

# Interactive Read Alouds: Teachers and Students Constructing Knowledge and Literacy Together

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**Abstract** Interactive read alouds are important learning opportunities for emergent readers because teachers and peers can actively model and scaffold comprehension strategies, engage readers, and cultivate a community of learners. Using data from a 9 month ethnographic study in an urban kindergarten classroom, this article describes how the teacher's approach facilitated rich interaction in the classroom as students read and made sense of stories together. Findings of this study demonstrate how interactive read alouds were important learning opportunities for emergent readers because they provided opportunities for open-ended responses combined with specific reading instruction. The interactive read alouds created a space where meaning was constructed through dialogue and classroom interaction, providing an opportunity for children to respond to literature in a way that builds on their strengths and extends their knowledge.

**Keywords** Interactive read alouds · Kindergarten · Literacy instruction · Children's literature · Urban schools · Transactional theory

Ms. Milner (all names used in this article are pseudonyms) picks up the book *Yo! Yes?* by Raschka (1993) and takes her seat on the rug in front of 21 kindergartners. She asks the class, "Who can tell me what this book is about?" and hands go up. One student named Andrea says, "I can say the title!" and reads the title of the book. After a discussion about how the punctuation tells you how to make your voice go when you read it, they move on.

T: ...who wants to tell me something about the front cover? What do you think is going to happen on the cover?

Nicole: I think...he's going to be a clown wearing those clown shoes and dancing like ooh, ooh, ooh!

T: Okay, he's going to be a clown and dance. What else are you thinking?

Alexa: That boy on the side, he says Yo and the other boy says Yes.

T: Let's see if that's right. Let's see if that's what happens in this story.

After quite a bit more conversation where the students make predictions about the story, they move on to other aspects of the picturebook. The teacher stops to show them the Caldecott Medal and they discuss, as Isaac points out, that "...the book is special". After discussing the dedication page and noticing that the book is published in New York City, the teacher guides the children's attention to the text on the first page. Even though the text is simple ("Yo! Yes" on the first page), the students' conversation lingers on each page opening with children speculating on the characters' actions and meanings behind the text. The discussion centers around the characters and the children use their imagination to fill in the meaning from the short clips of dialogue they have in the book; for instance, Dana thinks one boy wants to go skating. They also discuss his clothes and that "maybe he just wants to be friends".

By attending to both the text and illustrations, each page opening brings a new idea and conversation about these two characters of the book; speculations on their intentions, needs, and thoughts. The students in this kindergarten classroom are participating in an interactive read aloud with their teacher. For the young child, an interactive read aloud is an important method for learning about the

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conventions of texts that ultimately lead to independent reading. An interactive read aloud consists of a teacher selecting books that meet students' interests as well as their social and developmental levels, modeling fluent reading, and encouraging students to contribute in active ways (Barrentine 1996; Fisher et al. 2004; Pantaleo 2007).

The read aloud goes beyond skills and literacy development in this classroom; it is an opportunity for teachers and students to develop, design, and acknowledge certain forms of knowledge within a classroom setting. Read alouds are important learning opportunities for students as teachers and peers can model and scaffold comprehension strategies and textual features in an active process (Justice et al. 2009). As children respond to texts, they are informed by their own lives and experiences, drawing from their own ideas to build and create knowledge within the classroom. In many classrooms, the conversation surrounding text is far from transactional; research has shown that many teachers follow the IRE pattern of "initiate, respond, evaluate" rather than approaching discussion as an opportunity to co-construct ideas and perspectives with students (Cazden 1988; Sipe 2008). Furthermore, even when read alouds are interactive, they often focus on how to build skills such as comprehension, fluency, or vocabulary rather than considering how conversations around a text can build community and engage in topics in critical and significant ways through classroom participation. The read aloud can contribute to complex thinking and learning when students are also responsible for meaning-making and able to contribute to the literacy knowledge of the classroom.

The purpose of this article is to explore how a teacher can support students' learning by implementing interactive read alouds as a component of the kindergarten literacy curriculum. The interactive read aloud can provide opportunities for open-ended responses combined with specific reading instruction as students focus on topics such as text structure, reading comprehension, and literary understanding, thus encouraging young children to develop their knowledge of reading. In this article, I begin with a description of the classroom and research methods and then provide a description of the interactive read aloud in this kindergarten classroom. In the second part of this article, I will talk about four important aspects of the teacher's discourse that resulted in rich interactions where the kindergartners, along with their teacher, read and made sense of the text together.

