum, they must recognize “… these are fictions, not historical accounts of actual events” (Brophy & Alleman, 2008, p. 39). Similar to book clubs, writing lessons need to have equal focus on learning objectives for both writing and social studies. Brophy and Alleman’s article (2008) provides a glimpse into a method of curriculum integration other than book clubs.

While most elementary teachers are very comfortable with language arts instruction, one challenge elementary teachers face when teaching social studies is helping students make a personal connection with social studies content (Gallavan & Kottler, 2007). Teachers’ struggle in guiding students to make connections is especially true when attempting to teach young children about historical people and events. One instructional technique for helping students to build connections is having students participate in creating a wax museum (Lacina & Watson, 2003; Lindquist, 1995). This method engages students in researching details about historical figures and events.
To create a successful wax museum, students need to research a historical figure in order to construct a display that provides accurate and interesting information. Older students could use Internet resources to peruse historical artifacts and primary documents that may otherwise be inaccessible. Older students can also be tasked with finding information that may not be considered common knowledge about famous historical figures to enrich the museum exhibits. While this method would be better suited for students who can read independently, it certainly could be adapted for younger children. Younger students could work in larger groups with more adult assistance to construct wax museum exhibits. Lacina and Watson (2003) actually conducted this activity with a group of preservice teachers. The students walked away with a new teaching strategy, and a clear idea of a way to teach social studies beyond traditional textbook use. Integrating language arts standards would be very easy with this instructional technique. Assessments of the research process and final report could be added to the assessment of content included. Lacina and Watson offer a very creative curriculum integration method, however theirs is another practitioner based article that does not offer empirical data.

Language arts is a very broad content area that encompasses a variety of communication and critical thinking skills. Lessons that integrate social studies and language arts need not be limited to reading and writing tasks. Timothy Lintner (2005) conducted a study in which 175 students in First, Third, and Fourth grades analyzed photographs of children who were different from themselves. The photographs portrayed children who were physically disabled, from a different culture, from a different period of time, or from a different setting (i.e. urban vs. rural). No quantitative data was collected, however Lintner was very surprised at the depth of observation such young students were able to make. This activity can also be done with postcards, political cartoons, or other types of visual media and artifacts. The purpose is to put
something in the children’s hands that will help them view the concept from a different point-of-view as well as develop critical thinking skills. This method can be used to “kick off” a new unit by giving the students a common experience to refer and reflect back on as the unit progresses.

On the other hand, if the purpose of a unit is critical thinking and analysis skills, a photo and/or artifact analysis project can be used as a performance assessment. Even if no written assignment accompanies this activity, the listening and speaking standards associated with language arts can be integrated into the assessment of this strategy.

Hakes and Eisenwine (2003) used Classroom Lore and Artifacts Study Project (CLASP) to engage students in performance-based, hands-on lessons to study a variety of social studies standards. This method involves having students create electronic slide show presentations on the assigned curriculum. Students begin with items and events from their classroom experience: jokes, guests, daily events, a class pet, stories, etc. The exact lore and/or artifacts that would serve as the starting point for a CLASP project would depend on the social studies curriculum under study. Suggested content for this method include time projects; either a timeline project or a slide show detailing the development of a current event. This method is also a creative way to study geography. Students can combine historic and current maps to show how an area has changed over a period of time. The project could be taken a step further by predicting how the same area might change in the future. The idea of an electronic CLASP could also be used in other content areas or to integrate content areas. An electronic CLASP is a method that would work very well with younger children since the starting point can be anything in the students’ daily classroom experience. Assessing both language arts and social studies content is a logical way to end this project. Hakes and Eisenwine (2003) present another creative means of curriculum integration, however, like with the literature discussed so far, the CLASP idea is not
an empirical study.

Effective teaching requires more than an ability to read books and recite facts (Alger, 2007). Effective teachers become emotionally involved and personally vested in their students’ success (Alger, 2007). Using literature circles to integrate reading and social studies is an easy way to accomplish learning goals in both areas and fully engage students in learning. Bearing in mind the teacher’s need to teach a particular social studies content standard, a variety of literature on a variety of reading levels can be chosen to meet both reading and social studies targets. By providing a choice of literature, the teacher provides a more open opportunity for engagement.

**Using book clubs to integrate economics and reading.** Book clubs (also referred to interchangeably as literature circles) are a very interactive way to integrate literacy and social studies. In book club groups, small groups of students (between two and six students) work together to read and understand various books (Aguerre, 2006; Keane & Zimmerman, 2007; Literature Circles Resource Center; McCall, 2010). The particular books selected for book clubs depend on the learning goals established by the desired standards. In the case of the current study, all books will have a common theme central to the desired social studies content. The teacher works with each group to ensure learning and understanding of both literacy and social studies skills and concepts. Groups can be established with a variety of learners in each one, and a variety of books across the classroom. If groups read different books, the class can meet together so students can learn from each other. However, at the end of the day, it is still the teacher’s responsibility to ensure mastery of learning standards in all content areas considered to be integrated into the book club lessons (McCall, 2010). The idea of books clubs aligns directly with the current study. However, the resources discussed provided an explanation of what book
clubs are and how they work. They do not present empirical data to offer proof of an increased level of achievement through book clubs as opposed to another instructional method.

“Literature circles are small, student-led discussion groups in which group members have selected the same book or article to read. All group members must prepare to participate in the small group discussion and then must contribute to the discussion” (McCall, 2010, p. 153).

Depending on the social studies standard being addressed, the teacher may choose to have the entire class read the same book in their small group literature circles, or a variety of books addressing an issue from a different perspective may be offered, allowing students to choose the book. The choice of which particular book or books to offer will take careful consideration by the teacher because the selection needs to address not only the desired social studies standard, but also the desired reading standard.

McCall (2010) had specific goals for integrating social studies and reading through book clubs. Her strongest arguments for using book clubs as an integrated teaching strategy were for students to learn to critique the credibility of primary and secondary sources, students gain exposure to multiple perspectives on the same event, and students engage in authentic, meaningful discussions of literature. McCall’s article (2010), however, differs from the current study. McCall wrote a practitioner based article as a suggestion for classroom use. The current study is a case study that will record how participants’ perceptions change as they adopt a new instructional strategy.

In third grade, the grade level the current study evaluates, economics concepts, such as scarcity, interdependence, and the four productive resources are studied in accordance with the State standards. The Little Red Pen (2011) and Tops and Bottoms (1995), both by Janet Stevens, provide an age-appropriate summary of interdependence and specialization through entertaining
tales. These books would be good choices for literature circle reading that would produce assessable work in both the social studies standard, as well as the appropriate reading standard for cause and effect along with making judgments and inferences.

The teacher could use either of these texts as a whole class, with the class split into smaller literature circles. Using the same book for the entire class would provide an opportunity for the students to practice literature circle roles while learning the social studies content and make it easy for the teacher to guide groups as needed. The teacher could also use both books at the same time in different groups. After the literature circles have completed their small group work, the class could then meet back as a whole to make connections and contrast the two books.

Before literature circles will run smoothly with students confidently participating, practice in the role each group member takes along with clear learning objectives and expectations is required. Some roles in each group might include: word spotter, whose job is to find new, unusual, or unknown vocabulary words; questioner, whose job is to write down questions that come up during reading or discussion; illustrator, whose job is sketching interesting scenes from the book or drawing graphs to help the group make sense of information; and bridge builder, whose job is to make connections between the current reading selection and the students, other texts, and/or the world around them (Literature Circles Resource Center; McCall, 2010). Students may suggest or the social studies objective may call for addition or other roles to help enrich the literature circle experience. Each student should have the opportunity to practice each role using familiar reading selections that are at a low enough readability level so all students can read, comprehend, and confidently participate in the literature circle.
Summary

The field of elementary social studies has endured many changes from the beginning of education in the United States through the present day. At its heart, elementary social studies is the foundation of American society. Thus teachers of this subject must bear responsibility for students’ understanding of what citizenship means, the importance of voting, and the mistakes and successes of our forefathers, to name just a few lessons. Included in these lessons are skills such as getting along with friends, compromising, and following rules, lessons that students must practice each day on the playground and in the classroom. With the obvious, practical connection to daily life, educators must ask why educational priorities have shifted in such a way as to put social studies lessons on the bottom of the priority list? How has teaching children the skills they will need to continue American Democracy become the least important part of their day?

The answer to this question, as discussed above, seems to be the No Child Left Behind Act that has set instructional priorities with reading and math. While not arguing the importance of reading and math, the day-to-day result of prioritizing those two subjects has been at the expense of elementary social studies. Though this piece of federal legislation may omit the importance of elementary social studies, teachers must not.

One way to maintain the priority level NCLB has placed on reading maintaining instructional time for social studies is to combine the lessons during the same time block. Curriculum integration combines standards from two different subjects through the same lesson. The teacher can assess all standards concerned by choosing lesson topics and materials with integration in mind. As discussed above, the field of applicable literature contains a variety of integrated instructional techniques that draw from the field of Best Practices for reading
instruction while incorporating the teaching and assessing of social studies standards. However, the body of research on teachers’ changing perceptions of social studies and reading as they change from teaching social studies and reading as isolated lessons to teaching them in an integrated way is lacking.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Elementary teachers have a need to maximize instructional time to make sure elementary social studies maintains its place in the school day. Due to the increasing demands of standardized testing, social studies instruction struggles to maintain a place of priority in the typical elementary school day (Bolick, Adams, & Wilcox, 2010; Halvorsen, Duke, Brugar, Block, Strachan, Berka, & Brown, 2012). The purpose of the current case study was to explore third grade teachers’ perceptions and experiences as they integrated reading and social studies through book clubs. The guiding research question for this study is: What impact does integrating economics with reading through book clubs have on six third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies? The researcher used a qualitative case study to answer this question, which allowed the researcher to closely observe and explore how these teachers perceived and applied curriculum integration through book clubs within the real life context of their classrooms.

Overview of Research Design

The best method for answering the current research question is a qualitative case study, because a case study allows the researcher to observe an event in its “real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). The real-life context of the current study is third grade at an elementary school in a district approximately 45 miles outside of a large metropolitan area in a southeast state. While a quantitative research method would rely on a limited number of variables that the researcher would measure for change, this case study event has more variables than could be accounted for using a quantitative method, and requires several types of data to fully capture the entire picture
of the event (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). This study involves six teachers adjusting their instruction methods from teaching social studies and reading in isolated lessons to teaching these lessons in an integrated way. As discussed below, these participants have several years’ experience teaching third grade. Asking them to change their instructional method meant taking them outside of their comfort zone. Collecting data in the form of a quantifiable survey or looking only at measurable pretest and posttest student learning measures would not allow the researcher to gain comprehensive insight into the participants’ perceptions of the instructional method. The researcher examined these participants’ experiences and perceptions as they integrated economics and reading through book clubs. A quantitative study might statistically analyze whether teachers spent more or less time between the isolated method and the integrated method, and whether students scored differently when they learned the same standards when taught in an isolated way or integrated way. By studying the same event using a qualitative case study method, the researcher could consider feedback that numbers alone cannot describe, such as how the teachers applied the integrated method, whether they liked the integrated method, whether they felt confident in the students’ level of mastery by using a much different instructional method, and whether or not they believed the students enjoyed the lessons. Feedback, either positive or negative, determines whether the instructional method in question, integrated book clubs, may be used again in the future for different standards.

Yin (2003) categorizes case study method into single- and multiple-case studies. The current study fits into the single-case study category, because the six teachers in this third grade unit experienced the introduction of book clubs as an integrated teaching technique together. A single case study is called for when the investigation “represents an extreme case or a unique case” (Yin, 2003, p. 40). In the current investigation the researcher examined six teachers’
experiences and perceptions of social studies and literacy as a result of integration through book clubs. This investigation is a unique case because it is the first time this group of teachers experienced purposeful integrated instruction. Since reading is one of the core skills in the elementary years, as a secondary investigation the researcher also asked participants about their perceptions of reading through the integration process. Case study methodology lends itself well to understanding teachers’ perceptions through qualitative means, which is important to the long-term success of book clubs as a viable integrated instructional tool.

Six third grade teachers including the researcher were the participants in this study. The researcher decided to become a participant because she had taught with the other five participants for 11 years at the time of this study. As a reflective practitioner with a deep interest in elementary social studies, conducting this investigation as an outsider would be nearly impossible. Participating in the study allows the researcher to openly reflect on the integration process of her peers implementing a new instructional technique, and to better understand the impact of integrating curriculum on third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies and reading.

As Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) suggest, the researcher collected triangulated data in multiple forms to increase data validity by showing independent pictures of the same event. The researcher collected anecdotal notes from planning meetings, weekly lesson plans, focus group interviews, and weekly, individual, written reflections from all six participants, transcribed interviews, coded, and analyzed data for emergent themes. In addition to these documents, the researcher also collected samples of student work and assessments from these lessons to supplement whatever the teachers reported. This particular group of teachers has a lengthy history of working together, the newest member joining the group three years ago. The others
have been members of this grade level a minimum of six years. Weekly planning meetings have been a regular part of this group’s functioning for its entire history. The anecdotal notes offered key insights into the group’s adjustment to realigning familiar curriculum while adding some new curriculum as they changed from state performance standards to common core curriculum performance standards. The individually written weekly reflections shed light on some topics not addressed when the entire group was present. Comparing weekly lesson plans, which the school administration requires be posted on a shared network file storage drive, to the outcome of the weekly planning meetings allowed the researcher to evaluate how closely individual teachers followed the grade level plans. A more in-depth discussion of the participants follows the description of the study, along with discussions of data sources, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness of the study.

**The Research Context**

The school in which this study took place was classified as a suburban elementary school, approximately 45 miles southeast of a large city in a Southeast state, housing 914 students in grades kindergarten through fifth during the 2013-2014 school year. Of the 914 students, 478 (52.3%) were male, and 436 (47.7%) were female. The student body was composed of 638 (69.8%) White students, 162 (17.7%) Black students, 61 (6.7%) Hispanic students, 10 (1.1%) American Indian/Alaskan Native students, and 9 (1%) Asian students. This school contained 57 certified faculty members: 35 regular education teachers with homerooms from kindergarten through fifth grade, two self-contained special education teachers with homerooms, 13 special education teachers without homerooms, three counselors, one media specialist, two assistant principals, and one principal. This school also included 30 classified staff members: 14
paraprofessionals, one bookkeeper, two administrative assistants, one nurse, five custodians, and seven cafeteria workers. Of the 87 faculty and staff members, four (4.6%) were male and 83 (95.4%) were female. The 87 faculty and staff were made up of 9 (10.3%) African Americans, one (1.4%) Hispanic, one (1.4%) Asian, and 76 (87.4%) Whites.

While the school where the case study took place contains grades kindergarten through fifth, third grade was chosen because it is the first year of state mandated testing. As discussed in Chapter 2, time for reading instruction often diminishes social studies’ importance, since reading is the primary area of interest in NCLB (Jones & Thomas, 2006). However, in the 2012-2013 school year, the district in question compelled third grade teachers to integrate social studies and reading because the district leaders planned to count the state mandated test scores in social studies as an indicator of overall school success.

In the school where the study took place, there were six third grade classes with 21-24 students in each, totaling 141 students total in the grade level. Not all students were randomly assigned to particular classrooms. The purposeful assignment of students with particular needs affected those teachers’ input in the current study, therefore, a description of these classrooms follows. Two of the classrooms followed a special education co-teaching model. In these two classrooms, a special education resource teacher co-taught with the regular classroom teacher for part of the day. The special education co-teacher planned her schedule around her students’ Individual Education Plans’ (IEP) stipulations. The special education teacher’s paraprofessional was also present in these classrooms for part of the day. Students identified in their IEPs as participating in the co-taught lessons may have been assigned to another regular education homeroom. These students left their regular homeroom to attend the co-taught lessons in the co-teaching regular education classrooms. The homeroom teacher needed to adjust his or her
schedule to accommodate the schedule of co-taught lessons. Of the other five classrooms, one contained five students who have IEPs for disorders on the Autism/Asberger’s Spectrum Syndrome. This classroom’s teacher and another, regular education classroom teacher team taught. Students in these two classrooms saw one teacher for math and non-reading language arts, and the other for reading, science, and social studies. The other two classrooms contained students who may have had IEPs for speech and/or language disorders and students who were in the Early Intervention Program (EIP), in addition to students with no outstanding needs.

The Participants

A convenience sample of six white, female teachers, including the researcher, participated in this study. The researcher explained to the participants the purpose, procedures, and time commitment involved in this study. After signing informed consent that would allow them to withdraw from the study any time they may choose, these teachers volunteered for this study because they were frustrated with constraints on instructional time, and were eager for a new instructional technique. They have an average of 12.3 years of overall teaching experience, ranging from six years to 21 years for individual teachers. These participants have an average of 10.6 years’ experience teaching third grade, ranging from three years to 16 years for individuals. Their ages range from 31 to 44 with an average age of 37.5 years. A summary of their demographic information is displayed in Table 1 below. All participants, except the researcher, have been given pseudonyms.
Table 1

Participants’ Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Length of Overall Teaching Experience (years)</th>
<th>Length of Third Grade Teaching Experience (years)</th>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyssa</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All six participants have met the state’s criteria for Highly Qualified Educators (HQE), defined by holding a four year degree from an accredited university and a current, valid teaching certificate.

These third grade teachers were purposely chosen for the current case study, because the researcher had been part of this grade level team for eleven school years, and knew the teachers and third grade curriculum well. These teachers earned their credentials at a variety of universities across several states. Of the four who have teaching experience other than third grade, all of that experience for all four teachers took place in lower grades before beginning third grade.
Data Sources and Collection

Qualitative research methods were used for the current study. Multiple sets of data were collected to present as detailed a picture of this case study as possible, including focus group interviews, individual reflections, anecdotal notes from weekly meetings, lesson plans, and anecdotal notes from professional development meetings about book clubs. A description of each component of this study follows.

Focus group interviews. Three focus group interviews, each lasting 45 - 60 minutes, were held throughout the data collection period (see Appendix H for a sample of the audio-taped, verbatim transcripts from the focus group interviews). The first focus group interview occurred at the beginning of the study. Focus group interviews took place at the school where the participants teach following the regular school day with refreshments provided by the researcher. The researcher reserved a conference room, and the door was closed during the interviews to maintain as much privacy as possible. The researcher-participant wished to gain insight into the other participants’ perceptions and knowledge about social studies and curriculum integration before integrating social studies and reading instruction. After asking some guiding questions at the beginning of the focus group interview, the researcher-participant opened the discussion to questions and thoughts not covered by the guiding questions. Specific guiding questions for the Focus Group Interview 1, which was the first event of this study, can be found in Appendix A. The same guiding questions were included at each of following focus group interviews so the researcher-participant could see if attitudes were changing throughout the course of the study. The guiding questions asked participants about their perceptions of book clubs, whether their students liked the book club lessons, their perceptions of student engagement and learning, etc. Focus group interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for emergent themes by the
researcher-participant. Guiding questions for Focus Group Interview 2 can be found in Appendix B for the interview that took place three weeks into the study, and the guiding questions for Focus Group Interview 3, which took place after the integrated book club lessons ended, can be found in Appendix C.

**Professional development.** Before implementing the integrated lessons, participants also participated in two 60-minute professional development sessions led by the researcher for the purpose of ensuring all participants understood both book clubs and curriculum integration. The first professional development session focused on the participants building a definition of integration. The researcher guided them in finding the importance of assessing equally both reading and social studies standards during each lesson. Activities in this session began with participants defining and identifying the purposes for both reading and social studies instruction. Participants then defined and identified the purpose of integrating content areas. After defining these key terms, the researcher then presented the participants with the definitions included in this dissertation, and guided discussion about any discrepancies until the researcher and participants agreed upon a final definition. The first professional development session focused heavily on the participants building a definition of curriculum integration because this idea is central to this study. It was possible for the participants to teach the book club lessons without truly integrating the two content areas. By focusing the first professional development session on constructing a definition understood by all participants, the researcher hoped to increase participants’ awareness of whether both subjects were equally taught and assessed.

In order to offer some time for participants to reflect on the accomplished learning from the first professional development session, the second professional development session took place two days after the first. The second professional development session explained how the
book club lessons were to be implemented for consistency across participants. Activities in this session included the participants reading the books planned for use with students. The participants were asked to identify which reading standards aligned most clearly with the books. After the reading standards were identified, the participants were asked to identify which social studies standards may apply to the same stories. The participants were then asked to design two lesson activities that include both of the identified reading and social studies standards, and how the assignments should be assessed. The two lessons designed during this professional development session served as the starting point for the book club lessons participants conducted with their own students.

**Book clubs.** Book club lessons for the current study started on a Monday, and continued daily for six weeks (See Appendix E for a timeline of this study). The book club lessons were taught during each participant’s usual 60 minute reading instructional time. On each Friday of the study, participants had the option of a written (e-mailed) or an audio recorded, face-to-face interview with the researcher-participant for the purpose of obtaining individual reflections. All participants chose to e-mail their weekly reflection, so no individual interviews were recorded. While the weekly team meetings were informal, allowing each member to freely express opinions and views, the researcher recognized that some participants might feel obligated to respond in a predictable way. Therefore, while the purpose and procedures of this study were fully explained in the training sessions prior to the study’s beginning, the researcher reminded the other participants at the onset of these weekly meetings that honest candor about the book club lessons was important to the integrity of the study. The researcher maintained a participatory role as opposed to a supervisory role, and, therefore, did not influence the flow of freely expressed ideas. Hopefully the privacy of an individual reflection took away some of the
feeling of obligation to echo someone else’s opinion or respond in a way that was less than entirely accurate.

