Children's Literature in the Elementary Schools: Which Books Are Being Chosen for Literacy Instruction?

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Abstract
Research has shown the value of using children’s literature for reading instruction. As teachers incorporate more children’s literature into their programs, questions arise as to the choices they are making about which books to use for literacy instruction. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of children’s literature in two literacy activities, teacher read aloud and literature circles, in grade four through six classrooms in Central School District. Teachers from this group were asked to complete a survey for each children’s literature book they used for teacher read aloud and literature circles during one school year. A descriptive analysis summarizing the characteristics of the information collected in the surveys was conducted. Results indicated there was variability in the number and titles of books the sample teachers used in their classrooms, some books were read in more than one classroom, fiction and chapter books were chosen more often than informational or picture books. The sample teachers selected books for a variety of reasons, with the greatest consideration being what they thought the students would like. Teachers selected books for literature circles from the schools’ guided reading libraries most often, and teachers chose books for teacher read aloud based on their own likes and according to other teachers recommendations. The teacher’s responses to the research questions reflected heavy reliance on the contents of the school guided reading library to support literature circle reading groups. While the development of the guided reading library in each of the sample schools has created a resource for teachers, the contents may limit the genres of children’s literature that teachers use for literacy instruction. If, indeed, teachers depend upon the guided reading library for the majority of the books they use in literature circles, the quality and quantity of the books in the guided reading library may warrant further study.

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