## Related Research

Reading instruction is traditionally designed to help students comprehend the text and increase reading abilities by

teaching how to become more adept at applying specific strategies (Pantaleo 2007; Reutzel 2004). However, learning to read involves much more than acquiring skills; it should extend the reader's own experiences as language users (Adomat 2009; Henson and Gilles 2003). One classroom practice that promotes dialogue and oral language development in the early grades is the interactive read aloud, which is an important method for learning about conventions of texts that ultimately lead to independent reading (Sipe 2008). Through teacher guided discussion and modeling of comprehension strategies, read alouds provide emerging readers with a wide variety of literacy-related concepts such as knowledge of story structure, linguistic and textual patterns, as well as information about organization and interpretations of stories (Lysaker 2006). Therefore, young children's experiences in the classroom during the read aloud can support and extend reading development.

Read alouds that foster an exchange between teachers and students can be based on a transactional approach, which as Rosenblatt (1976) states, is the "...interrelationship between the *knower* and what is to be *known* (p. 86)". A transactional approach to reading means that the social and cultural context of literacy is central to how and why students learn and that meaning occurs through transactions between the text, reader, and social context (Whitmore et al. 2004). The transactional nature of the interactive read aloud provides opportunities to develop complex thinking and learning as students make meaning together and contribute to the literacy knowledge of the classroom (Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2009; Sipe 2008). As children respond to texts, they are informed by their own lives and conceptual understanding, drawing from their ideas to build and create knowledge within the classroom. For instance, in Pantaleo's (2007) study, she found that first graders' discussions about books during the interactive read aloud reflected their understanding of the text while simultaneously generating knowledge of literature as they participate in conversations with peers.

The interactive read aloud goes beyond skills and literacy development; it is an opportunity for teachers and students to develop, design, and support students' ideas within a classroom setting. During the interactive read aloud, the conversations teach participation structures of the classroom while also integrating important aspects of reading instruction (Allor and McCathren 2003; Justice et al. 2009; Santoro et al. 2008). Students who participate in read alouds that are interactive benefit both in their understanding of texts and in their attitudes towards learning (Greene Brabham and Lynch-Brown 2002).

## Study Site and Participants

This classroom was located in an urban public kindergarten in a major metropolitan city in the Northeast and consisted of 21 children, all African American and 95% free or reduced lunch. Their teacher was a Caucasian-American woman named Ms. Milner who had been teaching for 10 years at the time of the study. Ms. Milner used a balanced literacy approach for teaching reading and writing, which means her instruction focused on language and literature experiences designed to provide both a holistic experience with embedded skills and strategy instruction (Fountas and Pinnell 1996). A central component of Ms. Milner's reading instruction consisted of an interactive read aloud, where she read and shared a picturebook with the class, encouraging involvement through discussion, modeling and questioning (Barrentine 1996).

In this classroom, Ms. Milner read multicultural literature, particularly African-American stories that she selected, because her teaching philosophy was informed by sociocultural literacy as well as culturally relevant pedagogy. At the time of the study, she was also a doctoral student who had conducted a teacher research study of the use of African-American picturebooks and culturally relevant instruction for her dissertation. Ms. Milner used the read alouds to model oral reading, encourage discussion of texts, and connect to students' individual reading and writing. At the same time, she encouraged her students to take the important role of making meaning by contributing to discussion and learning about the picture book.

## Data Collection

During the 9 month study, I was part of a three person research team collecting ethnographic data in this kindergarten classroom. On a daily basis, the kindergarten students engaged in a whole class interactive read aloud (Pantaleo 2007) as part of their reading instruction; the read aloud lasted anywhere from 25 to 45 min. The children were encouraged to respond to the whole class throughout the read aloud and then at the end, turn to a partner, discuss the ideas on their minds, and then write in their journals. I am a white female who was formerly an elementary teacher; the children were aware that I was writing down and tape recording classroom interactions as a researcher and I also helped with dictating sentences and talked with them about stories they read much like their teacher.

Using methods of participant-observation, we observed in this classroom 4 times a week from October through May during morning meeting, an interactive read aloud, and journal writing. The research team recorded field notes focusing on the teacher's instruction, students' interactions

and responses to read alouds. I stayed for the entire school day three times, following students to recess, lunch, and electives, noting the literacy practices and student responses throughout the curriculum in my field notes. In addition, 54 read alouds were audio-taped and transcribed. Secondary forms of data collection included student journals and informal interviews with teachers and students. The journals were collected and copied for analysis. Informal conversations with the teachers and students were recorded through field notes. These secondary sources supported my understanding of the background behind different instructional practices and classroom routines.