**Weekly planning meetings.** Each week on Tuesday afternoon, after the school day for students has ended, the team of participants met to plan lessons, discuss students issues, and any other school related topics. The researcher took anecdotal notes during each weekly team meeting on any discussion related to the current study. The researcher did not ask any leading questions related to the study during these meetings, reserving those questions as needed for focus group interviews and topics for weekly reflections. Anecdotal notes were coded in the same manner as the focus group interviews and individual reflections. Anecdotal notes were collected so the researcher could track participants’ reported progress with book club lessons. These weekly meetings did not delve into personal reflections, but, instead, focused on whether participants were able to keep pace with planned book club lessons, whether planned activities within daily lessons were going well, and whether the participants reported ease or difficulty with book club implementation.

**Individual weekly reflections.** Each week of the study, the participant-researcher asked a question upon which all participants were asked to reflect. The questions posed can be found in Appendix D. These questions asked about individual participants’ thoughts and perceptions in slightly different words than the focus group interview questions. The purpose of the individual reflections was to give participants a private channel for expressing themselves regarding curriculum integration and book clubs, hopefully taking away any obligation participants may have felt to respond in a particular way while in an open discussion setting.

**Participants’ lesson plans.** In addition to focus group interviews, individual reflections, and anecdotal notes from weekly meetings, the participant-researcher collected copies of each
participant’s plans of lessons related to the study. Per the school’s administration, each teacher is required to post lesson plans to a shared drive on the school’s computer network. All teachers and administrators have access to all folders on this drive. Participants were aware of the participant-researcher’s gathering of the plans related to the study. The purpose of collecting written lesson plans was to determine whether each participant was following the study guidelines.

As mentioned above, five sources of data were collected. The first source of data was anecdotal notes taken by the participant-researcher during weekly planning meetings. Notes included information pertaining to what social studies content and reading skills the group agrees to include in upcoming lesson plans. Anecdotal notes also included instances of success or frustration shared by participants with integrated lessons as well as any concerns or questions addressed by the whole group. The anecdotal notes consisted of observations made by the researcher, who led the discussion of lesson plans for the following week. Discussion of weekly plans included successes and challenges of the previous week’s lesson plans so the team of teachers could progress together. To verify how closely all six participants adhered to the decisions made in the weekly planning meetings, weekly lesson plans were collected. Because the school where the study takes place is large, building administration requires all teachers post electronic lesson plans on a shared storage drive. Participants were informed that their posted lessons plans would be accessed for case study purposes.

In addition to anecdotal notes from weekly planning meetings and lesson plans, all participants attended focus group interviews at the onset, mid-point, and closure of data collection. A focus group “involves organized discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic” and “is particularly suited for
obtaining several perspectives about the same topic” (Gibbs, 1997). Interviewing participants in a focus group also allowed everyone to hear others’ understandings of the same event. During the three 45-minute focus group interviews, the researcher guided each recorded conversation with direct questions about participants’ perceptions of social studies and reading as they progressed through the change. Focus group interviews were semi-structured with the participant-researcher asking some questions, but allowing for the exploration of other topics related to the study that arose from conversation. Guiding questions included: Do you like teaching social studies using book clubs? Why or why not? Do your students enjoy book club lessons? How do you know? What changes might you make if you were to teach book clubs again? Why? Recordings from each focus group interview were transcribed by the researcher.

The fourth source of data was weekly hand-written, or typed, reflections from each of the six participants. Participants had the choice of a weekly, written reflection or an individual, audio-recorded interview with the researcher, but all participants chose to submit written weekly reflections each time. Because of the length of time this group has worked together and personality dynamics between certain individuals, some members might not have felt comfortable divulging frustrations, misunderstandings, or asking certain questions when the entire group is assembled. Individually, privately written reflections may reveal indicators of participants’ true perceptions of the integrated curriculum that would not be apparent in data collected while the group was assembled. Participants were asked to include ideas they liked in the week’s plans, anything they did not like or did not work well in their class, any changes they made before teaching a similar lesson again, any questions related to integrating social studies and reading curriculum, how they think students were faring, and any additional thoughts. The final portion of data collected was anecdotal notes that the researcher took during the
professional development sessions at the onset of the study. The researcher made notes about comments participants made and thoughts that came up to explore later in the study.

In addition to these data sources, the researcher kept a reflective journal to document her thoughts, feelings, questions, successes, and concerns throughout the data collection process. This journal served as a means to help the researcher work through the stress of conducting a study and kept her personal bias from permeating the study. Recording thoughts and feelings toward the study in a separate place helped the researcher separate those thoughts from the objective reporting of study events.

**Book Club Procedure**

Book club lessons took place daily during each participant’s usual reading time block throughout the data collection period. As will be discussed below, each participant decided for herself how to group students into book clubs based on the needs of her own students. Participants planned five days of lessons for each book. Each week’s plans began with a whole class reading of the story, book club groups deciding upon roles for the week with the teacher making sure each club member fulfilled each role throughout the data collection period, and students beginning their book club journal for the week. Each daily book club lesson started with a review of the previous day’s activity and/or discussion and a reading of the story. Subsequent lessons had book club members fulfilling their roles to address the reading standards, defining economics vocabulary related to the economics theme of the story, and answering questions in their book club journals to tie the reading and social studies standards together.
Data Analysis

**Book selection.** The social studies unit for the integrated book club lessons was economics. In the researcher’s teaching experience, third grade students experience difficulty forming enduring understandings of economics concepts. Integrating the economic concepts in the state’s social studies standards with picture books helps students more readily make connections with their own economic experiences. The picture books chosen for this study were books many students choose to read on their own for enjoyment. Incorporating already familiar, enjoyable books within social studies lessons helped put students at ease with what could be difficult ideas to understand. The social studies standards to be addressed in this study are:

- **SS3E3** The student will give examples of interdependence and trade and will explain how voluntary exchange benefits both parties.
  
  a. Describe the interdependence of consumers and producers of goods and services.
  
  b. Describe how goods and services are allocated by price in the marketplace.

- **SS3E4** The student will describe the costs and benefits of personal spending and saving choices.

The books chosen for this integrated unit lent themselves well to focusing on the reading skills of describing characters’ impact on the story and discussing how illustrations add to the story. The reading standards to be addressed in this study are:

- **ELACC3RL3:** Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

- **ELACC3RL7:** Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is
conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

The children’s literature chosen for the integrated book clubs lessons to address the listed standards are: *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971); *The Great Fuzz Frenzy* by Susan Stevens Crummel and Janet Stevens (2005); *I Wanna Iguana* by Karen Kaufmann Orloff (2004); *Saturday Sancocho* by Leyla Torres (1999); *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry (1990); *Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday* by Judith Viorst (1978). In addition to addressing the standards listed above, these books represent a variety of reading levels covering the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) of the majority of third grade students. Participants, or paraprofessionals hired to assist provide IEP services to students with disabilities, may have to individually accommodate students whose reading ZPD are outside the scope of the chosen books. The first two books listed illustrate the economic idea of scarcity. The second two books portray different scenarios of bartering and assigning value to items without the use of currency. All four stories have characters to whom students relate well, plots that engage students, and illustrations that contribute to the story, making these books excellent choices to assess students’ success with both the social studies and reading standards previously listed.

**Method of data analysis.** This case study had the potential to produce a large amount of data since multiple sets of data were collected to present a detailed picture of this case study, including focus group interviews, individual reflections, anecdotal notes from weekly meetings, lesson plans, and anecdotal notes from professional development meetings about book clubs. The data set was analyzed in a sequential manner, as transcription of interviews and report of weekly study-related events occurred as they took place. Analyzing data as it was collected helped keep
findings focused on addressing the research question and prevented the amount of data from becoming overwhelming. As Merriam (1998) points out:

Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating (p. 162)

Data in this study was transcribed where necessary and coded for emerging themes as it was collected as opposed to waiting until all data was collected before beginning analysis because it allowed the researcher to explore emerging themes, conflicts, or questions raised as the study progressed (Merriam, 1998).

**Consensual coding.** After the researcher de-identified written and transcribed weekly data, data were coded for emergent themes by both the researcher and Carla, who was trained in qualitative data methods while working on her Ed.D. The researcher and Carla used consensual coding suggested by Hill, Thompson, Hess, Knox, Nutt, and Ladanay (2005), which demands that the team members discuss disagreements and feelings and respect each other in the process of data analysis for common categories.

The researcher provided Carla with printed, de-indentified copies of each week’s data. Carla and the researcher individually read and reread the week’s data (participants’ weekly reflections, researcher’s anecdotal notes, and verbatim interview transcripts when applicable), and then color coded their data set. After they each color coded their individual copies of the data, Carla and the researcher met each week to discuss their coding. They compared color codes for similarities and differences, and then discussed their differences until consensus was reached.
While Carla and the researcher agreed upon the themes most of the time, they did occasionally disagree. The few times they disagreed, Carla and the researcher were able to reach agreement after some discussion. As can be found in Appendix H, the researcher and Carla disagreed early in their meeting about the coding of the first focus group interview. The researcher had coded lines 10-12 as social studies content because those lines were a response to a question about challenges to teaching social studies. The researcher chose to code those lines as social studies content because she thought the participant was talking about social studies concepts when responding to the question. Carla coded those lines as efficacy because she thought the response spoke to how the participant felt about her effectiveness as a teacher. After some discussion, Carla and the researcher agreed that those lines would be more appropriately coded as efficacy, because the response provided more insight into how the participant felt about her instructional effectiveness. Throughout the process of color coding the data, Carla and the researcher continued their discussions to ensure they agreed upon each theme. They kept the color code process consistent throughout the study.

One example of how Carla and the researcher came to consensus about a disagreement was when they disagreed about the coding of Alyssa’s response to the reflection question during week 2 of the book club implementation period. The researcher asked participants to reflect on any changes they found themselves making to the lesson plans. Carla coded Alyssa’s entire response as efficacy. The researcher coded approximately half of the response as efficacy, part as time, and the rest as reading. Carla chose to code the entire response as efficacy because phrases such as “I am allowing,” “I do find myself making,” and “I have found” (Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013) appear throughout Alyssa’s reflection, which Carla felt indicated Alyssa’s instructional decisions. The researcher coded the statements that explicitly
showed Alyssa’s instructional decisions, demonstrated by Alyssa stating that she was making some adjustments to the lesson plans and that she had added in read-alongs on youtube.com to the lesson plans. The researcher coded Alyssa’s statement of how she managed the time in her book club lessons for students to share their roles as time. The researcher coded Alyssa’s statement about students’ use of the youtube.com read-alongs as reading. During the discussion to decide which way to code the lines where they differed, the researcher explained to Carla that the lines the researcher coded as time and reading were student-centered statements. The lines the researcher agreed demonstrated Alyssa’s efficacy explicitly stated her input and manipulation of the instruction. Carla then agreed that the student-centered statements should be coded in the way the researcher suggested.

Another example of disagreement in coding occurred on lines 44 – 46 of Focus Group Interview 2. The lines, which happened to be Carla’s response, were in response to a question about successes and challenges participants experienced with integrated book clubs to that point of the study. Carla coded the response as social studies content while the researcher coded it as time. The researcher interpreted the response as Carla’s expression of a limit of her instructional time flexibility due to the schedules set for her students with disabilities. Carla coded the response as social studies content because she recalled that during the interview, she was thinking about social studies content when she answered the question, and not about her instructional time limits. After discussion, Carla and the researcher agreed to code this response as social studies content based on Carla’s intention.

This particular disagreement was settled quickly because Carla was immediately available to provide further input about the intention of her response. Other disagreements were settled after discussion of the meaning of the response in the context of the conversation. After
the researcher finished writing her data analysis, she visited each participant for a member check conversation to ensure each participant’s input had been accurately portrayed.

The last example of a disagreement in coding came later in the data collection time period. Carla and the researcher initially disagreed about how to code Becky’s response to the reflection question during week 4 of the book club implementation period. The researcher asked participants to reflect on their grouping strategy for the book clubs, and whether integrating social studies with reading affected participants’ grouping strategy in any way. Carla coded the entirety of Becky’s brief response as reading, while the researcher coded all but one sentence of Becky’s response as efficacy. Carla chose reading because Becky explains that she used the same groups for book clubs that she previously set up for her regular reading groups based on her students’ reading levels. The researcher chose efficacy because the groups were the direct result of Becky’s instructional decision. The researcher drew Carla’s attention to the last line of Becky’s reflection, “I used the book clubs and lessons to work for what was best for my students and how my classroom works and runs” (Week 4 Reflection, October 18, 2013). Carla then agreed with the researcher that Becky’s reflection should be coded as efficacy instead of reading. This ongoing discussion allowed Carla and the researcher to maintain consistency throughout the analysis process.

Data coding and theme generation. As discussed above, data were analyzed as they were collected, so Carla and the researcher addressed multiple forms of data each week. The transcription from the initial focus group interview was addressed first, followed by anecdotal notes from the professional development sessions. Weekly written reflections and anecdotal notes from grade level meetings (see Appendix I for sample) were analyzed each week.
All data was de-identified prior to Carla seeing it, so Carla did not have access to the list matching pseudonyms to actual names at any point during or after the study. Following in the longstanding footsteps of Huberman and Miles (1983), Carla and the researcher discussed a short list of key ideas they predicted they would find in the data (i.e., instructional time, standardized testing, curriculum integration, social studies, and reading) based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (Dail, McGee, & Edwards, 2009; Heafner, Lipscomb, and Rock, 2006; Jones & Thomas, 2006; Morton & Dalton, 2007) and the research question under investigation.

The next step in the process of data analysis was to simply read and read the data. The first piece of data they read was the same verbatim transcript of the first focus group interview. Carla and the researcher each made a list of themes they thought appeared in the data, and then compared lists. For example, based on literature reviewed for this study, Carla and the researcher predicted the theme of standardized testing would come up from the beginning, but this theme was absent from the first focus group interview. Carla and the researcher had not predicted teacher efficacy would appear as a theme, but this theme did appear. In addition to agreeing on the themes present in the data, Carla and the researcher had to agree on which items (i.e., statements, phrases, etc.) in the data supported each theme. When they disagreed on how particular items should be coded, Carla and the researcher discussed and resolved the disagreement to ensure consistency (see Appendix H for coding samples).

On the basis of the consensual coding, the constant comparative method (Glazer & Strauss, 1967) was used to compare responses from the different participants and categories generated from data analysis of all data sources. As Merriam (1998) points out, “[…] at the heart of this method (constant comparative method) is the continuous comparison of incidents, respondents’ remarks, and so on, with each other” (p. 179). Using this method, the researcher
compares bits of data seeking “[... ] recurring regularities in the data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 180). As regularities appear, the researcher creates categories in which to sort data. From these categories, themes are built. For the current study, each week, Carla and the researcher met to analyze data in this way, beginning with the verbatim transcription of Focus Group Interview 1. Carla and the researcher analyzed new data each week of the study, including participants’ weekly reflections, the researcher’s anecdotal notes, participants’ lesson plans, and focus group interview transcripts on the weeks of the interviews. As the name “constant comparative method” implies, Carla and the researcher constantly compared their analysis and themes generated from the various data sources.

Member check. An important piece of the data analysis process occurred after the final focus group interview when the researcher visited each participant for a member check conversation. As Koelsch (2013) describes, “In this process, the participant is provided with relevant sections of a research report and is invited to comment on the accuracy of the report” (p. 170). In the case of the current study, the researcher invited each participant to read and comment on the findings of the data as well as the accuracy of the data. Since the participants themselves wrote their weekly reflections, and were aware of the audio recording of the focus group interviews, the accuracy of the direct quotes faced little scrutiny. The primary purpose of the member check interviews for this study was so the researcher could be sure she had accurately portrayed each participant’s input, insights, and role in the study. In this way, the researcher gave each participant “[...] partial control over their represented selves” (p. 171).
**Issues of Trustworthiness**

Although the present case study was not looking for a causal explanation, trustworthiness and credibility still needed to be maintained. According to Yin (2003) the threat to internal validity in a case study comes from extensive inference making throughout the study. “An investigator will ‘infer’ that a particular event resulted from some earlier occurrence, based on interview and documentary evidence collected as part of the case study” (p. 36). The researcher must then ensure that the inferences were correct, addressing any competing possibilities or explanations. The best way to address this aspect of trustworthiness, as with the current case study, was for the researcher to collect multiple sources of data for triangulation. In the case of the current case study, data was analyzed as it was collected. If themes appeared and compelled follow-up questions, the researcher had the opportunity to clarify any inferences before the end of the study. Since the researcher was also a participant in this study, she took careful steps to avoid, as much as possible, presenting findings in a biased way. In reporting this study, the researcher must guide the reader through the scenario of the participants’ experience of learning a new instructional technique, and how this experience might change their perceptions about social studies and reading instruction. It is important that other readers of the study agree that the findings make sense based on the information presented (Merriam, 1998, p. 199).

**Internal validity.** Internal validity is another important consideration. As Merriam (1998) states, “Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (p. 201). Thus, it is the researcher’s job to check her representations of participants’ perceptions with the participants to ensure accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation. Besides giving participants an opportunity to review how they were represented in the final analysis,
triangulating data by collecting types of data representing different perspectives on the event under investigation will help confirm the accuracy of the researcher’s representation.

**External validity.** The largest barrier to validity in a case study is external validity, i.e. generalizing the results beyond the bounds of the study (Yin, 2003, p. 37). While case studies rely on analytical generalization as opposed to statistical generalization, the findings can be generalized to other cases once replicated. For example, should the current study show that third grade teachers were more comfortable teaching social studies after learning how to integrate it with reading, a researcher could collect similar data at another school to see if the attitudes among that set of third grade teachers aligns with the current study. With regard to the current study, the participants represented a convenience sample as they work with the researcher. Because of the small number of participants, there is decreased possibility of transferring the findings of this study to other settings.

**Reliability.** The next issue of trustworthiness in case study design is the question of reliability. If another researcher conducted the exact study, would the results be the same? In qualitative research, the term reliability takes on a slightly different meaning than in traditional quantitative research. In quantitative research, reliability of a study refers to the ability of another researcher replicating the study and coming out with the same results. However, in qualitative research:

Rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense - they are consistent and dependable. The question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected, (Merriam, 1998, p. 206)
The best guard against this threat was for the participant-researcher to keep an audit trail by carefully documenting each step of data collection. In the current study, participants had the opportunity to review, sign, and date data as it was collected, also referred to as member checking (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). While the participants were also asked to sign and date paper copies of their weekly reflections, the participants did not have access to each other’s reflections to maintain privacy. Another guard against this threat, as mentioned earlier, was having Carla, who had expertise in qualitative data analysis, also code the data in addition to the researcher.

The final threat that pertains to the current study is the absence of quantitative data. The researcher has purposely chosen not to collect surveys that quantify attitudes on a numbered scale. The purpose of this study is not to statistically analyze quantitative changes in participants’ attitudes for the better or worse, but to examine possible changes in participants’ perceptions that are not readily quantified. Collecting qualitative data in a manner that allows for open response will lend the desired richness of description to the study’s findings for which quantitative data cannot account.

**Ethical Considerations**

**Participant-researcher subjectivity statement.** Before describing the context in which this study took place, the researcher must first acknowledge her own role as a participant-researcher. As Shenton (2004) points out, qualitative research is open to scrutiny of confirmability, credibility, and trustworthiness. Therefore, the researcher must take steps to guard the current study against such criticism. As suggested by Kennedy-Lewis (2012), the researcher will use self-narrative, also referred to as reflective commentary (Shenton, 2004), to reflect upon her own role in this study.
Since this study’s participants share a lengthy history with the researcher, attempting to conduct this study without including her own experience would be close to impossible for the researcher. Identifying her role, including her own unique perspective, and reflecting on her dual-role as a veteran educator and a student of education research provides the researcher a rare opportunity. While playing a key role in the guiding of the other participants through the process of a change from teaching social studies and reading as isolated subjects toward using book clubs to integrate the two subjects, she must take great care to describe the case as it unfolds. Just as the standards for social studies and reading must be given equal weight in assessing the success of the integrated lessons, the researcher’s reflections and personal interpretations were only included to an equal extent as comparable information from the other participants is included. Balance must be maintained in representing the array of perspectives described throughout this study.

The researcher transcribed and analyzed data as it was collected. The researcher and Carla coded data based on emergent themes in the data. The researcher and Carla agreed on the themes to be coded and the interpretation of the themes. As a participant, the researcher must be very cautious of any interpretations, inferences, or conclusions she drew from the data. Cross checking data codes and interpretations with Carla helped reduce subjectivity, as much as possible, in the final analysis.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.

Limitations. The current study had some limitations throughout the data collection period. One of the limitations of this study was time. While the purpose of integrating curriculum through book clubs was to find a way to repurpose instructional time for the goal of
ensuring instructional time for social studies, the participants agreed on limiting book club plans to five days per book. The economics themes in some of the selections, namely *The Lorax* and *The Great Fuzz Frenzy*, could easily have been expanded beyond five days. However, in the interest of ensuring enough instructional time for other standards, limits were required on the book club plans. Another limit of the current study was available resources. The participants chose to do book clubs on the same reading selection in any given week as opposed to having each book club choose their book. The reason for this decision was the limited availability of books.

**Delimitations.** Despite the limitations of conducting this study as a participant-researcher, there are several benefits to doing so. The first benefit is the length of the researcher’s relationship with each participant. Having established lengthy relationships with each participant will allow for more thorough questioning and a deeper level of investigation. Another benefit to conducting research as a participant-researcher is the previously established rapport with participants, decreased tension, and the researcher’s access to interview times at the other participants’ convenience.

The triangulation of data using multiple data sources and methods of collection were the primary methods of addressing study limitations. Audio taped interviews, anecdotal notes, weekly reflections, and lesson plans produced a significant amount of information to support the credibility of study findings. Consensual coding and member checks helped address the issue of researcher bias and supported the researcher’s interpretation of the data. The researcher’s statement of subjectivity also addresses the issue of potential researcher bias.
Summary

A qualitative case study was conducted to address the research question: What impact does integrating economics with reading through book clubs have on six third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies? Five types of data were collected to document this study: focus group interviews, anecdotal notes from professional development sessions, weekly written reflections from each participant, participants’ lesson plans, and anecdotal notes from weekly planning meetings. The participant-researcher and Carla, one of the participants who was an expert in qualitative data analysis methods, used consensual coding and constant comparative method to analyze the data for themes. Chapter 4 contains a description of the researcher’s planning of the study along with the professional development the participants attended before implementing integrated book clubs with their students. A report of the data collected each week of the study along with a discussion of the themes that emerged from the data follows in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 4: BOOK CLUB PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

What impact does integrating economics with reading through book clubs have on six third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies? This research question guided the current qualitative case study. The researcher-participant and the other five study participants implemented integrated book clubs in their classrooms for six weeks. In addition to the book club implementation period, the researcher and participants held two sessions on two consecutive days during the week prior to the lesson implementation with students participating in professional development to gain a foundation and common understanding of integrated curriculum. The researcher explains the planning of the professional development and the lesson implementation in the current chapter.

The research question could not be addressed without the participants; the researcher and her five courageous teammates. Capitalizing on one of the benefits of qualitative research, telling a rich story, the researcher will introduce each participant by sharing a brief summary of each teacher’s journey at the point of the study along with a glimpse into each teacher’s classroom. After becoming acquainted with each participant, a description of how the study unfolded follows. The researcher collected five sources of data throughout the study. The data included three 45-60 minute focus group interviews with all participants, anecdotal notes from two 60 minute professional development sessions, participants’ lesson plans, anecdotal notes from the participants’ weekly planning meetings, and weekly individual written reflections. The researcher transcribed and analyzed data as it was collected.
Researcher Preparation

While the implementation of the integrated book clubs took place over a period of six weeks, the researcher researched and prepared professional development for the other participants prior to the implementation period. Implementation of integrated book clubs depended on all participants gaining a common understanding of curriculum integration. In addition to reviewing literature in the field of social studies and reading integration (see Chapter 2) and designing a qualitative case study (see Chapter 3), the researcher needed a thorough understanding of book clubs as well as how to help her participants build their own knowledge base. As part of her preparation for this study, the researcher reflected on her reasons for choosing economics as the social studies focus and book clubs as the reading instructional tool.

Why economics? The researcher has had a personal and professional interest in elementary social studies education for several years. Her decision to conduct her dissertation study around a social studies topic came very easily and naturally. However, social studies encompasses a very wide variety of topics, including geography, history, culture, and government to name just a few. Some of these topics have much more information, prior literature, and resources readily available than economics, so why choose economics?

As a veteran teacher, the researcher was all too aware of the limited resources and reliance on a marginally effective program used to teach third grade economics. The researcher and other participants were eager to try a new instructional technique in an attempt to help students understand economics using familiar resources in a new way. The researcher and her participants also wanted an instructional technique that would actively engage students in
learning, and help them build an authentic understanding of some difficult economics concepts (i.e. the four productive resources).

**Why book clubs?** At the time of the study, economics concepts were the most heavily weighed portion of the social studies section of the state standardized assessment. While the participants had never been actively encouraged to minimize the time they spent teaching social studies, each year they found they had a hard time dedicating the time they felt they needed to teach economics concepts to the degree necessary for most of the students to gain understanding. In addition to desiring an instructional technique that would actively engage students in constructing a thorough understanding of the third grade economics standards, the instructional technique also needed to help the participants maximize instructional time.

The researcher chose to integrate economics concepts with reading using book clubs because she was able to build on the participants' comfort level and strengths in reading instruction. Book clubs also allowed students to actively participate and interact with one another without requiring a large number or amount of resources, making book club preparation less daunting for the teachers. The researcher wanted the participants to maintain a primary focus on integrating social studies with reading without worrying about gathering a large number of supplies. While bearing these thoughts in mind, the researcher mapped out an agenda for the professional development she led before the book club lessons could be implemented with students.

**Social studies standards and literature connections.** The researcher planned for the participants to choose the books to use to integrate economics with reading; however, she prepared a list of literature choices before presenting her participants with professional
development. The researcher also planned for the participants to choose which standards from both social studies and reading applied best to their literature selections. The researcher carefully considered which economics concepts tied in best to the stories before the reading standards because the number of economics standards to choose from was much more limited. The state’s third grade economics standards at the time of the study were:

SS3E1 The student will describe the four types of productive resources:

a. Natural (land)

b. Human (labor)

c. Capital (capital goods)

d. Entrepreneurship (used to create goods and services)

SS3E2 The student will explain that governments provide certain types of goods and services in a market economy, and pay for these through taxes and will describe services such as schools, libraries, roads, police/fire protection, and military.

SS3E3 The student will give examples of interdependence and trade and will explain how voluntary exchange benefits both parties.

a. Describe the interdependence of consumers and producers of goods and services.

b. Describe how goods and services are allocated by price in the marketplace.

c. Explain that some things are made locally, some elsewhere in the country, and some in other countries.

d. Explain that most countries create their own currency for use as money.
SS3E4 The student will describe the costs and benefits of personal spending and saving choices.

While the participants agreed upon which standards they would include with each story, the researcher made preliminary notes about which standards she thought tied in best with each story before professional development began.

**Book selection rationale and rotation chart.** The researcher was prepared to suggest the following titles: *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971); *Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday* by Judith Viorst (1978); *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry (1990); *I Wanna Iguana* by Karen Kaufmann Orloff (2004); and *The Great Fuzz Frenzy* by Susan Stevens Crummel and Janet Stevens (2005). The researcher chose this group of titles because the participants were already familiar with them, they were all short enough to be read entirely each lesson, they all had engaging pictures and characters, and all of the stories had clear ties to both reading comprehension standards for third grade and economics standards lending themselves naturally to integrating curriculum (see Table 2 on page 78).

The researcher gathered enough copies for a class set of books (25 copies) of each title, enabling each student to have his or her own copy to read and work from during each lesson period. Since six classes needed to share the books, the researcher prepared a rotation schedule to use.

The participants followed the rotation schedule (Table 3 on page 79) so that each class learned from each title, albeit in a different order. To gain a better understanding of how these
participants worked together so closely and shared limited resources so successfully, a
description of each participant, along with a peek into each classroom, follows.

Table 2

*Economic Concepts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Economics Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td>Dr. Seuss</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Scarcity, four productive resources, trade-off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td>Judith Viorst</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Budgeting, opportunity cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest</em></td>
<td>Lynne Cherry</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Scarcity, opportunity cost, interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td>Karen Kaufmann Orloff</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Trade off, budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td>Susan Stevens Crummel and Janet Stevens</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Scarcity, resource allocation, interdependence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Profile of the participants.** Six third grade teachers participated in this study. The researcher assumed a role of researcher as participant and reflective practitioner in this study, and was involved in the whole process of planning, designing, implementing the book clubs, and reflecting on the integration experience. The other five third grade teachers who participated in this study had worked with the researcher as a team for three years at the time of the study. The participants represented a variety of teaching experiences and approaches to instruction.
Table 3

*Book Rotation Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Week 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie</td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyssa</td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Carla.* Like many young women, Carla went to college immediately out of high school. She became a young mother before graduating with her bachelor’s degree in communications. With degree in hand, she found a job as a customer service representative for a local business in the construction industry. When her son grew close to starting kindergarten, she wanted more...
time with her son as well as a more personally fulfilling career than she found as a customer service representative. Carla decided to pursue a degree in elementary education, which allowed her to have her own classroom. As Carla’s teaching career progressed, she earned both a master’s degree and doctorate of education (Ed.D.). At the time of the current study, Carla was 44 years old and a 16-year veteran teacher of County H. She taught second grade for one year and third grade for fifteen years.

Upon entering Carla’s classroom, students were greeted with a camping theme. Bulletin board decorations both inside her classroom and in the hallway just outside of Carla’s room included forest animals ready for a campout. In addition to camp-themed wall decorations, Carla had a dark green pop-up tent in the corner beside the window for students to use during partner or silent reading time. Additional decorations added to her camping theme, but did not overwhelm or clutter the classroom. In fact, Carla’s classroom was exceptionally neat and tidy—everything had its place. Baskets were provided for students’ supplies such as glue bottles, crayons, and scissors. Students placed their work in individualized trays for each content area. Student desks were arranged in groups of four, with pairs facing each other, to facilitate group work and student collaboration. When passing Carla’s classroom, it was typical to see students working together in various capacities throughout the school day. Carla chose not to have a traditional teacher’s desk. Instead she had a rectangular table that is approximately six-feet long that she placed at the back of her room, perpendicular to the counter where her classroom computers were located. This arrangement allowed Carla to pull small groups of students aside for remediation or support students in making up missed work or lessons.

During the school year of the study, Carla had 24 students in her class, 11 girls and 13 boys. While the number of students was similar to the other five third grade classrooms, Carla’s
class make-up was unique in other ways. In this particular school year, Carla had six students in her class with varying degrees of Asberger’s Syndrome. All of these students had Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to provide services as needed, which included having a paraprofessional teacher in the classroom during science and social studies lessons. This high number of students with similar special needs were placed together in the same classroom to maximize use of limited resources (i.e., paraprofessional support) and limit the number of homeroom classes affected by scheduling pull-out resource classes. As a result of this additional instructional support during science and social studies activities, three students with learning disabilities from other third grade classrooms joined Carla’s classroom. Additionally, as designated by their IEPs, Carla’s six students with IEPs were required to attend lessons with a resource teacher in a different classroom. So, students entered and exited Carla’s classroom quite regularly. This unique schedule and instructional support to scaffold students’ learning needs posed some challenges for Carla during this study’s book club implementation that the other teachers did not experience. Carla’s thoughtful reflection of these challenges added to the study.

*Sandy.* Sandy is the researcher-participant in this study. Like Carla, Sandy attended college immediately after high school and pursued a field other than education. Sandy’s first degree was in International Business. After graduating college, Sandy started her business career in the field of retail management. After realizing that her favorite part of her job was teaching children, Sandy decided to pursue a degree in education to become a teacher. Sandy found an education program that gave her credit for her first degree, and she was able to earn both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education simultaneously. She has since begun pursuing her Ph.D. in education. At the time of the study, Sandy was in the midst of her 11th year teaching third grade in the school where the study took place.
Upon entering Sandy’s classroom, students were greeted with a cheery star theme. Wall decorations inside the classroom reflected bright colors with stars, while Sandy changed the bulletin board just outside her classroom monthly to reflect current learning objectives and display student success. Sandy arranged student desks in groups of four, with pairs facing each other, to facilitate group work and student collaboration. Like Carla, Sandy chose not to have a traditional teacher’s desk in her classroom. Instead, Sandy had a kidney-shaped table that was a half-circle with an indentation on the flat side to allow the teacher to reach across the table more easily. Sandy placed the kidney table at the back of the room in front of the counter where the classroom computers are located. This set up allowed Sandy to keep student work organized and allowed a space aside from the main activity of the classroom for small group instruction. Sandy had a library corner with short bookshelves arranged on a rug beside her window. She also had two rectangular tables that were approximately six-feet long arranged perpendicular to the wall opposite the door. These tables were around four feet apart, so students groups could easily work at both tables without crowding each other. One walking by Sandy’s classroom would see students engaged in various activities around the classroom throughout the day.

During the school year of this study, Sandy had 24 students in her class. Two of Sandy’s students had IEPs for learning disabilities, and spent significant portions of the day, including reading and social studies, out of her classroom. Sandy did not have the challenge of working with other teachers’ schedules that Carla had during this particular school year. Sandy also had the luxury of flexibility in her schedule, since she had just two students leaving her room during the day. This unique aspect of Sandy’s class was not overtly addressed during the study, but became apparent upon analysis in the absence of comments from Sandy about time challenges compared with the other teachers.
**Angie.** Like Carla and Sandy, Angie attended college immediately after graduating from high school. However, unlike Carla and Sandy, Angie pursued her education degree upon entering college. Angie is the newest member of the third grade team participating in this study. At the time of the study, Angie was a six-year veteran teacher, and amid her third year teaching third grade. Angie completed her student teaching in first grade in the school where the study took place. She then spent her first two years teaching first grade at another school in the county, and her third year teaching second grade in the school where the study took place before the principal asked her to teach third grade. Angie is the only teacher participating in this study who had not yet earned a graduate degree at the time of the study.

Like Carla’s classroom, Angie’s classroom was exceptionally neat and tidy. Angie did not have any particular theme for decorations in her classroom. Angie decorated bulletin boards, both inside the classroom and in the hallway outside the classroom, with muted primary colors. Angie’s bulletin boards reflected current learning objectives and student successes. Like Sandy, Angie arranged student desks in groups of four, with pairs facing each other, to facilitate group work and student collaboration. Unlike Carla and Sandy, Angie chose to have a traditional teacher’s desk in her classroom. She placed her desk at the back of her classroom, in front of the counter where the classroom computers are located. Angie also had a kidney shaped table that she placed beside her window for small group instruction. This set up allowed Angie to keep student work organized, and provided a distinct location to work with small groups of students.

During the school year of the study, Angie had 23 students in her class. During this particular school year, Angie was one of two teachers on this team who was assigned a special education co-teacher. Five of Angie’s students had IEPs for learning disabilities. The Special Education resource teacher co-taught math in Angie’s room. Four students from the other third
grade classes attended math in Angie’s room because their IEPs also required they receive additional support provided by the co-teacher. In this school year, Angie also had one student with blindness. This student had her own full-time paraprofessional. Angie made arrangements in advance for appropriate materials (i.e., translating the stories to braille) so this student could participate in the book club lessons along with the rest of the class.

**Alyssa.** Like the other members of the team participating in this study, Alyssa attended college immediately after high school. Like Angie, Alyssa pursued her education degree upon entering college. At the time of this study, Alyssa was a 10-year veteran teacher, having spent all 10 years teaching third grade at the school where the study took place. As her career has progressed, Alyssa has earned both a master’s and a specialist’s degrees in education. Alyssa also served the additional role of grade level chairperson for the last six years.

When students enter Alyssa’s classroom, they were greeted by a very student-friendly racecar theme. Alyssa’s decorations reflected various aspects of racing from a black and white checkered background on her bulletin board to a stoplight system of student behavior tracking to the chart that organized learning centers that referred to which “lap” students should go to the various learning centers. Alyssa arranged student desks in groups of four, with pairs facing each other, to facilitate group work and student collaboration. Like Carla and Sandy, Alyssa chose to not have a traditional teacher’s desk in her classroom. Like Sandy, Alyssa had a kidney shaped table that she placed at the back of her classroom in front of the counter where the classroom computers were located. This set up allowed Alyssa to keep student work and instructional materials organized while providing adequate room for Alyssa to pull small groups for remediation and support as necessary. Alyssa had set up a student library corner on a rug just inside her door, and organized books in baskets by reading level on tall bookshelves. Alyssa
labeled the baskets with brightly colored index cards affixed so students could easily see which level each basket contains. Beside Alyssa’s window, she placed wooden cubbies for sorting student work to send home. Alyssa also had two rectangular tables of approximately six-feet in length that she placed perpendicular to the wall opposite the door. Similar to Sandy’s arrangement, Alyssa placed these tables about four-feet apart to allow student groups space at both tables without crowding each other. Anyone walking past Alyssa’s classroom would usually see students scattered about the room engaged in a variety of activities.

During the school year of the study, Alyssa had 25 students on her class roster. At the time of the study, Alyssa had three students with IEPs for learning disabilities. Two of these students attended co-taught math lessons in Angie’s classroom, and the third attended co-taught reading lessons in Susan’s classroom. Similar to Sandy’s classroom, Alyssa had the luxury of schedule flexibility throughout the study.

**Susan.** Susan also attended college immediately after high school, earning her first degree in education. Susan is the most senior veteran of the team, having taught third grade 16 of her 21 years in education at the time of the study. Of her 21 years, 14 were spent at the school where the study took place. Susan spent her first seven years teaching in a county adjacent to the county where the study took place, with the first five in first grade before moving to third grade. Since beginning her teaching career, Susan has earned her master’s and specialist’s degrees in education.

Upon entering Susan’s classroom, students were greeted by bright, cheerful colors. Susan did not have any particular theme to her decorations. Susan decorated her bulletin boards, both inside her classroom and in the hallway outside her classroom, with bright colors, and her bulletin boards reflected current learning objectives and student successes. Susan arranged
student desks in groups of four, with pairs facing each other, to facilitate student collaboration and group work. Like Angie, Susan chose to have a traditional teacher’s desk in her classroom, which she placed in the center at the back of her room to allow open access to the counter where the classroom computers are located. Susan also placed a kidney shaped table in the back corner of her room, so she had a place to meet with small groups of students for instruction or remediation. Susan chose to arrange a student library corner with both tall and short bookshelves beside her classroom’s window. Walking by Susan’s room, one would see students engaged in a variety of activities around the classroom.

During the school year of the study, Susan had 24 students in her class. Five of the 24 had IEPs to address learning disabilities. A Special Education resource teacher co-taught language arts (reading, writing, and grammar) lessons with Susan. Four students from other third grade classrooms attended these co-taught lessons in Susan’s classroom. In addition to the co-taught lessons, a paraprofessional supported Susan’s students with IEPs during social studies and science. This unique aspect of Susan’s classroom limited her schedule flexibility during the book club lessons for the current study. Susan commented on this issue multiple times throughout the study, which offered a unique perspective.

**Becky.** Unlike the other teachers, Becky took a year off after high school before entering college. Her father served in the military, and retired a year after Becky graduated high school. She chose to stay near her family, and decided to wait until her parents settled in their new home before enrolling in a nearby college. She pursued her education degree upon entering college. At the time of the study, Becky was a 10-year veteran teacher, having taught third grade at the school of the study for eight years. At the time of the study, Becky was in her seventh consecutive year at the school where the study took place after having somewhat scattered
teaching experiences during her first three years in education. Becky taught second grade at another school in the county where the study took place during her first year of teaching. She then taught third grade for a year at the school of the study. During her third year of teaching, Becky taught first grade in another Southeastern state because she experienced testing anxiety and had a very challenging time passing the certification exam in the state where the study took place. During that year, she passed the certification exam, and returned to the school of the study her fourth year. Since relocating to her current position, Becky has earned her master’s degree in education.

When students enter Becky’s classroom, they were greeted by a jungle theme. Becky decorated more than anyone on the grade level team, but her classroom invited students and visitors instead of distracting and overwhelming those who entered. Becky’s classroom was neat, tidy, and very welcoming. Bulletin board decorations both inside her classroom and in the hallway outside her classroom reflected Becky’s preference for jungle-based prints and a jungle theme. Student desks were arranged in two long groups of 12 each with rows of 6 facing each other. This arrangement facilitated varying group sizes and student collaboration. Like Carla, Sandy, and Alyssa, Becky chose not to have a traditional teacher’s desk in her classroom. Instead, Becky placed a kidney shaped table in the back of her room in front of the counter where the classroom computers are located. This arrangement allowed her to keep student work organized and provided a location for small group instruction and remediation. Beside her classroom window, Becky placed a small round table with materials for one of her literacy centers. Becky arranged her student library on very low shelves under her classroom bulletin board. Walking by Becky’s classroom, one would see students scattered about the room engaged in a variety of activities.
During the school year of the study, Becky had 25 students in her class. None of the 25 students had IEPs for any reason, and were, therefore, in Becky’s room for all lessons throughout the day. Like Sandy and Alyssa, the absence of students with IEPs allowed Becky the luxury of schedule flexibility.

As noted above, at the onset of the study the participants held a wide variety of backgrounds and teaching experiences on which they had built their prior understanding of curriculum integration. The success of this study hinged on all of the participants sharing a common understanding of the core concept this study set out to explore: curriculum integration. The researcher’s knowledge of the other participants’ varying experiences and prior notions led her to the need for professional development designed for the purpose of building a common understanding of curriculum integration before integrated book clubs could be implemented with students.

**Participant Preparation**

Before the participants could implement integrated book clubs in their classrooms with their students, they needed to learn the meaning of curriculum integration and construct a mutual understanding of what integrated book clubs should entail. Prior to participating in professional development, the researcher conducted the first of three focus group interviews for the purpose of understanding the participants’ views on curriculum integration.

**Focus group interview one.** The focus group interview took place in a conference room in the media center of the school. The researcher chose this location because it was neutral and private. The entrance to this conference room is inside the media center instead of the hallway, so inadvertent interruptions would be minimized. The researcher conducted this interview on a
Tuesday afternoon after the instructional day was over, and she provided refreshments for the participants. The researcher held this interview the day before the professional development sessions started because she wished to gain some thoughts and perceptions of social studies from the participants before introducing new ideas through professional development and book club planning.