## Data Analysis

Analysis consisted of reading through transcripts and field notes, forming emergent themes to answer the research questions (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As I engaged in ongoing reflection, review, and coding of the data additional themes and topics emerged. This process of expanding data by asking questions led to hypothesis formation and theory development (Merriam 2009). Codes were linked in order to identify dimensions, build theory, and consider relationships among observations. After coding all the data, I had 4 major categories of teacher response which included: confirmation, modeling, extending ideas, and building meaning. I used NVivo software as an aid in developing the codes and categories, linking overall themes and events, and analyzing with research memos.

## Description of the Read Aloud

While the discussion of picture books was primarily guided by student interests and contributions, the beginning of the read aloud always started in the same way. Ms. Milner followed a consistent pattern of introducing the book by discussing the cover, looking at the dedication and copyright page, and then leading students in a conversation about these different components of the text while encouraging students to make predictions the book. As she guided students to respond to the components of the picturebook, including the front and back cover, the end pages and the title page, Ms. Milner demonstrated how both visual and textual features could contribute to the meaning of the story. When the students became familiar with the structure of her introduction as the year progressed, I noted that they led more of the conversations without her prompting. Ms. Milner read the title page and the dedication, including the where the copyright was from and the students responded to all components of the text as

a way to start thinking about what might happen in the book. For instance, in the book *Black Cat* (Myers 1999), Ms. Milner read the dedication and explained that (words in bold indicate that it was quoted from the text), “**To all the children of the city, like me.** And you are all the children of the city.....So this book is dedicated to you, to kids like you!” She conveyed the sense that the book was an experience they would share together and that they were an important part of the story.

Before reading the story, she encouraged students to predict what was going to happen next in the story and asked them, “What do you think? It could be whatever you think... it can’t be wrong, it’s whatever you think!” Her open-ended questioning emphasized that meaning existed in the minds of the readers and that the students had important perceptions for interpreting stories. For instance, Ms. Milner’s use of open-ended questioning was evident in this exchange where she asked her students to make predictions about the story *There’s an Alligator Under My Bed* by Mayer (1987):

Alexa: The little boy is scared of the alligator under... he scared of the ....under .... he doesn’t know what’s under the bed.

Ms. Milner: How do you know he’s scared?

Alexa: Cause he’s tucking himself in really tight.

Ms. Milner: He’s tucking himself in really tight. Do you know this story? Have you seen this story before?

Alexa: No....

Ms. Milner: Okay, that’s good. Okay, Dayna, what do you think?

Dana: I think//that’s scary//he’s gonna scream real loud.

Ms. Milner: Scream really loud, okay. Andrea, what do you think?

Andrea: A nightmare in my closet.

Ms. Milner: A nightmare in your closet?

Andrea: I’m talking about another story.

Ms. Milner: You’re talking about another book. Is it kind of like this book, do you think?

Andrea: Affirmative (nods head)

Ms. Milner: Oh, I’d like to hear more about that, a nightmare in my closet. I have that story. How do you think it’s going to be the same?

Andrea: Because a boy has a big thing... a pink gray, and purple thing...and when he turned his light off there was a nightmare in there.

Throughout the discussion, Ms. Milner scaffolded the students’ comments, while also encouraging them to contribute in ways that extended their own ways of thinking about the story. The transactional nature of the conversation meant that Ms. Milner encouraged students to

bring up the topic of conversation, but she also facilitated their learning by guiding their responses. When students predicted what was going to happen in the story, she confirmed their ideas and she was often able to connect back to their ideas throughout the reading experience. This type of interaction requires a balance between understanding the literature and making connections among students’ perceptions and the features of the story.

Ms. Milner modeled oral reading and developed print awareness, two aspects of reading that are essential for emergent readers, while encouraging students to contribute throughout the story. During the reading of *Yo! Yes?* (Raschka 1993), Ms. Milner addressed punctuation marks and how to change your voice as you are reading them.

T: That’s this part. How would I say this?

Students: Yo!

T: This does not say yo. It says Y-E-S (she spells out the word). What does Y-E-S say?

Students: Yes!

Lexi: Yes?

T: Yes? That’s the way you would say it because there is a question mark.

Students (sounding out the word): Yeeeesss?/yes/y-e-s, yes//

T: I would say Yo! And you say...

Students: Yes?

T: Do you see how your voice went up because it’s a question even though it’s just one word, it’s still a question. I’m saying, yes? That means what do you want? Yes? And when I say Yo! That means I’m talking to you, right?

T: This is a good book for our .....what sound?

Students: Y!

Students considered how pictures and text both contained information about the story, students constructed meaning in various ways that built their literary understanding.

Each time the class finished a story, Ms. Milner would ask them to discuss their overall impressions of the book and then they were instructed to, “...turn to your neighbor and tell them what you are going to write about”. After paired peer discussion, the students went to tables that had their journals and pencils and wrote a response that could be related to the book or anything else on their minds. Throughout the entire reading event, students were encouraged to question events of the text, make connections between their knowledge and the storyline, and interact together to build meaning. In this classroom, the journal writing did not have to be about the read aloud, but the text often provided students with a springboard for important connections to their writing topics.

### Constructing Meaning: The Role of Dialogue in the Interactive Read Aloud

The interactive read alouds created a space where meaning was constructed through dialogue and classroom interaction, providing an important opportunity for children to respond to literature in a way that built on their strengths and scaffolded knowledge. Furthermore, it gave Ms. Milner the opportunity to extend students' literary understanding within the context of authentic literature. In this classroom, there were four main ways that knowledge was constructed orally and interactively. First of all, the teacher used confirming statements that showed support of each others' responses and ideas. Second, the teacher would also model, or make her thinking explicit, as she showed students how to understand various aspects of a picturebook. Third, the teacher and student also pushed each other by extending ideas beyond the way they were initially articulated. Finally, the teacher and students built meaning together by scaffolding and building understanding in a social context. In the next section, I will elaborate on each category.

#### Confirming

Confirming contributions of the students not only promoted a positive classroom atmosphere that encouraged children to discuss their ideas about the book, it also supported certain topics of conversation that led to important interpretations about literature. In the classroom, both the teacher and classmates confirmed each others' responses, providing encouragement and feedback to the insight provided during conversations. An example of this happened in *Flossie and the Fox* (McKissak 1986). In this story, Flossie outwits the fox who wants to steal her eggs by pretending she doesn't believe he's a fox. Early in the story, Lexi predicted that, "They could be best friends trying to trick somebody". On the last page, Ms. Milner read how Flossie knew all along that the fox was trying to trick her and then she went to Miz Viola's with the basket of eggs tucked under her arm. At the end of the read aloud, Ms. Milner brings the conversation back to Lexi's comment, using her idea to think about the character's intentions while Lexi's peers also elaborated on her ideas.

Ms. Milner: So, I think Lexi was right, she's saying "I know! I know!" Why did she go through all that with the fox, why did she do that?

DeShawn: 'Cause she thought the fox was going to eat the eggs!

Yessica: So she can trick the fox!

Ms. Milner: Yes, she can trick the trickster!

In the exchange above, Ms. Milner referred back to a comment that Lexi made while they were looking at the front and back cover and making predictions about the story where Lexi noticed that the text asked if Flossie could outfox the fox. DeShawn and Yessica also added to the conversation, bringing up how she was going to eat the eggs and therefore trick the fox. Not only did this show the importance of using student comments to build understanding, but it also illustrates how the prereading conversations can provide students with foundational knowledge that can add to their comprehension throughout the reading experience.

In another example from *Flossie and the Fox* (McKissak 1986), Ms. Milner confirms different types of responses to the story; thus encouraging students to use their own experiences to make meaning:

Ms. Milner: Okay. Do you think she's trying to trick the fox? Isaiah?

Isaac: She probably knows that a fox but she scared of the fox, so she just wants the fox to go away so he won't be scared.

Ms. Milner: Oh, that's a good idea, maybe she's really scared but she's acting like she's not scared because she wants the fox to go away. What do you think, Keith?

Kevin: I was scared when me and mom, my stomach was scared, but I wasn't scared though.

Ms. Milner: You get that feeling in your stomach when you are scared sometimes, don't you?

In this conversation, Ms. Milner confirmed Isaac's response by commenting that it was "a good idea" and actually restating his words. Ms. Milner also confirmed Kevin's comment, which was more emotional and personal, but also an important aspect of children's comprehension.

During the class conversations, the teacher guided the instruction while the students played an important role in building meaning. This is an important feature of the transactional nature of the conversation; meaning making is based on a series of exchanges and reliant on all of the participants in the classroom. This is a shift from the idea of the teacher as the one who possesses all the answers. Students have important perspectives that might be ignited from the story or from other discussion and their insight can become a springboard for further discussion about the text.