Going into the first focus group interview, the participants seemed both nervous and excited. While all participants were aware that the focus group interviews would be recorded when they volunteered to participate, and were eager to learn a new instructional technique through participating in this study, they were nervous about sharing their experiences, and reluctant to answer questions with detailed answers during the first interview.

The researcher opened the interview with a question with which all participants had experience to start the conversation. The first question was: “What do you find most interesting about teaching social studies?” After the participants’ initial responses, the researcher paused to allow other participants to contribute their responses. After a short pause and absence of further responses, the researcher moved forward with the next question. As an inexperienced interviewer, the researcher should have been better prepared with follow up, probing questions (i.e. tell me more about that or could you tell me about a specific example) to draw lengthier responses from her participants.

The second topic in this interview was about the challenges the participants had faced with social studies instruction. Beyond asking which aspects of social studies interested the participants, the researcher wanted to gain insight into what they found challenging so she could plan to address these challenges during professional development or follow up on these topics in a later interview or individual reflection question.
Following the topics of interest and challenges to social studies, the conversation turned to curriculum integration with the researcher asking, “In what ways have you attempted to integrate any areas of curriculum before this study?” The researcher wished to gain insight into any of the participants’ curriculum integration experiences. Since the question invited discussion about any curricular areas, and not specifically about social studies, the researcher followed up with, “Have you attempted incorporating math with anything?” Opening up the topic to any curricular areas sparked more participation in the interview conversation.

After asking the participants about their experiences with integrating content areas into other areas, the researcher asked about how they assess these cross-content lessons. During the professional development sessions that followed this interview, the researcher presented the participants with a definition of integrated curriculum that included assessing all standards taught in the integrated lesson. The researcher asked questions about assessment to gain insight into the participants’ understanding of this aspect of curriculum integration before the professional development sessions. After the participants shared their perceptions of social studies and ideas of curriculum integration, the researcher asked about their experiences with book clubs or, as some participants alternately referred to them, literature circles.

The first focus group interview gave the researcher some topics to reflect upon when finalizing plans for the first professional development session the next day and when considering topics to explore later in the study through weekly reflections and subsequent focus group interviews. The participants seemed to have a superficial understanding of curriculum integration. Three of the participants previously used book clubs in their classrooms, but none used them for integrating curriculum. Just as teachers consider their students’ prior experience
and knowledge when finalizing their lesson plans, the researcher used her participants’ prior
knowledge and experience to finalize her plans for the professional development.

**Professional development part one – Defining curriculum integration and book clubs.** The goal of the first 90-minute professional development session was to have the participants develop a clear definition of curriculum integration. The researcher came to this session prepared with a research-based definition to introduce to the participants. Establishing a definition at the onset of this session would provide a springboard for the researcher and participants to plan lessons and instructional activities that would authentically integrate social studies and reading. The professional development sessions took place in Alyssa’s classroom. The researcher chose this location, with Alyssa’s permission, because it offered more space than the conference room where the first focus group interview was held. Alyssa was also the grade level chairperson, and weekly planning meetings were held in her room. Alyssa’s classroom was a natural meeting place for this third grade team. The professional development sessions were held on the two days following the first focus group interview.

During the first professional development session, the researcher started by revisiting some of the responses to the initial focus group interview, specifically regarding the participants’ definition of integrated curriculum. Some of the participants considered using a story to kick off a math lesson or using a science or social studies topic for informational writing as curriculum integration because they were reading during a lesson other than reading. This superficial definition of integrated curriculum did not include assessment of standards across included curricular areas. Redefining this term to include assessing all standards included in the book clubs was of utmost importance to the focus of this study to genuinely integrate social studies with reading.
This professional development session focused on defining curriculum integration by emphasizing the purposeful combining of the standards of two content areas as opposed to happenstance integration, which stays in line with the research-based definition of curriculum integration (Brophy & Alleman, 2008; Hinde, 2005; Keane & Zimmerman, 2007). The district in which the study took place adheres to the state standards across curriculum areas. The researcher revisited the question of assessing standards across curriculum areas during the lessons in which participants believed they were integrating curriculum. When they considered that they only assessed the standards for the primary curricular area, participants quickly realized that the curriculum integration mentioned in the focus group interview, for example, vocabulary instruction in math, using stories to kick off a new unit, and so on, were not purposeful curriculum integration, and, therefore, did not fit the definition of curriculum integration. The participants began to recognize the need to include assessment of all relevant curriculum standards. The participants who considered these instructional tools as curriculum integration quickly redefined them as pieces of meaningful instruction, but agreed that these instructional tools did not qualify as curriculum integration as the lesson assessment included only the primary content standards, without assessing the corresponding standards from the other curricular area. Next, the researcher introduced a research-based definition of curriculum integration as purposeful combining of more than one content area into a single lesson, taking care to equally teach and assess all standards from all applicable content areas (Brophy & Alleman, 2008; Hinde, 2005; Keene & Zimmerman, 2007; Morris, 2003).

Participants’ initial responses concerning curriculum integration indicate that they had a limited and superficial definition and practice of curriculum integration, yet the county where this study took place encouraged teachers during this particular school year to use county-
provided lessons written for the purpose of integrating social studies and language arts curriculum. However, the book club lessons for the current study were separate and distinct from the lesson plans provided by the county. The integrated lesson plans provided by the county for third grade were all based on novels of fourth grade reading level or higher, for example, *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo (2009). The social studies themes in the lesson plans and books the county’s plans used were disjointed by discussing one topic (i.e., scarcity of resources) one day and another, unrelated topic (i.e., citizens’ roles within a community) the next. While use of these plans was recommended, it was not required. The participants found these plans confusing to follow and too intimidating to implement, so they did not integrate social studies and reading through these plans.

The participants had not used these county-provided plans because they found the overall reading level of the stories too high for many third graders, and the approach taken toward both reading and social studies instruction disjointed and difficult to follow. Although the county-provided lessons did not include book clubs, they did include assessment of standards across curricular areas. The participants saw and discussed the differences between the way they have always taught social studies and reading as isolated content lessons, occasionally using one as an unassessed instructional topic in the other lesson’s time slot, and their previous perceptions of curriculum integration and the integrated lesson plans from the county. Following this discussion, the researcher asked the participants to think about some lesson ideas they might use for book club lessons to discuss the following day during the second professional development session.

Since the researcher asked the participants to attempt a new instructional technique for this study, she and the participants opted for shorter books with social studies themes that were
closely linked to each other and more transparent to lower level readers to minimize frustrating these students with books that were too difficult. The participants also considered book length and appeal to students in their story selection. The participants sought books that could be read in a short period of time that would capture and hold students’ attention. The final portion of the first professional development session was spent looking at some of these county-provided lesson plans, enabling participants to walk away from this session with a very clear idea of what integrated lessons might look like.

**Professional development part two – Planning the integrated book club unit.** The second 90-minute professional development session took place the day after the first professional development session. This session took place soon after the first session because scheduling conflicts with other school meetings interfered with holding the second session any other day the same week or the next week. The goals of the second session were to write book club lesson plans and help the participants gain understanding of what the book clubs should look like when they were in session. The second professional development session began with a review of the definition of curriculum integration established during the first professional development session. The researcher also asked the participants to review the distinction between using stories and vocabulary to increase students’ understanding of content as opposed to explicitly teaching standards from different content areas in the same lesson as the participants had described during the focus group interview. Participants then discussed how to accomplish purposeful integration through book clubs. As Becky had previously used book clubs in her reading instruction, she described how she had coached students through various roles (i.e., word watcher, summarizer, illustrator, etc.) to discuss the books in a book club format. In her previous use of book clubs, Becky had students practice one role at a time in their book club groups. This practice allowed
her to monitor the conversations, and to coach students through the content of their conversations. She reported that introducing book club roles in this way also helped the students to understand the importance of turn taking during book club conversations.

The researcher next asked the participants in what ways they would like to see curriculum integration unfold through the book clubs. The participants asked the researcher if she had particular topic and books in mind for the book clubs so they could have a springboard for ideas. The researcher presented the group with the titles she had prepared in advance (see Table 3 on page 79). The researcher suggested this group of titles because they were all short enough to be read entirely each lesson, they all had engaging pictures and characters, and all of the stories had clear ties to both reading comprehension standards for third grade and economics standards lending themselves naturally to integrating curriculum. The participants were first ecstatic that the books were all short books with engaging stories and pictures. Next, the participants were curious about how to tie social studies to these stories. While all participants had previously read all these stories and used them for various instructional purposes, they had not used them for social studies instruction. So, they took a few minutes to reread them through the lens of curriculum integration looking for social studies topics that could apply to an integrated lesson.

After reading the stories, the group discussed which standards the stories best addressed. The reading standards were addressed first, because the participants all felt more comfortable with the reading portion of the integrated lessons. The researcher asked the participants to take a moment and choose one standard they each though would apply best. After listing the standard each participant thought best fit and discussion among the group, the reading standards agreed upon for all of the books were:
ELACC3RL2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

ELACC3RL3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

ELACC3RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language.

ELACC3RL7: Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

The next topic of the professional development session was planning the lessons. As with the reading standards, the researcher asked the participants to consider which economic standard they could each tie to the stories. After listing the standards each participant thought best applied and some discussion, the social studies standards agreed upon were:

SS3E1 The student will describe the four types of productive resources:

   a. Natural (land)
   b. Human (labor)
   c. Capital (capital goods)
   d. Entrepreneurship (used to create goods and services)

SS3E3 The student will give examples of interdependence and trade and will explain how voluntary exchange benefits both parties.
a. Describe the interdependence of consumers and producers of goods and services.
b. Describe how goods and services are allocated by price in the marketplace.
c. Explain that some things are made locally, some elsewhere in the country, and some in other countries.

After deciding which reading and economics standards were best represented in the books, the participants discussed how much time to devote to book club lessons each day. During this particular year, all participants taught reading in the morning; Alyssa, Becky, and Susan taught it during the very first time block of the day, and Sandy, Carla, and Angie taught it later in the morning. The participants agreed that the book clubs would be allotted 60 minutes each day, because they already devoted that time to reading instruction. Next, the group discussed various choices for book club roles. The group relied upon Alyssa and Becky’s experience with book clubs in the past. Alyssa and Becky made suggestions about “must have” roles based on their prior experience with book clubs (i.e., someone to find and define vocabulary and someone to connect the text to the real world), roles that could be held by more than one group member if necessary (i.e., illustrator since different book club members could have a different perspective on the illustrations in the story), and roles that were beneficial but a group missing a person could function without (i.e., someone to keep time was a role that could be combined with another role). The options for roles, based on Alyssa and Becky’s input and H. Daniels’ 2002 publication *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*, discussed were: Word Wizard, Illustrator, Summarizer, Personal Connector, Story Connector, Real-Life Connector, and Time-Tracker. After discussing the standards and desired learning outcomes, and consideration by each participant about how many students would be in
each book club group, the participants narrowed down their options to the following roles: Word Wizard to find and define new and unknown vocabulary words; Summarizer to provide the club with a summary of the story; Real-Life Connector to make connections between the story and students’ real-life experiences, also called text-to-world connections; Story Connector to make connections between the book club selection and other stories students have read, also called text-to-text connections; and Illustrator to create an illustration that represents the students’ interpretation of how the illustrations contribute to the meaning of the story. The participants agreed that students in the book clubs would trade roles as they read the different selections so each student would complete each role at least one time during the study.

In addition to their roles, participants decided that students would also complete assignments in a journal for each book. Some of the assignments (i.e., responding to a reflection question about a certain aspect of the book story) would be completed independently and some would be completed together with their book club teammates (i.e., defining the economics terms that applied to the story). The researcher asked the participants to each contribute a journal assignment idea that students could complete independently and one that the groups could complete together. Independent journal assignments were writing prompts that asked students to reflect on personal experiences with choices and questions tied to the economics portions of the books. Group journal assignments allowed the book clubs to collaborate on examples from the stories that illustrated economics vocabulary. Students’ completion of their book club role, teacher observations, and assignments completed in their journals served as the assessments for the standards taught through the book club lessons.

At the end of the second professional development session, participants commented that they had a very different idea of curriculum integration than they had at the start of the first
professional development session. At the beginning of the first professional development session, the participants viewed curriculum integration as simply using a story to kick off a math lesson or using a social studies topic for informational writing while only assessing the standard for the primary lesson. By the end of the second professional development session, the participants understood the importance of assessing all standards applicable to an integrated lesson.

The second professional development session ended with the participants deciding a rotation for the book club stories. The participants had a hard time deciding who would teach which story first, so the participants agreed to allow the researcher to make a rotation schedule to ensure everyone taught each title. The researcher wrote the titles on slips of paper, put them in a plastic bowl, and each participant drew a title for the first week. The researcher made note of which participant drew which title, and then made a rotation schedule for the rest of the weeks.

While still expressing nervousness at managing book club lessons and apprehension at being able to thoroughly teach seemingly disconnected standards through the same lesson, participants overall were excited at trying a new instructional method with their students. The researcher highly anticipated feedback from the first week of book club lessons through individual reflections.

**Book Club Implementation**

Following the professional development, the participants and researcher implemented the integrated book clubs in their classrooms. The researcher collected data during this period of the study, and will be analyzed in Chapter 5. The researcher’s activities beyond teaching the integrated book club unit included: finishing the lesson planning started during professional
development, taking anecdotal notes during the team’s weekly planning meetings, emailing weekly reflection questions and gathering responses, keeping a personal reflection journal, and conducting the second of the three focus group interviews at the midway point of the implementation period.

**Lesson plans.** Each week, the participants and researcher posted their lesson plans to a shared drive on the school’s computer system. The participants could all see each other plans, and administration had access to all teachers’ plans as well. The participants were aware that the researcher would be gathering their lesson plans during the book club implementation period as a data source for this study. The purpose of gathering lesson plans each week was a means of confirming participants’ self-reports that they were adhering to the book club rotations schedule. All of the book club lesson plans can be found in Appendix F.

One week’s lesson plan (five instructional days) was written for each title. The lesson plans were designed so that by the end of the week, the participants would have taught both the reading and economics standards. Some individual days’ lessons focused more heavily on either reading or social studies, but the standards were equally taught and assessed by the end of the week, which supported the understanding participants’ constructed during professional development.

**Weekly planning meetings.** The weekly planning meetings took place each Tuesday afternoon in Alyssa’s classroom. While the researcher added the book club component, as well as her anecdotal note taking to these meetings for the purposes of this study, these meetings were an otherwise normal and expected part of the participants’ week. The researcher waited at each meeting to see if the participants would spontaneously start a conversation about the book clubs without broaching the topic herself. During the first weekly meeting of the book club
implementation period, which took place after just two book club lessons, all of the participants expressed stress and anxiety over getting the book clubs to run smoothly and completing the day’s lesson plan within the allotted time. As the book club implementation period progressed, the participants’ anxiety lessened, and conversation of book clubs only started when the researcher asked the participants about their successes and challenges for the week.

For the purpose of this study, and as another means of confirming participants’ self-reports that they were adhering to the book club lessons, the researcher asked participants to bring some student work samples to the weekly meetings. Student work samples were not included as a data source for this study, but the researcher did look for completion of activities as planned in all participants’ classrooms.

**Participants’ weekly reflections.** While the first weekly planning meeting was on Tuesday, which was the second day of book club lessons, the first individual reflection question was emailed to participants on Thursday morning. The researcher requested that participants respond by the end of the day on Friday. Participants had three book club instructional periods between the time of the first planning meeting and the time that they responded to the first reflection question. The question for the first week’s individual reflection was about their first impression of the book club lessons. The researcher asked participants to describe how they felt about these lessons and how they felt their students were doing with the integration activities (i.e., Are they enjoying book clubs? Are they learning what the teachers intended for them to learn?).

The reflection questions for participants by the end of week two were about whether participants made any adjustments or changes to the book club lesson plans and asked that participants explain why and how, if they did make any changes.
Introducing economics through book clubs was a large departure from the way in which the participants had traditionally taught this part of social studies. In all the years the researcher has worked in this district, third grade has taught the economics portion of social studies using the Mini Society unit from the State Council on Economics Education (SCEE). Mini Society was a unit intended to teach all of the economic standards by having students create their own society. Through this unit, students created a name and flag for their society, discovered the need for money and jobs, and created products to sell on Market Day, the culminating event. The county in which this study took place had been using Mini Society to teach third grade economics for 18 years at the time of the study. The reflection question for this week asked the participants to think about the difference between how they taught economics using Mini Society and how they taught economics through the integrated book clubs: How do the book club lessons compare and contrast with the way you have taught economics in the past (primarily Mini Society)? How do you feel about your students’ learning of economics through book clubs?

Focus group interview two. The second focus group interview took place on Wednesday after the end of the instructional day during the third week of book club lessons, which was approximately halfway through the study. Like the first focus group interview, the group met in the conference room in the school’s media center. This room provided a neutral location that offered more privacy than any of the participants’ classrooms. The researcher provided refreshments for the participants. During this interview, the researcher chose to focus on what the participants were observing with their students as the book club lessons were underway.

The first question of this interview was: What is the most interesting part of teaching integrated social studies and literacy through book clubs so far? Since the researcher was also a
classroom teacher at the time of the study, she was keenly aware that teachers use instructional tools that they like. If teachers do not like the tools or do not find success with a new instruction tool, they are not likely to use it again. With this knowledge in mind, the researcher then asked the participating teachers whether they liked integrating social studies with reading using book clubs thus far. Teachers tend to use a new instructional tool again if they like it, and if they know students also enjoy and benefit from it. To gain the participants’ perspective on their observations of students’ reactions to the integrated book club lessons, the researcher asked the third question: Do your students enjoy book club lessons? How do you know?

The focus group interview to this point reflected both teacher and student enjoyment of the integrated book club lessons. The researcher then asked participants about more specific successes and challenges they had come across at the halfway mark of the implementation time period.

After talking about the challenge and success of book clubs, the conversation moved toward more specific thoughts about the social studies content instruction. The last part of this focus group focused on the social studies content learning participants observed since using book clubs was a departure from how this group had taught economics in the past. The interview question was: What do you think about the social studies learning going on so far? In spite of some continuing challenges, an in-depth discussion of which can be found in Chapter 5, the participants thought highly of the social studies learning they observed at the midpoint of the study.

Just as assessing both aspects of an integrated lesson was emphasized in the professional development sessions at the onset of the current study, the researcher must include participants’ perceptions of both curricular areas throughout the study. With this in mind, the last question the
researcher asked participants was to consider the reading aspect of the book club lessons: What about the reading instruction and student learning? Are you happy with that side of things as opposed to the social studies side?

The second focus group interview took place approximately half way through the integrated book club implementation period. While initially going into this study, participants had a mix of emotions (nervousness, excitement, etc.), at the middle point of the implementation period they had hit their stride with using book clubs and seemed more comfortable integrating social studies and reading.

Post Book Club Reflections

Following the conclusion of the book club implementation period, the researcher conducted the third, and final, focus group interview. After the researcher had thoroughly analyzed the data and began writing her findings, she revisited each participant to conduct short member check conversations. These member check conversations were not recorded, but the researcher did ask each participant to reflect on the experience.

Focus group interview three. The final focus group interview took place on a Wednesday afternoon after the instructional day ended two weeks after the last week of book club lessons, and the researcher provided refreshments for the participants. As with the first two focus group interviews, the final focus group interview took place in the conference room in the school’s media center to provide a neutral location and more privacy than any of the participants’ classrooms offered. While the participants were aware of the audio recording aspect of the three focus group interviews when they signed informed consent to participate, they seemed uncomfortable with the presence of a microphone during the first two interviews. By the time of
this final interview, the participants were slightly more comfortable with the audio recording aspect of the interview.

The purpose of this interview was to have participants to reflect on their book club implementation experience, and whether and how they might use book clubs in the future. The first question was: What did you find most interesting about teaching social studies and literacy? The researcher then asked participants about the benefits of teaching social studies and reading through the integrated book clubs to gain insight into the aspects of the integrated book clubs that the participants perceived as beneficial. Participants were asked to consider the social studies side and literacy side of the integrated book clubs separately: What benefits did you find to teaching social studies using book clubs? The third question focused on the reading side of the integration: What benefits did you find to teaching literacy using the book clubs?

Next, still focusing on social studies and reading independently, participants were asked to think about the challenges of teaching social studies through integrated book clubs: What challenges did you find to teaching social studies using book clubs? Following up on an idea the researcher had asked participants about earlier in the study, the next topic of the interview was whether the participants enjoyed teaching social studies and reading through integrated book clubs: Did you like teaching social studies using book clubs? Why or why not?

The researcher then asked participants whether their students enjoyed the integrated book clubs, again following up from a question earlier in the study: Did your students enjoy the book club lessons, and how do you know? Next, the researcher asked participants about changes they might make if they were to use integrated book clubs again in the future: What changes might
you make if you were to teach book clubs again? Why? The final question of this interview asked participants if they would continue integrating social studies with reading.

**Member check conversations.** After writing her data analysis, the researcher visited each participant at a convenient time in the participants’ classroom for a short, informal member check conversation. The purpose of the member check conversation was to ensure that the researcher had accurately portrayed each participant’s input and role during the current study. In addition to simply asking each participant whether she had been accurately represented in the report of the study, the researcher asked each participant to briefly reflect on her experience with integrated book clubs, and whether she might use integrated book clubs again.

**Summary**

The planning and implementation of integrated book clubs occurred in four stages: researcher preparation, participant preparation, book club implementation, and post implementation reflections. The researcher planned professional development prior to involving participants in any phase of the study. The next step was a focus group interview so the researcher could gather thoughts from the participants about their understanding of what curriculum integration and book clubs were before the participants attended professional development on those topics. After the interview, the researcher led professional development that was split into two sessions. The first part focused on helping the participants construct a mutual understanding of curriculum development, and the second part focused on planning the integrated book club unit. During the book club unit’s implementation period, the researcher gathered data for the current study including participants’ lesson plans, participants’ weekly written reflections, anecdotal notes during weekly meetings, a weekly reflection journal, and a
second focus group interview. Following the book club implementation period, the researcher held a final focus group interview and visited each participant for an informal member check conversation.
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The current case study examined six third grade teachers as they implemented book clubs in their classrooms. The purpose of the book clubs was to integrate economics and reading. This group of teachers chose to try this new instructional method as a means of prioritizing social studies instruction. This chapter will focus on the findings of the data collected throughout this study. The research question guiding this investigation was: What impact does integrating economics with reading through book clubs have on six third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies?

Discussion of the themes that emerged from the data follows the study events. The themes that emerged from the data were: the impact of time, an increase in minutes dedicated to social studies instruction, the impact on instruction, participants’ prior experiences with integration, teacher efficacy, and student successes. A summary of overall findings closes this chapter. Table 4 on page 109 shows how the findings came from the coded data.

Impact of Time

Increase in time dedicated to social studies because of integration. The first theme that emerged from the data analysis was the issue of instructional time related to social studies. Literature on the topic of elementary social studies instruction shows clearly that finding and maintaining instructional time for elementary social studies challenges teachers at best (Jones & Thomas, 2006; Morton & Dalton, 2007). One of the goals of integrating social studies with another, higher priority curricular area is to ensure instructional time for social studies. The researcher chose to use integrated book clubs as the tool to meet this goal. During the first focus group interview, the topic of social studies instructional time arose in response to the researcher
Table 4

Themes from Data Codes

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<th>Level I Codes</th>
<th>Level II Codes</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Overall Impact of Time</td>
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<td>Increase in Time Dedicated to Social Studies</td>
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<td>Exclusion/Pullout</td>
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<td>Shifts in Strategies and Tools</td>
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<td>Curriculum Integration</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
<td>Impact on Instruction Because of Integration</td>
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<td>Student Successes</td>
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<td>Teacher Efficacy</td>
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asking what challenges the participants faced when teaching social studies. Carla responded, “Finding the time to get it in because we share it so much with science and sometimes they don’t blend and so you have to keep it separate and then you don’t have the time you really need to give it” (Focus Group Interview 1, lines 7-9).

The professional development sessions focused on building a common understanding of curriculum integration and planning lessons for the book club unit. The issue of limited instructional time was not overtly addressed. However, by the first weekly planning meeting during the first week of book clubs, the participants already felt pressed for time (Researcher’s Anecdotal Notes, Weekly Planning Meeting 1, September 17, 2013). Once the participants
realized all the other participants felt the same pressure, anxiety about time was alleviated, and conversation turned to how each participant addressed the issue of instructional time.

As the book club lessons progressed and began to run more smoothly in all participants’ classrooms, the participants found a rhythm to the lessons that worked for each. However, input from Angie, Carla, and Susan still reflected a continuing wish for a larger time block for book clubs because they had to maintain a stricter schedule because of students with disabilities leaving for lessons with other teachers (Researcher’s Anecdotal Notes, Weekly Planning Meeting 2, September 24, 2013). Their comments reflected how much enjoyment they observed from their students, and the desire for more time for the book club lessons stemmed from not wanting to cut student discussions short.

During the second week of the book club implementation period, the weekly reflection question asked participants whether they had altered any of the lesson plans or activities to this point. The issue of time came up in Susan’s response to this question. Susan stuck to the lessons as planned (for *Fuzz Frenzy*, see Appendix F). However, she was also concerned about time constraints as she explained:

No, I have not made any changes thus far. I am still following the plans as written. The only thing I am having a hard time with is fitting it in my allotted reading time. Some days need to be carried over for the assignments to be completed. They are great plans, and I want to do them justice. (Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013)

Becky, who had no students with disabilities scheduled to leave her class, found herself with more flexibility as a result of integrated book clubs (*The Lorax* lesson plans, See Appendix F):

I have incorporated book clubs into my reading stations. I usually have a short mini-lesson and then explain stations for that week. The book clubs are part of the station
rotations. I have enjoyed integrating social studies and reading because I have more flexibility with my lessons and assignments for the students. I don’t feel rushed since I can integrate them in with reading and social studies. (Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013)

Angie also found benefits to instructional time as a result of the integrated lessons:

Since the integrated method is being implemented, there is not as much of a time restraint. However, some of my students struggle to complete everything in a timely manner. Yet, this is true for all subject areas. (Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013)

The second of three focus group interviews took place during the third week of book club implementation. By this time in the implementation period, all participants commented that the book clubs were running smoothly in their classrooms, and the initial anxiety had been eased. The topic of instructional time arose in the second focus group interview in response to the researcher’s question of whether the participants were enjoying using book clubs as a curriculum integration tool up until this point. Carla responded positively and emphasized the benefits to her students, as she remarked:

Yes, it seems beneficial to the kids. Because of what [Susan] just said with the integration of the two, and the kids are starting to catch on to that [the connection between social studies and reading], then you also have better [more efficient] use of time. When we’re teaching in the content, it’s a little difficult to get everything in, and it’s nice to be able to integrate it with something else. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 10-15)

The other participants nodded, but did not verbally add to Carla’s answer that the students were understanding the connection between social studies and reading along with the
added benefit of a more efficient use of instructional time by combining social studies and reading within the same lesson.

In addition to the second focus group interview during the third week of book club implementation, the researcher also overtly addressed the issue of social studies instruction time with the weekly written reflection question: How are you managing your instructional time with the use of book clubs? Describe how your instructional time allocation for both social studies and reading has changed by changing to this integrated method from our traditional isolated method. Carla had a lot to say on this topic because she had been facing time management challenges throughout the study to this point. She viewed the question of time management through the lens of her challenges with teaching social studies and science content in isolated lessons because of the number of Carla’s homeroom students with disabilities assigned to another teacher for these content lessons:

My students are becoming aware that subjects often overlap one another. In addition to social studies, I often find links to science as well and stop to discuss these links. I also find my students sometimes referencing previously learned science and/or social studies curriculum on their own during book clubs. (Week 3 Reflection, October 4, 2013)

While some participants had different responses to the weekly reflection question of instructional time, they commonly found benefits to instructional time as a result of the integrated book club lessons. It is worth noting that Carla had several students who were pulled out of her classroom for various special education services during specific content instructional periods throughout the day. She experienced instructional time challenges that the other participants did not because of so many students coming and going from her class throughout the day. Because some of her students with disabilities were pulled out during her social studies
instructional time, Carla capitalized on the curriculum integration aspect of the book clubs by emphasizing the social studies content. The other participants had all previously mentioned during weekly planning meetings throughout the year that a small number of students in their classes struggled to complete assignments in a timely manner, although this issue of these students was not restricted solely to book clubs assignments. On a positive note, while there was initial anxiety over time management at the onset of the book club lessons, as the book clubs progressed, the participants felt more flexibility with assignments and use of time by implementing book clubs that integrate social studies with reading.

Carla remarked during the final focus group interview that, because of student engagement with the book clubs, she would work in the future to use book clubs more often and with content integration besides reading and social studies, so she could ensure that her students who had to leave during the current book clubs still experienced them at another time. Alyssa, Becky, and the researcher had a bit more freedom in their schedule to extend book club time for a few minutes as needed to allow for longer student discussion.

Overall, participants’ perceptions of instructional time with social studies were positive. Once the book clubs were running smoothly across all participants’ classrooms, participants repeatedly mentioned their observations of active student engagement and authentic learning. Carla and Susan felt especially torn about sticking to their allotted book club lesson time because they had students with disabilities who were scheduled to leave at specific times for lessons with other teachers. Carla and Susan both observed their students with disabilities actively engaged and enjoying the book club lessons.

**Inclusion.** One topic that arose throughout the book club implementation period related to time had to do with two participants’ classes: Carla and Susan. These two participants had
higher numbers of students with disabilities than the other four participants. Altering instructional time blocks to accommodate a higher number of students’ Individual Education Plans (IEPs) caused Carla and Susan to have a slightly different perspective on the issue of time related to social studies instruction. Carla first addressed the topic of time with her students with disabilities who stayed in her classroom to receive their IEP services when she answered the second weekly reflection question about whether participants were altering lesson plans. Carla noted that she had to make some adjustments to her lesson plans to compensate for her time challenges (The Lorax lesson plans, I Wanna Iguana lesson plans, See Appendix F):

I have sometimes found myself making changes to the lesson plans, though not dramatic ones. Often, the changes are due to time constraints in conjunction with our daily schedule (depending on the week). I have also made minor tweaks to the lessons on occasion based upon student needs. I have a few students that need to organize information in a different way, or I may think of something to add or rearrange that allows my students to see the topic in a new light. Usually these tweaks are in the writing reflections or vocabulary identification that are recorded in their Readers’ notebooks. Other than that, we tend to stick with the lesson plans as they are written. (Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013)

Susan commented on the same topic during the second focus group interview. Susan focused her comments on the time challenge facing differences between higher level and lower level students:

And then piggy backing on time, your higher functioning students move more quickly through the questions than the lower students, so you’ve got that to kind of deal with. My groups are heterogeneously mixed, so sometimes we have some friends waiting on
others, or they’ll just help each other out. For a success, one part that I like is that every student participates. Nobody’s getting left out. Everybody adds to the conversation that day. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 38-42)

Carla and Susan both made considerations for their student with disabilities who stayed in their classrooms all day along with considerations for their students with disabilities who were scheduled for pull-out to another classroom for instruction.

Exclusion/pullout. In addition to their students with disabilities who remained in their classrooms for the book club lessons, Susan and Carla both faced a scheduling challenge throughout the study because they both had high numbers of students with special needs that were pulled out of their classes that were scheduled by special education teachers throughout the day. Both of them repeatedly mentioned this issue throughout the study, and both of them tried very hard to work their book club times around their students getting pulled to other lessons so all their students could participate in the book clubs for as much time as possible.

Carla addressed her time management issue with this group of students in response to the third weekly reflection question, in which the researcher asked all participants to reflect on how the integrated book clubs affected their instructional time. Carla’s homeroom students with disabilities were assigned to another teacher for these content lessons:

Time management remains an issue with science and social studies taught in isolation due to so many students [with disabilities] pullouts. However, my students are all in place during reading, so it helps to review social studies concepts. This strengthens their [social studies] knowledge base as well as showing them that subjects [like social studies and reading] don’t have to be taught in isolation. I’m also just as able to teach the
curriculum-mandated reading strategies in conjunction with the social studies concepts.

(Week 3 Reflection, October 4, 2013)

Carla also brought up this topic, demonstrating how large an impact time management with regard to students with disabilities had on her experience with integrated book clubs for this study, during the second focus group interview. Carla, then, reflected on the benefits as well as the challenges of her time management issues:

I don’t want to say that it’s a failure, but a difficulty would be, in the situation that I have this year where I have so many kids [with disabilities] that are pulled, it’s concerning that, during the content time, that’s all they get from me and they don’t get to experience the book clubs. But the nice thing is that I have an open relationship with the special education teachers that teach them, and so they’ve been open to, what do you have that we can use; what topic are you covering right now, and then that way they can at least incorporate it into their reading time even though they’re not doing book clubs. But the benefit to me is that I have a reduced number of students during book club time because those students are out of the room, so I’m able to give my kids more focus during that time. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 44-52)

Carla’s focus on the benefits the students received from the integrated book clubs, as opposed to focusing solely on her challenges, helped Carla to build and maintain overall positive perceptions of curriculum integration for all her students.

**Impact on Instruction Because of Integration**

**Prior experiences with curriculum integration.** Just as a teacher must consider and understand her students’ prior knowledge and experiences with a particular concept, a
professional development facilitator must consider and understand her audience’s prior
knowledge and experience. While the researcher planned the professional development sessions
prior to the first focus group interview being held, she waited until after she knew a little bit
more about the participants’ prior experiences with curriculum integration before finalizing her
professional development agenda. In her lengthy personal experience with the school system in
which the study took place, the researcher knew that curriculum integration was not a district
level expectation at the time of the study, however the researcher was curious about whether any
of the participants had experimented with integrating curriculum in their classrooms.

This topic of the participants’ prior curriculum integration experience was explored, and
commented on by the participants, during the first focus group interview. The first question was:
“What do you find most interesting about teaching social studies?” Susan responded first with,
“The American heroes” (Focus Group Interview 1, line 4). Becky concurred with,
“Incorporating it with reading. It’s easy to discuss the different people in reading” (Focus Group
Interview 1, line 5).

The next question was: “In what ways have you attempted to integrate any areas of
curriculum before this study?” The researcher wished to gain insight into any of the
participants’ curriculum integration experiences. Since the question invited discussion about any
curricular areas, and not specifically about social studies, the researcher followed up with, “Have
you attempted incorporating math with anything?” Opening up the topic to any curricular areas
sparked more participation in the interview conversation. Carla considered using stories to kick
off a new math unit as integrating curriculum (Focus Group Interview 1, lines 21-22), while
Angie used content topics in writing math word problems to integrate curriculum in her
classroom (Focus Group Interview 1, line 25). Susan added that she had used social studies
content for writing prompt ideas (Focus Group Interview 1, line 27). The participants viewed curriculum integration as anything from one content area popping up in a seemingly unrelated lesson, for example, vocabulary in math or a math word problem that mentioned an American hero.

The researcher asked questions about assessment to gain insight into the participants’ understanding of this aspect of curriculum integration before the professional development sessions. Alyssa and Angie both responded that they solely grade the primary topic (Focus Group Interview 1, lines 30-31). For example, when integrating writing with math, they talk about the writing skill but only assess the math standard.

The first question about book clubs was: What is your definition of book clubs or literature circles? Becky responded first with, “To me, literacy circles are: grouping your students, […] each having their own job, based off that one book, working together as a team” (Focus Group Interview 1, lines 33-34). Alyssa included, “Like someone that leads discussion, maybe someone that looks up vocab, words that are unfamiliar to them” (Focus Group Interview 1, lines 35-36). Becky and Alyssa named some of the other jobs that might be included in a book club, like someone to take notes and someone to ask questions. Becky and Alyssa were the only two participants who had comments to share on the definition of book clubs. The other participants listened carefully to the exchange, but neither agreed nor disagreed with Alyssa and Becky. Since Alyssa and Becky had used book clubs previously, the researcher then asked if the book clubs had been used to focus solely on reading or if they had been used to integrate other content with reading. Alyssa explained that writing had been integrated, but no other content areas had been integrated. As with the previous question about book clubs, the rest of the participants listened to Alyssa and Becky with interest, but did not verbally add to the
conversation. Alyssa explained why and how she integrated book club to reading instruction in her class:

To level them more by reading so then they’re.... Like I chose four novels for them to choose from on each of their levels, and they picked which one based on interest and their reading level. So it made them a little more interested because they got to choose what they’re reading. (Focus Group Interview 1, lines 44-47)

Having the autonomy to fit integrated book clubs into her existing classroom structure, as opposed to drastically having to change her reading instruction, helped Alyssa build and maintain positive perceptions of curriculum integration.

**Efficacy.** Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) defined teacher efficacy as, “teachers’ beliefs about their own capacities as teachers” (p. 202). Whether a teacher has confidence in his or her ability with a particular instruction tool will weigh into the decision to repeat use of the instructional strategy (i.e. integrated book clubs). With the goal of finding out a little about the participants’ sense of teacher efficacy, the researcher asked the participants about their successes and challenges with teaching social studies during the first focus group interview, which took place ahead of any other study events.

The first question of the first focus group interview was: “What do you find most interesting about teaching social studies?” Susan and Becky’s immediate responses that they found teaching the American heroes easy to include with reading instruction indicated their confidence level with that portion of social studies (Focus Group Interview 1, line 4-5). The researcher followed up by asking about participants’ challenges with social studies instruction. Becky and Susan said their largest challenge was getting the students to understand certain topics. While Becky and Susan did not expand on their statement, the researcher concurred with
them as she experienced the same challenge in her classroom. In particular, the researcher found
the topics of representative and direct democracy as forms of government and the economics
concept of the four types of productive resources to be the most challenging social studies
standards for third grade students to master.

During the first weekly planning meeting after the beginning of book club
implementation, the participants’ sense of efficacy took the forefront of the conversation.
Participants’ reflections from the first two days of implementing integrated book club lessons
showed initial frustration, which was expressed at the weekly planning meeting just two days
into the lesson implementation. The participants felt they were already behind just two lessons
into it because students struggled to complete their book club roles (Researcher’s Anecdotal
Notes, Weekly Planning Meeting 1, September 17, 2013). However, by the end of the week, all
participants expressed in their weekly reflective writing that their students enjoyed taking
ownership of their book club roles, and enjoyed the open response nature of the journal
assignments. While all participants felt stressed and nervous about the book club lessons at the
start of the week, by the end of the week all participants felt that the students had learned the
intended lessons and concepts through their book club lessons.

The next time the researcher asked participants a question related to their teacher efficacy
was during the first weekly reflection. Although Becky had previously used book clubs in her
reading instruction, her response to this week’s reflection indicated that she felt some anxiety at
the onset of the book club lessons (Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday lesson plans,
See Appendix F):

My first impression of the book club lessons [was that they] were a little stressful at first,
but then I was able to make a smooth transition for my students and I to make them [book
clubs] successful. My students seem to love the idea of having a job and sharing their thoughts with their group. They loved the story, and were able to connect with the story. The journals are a big hit with the students. They love to write in them and share their thoughts. Overall, I think the book clubs are great. The social studies integration will be beneficial for the students to fully understand the economics unit. (Week 1 Reflection, September 20, 2013)

Carla also responded positively to the first week’s reflection question related to her lesson plans (The Lorax, See Appendix F), and she mentioned the benefits of discussing the link between the books and social studies in the weekly planning meeting earlier in the week:

I appreciate the link between literature and social studies. That is what we, as educators, are striving to accomplish, often without the necessary resources. It was helpful to have grade-appropriate literature [the books agreed upon for this study] with standards-based, content-area plans provided in completion. (Week 1 Reflection, September 20, 2013)

The second week’s reflection question asked participants whether they changed any of the book club lessons plans. All the participants responded that they were doing their very best to stick to the lesson plans as written: however, due to students leaving classrooms to attend various other lessons (i.e., speech, EIP, etc.), the participants occasionally struggled to finish the book club lessons in the allotted time. Becky adjusted the book club lessons by taking a more active role in guiding her lower reading group while her higher reading group was capable of running their book clubs more independently. Alyssa changed the lesson plans to integrate more technology by allowing her lower readers to listen to the stories read aloud on YouTube. This provided Alyssa’s lower readers additional exposure to the stories beyond the book club lessons.
The next opportunity for the researcher to catch a glimpse of the participants’ efficacy was during the second focus group interview at the midpoint of the study. Similar to the first focus group interview, the researcher asked participants about their successes with social studies. Susan responded with:

I like the fact that we preview vocabulary and reading, and they [students] get a glimpse, maybe, of what they’re going to learn later in a major unit in social studies, or it could be a remediation of vocabulary words. Also the fact that they are making connections in social studies and reading, and realizing that it’s not just separate academic courses. That they intertwine together. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 3-5)

The fourth week’s reflection question asked participants about their grouping strategy for their book clubs. Strategically grouping students, considering both academic performance and behavior management, could have an important impact on how successfully the participant felt book clubs were running in their classrooms. The researcher grouped her students heterogeneously by reading level so the stronger students could assist the weaker students when the groups were working without teacher assistance. Grouping students for integrated lessons did affect the researcher’s grouping strategy. The researcher used both heterogeneous and homogeneous groups for various lessons, and the integrated nature of the book club lessons was one factor she weighed when she chose book club groups. However, all other participants except Becky seemed to utilize heterogeneous grouping strategies for different reasons. Since Alyssa used homogeneous ability student groups for her guided reading lessons apart from the current study and for her small group math lessons, she used a random grouping strategy by assigning book club groups from her roster, as she described:
My groups for book clubs were completely random. I just counted down my role and assigned students alphabetically to groups 1-5 and then started again at group 1. With our class already being “ability grouped” for guided reading and math centers, I decided to allow random students the chance to work together. My groups have remained the same with the exception of pulling out EIP [Early Intervention Program] students as they normally are gone from my room during book clubs. The integration of lessons did not affect my grouping as I chose to build the groups completely randomly. (Week 4 Reflection, October 18, 2013)

While Susan also grouped her class heterogeneously, she had a different reason for doing so. Because of Susan’s high number of students with disabilities, she grouped her students with different reading levels so that the higher-level students could support students in need.