#### Modeling

The teacher can make certain ways of thinking and comprehending explicit by modeling how to read, understand, and analyze a story, much like a think aloud. When Ms.

Milner modeled how to comprehend or understand, she showed how she came up with predictions, questioned the characters or events in the story, or articulated points she did not understand or wanted to find out more about. In one example of modeling, Ms. Milner begins reading *Black Cat* (Myers 1999) and she says:

It says Black Cat. Black Cat. And that's a street light. So this must be a city cat. I don't think it's a country cat. If it was a country cat, it might live in a barn somewhere chasing mice. And this one probably chases mice and rats here, too.

In this excerpt, Ms. Milner demonstrated how she can look at the clues from pictures to determine information about the setting, which helps with the meaning of the text. Modeling plays an important role in the reading process for young children; they learn different strategies for comprehending the stories.

Another example of modeling occurred when Ms. Milner read *There's a Monster Under My Bed* (Howe 1986) and talked about how it was similar in some ways to *There's a Nightmare in My Closet* (Mayer 1968) and *There's an Alligator Under My Bed* (Mayer 1987). In this excerpt, she talks about how the books might be similar and explicitly states what she means by similar:

So this book is *There's a Monster Under My Bed* written by James Howe (1986) who is not the same person who wrote *There's a Nightmare in My Closet* who is Mayer (1968) or *There's an Alligator Under My Bed* because that was Mayer (1987) also. So let's see if this is similar. When I say similar I mean how many think it's going to be the same or not the same kind of story? How many think it's going to be the same kind of story? (show of hands) How many think it's going to be totally different? (show of hands)

Ms. Milner talked about what makes a story similar and had her students apply this idea with a simple show of hands. At different times, Ms. Milner modeled her thoughts and ideas about the text to show how she came to a conclusion and she often used this when the students were having a hard time figuring something out or if she wanted to demonstrate a connection or idea that would help them with their thinking. By thinking aloud, the teacher can show how she understands the text and model ways of understanding the book which is an important way of teaching beginning readers how to find and make meaning as they are reading.

It is important to note that while she modeled her thoughts about the text, this type of teacher contribution did not dominate the discussions of the read aloud. The emphasis is on the interaction among the teacher and students in this classroom; however, there were times the

students benefitted from observing the teacher model her comprehension strategies, thus showing how language can be used for meaning making. Ms. Milner was very thoughtful in moving in and out of a scaffolding role and providing opportunities for the students not only to contribute but also lead the conversation in different ways that were relevant to them. In this classroom, the teacher carefully balanced her own guidance with opportunities for the students to contribute and lead the conversation.

### Extending

Extending is where the teacher takes what the students know and guides them to a deeper meaning, sometimes by focusing on an important theme or idea that might not have been discussed by simply facilitating the students' comments. At times, this was an important aspect of the interactive read aloud since Ms. Milner focused on multicultural literature and social justice. An example of this occurred in the text *Shades of Black* (Pinkney 2000) where the teacher noted that the children in the book were all African American and that the pictures showed how their skin colors were very different. After reading and encouraging comments from students, Ms. Milner focused the students' attention on how the children in the pictures had different colored skin and that was special. She began the conversation by asking the students:

Ms. Milner: What is the author trying to tell you? They are all different colors, but they are all what? They are unique...

Yessica: They are special!

Ms. Milner: They are all special. They may all look different, but they are all African American, and they are all different colors. And they are telling you...it doesn't matter what shade you are, they are all pretty, they are all special.

After this guided conversation, directed by the teacher, students began to contribute their own ideas about how the children had different colored skin and noted how the author gave the idea that different skin colors were unique and special with the language she used in the text. Shavon told the class that, "I like how everyone in the book is a different color." And Shadera explained that her favorite description was, "...the girl who was like buttery popcorn". Ms. Milner goes on to explain that "there are all different shades and they are special" and asked the children to "describe what colors they are". The students were very interested in this activity and began looking at their hands and arms, almost if they had not thought about the different shades of tan, white, brown and black before. Lexi looks down at her hands and she responds, "I think that I look like

brown chocolate!” and Shanel says, “I’m black and white, not very dark.” These ideas also translated to their journal writing; many of them drew their hands and their skin and took time to find “their color” out of the crayon box.

In order to invite some topics into the conversation that might not be normally addressed in school, teachers may have to direct and encourage students to think and respond. In this case, the teacher was able to extend an idea from the book and have a conversation about skin color and identity in the classroom. Ms. Milner had identified this as an important point in the book and focused the students’ conversation on race and identity. Because the students in her class were African-American and also in an urban school, she integrated multicultural literature where the stories took place in metropolitan cities. As they read *Shades of Black* (Pinkney 2000), the students responded by making their own identifications to skin color and in doing so, realized how different and unique everyone is. Not only is it significant for emerging readers to be exposed to good reading strategies as they begin school, it is also important for them to relate to the characters and stories on a personal level.

### Building

An important component of an interactive read aloud is providing students with opportunities to build meaning together. This gives students the opportunity to contribute to the conversation surrounding the text and also learn together as they read the story. In one reading of *The Three Little Pigs* by Marshall (1996), Ms. Milner reads the first opening which describes how the “...old sow sent her three little pigs into the world”. Without any prompting, the students raise their hands to discuss what is happening in the story and use their background knowledge to predict what happens next:

DeShawn: Them gonna get killed by the wolf and he’s not!

T: Oh, DeShawn said that these two are going to get killed by the wolf but he’s not.

Monty: He gonna get dead!

T: How many think he’s right? Raise your hand if you think he’s right.

Michael: ‘Cause I got the book at home

T: How are they going to get killed DeShawn?

DeShawn: He gonna huff and puff and blow the house in!

T: Blow the house in! But why are these two gonna die and not that one?

DeShawn: ‘Cause that one go to that one and he is going to build his house out of bricks.

There are two aspects of this conversation that are significant. First of all, the teacher did not ask for predictions; the students initiated their predictions and

analysis in their own way. DeShawn started the conversation with a prediction that two pigs are going to “get killed” and Monty, along with other classmates, support this idea based on their own prior knowledge of the text. Secondly, there are many opportunities where the students’ conversations are so rich and thoughtful, the teacher should step back and facilitate as the students build information together. The first two comments address how the two pigs are going to die and then DeShawn describes an important aspect of the book; that one of the pigs built his house out of bricks. In a transactional exchange of ideas, it is significant to have many opportunities for the students to be able to guide the conversation and contribute to the meaning as it is for the teacher to direct the way that books are discussed. The student-centered approach to reading and learning reflects the power of the interactive read alouds—to engage and motivate children’s involvement in the reading process.

### Discussion

There are compelling reasons to approach reading instruction as an active transaction of establishing connections between children’s lives and experiences with making sense of literature by encouraging children to build on their knowledge and extend their story interpretations through conversations surrounding the text. Not only does it lead to a positive and accepting classroom environment, but using students as resources has been found to increase engagement and academic performance (Powell et al. 2006). In this classroom, the read alouds were an important literacy ritual that encouraged student participation and provided important information about “how books work” in a variety of ways. Students were able to connect their own personal background knowledge with the text to make complex connections and demonstrate higher levels of understanding. The teacher attended to the features of the text and the print, along with how to use the cover, end pages, and pictures to predict and make meaning. But, maybe more significantly, Ms. Milner provided students with an entrée into meaning making in which they further developed through conversations that were open ended and relied on building understanding through collective response.

There are two main pedagogical implications regarding the interactive read alouds. First of all, the transactional approach illustrates the importance of providing readers with active ways to contribute to the curriculum in ways that builds on students’ own ways of conceptualizing reading and literacy. In this classroom, the conversations surrounding the text went beyond “open ended” and incorporated confirming, modeling, extending, and

building. While the students could contribute to the conversation in many ways, the teacher had an important role of guiding and instructing within the discussion about the story.

Second, text selection is a significant aspect for encouraging responses in the classroom. It is important to build on students' localized, cultural, and personal understandings in ways that are both relatable and engaging. Children's literature can be a platform for discussions about how the world is, how it should be, how we want it to be; quality children's literature provides a wonderfully powerful way of to connect with their lives while modeling skillful reading strategies. By bringing in texts about different topics, a teacher can build on information that students have and also create learning opportunities in the classroom that affects the environment and community in various ways. In this particular case, Ms. Milner carefully selected books that were interesting, appropriate, and relatable. She used literature to have conversations about identity as well as support students' interests and background knowledge

Interactive read alouds are an important pedagogical tool for readers in the classroom. Not only do they provide opportunities for children to develop literacy skills while reading picturebooks, but they also create a community where children can learn together.

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