Susan did not change the groups because students rotated their jobs/roles throughout the book club. She felt that it was easier to keep students in the same group to know who did which job and how well each performed. She also believed that integrating social studies with reading for these book club lessons affected her grouping decision. Angie also grouped her class heterogeneously for book clubs, but considered behavior management in addition to students’ reading levels for her class:

I grouped kids based on behavior/ability levels. My groups stayed the same because they are still appropriate for their reading levels. Integrating social studies did not affect my grouping decision because the same students that struggle in reading struggle in social studies. (Week 4 Reflection, October 18, 2013)

While only one participant (Becky) grouped her students by ability for the integrated book club lessons, the other participants had varying reasons for using heterogeneous groups.
The researcher Sara and Angie chose heterogeneous groups to assist with managing the groups when they worked independently, while Alyssa chose to randomly assign students since she used ability groups at other times during the day. Becky chose to keep her ability groups so she could continue managing reading instruction in the way to which she was accustomed.

**Student successes.** Beyond whether a teacher has a positive sense of teacher efficacy, successful student learning and engagement are important considerations. A teacher may feel very confident with an instructional tool, but if students are not successfully mastering the lesson content or not actively engaged, the tool may not be worth repeating. With this in mind, the researcher explored how the participants felt the students were engaged and learning with the integrated book clubs.

The researcher’s first opportunity to ask participants about student success was with the first weekly reflection question. Angie’s response indicated that she had a very positive initial experience with her first integrated book club lesson plans (*Fuzz Frenzy*, See Appendix F). Angie noted the difference between her expectation that students would play during book club time and what she actually observed with her students, which was authentic engagement:

> I have really enjoyed the book club lessons. I feel like the lessons are extremely easy to understand and follow. The students are doing rather well with their book clubs.

> Honestly, I thought they would view this as a time to play. However, they are extremely engaged and complete their work thoroughly. Overall, I feel that the lessons are successful. (Week 1 Reflection, September 20, 2013)

The second week’s reflection question asked participants whether they had changed the lesson plans at all. While some participants’ responses indicated their efficacy by showing
whether they were comfortable manipulating the plans beyond what was written, Alyssa’s response showed how she tweaked the plans to ensure student success. Alyssa adjusted both of her book club lessons (Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday Lesson Plans, The Lorax Lesson Plans, See Appendix F) based on what she observed students doing on their own, and to make use of additional technology resources:

While the lessons are well planned, I do find myself making a few minor adjustments as I go along. First, I am not allowing for specific time for students to share their individual roles. I am finding that students are actually sharing as they go along. Their “working” conversations are often quite enjoyable. Secondly, there have been books I have found to have read-alongs on youtube.com. In an attempt to utilize more technology, my students have been listening to the books rather than my reading them. They seem to enjoy hearing and watching the books being read from a different voice. (Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013)

The participants’ responses to many questions during the second focus group interview indicated student success in a variety of ways. Susan’s response to the first question, which was about what participants found most interesting, seemed to echo Carla’s observation noted in her weekly reflection that Carla’s students were making connections between curriculum areas without prompting from her (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 3-5).

Angie chimed in with success focused on student engagement. Angie was also pleased that her students enjoyed the book clubs:

I know that my kids enjoy it because they’re always asking what their job is for the day, and they’re always interested to know what they’re doing next. And they seem to enjoy
every job; it’s not just one in particular for most of my…. for a few they prefer one or the other, but most of mine want to rotate for each job. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 24-27)

Carla concurred with Angie’s observation and added:

And now that we’ve done it a few weeks, my kids know what’s coming so they, I don’t want to say fight over the jobs, but they discuss it before we even get to that point, so they do enjoy that. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 29-31)

As the second focus group interview progressed, the researcher and participants could not help but to compare and contrast their traditional economics instructional tool, Mini Society, with the integrated book clubs. Susan noted the positive differences between teaching economics through integrated book clubs as opposed to the traditional mini society lessons:

I agree. It’s so different from mini society, and they seem more engaged because I’m not pushing to move on to the next step. While I wish I had more time for book club discussions some days, it’s a more relaxed pace. They are coming up with the ideas and conversations themselves rather than me pushing them through it. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 62-65)

In addition to student success, the researcher asked participants about the challenges they observed. Some of the challenges mentioned (i.e., managing instructional time with students with special education requirements getting pulled out, students of different performance levels finishing assignments at different speeds, etc.) were challenges participants faced outside of the book club lessons (Researcher’s Anecdotal Notes, Weekly Planning Meeting, Week 3, October 1, 2013). Successes participants mentioned were being able to include students with disabilities
in content lessons they ordinarily missed when they were scheduled to be with their special education teachers and the level of student engagement with the book club lessons and discussions. Overall, at the midpoint, participants held positive perceptions of integrated book clubs, and already saw benefits of teaching social studies and reading in an integrated way.

The next time the researcher followed up specifically about student success was with the final reflection question. Alyssa preferred teaching economics using the curriculum integrated book clubs because she thought her students’ learning was more authentic, and provided specific examples from *The Great Kapok Tree* and *Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday* lesson plans (See Appendix F):

> After having taught the economics concepts in an isolated fashion and now using book clubs, I feel the students have a better grasp of the real world meaning of the concepts. They were able to actually read about specific instances of scarcity (money), natural resources (trees, water, air, light), renewable resources (trees), and non-renewable resources, rather than learning about them through a text book. When students can immediately fit a concept into their life, especially through an enjoyable book or movie, they not only grasp the concept more quickly, but also seem to commit it to memory. For instance, we learned about scarcity (air, food, living space) in our first reading, *The Great Kapok Tree*. When we read *Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday*, I had several students refer back to *The Great Kapok Tree* and make text-to-text connections regarding scarcity in each book. This solidified my thought that concepts mean more and stick when students can actually relate them to their life, or something they enjoy. (Week 5 Reflection, October 25, 2013)
Like the second focus group interview, student success arose during the final focus group interview. Angie noted that her favorite part was that the book club allowed her students to see the connections between different subject areas:

I felt like before the kids didn’t always make the connection between the different subject areas, and when we were using the book clubs, and we were incorporating social studies, they seemed to have a better understanding of how they relate to one another, and you could really see the light bulb go off in their eyes, and you could really see where they understood how they related. (Focus Group Interview 3, lines 3-7)

Carla added, “I agree. I saw the same thing. I found it interesting that they [students] were excited about it. I was actually a little bit surprised at how they took to it, and they did, make the connection” (Focus Group Interview 3, lines 9-11)

Becky pointed out the authentic learning she observed as the benefit of social studies, and she responded:

I think they got a better understanding of the [economic] terms. It wasn’t just take out your social studies book, let’s turn to page such and such, and read the definition. We read the book, then we discussed how, introduced the vocabulary words, and then talked about how those vocabulary words could connect with the characters or the plot in the story that went along with the book clubs. (Focus Group Interview 3, lines 13-17)

Carla enjoyed observing her students taking ownership of their book club roles and considered the different jobs as the strength of literacy part:

They got really excited about jobs, and they would even discuss it when they knew that it was book club time. I would hear the groups saying, I’m going to do illustrator this time!
or I’m going to do..... You know, and they worked out, you know, how to work in groups, and how to share those responsibilities and those jobs, and I think it did strengthen their literacy because we were reading the same book over and over, discussion was there, integration with another content area was there. So, I think it was stronger on the literacy side as well. (Focus Group Interview 3, lines 21-27)

In Sandy’s classroom, the students seemed to grasp the economics concepts better, and construct a more genuine meaning of economics ideas through book clubs than any group she had taught through Mini Society. The participants’ responses to this week’s reflection question were mixed. Carla observed little difference in students’ economic learning between book clubs and Mini Society; however, she reported that the link to literature through book clubs offered the dual purpose of teaching literacy and economic standards and it was a better use of instruction time.

The participants’ reflections on teaching economics through integrated book clubs as opposed to teaching economics through Mini Society were varied. The researcher and Alyssa thought their students constructed a more authentic understanding of difficult economics ideas through the integrated book clubs. Angie, by contrast, thought her students, students with disabilities in particular, gained a better understanding through Mini Society. Carla thought her students’ learning outcomes were similar whether she used integrated book clubs or Mini Society. The benefits the participants found to integrating economics with reading through book clubs were providing students with additional exposure to economics vocabulary, a high level of student engagement, repeated practice with reading skills, the connections students made between economics and reading, and authentic student learning.
**Shift in strategies and tools.** As noted above, implementing integrated book clubs for the purpose of combining economics and reading instruction marked a shift in instructional approach for the researcher and participants. Up until the time of this study, this group of teachers used the State Council on Economics Education’s (SCEE) Mini Society unit to teach economics. This shift meant the participants had to step outside their comfort zone to attempt a new instructional strategy.

Carla’s response to the first weekly reflection question showed that she made adjustments from the very beginning of the study:

> My one concern is that my students [with disabilities] who are only taught science and social studies in isolation by me (because of pull out for other subjects) do not reap the benefits of the extra social studies exposure during reading. One remedy to this [and method of managing problematic time constraints], however, is that I share reading books, topics, and ideas with their special education reading teachers, who are often eager for the additional ideas and materials. (Week 1 Reflection, September 20, 2013)

By the second focus group interview at the midpoint of the book club implementation period, Becky had merged her book club lessons with her normal approach to reading instruction through stations:

> For my class, I teach two groups, two reading groups, and the first group is the average to high group. And they catch on a little better to how the book clubs run, and their responsibilities and jobs without a bunch of questions. The second group needs a little bit more remediation, reminding them what to do, and, how to answer questions, how the whole book club runs. But, both groups are excited about the book clubs and what we’re doing for the day. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 17-22)
Susan noticed that more student interactions occurred within each book club group and students seemed to enjoy having more control of their learning than she had observed during Mini Society:

I notice that when my children share in their groups they really, truly enjoy sharing with each other. So they really listen to each other, and it’s kind of like they are taking control of their learning, and they really enjoy that part too. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 32-34).

Becky pointed out that the book clubs allowed her to teach some economic concepts that she had trouble getting students understand using other ways, and mentioned an example from The Lorax (See Appendix F):

I’m happy with it. They [students] are able to see some of the concepts through these books that we’ve had trouble getting across in previous years. Like with The Lorax, it is easy for them to see the four productive resources, and that’s one area we’ve struggled to teach through Mini Society when they’re more focused on, actually making their product and how much money they have. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 54-58)

Carla concurred with Becky’s view by directly contrasting the integrated book clubs with Mini Society, specifically Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday lesson plans (See Appendix F):

Yes, they [students] enjoy the stories and it’s a different take on economics from what we’ve always done [Mini Society]. It’s a lot easier for them to see the budgeting lesson from Alexander when they can go back and reread what happened. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 59-61)
Susan agreed with the positive differences between teaching economics through integrated book clubs as opposed to the traditional Mini Society lessons:

I agree. It’s so different from Mini Society, and they seem more engaged because I’m not pushing to move on to the next step. While I wish I had more time for book club discussions some days, it’s a more relaxed pace. They are coming up with the ideas and conversations themselves rather than me pushing them through it. (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 62-65)

In the final reflection question, Carla’s view contrasted with the rest of the participants when considering the instructional shift from Mini Society to integrated book clubs. Carla observed little difference in students’ economic learning between book clubs and Mini Society; however, she reported that the link to literature through book clubs offered the dual purpose of teaching literacy and economic standards and it was a better use of instruction time. In addition, students seemed to favor this format of teaching, as she commented:

My students have grasped most of the economics concepts taught through book clubs pretty well, though some will need reviewing. They retained comprehension of terms such as “resources” and “scarcity” that were used more frequently than other terms. My students have comprehended the economics concepts well through books clubs. Similarly, my past students comprehended the economics concepts well the way I traditionally taught them in relation to Mini Society. The book clubs have been beneficial to relate economics concepts to literature at an elementary level. Using Mini Society to teach the same concepts has also been beneficial. Therefore, I have found that both formats have proven to be beneficial to student comprehension of economic topics. However, the link to literature through book clubs has offered the dual purpose of
teaching literacy and economic standards, making good use of teaching time. In addition, students seemed to respond more favorably to the book club format of teaching economics than through some of the more traditional forms of teaching the same concepts. (Week 5 Reflection, October 25, 2013)

Across Teacher Findings

While overall themes emerged from the group as a whole, certain issues came up with some participants that did not arise to the same degree for the others.

Time. The issue of instructional time, in addition to being well documented in research on elementary social studies (Heafner, Lipscomb, & Rock, 2006; Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Jones & Thomas, 2006; Morton & Dalton, 2007), arose most acutely for Susan and Carla. Susan and Carla both had higher numbers of students with disabilities than the researcher and other participants. Susan and Carla both had Special Education teachers co-teaching with them in their classrooms during certain lessons, paraprofessional support during other lessons, as well as students who were pulled out for lessons with Special Education teachers in other classrooms. All of those cases, with other Special Education teachers coming in, paraprofessionals coming in, and students being pulled out, meant that Susan and Carla had to adhere to schedules set by other teachers. Susan and Carla had to abide more strictly to a particular time line much more consistently than the other participants. The other participants, who did not have students with disabilities, had much more flexibility with their instructional time. For example, in the researcher’s own classroom, she allowed extra minutes on several of the book club days because students were so actively engaged with the book club discussion. Had the researcher’s class
included students with disabilities, such freedom to allot extra time would not have been possible.

At the onset of the integrated book club lesson implementation period, there was initial anxiety from the participants due to the feeling of time pressures (Carla, Week 1 Reflection, September 20, 2013; Susan, Week 1 Reflection, September 20, 2013; Researcher’s Anecdotal Notes, Weekly Meeting 1, September 17, 2013). That initial anxiety lessened for all of the participants after the first week of book clubs and the students understood better how book clubs worked. While, this initial anxiety of time also lessened for Carla and Susan, they continued to mention time constraints throughout the lesson implementation and data collection periods (Carla, Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013; Carla, Week 3 Reflection, October 4, 2013; Susan, Week 2 Reflection, September 27, 2013; Susan, Week 3 Reflection, October 4, 2013; Focus Group Interview 2, lines 10-15; Focus Group Interview 2, lines 38-42).

In addition to the data cited above focusing on time, Susan and Carla both mentioned this issue again in the final focus group interview, which took place after the integrated book club lessons had concluded. The researcher asked participants what changes they might make to the book clubs if they were to use this instructional strategy again. Susan and Carla both expressed the wish to change their schedules, and the schedules of their students with disabilities, to allow all students in their classes to have more time for the integrated book clubs (Focus Group Interview 3, lines 75-87). Both of these participants found so much benefit from integrated book clubs for their students that they would work in the future to make adjustments to ensure all students get to experience the book club lessons.
When planning this study, the researcher was eager to present her teammates with an instructional strategy that would capture students’ attention, actively engage students in learning, and allow the teachers to facilitate students’ construction of economics while maximizing instructional time, a tall order to fill! While integrating reading with economics through book clubs that used well-known children’s literature accomplished the goal, the issue of instructional time continued to hang over participants’ heads throughout the study. Although the researcher did not quantify instructional time by tracking social studies lessons when taught in isolation from the other subjects contrasted with instructional time when social studies was integrated with reading, comments about time constraints during the second half of the study were absent from the participants who did not have to adhere to a schedule to accommodate students with IEPs. The absence of comments about time constraints after the book clubs started running smoothly, perhaps, indicates that the participants found they had ample time for both social studies and reading when taught with integrated book clubs.

**Mini Society vs. book clubs.** As previously mentioned, prior to this study, the researcher and the participants taught economics through the Mini Society unit. This unit was intended to be an integrated unit in which the students form a country within their classroom, discovering the need for a currency, particular jobs, and how the ideas of supply and demand work. The unit culminated in a Market Day, during which the students buy and sell products they have made using the currency they created. While this unit was well intended, the researcher and participants could never find the instructional time necessary to facilitate this unit in as student-centric, discovery-learning way as was originally intended. When the researcher approached her teammates with the idea of using integrated book clubs to teach economics, they were eager to
participate. With the lengthy history of teaching economics through Mini Society, though, the researcher and participants could not help comparing and contrasting what they observed with the students participating in the book clubs as opposed to previous classes who had only learned economics through Mini Society.

The contrast between integrated book clubs and Mini Society first came up in the second focus group interview, which was at the midpoint of data collection. Becky, Carla, and Susan all commented on the differences between book clubs and Mini Society when the researcher asked what they thought of the social studies learning going on until that point of the study. All three participants were very happy with the progress their students were making with the integrated book clubs, and provided different examples to support their answer (Focus Group Interview 2, lines 54 – 65). Becky observed a high level of student learning about the four productive resources when her class experienced *The Lorax* book clubs. Carla enjoyed watching her students learning about budgeting when they read *Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday*. Susan looked at the bigger picture, and commented how much she enjoyed the truly student-paced aspect of the integrated book clubs contrasted with feeling like she was always rushing students through Mini Society because of a tight time limit.

By the time the fifth, and final, week of book club implementation ended, Carla found that she thought students learned economics equally well through Mini Society and integrated book clubs (Week 5 Reflection, October 25, 2013). Carla concluded that, while she thought both instructional strategies worked well for the economics concepts, she appreciated the reading integration aspect of the book clubs. In addition to observing students enjoying their book clubs,
Carla felt that integrating reading and social studies through book clubs allowed her to use instructional time wisely.

By the final focus group interview, which took place after the conclusion of the lesson implementation period, Becky started to view book clubs as a complement to Mini Society when she responded to the researcher’s questions about whether the participants liked teaching social studies using book clubs (Focus Group Interview 3, lines 52-56). Becky felt that teaching economics concepts through book clubs in the fall of the school year laid a good foundation on which to build economics understandings when she taught Mini Society the following spring.

The researcher and participants continually look for ways in which to improve their use of instructional time while actively engaging students in learning. When presented with a new instructional technique, the researcher and participants viewed it in a dichotomous way; either Mini Society or book clubs. However, by the time the study ended, the researcher and participants viewed Mini Society and book clubs as a team of instructional techniques; they could use them both to teach economics.

**Summary**

Through five data sources, the researcher found that the issue of instruction time weighed heavily in participants’ responses and reflections. While complete, autonomous control of instructional time would be ideal for the researcher and her participants, such freedom simply is not possible. Instructional time is a constant consideration. However, the researcher and her participants found integrating economics with reading through book clubs to be an effective way to maximize instructional time.
The data also showed that the participants, while initially stressed, embraced and enjoyed using a new instructional technique. The initial anxiety came from the participants’ learning the new instructional technique while attempting to teach difficult content to students. However, once the students gained proficiency and understanding of book clubs, and started to comprehend the links between economics and reading, participants’ anxiety eased, and the book club lessons became enjoyable for all involved.

Across participants, the data showed that the two participants who had higher numbers of students with disabilities, and therefore had to adhere more strictly to other teachers’ time schedules, felt the pressure on instructional time more acutely throughout the book club implementation period. Their feeling pressured for instructional time continued even after their students gained confidence with book clubs. The data also showed that participants initially viewed using either book clubs or their traditional Mini Society as an either/or choice, but by the end of the study the participants viewed the two instructional techniques as complements of each other, finding merits to both.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, elementary social studies has faced an uphill battle to maintain consistent instructional time. Instructional time for elementary social studies has been reduced in favor of the “high stakes” subjects of reading and math. However, prioritizing reading and math instruction to meet federal mandates does not decrease the importance of the skills and content included under the elementary social studies umbrella, including beginning economics concepts. As a result, elementary teachers are often placed in the position of facing direct pressure to either reduce or omit social studies. The teachers who participated in the current study did not face this pressure, but their students were held to the state-mandated high stakes of passing the reading standardized test or being retained in third grade. While administrators did not pressure these teachers to reduce or omit social studies, the teachers found themselves prioritizing reading over social studies anyway. The social studies portion was not one of the high stakes subjects on the standardized test. The state in which the study took place included social studies in the state standardized assessment, so the teachers had to find a way to engage students in social studies while ensuring mastery of the reading standards. The purpose of the current case study was to explore six third grade teachers’ perceptions and experiences of integrating economics concepts and reading through book clubs. The study addressed the following question: What impact does integrating economics concepts with reading through book clubs have on six third grade teachers’ perceptions of social studies?

To find answers to this research question, the researcher followed five third grade teachers in addition to herself for five weeks as they implemented book clubs that integrated economics concepts with reading. The researcher implemented a qualitative case study to gain in-depth insight and knowledge of how the participants shifted their instructional technique from
teaching social studies and reading as isolated subjects to teaching them in an integrated way, and what thoughts and reflections participants had throughout the implementation period. Data included three audio-recorded focus group interviews, weekly written reflections from each participant, anecdotal notes from weekly planning meetings, participants’ weekly lesson plans, and two professional development sessions. The researcher and an assistant analyzed data as it was collected to look for themes as the implementation period progressed.

Participants agreed to this study to learn an integrated instructional technique that allowed them to maintain instructional time for social studies while keeping reading instructional time high on their priority list. Previous research in the area of curriculum integration mainly focused on teachers of other curricular areas (Brophy & Alleman, 2008; Gallavan & Kottler, 2007; Hakes & Eisenwine, 2003; Lacina & Watson, 2003; Lintner, 2005). The current study aims to examine the field of social studies which is increasingly marginalized and needs empirical research that demonstrates how teachers endeavored to improve the state of social studies through integrated means.

Findings of this qualitative case study included the impact of integrated book clubs on social studies instructional time, the impact on instructional time where students with disabilities were involved, impact on teacher efficacy, teachers’ perceptions of student performance, and a shift in instructional strategies for the participants. Overall, the participants reported positive experiences of integrating economics concepts with reading through book clubs even though the participants faced challenges initially. A discussion of these findings follows.
Discussion

**Impact of book club on social studies instructional time.** Instructional time for elementary social studies took the forefront of the current study, which supports previous research. Many researchers (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Jones & Thomas, 2006; Morton & Dalton, 2007) examined the issues of social studies instructional time management. These researchers discussed the issue of time management from the viewpoint of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act, and the pressure this legislation placed on teachers to prioritize their instructional time in favor of reading and math over social studies. The participants in the current study have never fallen in the category of teachers who have been encouraged to minimize social studies in favor of reading and math, because their school district has always included social studies in its annual state-mandated testing. However, reading has always been the high-stakes subject for this group of participants, as their state requires third grade students to pass the reading test to be promoted to fourth grade. Although teachers in this school have never been advised or directed by administration to reduce social studies instruction in favor of a high stakes subject, teachers do often find themselves cutting out social studies time because a high stakes subject lesson takes longer than planned. One of the reasons the researcher wanted to conduct this study was to attempt capitalizing on the teachers’ tendency to allow additional time for reading by combining social studies within the same lesson.

At the time that the current study took place, the district in which it took place required third grade teachers to use the State Council on Economics Education’s (SCEE) Mini Society unit to teach the economics standards. While this unit is intended to integrate other content areas with economics, the participants found the intentions of the unit difficult to manage. The Mini Society unit was also planned to take a much longer period of time than the participants found
they could realistically manage, which decreased the level of authentic learning the participants observed with their students.

While the state of social studies and the issue of time management for the participants of this study are somewhat different from previous research, the concerns involving time were certainly an important issue throughout the data collection portion of this study. The issue of time management for this group of participants was both positive and negative.

**Instructional time benefits.** Data analysis reveal that the participants found benefit to their instruction from integrating economics into their reading time through book club because they believed that students were provided extra exposure and practice with economics concepts. Participants initially found benefits when comparing the economics side of the integrated book clubs with the way in which the participants were used to teaching economics, Mini Society. Due to the scope and sequence of the third grade social studies content for the entire year, participants experienced a decreasing time frame in which to implement Mini Society compared with years past. Mini Society is designed to engage students in the experience of creating their own society, from deciding how to distribute scarce resources to deciding which businesses, products, and services their society needs and wants, by constructing knowledge of the underlying economics concepts. Because of the shrinking instructional time that could be allotted for Mini Society, the participants found themselves providing increasing teacher-led direct instruction of the economics concepts, inadvertently taking away from the students constructing knowledge from experiences. In short, the Mini Society unit had been losing effectiveness, and the participants recognized a need to find another way to engage students in building economic understanding through reading. The integrated book club lessons allowed
students to engage in authentic learning, whereby students constructed meaning of difficult economic concepts (i.e. the four productive resources) using a story they enjoyed.

In addition to the benefits of the economics learning, participants also experienced benefits to their reading instruction. During weekly planning meetings, participants shared student work samples that showed improving student performance throughout the book club implementation period in addition to participants’ reports of student excitement over book club roles. Participants reported that students enjoyed the stories, and students even chose to reread and discuss book club stories during their free choice reading time. The opportunity to allow students to embrace ownership of their reading lessons through their book club roles supports previous research on reading instruction best practices (Edwards, 2009; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011).

**Instructional time challenges with students with disabilities.** Despite the benefits, findings from this current study did suggest that participants’ primary challenge to integrating social studies with reading through book clubs was time management. The issue was that the participants observed students enjoying and becoming completely engaged in the book club lessons while particular students were scheduled to leave at a certain time for special education services. The participants would have allowed the book club lessons to take more time than allotted in their daily schedule if not for their students with disabilities missing out on the extended book club time daily. Two participants in particular felt this time management challenge more acutely than the rest of the participants because they had higher numbers of students with disabilities and it was hard for them to have to wrap up book club lessons while students were actively engaged. While this challenge persisted throughout the study both participants maintained positive perceptions of the book clubs because they observed their
students’ active engagement and authentic learning. The other four participants felt this time challenge to a lesser degree although they also had students pulled from their classes for other lessons, and had to cut the book club lessons short from time to time. However, all participants felt that the book clubs were a good use of instructional time because of the high level of student engagement and authentic learning that they observed during book club lessons.

Even though the participants experienced frustration at having to cut short lessons in which their students were fully engaged because of a small group of students with disabilities continually missing a portion, knowing whether they had increased overall social studies instructional time may have helped to alleviate some of that frustration. In spite of the time management frustration that lasted throughout the study, participants still believed that the integrated book clubs were a better way to use instructional time because they knew that their students were fully engaged in authentic learning and saw students’ work improve each week.

Participants’ observations that their students with disabilities were actively engaged in the book club lessons and building authentic knowledge supports Mitchell’s (2015) research that summarized various educational modifications to meet the academic needs of students with disabilities. On pages 13 and 14, Mitchell cited two meta-analyses and four original studies that all concluded that inclusion models for students with disabilities lead to greater learning gains than models that isolate students with disabilities from mainstream students. Participants Susan and Carla’s adherence to the pull out schedule to accommodate the resource instructional model for certain students with disabilities supports the research findings of McLeskey and Waldron (2011), which suggest the need for a teacher with specialized knowledge and skills to deliver high quality instruction at the student’s performance level in a separate setting when students’ individual needs depart from grade level expectations. To ensure inclusion of her students with
disabilities in the integrated book club experience, participant Carla shared book club materials and lesson plans with the Special Education teachers who pulled her students. Carla shared that both the Special Education teachers and the students were happy to have the additional resources and instructional ideas. While Susan did not extend the book club lessons to the Special Education teachers who worked with her students, she adapted the timing of each lesson to make sure all concepts were taught by the end of the week.

**Building on teacher efficacy.** Teacher efficacy is “teachers’ beliefs about their own capacities as teachers” (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 202). Previous research concerning teacher efficacy found that teachers’ confidence with their social studies instruction came, at least in part, from their content knowledge (Minor, Onwegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002). This content knowledge comfort level can be traced to preservice teacher preparation. The researcher’s own review of course offerings by two State Research I universities in the state where the current study took place, showed a large gap between social studies methods class offerings and reading methods class offerings. One of the universities offered three reading methods classes and one social studies methods class to preservice teachers while the other university offered four reading classes and one social studies class to preservice teachers. While the participants in the current study have been teaching the applicable social studies standards for several years, they still spend a larger portion of each instructional day teaching reading than they do teaching social studies, allotting approximately 120 minutes a day for reading or literacy and 15 minutes a day for social studies. The idea that these participants would have a higher level of efficacy about their reading instruction than their social studies instruction, even with familiar standards, follows naturally, and agrees with the findings of Bolick, Adams, and Willox (2010). Bolick, Adams, and Willox (2010) found that the social studies method courses in
teacher preparation programs at the universities they included in their study focused on methods and not content. The participants in their study reported that the content classes they attended in the humanities (i.e. history) were open to the general university population, and, therefore, these courses were not focused on content future teachers would one day teach to their own students. Upon entering their own classrooms, participants felt comfortable with social studies methods but uncomfortable with social studies content, which directly stemmed from their preservice preparation. Therefore, integrating comparatively less comfortable content (economics concepts) into the area of participants’ higher level of efficacy (reading) contributed to the success of the current study.

Curriculum integration. The social studies state standards addressed in the book club lessons for this study involved the economics portion of the social studies curriculum. In the years before this study, the participants taught economics using the county-provided textbook followed by Mini Society, which came from the State’s Council on Economics Education (SCEE). Participants had grown somewhat comfortable with the economics standards within the context of the Mini Society unit. While the participants were eager to learn how to integrate curriculum using book clubs when they volunteered to participate in this study, they experienced some nervousness at stepping outside of that comfort zone.

Before teaching the first book club lessons, the participants attended two professional development sessions. Gutierrez (2015) found both barriers and benefits to professional development that apply to the current study. She found that teachers have less success with professional development when continued support, training, and materials are lacking. Further, she found that teachers have increased success with professional development when a team of teachers collaborate in professional development, try out what they learned, and then reflect
upon and revise their teaching as a result. The professional development the researcher designed for the current study (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth description) involved collaboration, reflection, and revision. The researcher and participants continued using those three attributes (collaboration, reflection, and revision) beyond the initial professional development, throughout the implementation period, and the three attributes contributed to the success of the study.

While the economics standards taught through the book club lessons during the current study were not new, the book clubs themselves were new along with the addition of integrating the economics concepts with reading. The participants had a high level of efficacy for the economics concepts because the participants had taught the concepts several times through Mini Society. Prior to this study, the participants had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the level of student learning they observed through Mini Society. When the researcher introduced the idea of integrating economics concepts with reading through book clubs for the purpose of this dissertation study, the participants were excited for a new instructional technique and the prospect of higher student engagement. The researcher and participants all entered this study with a mindset of either Mini Society or book clubs. By the end of the implementation period, however, the participants’ responses during the final focus group interview showed that they had begun to see Mini Society and book clubs as complements to either other instead of as a dichotomous choice.

**Perspective of Researcher as a Participant**

Conducting this study afforded the researcher an amazing learning opportunity. The researcher was well embedded in her teaching practice at the time of this study. Leading her
team through a new instructional experience placed the researcher in a new role. In this new role of researcher, she learned some valuable research skills that she will carry forth.

One of the unforeseen skills the researcher started to develop was that of drawing out lengthier responses to interview questions. As an inexperienced interviewer, the researcher experienced difficulty in helping her participants to expand their responses. While the participants were well aware of the audio recording aspect of the focus group interviews, they were uncomfortable speaking at length while being recorded. Going forward, following a short response from a participant with a follow up question such as, “Could you clarify that thought?” or “Tell me more about….” may help the participants fully express their ideas. The participants and the researcher had worked together for several years at the time of the study, ranging from three to 12 years. The original intention of the focus group used in this study was to provide this group of teachers with the opportunity to have organized discussion to discuss and gain information about their views and experiences of their interested topic (Gibbs, 1997). It proved to be beneficial in helping participants share perspectives, experiences, and support each other, although some participants may have been reluctant to speak openly in front of the group. The researcher included the weekly reflection as a more private means of communicating honest thoughts to counterbalance this reluctance. Individual recorded interviews and video recordings of book club lessons in all participants’ classrooms could be added as data sources to compensate for the lack of lengthy focus group interviews.

Another skill the researcher began to develop through this study was tracking themes. Since the researcher and an assistant analyzed and coded data as it was collected, the researcher was able to track data each week to see how the emerging themes were supported by the various data sources and changing throughout the study. Huberman and Miles (1983) have long
supported monitoring data as it is collected, “…in that clusters and partitions will necessarily follow that analyst’s evolving sense of how the data come together and how they address the research questions s/he wishes to answer” (p. 285). One example was the theme of time. During the first week, all participants were overwhelmed with managing the book clubs, and were concerned about getting everything completed by the end of the week. However, by the midpoint of the study, the researcher found that the participants who had higher numbers of students with disabilities, and therefore had to leave the classroom on a preset schedule for lessons with other teachers, still experienced issues with time management. By tracking this theme throughout data collection, the researcher could observe how this affected participants’ perceptions of the book clubs. As a participant, the researcher had the advantage of helping the participants address this frustration as it unfolded to ensure continued implementation. Had the researcher been an outsider, the participants may have been more likely to give up on the integrated book clubs rather than persevere to find a solution.

The skill the researcher found most challenging to develop throughout this study was including her own voice in the data. In the interest of recording and describing the other participants’ experiences and perceptions as objectively as possible, the researcher initially left her own experiences and perceptions largely out of the study findings. This omission included events from guiding the focus group interviews in a way meant to draw out the thoughts of the participants without influencing their responses, and recording participants’ mentioning the book club lessons during the weekly planning meetings without prompting from the researcher. Throughout the process of writing her dissertation, the researcher’s advisory committee strongly encouraged her to include her own voice. After much discussion, the researcher did include her own thoughts and perceptions in the report of the study.
Implications and Recommendations

Implication for professional development. While the participants experienced anxiety during the start of the book club implementation period, they persevered and went on to observe many benefits to the integrated book clubs. The professional development that the researcher planned and held prior to the book club lessons played an important role in the final outcome. The researcher and participants experiencing all the events of this study in a collaborative setting, regular opportunities for reflection, and the autonomy to alter lesson plans as needed to suit student needs and support student success (Gutierez, 2015) also contributed to the success of the study. From this finding comes the implication that, similar to the student learning observed through this study, authentic professional development will engage teachers. Authentic, collaborative professional development provides teachers with higher efficacy, which leads to implementation and follow through in the classroom (Gutierez, 2015). Would one teacher take the risk of integrating curriculum with a new instructional technique on her own? Would she persevere through an initial challenge similar to the current study? Those questions are tough to answer, however the team environment of the participants in this study contributed to the entire group completing the entire five-week unit.

During the first focus group interview of the current study, participants indicated very limited experiences with both curriculum integration and book clubs. This inexperience appeared in participants’ initial frustrations with time management at the onset of the book club lesson implementation with students. Based on this finding comes the implication of a need for practical experience for preservice teachers with managing integrated lessons with students. Guided practice at managing integrated lessons during preservice teacher education may help
more teachers implement integrated instructional techniques when they enter their own classrooms.

**Implication for accommodating students with disabilities while integrating curriculum.** Throughout the current study, Carla and Susan balanced the desire to allow more time for book club lessons with adhering to the schedules of their students with disabilities. Would Carla and Susan have felt so pressured for time if their schedules with their special education counterparts were more flexible? As Mitchell (2015) reported, including students with disabilities in general education classrooms results in higher learning gains for the students with disabilities. Carla and Susan also reported high levels of student engagement and enjoyment with the book club lessons. The implication from this finding is that student success makes adjusting schedules and lesson timing to accommodate students with special needs worthwhile. On a similar note, Carla and Susan may have opted out of participating in the book club lessons all together had they known in advance the time management consideration. However, after the book clubs lessons ended, Carla and Susan agreed that all their students, both general education and the students with disabilities, successfully learned the standards taught. Their successful practices with students with disabilities may provide other classroom teachers with some ideas of how they can support their students with disabilities in general education classrooms and collaborate with Special Education teachers and content teachers.

**Implication for instructional strategy to prioritize social studies.** Before agreeing to participate in this study, participants had a very superficial definition of curriculum integration. Through participating in the professional development prior to implementing the book club lessons, the participants came to understand that curriculum integration is the purposeful combining of content areas and includes equal instruction and assessment of all standards
involved (Brophy & Alleman, 2008; Hinde, 2005; Keane & Zimmerman, 2007; Morris, 2003). One implication of this study was the issue of day-to-day time management. As suggested by previous research, the teachers in this study found themselves favoring instructional time for reading over social studies prior to this study. While the researcher did not ask participants to time their social studies and reading lessons either before or during book club implementation in the interest of focusing participants’ attention on the integrated book clubs, tracking the amount of time for the book club lessons would add a level of consistency across classrooms and allow researchers to compare the time spent on integrated lessons versus isolated lessons.

Another aspect of the book clubs highlighted by this study was active student engagement. The teachers were initially overwhelmed with implementing the curriculum integrated book clubs. However, their diligence and persistence was rewarded as the implementation period progressed when the participants observed their students’ active engagement and enjoyment of the book club lessons. Reflection on the level of student learning leads the researcher and participants to consider similar lessons with different stories that include different social studies standards such as the historical leaders addressed in the third grade state standards. The positive experiences the participating teachers in the current study had with active student engagement despite initial drawbacks may encourage other third grade teachers to implement similar book clubs in their classrooms knowing the resulting benefits will make initial struggles worthwhile.

**Recommendations for further research.** As a qualitative case study, the researcher did not intend for this study to be replicated. The difference between the current study and a possible repetition of the study is the researcher herself. The researcher and the other participants are all reflective practitioners, continually discussing instructional ideas, outcomes,
and student preferences for certain lessons over the years. While the researcher and participants do not make a habit out of holding focus group interviews on their own, much of the data for this study was based on naturally occurring conversations and exchanges. The researcher asked participants to write their weekly reflections for the purpose of data documentation, however in their real day-to-day practice, the questions posed for the weekly reflections would have come up in conversation eventually had they not been purposely posed at certain points of the study. Although exact replication of this study is not possible, the researcher can still make recommendations for further research based on this study.

The theme of time emerged as soon as the participants began implementing the book clubs with their students, and continued to come up throughout the implementation period. Managing the time during the integrated book club lessons, especially where students with disabilities were concerned, surfaced as an issue throughout the study. Upon repetition of this study, the researcher may consider collecting qualitative data concerning students with disabilities from teachers separately from the students without disabilities. Perhaps a comparative study by implementing the integrated book clubs for the two groups of students separately would reveal a different perspective on this topic.

Lack of instructional time for elementary social studies has been a concern in previous research (Bollick, Adams, & Wilcox, 2010; Heafner, Fitchett, & Lambert, 2014; Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Jones & Thomas, 2006; Morton & Dalton, 2007), and also in the current study. The findings of this qualitative study indicate that integrating social studies with reading through book clubs is an effective way to ensure instructional time for social studies. Before this study took place, when the participants taught social studies and reading as isolated subjects, they found themselves cutting back on social studies instructional time when other lessons ran too
long. Tracking the actual amounts of time study participants spent teaching social studies and reading, both in isolation and when integrated, would shed light on instructional time from a quantitative perspective. Although the researcher initially considered asking participants to time their social studies and reading lessons both before and after book club implementation, she chose not to ask participants to track time in the interest of keeping participants’ focus on integrating curriculum. The researcher and participants all felt that the integrated book club lessons were a worthwhile and better use of instructional time than teaching social studies and reading in isolation, tracking actual instructional time may add strength to that argument.

In the current study, student work samples were discussed at weekly planning meetings. Participants were satisfied with the level of student learning demonstrated through the work samples, however, the work samples were not collected as a data source, and therefore, were not analyzed for student learning for inclusion in the current study. A future study on curriculum integrated book clubs might analyze student work samples to gain further insight into book clubs’ affect from the perspective of student learning outcomes. Analyzing student work samples from both isolated and integrated instructional methods may shed light on social studies best practices.

As a researcher, but also a third grade teacher who had to manage her class and implement the integrated book club lessons as all the other participants, the researcher was unable to observe firsthand how the other participants each implemented the book club lessons, and how the students were engaged in the book club lessons. Despite her inability to observe the integrated lessons in the other classrooms, the researcher utilized multiple strategies to understand thoughts and experiences including three focus group interviews, professional development, anecdotal notes during weekly planning meetings, participants’ weekly written
reflections, and participants’ lesson plans. Future researchers may be able to arrange times to observe participants’ book club lessons and/or arrange for a research assistant to videotape lessons in participating classrooms. Firsthand observation would allow the researcher a more holistic picture of book club implementation in the other participants’ classrooms, and videotaping would allow each participant a unique opportunity for reflection and self-observation, which may translate to richer focus group discussions.

Conclusion

The current case study aimed to examine the perceptions of the researcher and five other third grade teachers at a metropolitan public school in the southeast state as they implemented curriculum integrated book clubs in their classrooms for six weeks. Overall findings indicate that the participating teachers considered integrating economics concepts and reading through book clubs a positive experience, an effective use of instruction time for both social studies and reading, and a meaningful approach to students’ active learning. While teachers initially struggled to adjust to an integrated instructional method, upon observing students being highly engaged in learning, the teachers started to develop positive attitudes toward curriculum integration and perceived the integrated book clubs as a worthwhile strategy to prioritize social studies instruction.

This study contributes to the field of curriculum integration research by examining teachers’ changing perceptions as they implemented integrated book clubs to prioritize social studies instruction in elementary school curriculum. While the teachers encountered some time management challenges where their students with disabilities were concerned, teachers perceived integrated book clubs as an effective way to provide all students, including students with
disabilities, with a meaningful, productive, and positive social studies and reading learning experience.

The current study contributes to the field social studies, which is increasingly marginalized and needs empirical research that demonstrates how teachers endeavored to improve the state of social studies through integrated means; and, in particular, it contributes to elementary economics education using children’s literature and the National Council for the Social Studies C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013) to engage students in applying disciplinary concepts and tools.

In addition to providing research focused on elementary economics, the current study adds to the growing body of literature on curriculum integration by focusing on third grade teachers, which is a group that has limited representation in existing literature. While the field of literature that includes social studies in curriculum integration is also growing, elementary level topics have limited inclusion, which is a gap the current study helps fill.

Last, but not least, the current study offers a glimpse into practical application of an instructional method that provides one solution to the instructional time problem that constantly bothers elementary teachers in balancing school curriculum. Social studies began as a means to teach children how to become active adult citizens. Over time, this purpose has been waylaid by legislation pulling focus, and often resources, away from social studies. The problem of marginalizing social studies has reached the point where social studies content has become optional, or even absent, in many elementary schools. The positive findings of this study suggest that teachers recognize the value of social studies, and are willing to look for ways to ensure time for social studies instruction gets preserved in the elementary school day.
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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Interview Questions

Focus Group Interview 1

1. What do you find most interesting about teaching social studies?

2. What is your greatest challenge to teaching social studies?

3. In what other ways have you attempted to integrate any areas of curriculum before this study?

4. What is your definition of book clubs (or literacy circles)?

5. Have you used book clubs before? Why or why not?
APPENDIX B

Focus Group Interview Questions

Focus Group Interview 2

1. What do you find most interesting about teaching social studies and literacy?

2. Do you like integrating social studies with literacy using book clubs? Why?

3. Do your students enjoy book club lessons? How do you know?

4. What are some successes and challenges you have experienced so far? Please explain.
APPENDIX C

Focus Group Interview Questions

Focus Group Interview 3

1. What did you find most interesting about teaching social studies and literacy?
2. What benefits did you find to teaching social studies using book clubs?
3. What benefits did you find to teaching literacy using book clubs?
4. What challenges did you find to teaching social studies using book clubs?
5. Did you like teaching social studies using book clubs? Why?
6. Did your students enjoy book club lessons? How do you know?
7. What changes might you make if you were to teach book clubs again? Why?
8. Will you continue to use book clubs to integrate social studies and literacy?
APPENDIX D

Weekly Reflection Guiding Questions

Week 1
What is your first impression of the book club lessons? Please include how you feel about these lessons and how you feel your students are doing with them (i.e. are they enjoying book clubs, and are they learning what we intended for them to learn?)

Week 2
Are you finding yourself making changes to the lesson plans? What kind of changes? Why?

Week 3
How are you managing your instructional time with the use of book clubs? Describe how your instructional time allocation for both social studies and reading has changed by changing to this integrated method from our traditional isolated method.

Week 4
How did you group your students for book clubs? Why? Have they changed book club groups? Why or why not? Did integrating social studies with reading for these book club lessons affect your grouping decision?

Week 5
How do the book club lessons compare and contrast with the way we’ve taught economics in the past (primarily Mini Society)? How do you feel about your students’ learning of economics through book clubs?
APPENDIX E

Study Timeline

**Researcher Preparation**
- Gathering resources
- Compiling list of books
- Compiling standards
- Planning professional development

**Participant Preparation**
- Wednesday - First Focus Group Interview
- Thursday - First Professional Development Session
- Friday - Second Professional Development Session

**Book Club Week 1**
- Monday - Begin integrated book club lessons, which continued daily for six weeks
- Tuesday - Grade level meeting, anecdotal notes were recorded
- Friday - First Weekly Reflections were collected

**Book Club Week 2**
- Tuesday - Grade level meeting, anecdotal notes were recorded
- Friday - Second Weekly Reflections were collected

**Book Club Week 3**
- Tuesday - Grade level meeting, anecdotal notes were recorded
- Friday - Third Weekly Reflections were collected
Second Focus Group Interview

**Book Club Week 4**

- Tuesday - Grade level meeting, anecdotal notes were recorded
- Friday - Fourth Weekly Reflections were collected

**Book Club Week 5**

- Tuesday - Grade level meeting, anecdotal notes were recorded
- Friday - Fifth Weekly Reflections were collected

**Post Book Club Reflection**

- Monday - Final Focus Group Interview

**Follow-up**

- Member Check Conversations with Individual Participants
APPENDIX F

Book Club Lesson Plans

Reading Plans for the Week of

| STANDARD: ELACC3RL2, ELACC3RL3, ELACC3RL4, ELACC3RL7 ELACC3SL1 a, b, c, d SS3E1 a, b, c, d SS3E3 a, b, c |
| Plan for Differentiation |
| Re-teach: |
| Enrichment: |

**EQ's:** What is the central message of this story? How do the characters affect the sequence of events? How do I use context clues to learn new words? How do the pictures help me tell the story? What are supply and demand? What happens when a resource is scarce?

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<td>On the cover of Book Club Journal, each member should write:</td>
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<td>Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
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<td>In book club journals, each member should individually write:</td>
<td>Name 1 time really wanted your parents to buy something for you.</td>
<td>Choose Book Club member roles. Discuss responsibilities of each role.</td>
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<td>Before reading:</td>
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<td>Re-read story</td>
<td>Write in Book club journals:</td>
<td>Why did Alex want the iguana? What were his reasons?</td>
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<td>In book club journals, each member should individually write:</td>
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<td>Why do you think Alex’s mom changed her mind in the end?</td>
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<td>Share your answers with your club.</td>
<td>Complete the independent part of your Book Club Role guide.</td>
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<td>Take a few moments to re-read answers to questions from Monday and Tuesday. Begin to think about how/if/why your answers may have changed.</td>
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<td>Re-read the story.</td>
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<td>Take turns completing the interactive portion of each member’s role guide.</td>
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<td>Work together to find definitions in the glossary of your social studies book for the terms: barter, service, goods, demand. Write these definitions in your book club journal.</td>
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<td>Review answers to Tuesday’s questions about how the various characters viewed the trees.</td>
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<td>Review definitions from social studies books.</td>
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<td>Re-read the story.</td>
<td>Turn to the next blank page in your Book Club Journal. Split it into four parts. In each part, draw an example of each vocabulary word from the story.</td>
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<td>(The barter picture can be any of the attempts Alex made to get the iguana, service can be Alex cleaning his room or the iguana’s cage, the things Alex needs to buy for the iguana are the</td>
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<td>What is a budget? (Use your glossary to help if needed)</td>
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<td>Write:</td>
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<td>One example of a barter that Alex offered mom.</td>
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<td>Why did it take so long to convince mom?</td>
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<td>How did Alex’s behavior change between the beginning and the end of the story?</td>
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| Was it hard to convince them?  
Why?  
What did you do to change their minds?  
Share responses with book club members, and discuss whether they agree or disagree with each member’s response.  
During reading: Follow along, take your turn | How do people make decisions about what to buy? | How do the characters affect the story? | How does my understanding of this story compare with my classmates’ understanding?  
What are renewable and non-renewable resources? | How do the pictures in a story help my understanding? | What is the message/lesson of I Wanna Iguana? |
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**Key Questions**

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**Brain Strategies**

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### ASSESSMENT KEY

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### BRAIN STRATEGIES KEY

|------------------------------|------------|----------------|----------|-----------------------|
# Reading Plans for the Week of

**Standard:** ELACC3RL2, ELACC3RL3, ELACC3RL4, ELACC3RL7  
ELACC3SL1 a, b, c, d  
SS3E1 a, b, c, d SS3E3 a, b, c

**EQ’s:** What is the central message of this story? How do the characters affect the sequence of events? How do I use context clues to learn new words? How do the pictures help me tell the story? What are supply and demand? What happens when a resource is scarce?

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<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
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<td>On the cover of Book Club Journal, each member should write: Name Title Author Other book club members’ names Draw a picture of the book’s cover Before reading: In book club journals, each member should individually write: Name I decision you made, and then afterwards thought you made a mistake. Why was it a mistake? What should you have decided? Share responses with book club members,</td>
<td>Social studies textbooks (glossary)</td>
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<td>Choose Book Club member roles. Discuss responsibilities of each role. Re-read story Write in Book club journals: How did the woodsman feel about the tree at the beginning of the story? How did the animals feel about the tree? How did the woodsman feel about the tree at the end of the story? Share your answers with your club. Complete the independent part of your Book Club Role guide.</td>
<td>Take a few moments to re-read answers to questions from Monday and Tuesday. Begin to think about how/why your answers may have changed. Re-read the story. Take turns completing the interactive portion of each member’s role guide. Work together to find definitions in the glossary of your social studies book for the terms: scarcity, non-renewable resources, renewable resources, and natural resources. Write these definitions in your book club journal.</td>
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<td>Review answers to Tuesday’s questions about how the various characters viewed the trees. Review definitions from social studies books. Re-read the story. Turn to the next blank page in your Book Club Journal. Split it into four parts. In each part, draw an example of each vocabulary word from the story. (The kapok tree is non-renewable, it is also the natural resource, any of the things mentioned in the story can be scarce i.e. oxygen, homes for the animals, food, etc; and a renewable resource might be rain, sunlight, etc.).</td>
<td>Re-read the story. Discuss: What are some ways people make decisions? (i.e. time use, which item to buy, which tv show to watch, etc.) What is interdependence? (Use your glossary to help if needed) Write: One example of how one of the animals influenced the woodsman’s decision. One example of interdependence. How did the woodsman’s view of this relationship change? What is the message/lesson of The Great Kapok Tree?</td>
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and discuss whether they agree or disagree with each member’s response.
During reading: Follow along, take your turn.

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<td>What are renewable and non-renewable resources?</td>
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<td>How do the pictures in a story help my understanding?</td>
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**READING PLANS FOR THE WEEK OF**

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<th>STANDARD: ELACC3RL2, ELACC3RL3, ELACC3RL4, ELACC3RL7 ELACC3SL1 a, b, c, d SS3E1 a, b, c, d SS3E3 a, b, c</th>
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<td><strong>EQ’s:</strong> What is the central message of this story? How do the characters affect the sequence of events? How do I use context clues to learn new words? How do the pictures help me tell the story? What are supply and demand? What happens when a resource is scarce?</td>
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**RESOURCES**
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<td>On the cover of Book Club Journal, each member should write: Name Title Author Other book club members’ names Draw a picture of the book’s cover Before reading: In book club journals, each member should individually write: Name 1 time you saved your money to buy something you wanted. Was it hard to do? Why?</td>
<td>Choose Book Club member roles. Discuss responsibilities of each role. Re-read story Write in Book club journals: Why did Alexander think it was unfair that his brothers had money? How did Alexander feel about money? Why do you think it was hard for Alexander to save money? Share your answers with your club. Complete the independent part of your Book Club Role guide.</td>
<td>Take a few moments to re-read answers to questions from Monday and Tuesday. Begin to think about how/it/why your answers may have changed. Re-read the story. Take turns completing the interactive portion of each member’s role guide. Work together to find definitions in the glossary of your social studies book for the terms: scarcity, trade, producer, consumer. Write these definitions in your book club journal. Silent reading/AR/checkout/pull T2</td>
<td>Review answers to Tuesday’s questions about how the various characters viewed the trees. Review definitions from social studies books. Re-read the story. Turn to the next blank page in your Book Club Journal. Split it into four parts. In each part, draw an example of each vocabulary word from the story. (The money is scarce, any picture of any of the exchanges in the story works for trade, any of the sellers are okay for producer, and Alexander is the consumer.).</td>
<td>Re-read the story. Discuss: What are some reasons people save money? (i.e. time use, which item to buy, which tv show to watch, etc.) What is a budget? (Use your glossary to help if needed) Write: One example of a mistake Alexander made with his buying decisions. Why would having a budget have helped Alexander? Did Alexander’s opinion of money change by the end? Why or why not?</td>
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| **Key Questions** | **Brain Strategies** | **What did you do to reach your savings goal?**
Share responses with book club members, and discuss whether they agree or disagree with each member’s response. | **Silent reading/AR/checkout/pull T2** | **What is the message/lesson of Alexander Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday?** |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**How do people make decisions about spending and saving money?**

**How do the characters affect the story?**

**How does my understanding of this story compare with my classmates’ understanding?**

**What are renewable and non-renewable resources?**

**How do the pictures in a story help my understanding?**

**How do budgets work? Why are budgets important?**

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## BRAIN STRATEGIES KEY

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<td>Project / Problem- Based</td>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>Drama / Role Plays</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
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<td>Visualization / Guided Imagery</td>
<td>Visuals</td>
<td>Work Study</td>
<td>Writing and Journals</td>
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READING PLANS FOR THE WEEK OF

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|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| EQ’s: What is the central message of this story? How do the characters affect the sequence of events? How do I use context clues to learn new words? How do the pictures help me tell the story? What are the four productive resources? How does trade work? |

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Plan for Differentiation

**Re-teach:**

**Enrichment:**
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<tr>
<td>On the cover of Book Club Journal, each member should write: Name, Title, Author Other book club members’ names</td>
<td>Take a few moments to re-read answers to questions from Monday and Tuesday. Begin to think about how/if/why your answers may have changed.</td>
<td>Review answers to Tuesday’s questions about how the various characters viewed the trees.</td>
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<td>Draw a picture of the book’s cover</td>
<td>Re-read the story.</td>
<td>Review definitions from social studies books of the four types of productive resources.</td>
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<td>~Before reading: In book club journals, each member should individually write: Name I decision you made today (i.e. breakfast, lunch, what to wear, etc.). Did your decision effect anyone else? What makes you think so?</td>
<td>Share responses with your club.</td>
<td>Re-read the story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share responses with book club members, and discuss whether they agree or disagree with each member’s response.</td>
<td>Complete the independent part of your Book Club Role guide.</td>
<td>Discuss: What is trade?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose Book Club member roles. Discuss responsibilities of each role. Re-read story Write in Book club journals: How did the Once-ler think about the truffula trees? How did the brown barbaloots think about the truffula trees? How did the Lorax think about the truffula trees? Share your answers with your club.</td>
<td>Take turns completing the interactive portion of each member’s role guide. Work together to find definitions in the glossary of your social studies book for the terms: natural resources, human resources, capital resources, and entrepreneur. Write these definitions in your book club journal.</td>
<td>What is interdependence? (use the glossary in your social studies book to help if needed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write: One example of voluntary trade from the story. One example of interdependence. What caused this relationship to end? What is the message/lesson of The Lorax?</td>
<td>Turn to the next blank page in your Book Club Journal. Split it into four parts. In each part, draw an example of each type of productive resource. (Once-ler is the entrepreneur, truffula trees are the natural resource, Once-ler’s family is the human resource, and the factory is the capital resource).</td>
<td>Write:</td>
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During reading: Follow along, take your turn

### Key Questions

- How do my decisions affect others?
- How do the characters affect the story?
- How does my understanding of this story compare with my classmates’ understanding?
- What are the four productive resources?
- How do the pictures in a story help my understanding?
- How does trade work?
- What causes an interdependent relationship to stop working?

### Brain Strategies

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### Assessment

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<td>12</td>
<td>Project / Problem- Based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Drama / Role Plays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Visualization / Guided Imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Visuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Work Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Writing and Journals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### WEEKLY FOCUS

**STANDARD:** ELACC3RL2, ELACC3RL3, ELACC3RL4, ELACC3RL7  
ELACC3SL1 a, b, c, d  
SS3E1 a, b, c, d SS3E3 a, b, c  

**EQ's:** What is the central message of this story? How do the characters affect the sequence of events? How do I use context clues to learn new words? How do the pictures help me tell the story? What are supply and demand? What happens when a resource is scarce?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Copies of *The Great Fuzz Frenzy* for book clubs  
Book Club Journals for each member (blank cover and notebook paper)  
Pencils and crayons | Copies of *The Great Fuzz Frenzy* for book clubs  
Book Club Journals for each member (blank cover and notebook paper)  
Pencils and crayons  
Book Club (literacy circle) role guide sheets | Copies of *The Great Fuzz Frenzy* for book clubs  
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Pencils and crayons  
Book Club (literacy circle) role guide sheets |

### RESOURCES

**Plan for Differentiation**

**Re-teach:**

**Enrichment:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF TASKS</th>
<th>Social Studies textbooks (glossary)</th>
<th>Social Studies textbooks (glossary)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On the cover of Book Club Journal, each member should write:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Choose Book Club member roles.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review answers to Tuesday’s questions about how the various characters viewed the trees.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name, Title, Author</td>
<td>Discuss responsibilities of each role.</td>
<td>Review definitions from social studies books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other book club members’ names</td>
<td>Re-read story</td>
<td>Re-read the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw a picture of the book’s cover</td>
<td>Write in Book club journals:</td>
<td>Discuss: What are some ways people decide how to use limited resources (i.e. limited copies of books for book clubs, limited recess time, limited lunch choices, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before reading:</td>
<td>How did the Pip Squeak feel about the fuzz?</td>
<td>What is interdependence? (Use your glossary to help if needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In book club journals, each member should individually write:</td>
<td>How did Big Bark feel about the fuzz?</td>
<td>Write:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name one time you wanted something someone else had. How did it work out (share it, didn’t get it at all, take turns, etc.)? How did you and the other person make that decision?</td>
<td>How did the rest of the prairie dogs feel about the fuzz?</td>
<td>One example of how a decision was made about how to use a limited resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share responses with book club members, and discuss whether they agree or disagree</td>
<td>Share your answers with your club.</td>
<td>One example of interdependence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete the independent part of your Book Club Role guide.</td>
<td>Work together to find definitions in the glossary of your social studies book for the terms: scarcity, non-renewable resources, supply, and demand. Write these definitions in your book club journal.</td>
<td>What caused this relationship to end?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(The fuzz is the non-renewable resource, the prairie dogs demanded the fuzz, the fuzz was scarce, and the fuzz was the supply).</td>
<td>What is the message/lesson of The Great Fuzz Frenzy?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with each member’s response. During reading: Follow along, take your turn.

| Brain Strategies | Key Questions                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|                  | How do people decide how to share when there isn’t enough?                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|                  | How do the characters affect the story?                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|                  | How does my understanding of this story compare with my classmates’ understanding? | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
|                  | What are supply and demand?                                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|                  | How do the pictures in a story help my understanding?                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|                  | How does trade work? What causes an interdependent relationship to stop working? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**ASSESSMENT KEY**

**METHOD**

1- Personal Communication
2- Performance Assessment
3- Extended Written Response
4- Selected Response
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET</th>
<th>A- Knowledge Mastery</th>
<th>B-Reasoning Proficiency</th>
<th>C-Performance Skills</th>
<th>D- Ability to Create Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
# APPENDIX G

## Book Club Rotation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Week 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie</td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyssa</td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td><em>Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday</em></td>
<td><em>The Lorax</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Fuzz Frenzy</em></td>
<td><em>I Wanna Iguana</em></td>
<td><em>The Great Kapok Tree</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Alyssa’s Week 2 Reflection
Coded by Carla

While the lessons are well planned, I do find myself making a few minor adjustments as I go along. First, I am not allowing for specific time for students to share their individual roles. I am finding that students are actually sharing as they go along. Their “working” conversations are often quite enjoyable. Secondly, there have been books I have found to have read-alongs on youtube.com. In an attempt to utilize more technology, my students have been listening to the books rather than my reading them. They seem to enjoy hearing and watching the books being read from a different voice.
Alyssa’s Week 2 Reflection

Coded by Sandy

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Focus Group Interview 2

Coded by Carla

SC: Good. What are some successes and challenges you have experienced so far?

BP: The challenge would probably have to be time; not always getting it to flow, you know, the way it’s supposed to, but as teachers, you know, we try to make exceptions and make it work.

SL: And then piggy backing on time, uumm, your higher functioning students move more quickly through the questions than the lower students, so you’ve got that to kind of deal with.

My groups are heterogeneously mixed, so sometimes we have some friends waiting on others, or they’ll just help each other out. For a success, one part that I like is that every student participates. Nobody’s getting left out. Everybody adds to the conversation that day.

SC: Good. Anybody else?

CC: I don’t want to say that it’s a failure, but a difficulty would be, in the situation that I have this year where I have so many kids that are pulled, it’s concerning that, uumm, during the content time, that’s all they get from me and they don’t get to experience the book clubs. But the nice thing is that I have an open relationship with the special education teacher that teach them, and so they’ve been open to, you know, what do you have that we can use, what topic are you covering right now, and then that way they can at least incorporate it into their reading time even though they’re not doing book clubs. But the benefit to me is that I have a reduced number of students during book club time because those students are out of the room, so I’m able to give my kids more focus during that time.
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Becky's Week 4 Reflection

Coded by Carla

I grouped my students based on their reading groups/stations already set up in my classroom, minus Mrs. Nix's friends. I have not changed the groups because they are based on their reading levels.

No because I incorporated the book clubs into my reading/literacy stations and groups. I used the book clubs and lessons to work for what was best for my students and how my classroom works and runs.
Becky’s Week 4 Reflection

Coded by Sandy

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No because I incorporated the book clubs into my reading/literacy stations and groups. I used the book clubs and lessons to work for what was best for my students and how my classroom works and runs.
APPENDIX I

Coded by Carla

Grade level may
Book clubs week 1
 efficency

S. not enough time
  kids don’t get what to do
  feels like she’ll spend so much time
  getting b.c. going, she won’t
  get even started done

B. agrees w/s
  - stud slow to catch on to rules
  - worried she’ll run out of time
twice

C. worried about stud lag for resource
  - @ same time every day
  - miss same part if b.c.

A kid like story 🌟

Next week - Cub kitchen Wed, Career day Fri.

Book clubs? may need to stretch out,
2 who info, check in on rules to
see how they’re coming.
Break up after
Roded by Sandy

9/24/13

Grade level mtg

Book clubs week!

S - not enough time
  kids don't get what to do
  - feels like she'll spend so much time
    getting b/c going she won't
    get even content done

B - agrees w/S
  - stud. slow to catch on to rules
  - worried she'll run out of time
    for soc stu

C - worried about stud lag for resource
  - @ same time every day
    miss some part of b/c.

A - kids like story

Next week - Cuba holiday Wed, canoe day Fri.

Book clubs? May need to stretch out
2 wks... check in on Tues to
see how they're coming.

Break up after
researcher reflection after week 9 level

6/1/13

When: They seem much calmer than last week. I'm glad they asked & everyone agreed to stretch out carrying over b.c. plans with the field trip tomorrow & career day on Friday. Trying to cut 2 days when they are just beginning to get comfortable would be too stressful. If past years are any indication, the students will definitely benefit from a slower pace & hearing the econ content a second time.

So real time seems to be the biggest hang up. I didn't think the economics content would since we've taught it so many times, but I didn't expect such a high level of anxiety about time. I'm glad the children are having so much fun! I think that's making/helping everyone power through the time issues.