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BOOKMATCH: Scaffolding book selection for independent reading

These book-selection criteria help elementary students choose appropriate books and discuss them with others.

While browsing the minilessons planned for the upcoming week in my primary classroom, I (Wutz) sat on my couch with sounds of a football game on the television nearby. Somehow my mind picked up on five words from the announcer regarding the progress of a professional football team: *Don't mistake activity for accomplishment*. And in hearing those five words, BOOKMATCH, and everything it entails, suddenly became clear to me.

Through basic literacy experiences like discussing, reading, writing, viewing, and listening, my students have become aware of themselves as readers, have increased reading abilities, and have demonstrated an overall understanding of "just-right" books in an environment very different from the usual activity-filled elementary classroom. Amazingly, because of basic support and conferring and, more important, because of its simplicity, BOOKMATCH has assisted the independent reading progress made by each of my students.

BOOKMATCH is an acronym. Each letter stands for a specific criterion for students to think about when choosing books for independent reading (see Figure 1). In addition, these criteria include support questions that assist independent readers. BOOKMATCH can be a scaffold for independent book selection as well as an assessment tool that guides instruction.

Background

My literacy block is structured as a reading workshop with an emphasis on independent reading. The main purpose for independent reading is to allow students to self-select just-right books on their own and to spend time engaged in reading those books. From my perspective, a book is "just right" when a student has thought about various criteria for selection and made decisions about its appropriateness. From a literacy process perspective, "just right" also can be defined as a text that supports a student's particular purpose for reading.

I approach teaching from a social constructivist perspective, embracing Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (as discussed in Bodrova & Leong, 1996). Simply put, the students in my classroom can "learn new skills and strategies that they cannot learn on their own" with the help and scaffolding of a teacher or peer (Robb, 2004, p. 5). With this in mind, I approached this study asking two questions: How effective is BOOKMATCH? If students use BOOKMATCH criteria, does their attitude about independent reading improve?

In order to acquire data relevant to my questions about BOOKMATCH, classroom research was necessary. This study with BOOKMATCH took on the dynamics of action research, defined by Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) as "an orientation to research, a form of professional practice, a research process, and, for teachers, a reflective way of teaching" (p. 15). I was involved in the research process and continually reflected on and improved my teaching. Reflection about the research process and teaching were intertwined throughout the year.

A review of literature showed that there are three widely used student book-selection trends. With the Goldilocks Rule, students can ask themselves if the book is too easy, too hard, or just right (Taberski, 2000). Students also can hold up fingers every time they come across difficult words or words they don't understand, keeping track up to five, when using the Five Finger Rule (Baker, 2002). Another popular method for book selection is leveled books (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

An underlying goal of BOOKMATCH was to take these methods for choosing books and add to them criteria that take much more of the student into consideration. And so I began the school year by asking myself this question: In what ways does BOOKMATCH scaffold book selection for independent reading?

Getting started with independent reading

Calkins (2001) stated, "Children need at least thirty minutes a day to read books they can read, preferably of their choosing" (p. 43). For independent reading to be successful, however, certain procedures needed to be put in place before giving such freedom and independence to 6-, 7-, and 8-year-olds. The following procedures guided this yearlong research.

1. Conduct a whole-group brainstorming session
   Record responses to the question: What criteria do you use to choose a book?
2. Administer BOOKMATCH survey
   Individually, students indicate how often the BOOK-MATCH criteria are used.
3. Administer independent reading attitude survey
   Individually, students share their independent reading behaviors.
4. Introduce BOOKMATCH
   Teacher models and demonstrates all criteria and questions on BOOKMATCH poster.
   Teacher models and demonstrates abandoning a book.
   Teacher explains bookmarks and student comment forms.
5. Confer with students about BOOKMATCH
   Use the BOOKMATCH student forms to guide one-on-one conversations.

FIGURE 1
BOOKMATCH classroom poster

B **Book length**
✓ Is this a good length for me?
✓ Is it too little, just right, or too much?
✓ Do I feel like committing to this book?

O **Ordinary language**
✓ Turn to any page and read aloud.
✓ Does it sound natural?
✓ Does it flow? Does it make sense?

O **Organization**
✓ How is the book structured?
✓ Am I comfortable with the print size and number of words on a page?
✓ Are chapters short or long?

K **Knowledge prior to book**
✓ Read the title, view the cover page, or read the summary on the back of the book.
✓ What do I already know about this topic, author, or illustrator?

M **Manageable text**
✓ Begin reading the book.
✓ Are the words in the book easy, just right, or hard?
✓ Do I understand what I read?

A **Appeal to genre**
✓ What is the genre?
✓ Have I read this genre before?
✓ Do I like or expect to like this genre?

T **Topic appropriateness**
✓ Am I comfortable with the topic of this book?
✓ Do I feel like I am ready to read about this topic?

C **Connection**
✓ Can I relate to this book?
✓ Does this book remind me of anything or anyone?

H **High interest**
✓ Am I interested in the topic of this book?
✓ Am I interested in the author/illustrator?
✓ Do others recommend this book?

6. Re-administer all surveys
7. Continue using BOOKMATCH
   Teachers and students continue to use and model BOOKMATCH through the end of the school year.

When I started with my class of 22 six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds, I didn't know much about their prior knowledge of choosing books and how they knew that a book was just right. I held a brainstorming session as a whole group about the main criteria currently used by my students when choosing books for independent reading (see Figure 2). Pre-BOOKMATCH responses were surprising to me, as many of them already indicated some awareness about choosing a book. However, when I heard the response, "If you can read the title, you can probably read the book," it was obvious that more work was needed, especially at the individual level. This brainstorming session was incredibly revealing. I realized, however, that whole-group brainstorming only let me inside the minds of those who chose to participate.

Learning more through student surveys

After looking over the list generated by the class as a whole, I created a BOOKMATCH survey to determine how many of the whole-group criteria individual students actually use while selecting a book (see Figure 3). To measure students' attitudes, I developed another survey by examining existing surveys (Johns & Lenski, 2001), pulling together questions or statements that were most relevant to independent reading, and constructing some additional questions and statements (see Figure 4). I believed that the surveys held validity and administered them confidently. There were two purposes behind the BOOKMATCH survey. The first was to find out which book-selection criteria were currently being used by individual students. The second reason was to gather information as to why they might be abandoning books they had chosen by themselves.

I experienced a few challenges as I administered the BOOKMATCH survey. One problem was that I felt the need to restate each question in terms that were more common to 6- through 8- year-olds. For example, first I read the question as written on the form, then I asked it another way.

> Do I look at *the length* of the book?
>
> or
>
> Do I think about *how long* the book is?

I also believe there was a need to add another option to the BOOKMATCH survey regarding whether or not a criterion is used. I realize now that many of my students were forced to answer "Yes" or "No" even on questions where the answer may have been "Sometimes" or even "I don't understand." These items will be reevaluated for future BOOKMATCH studies.

The independent reading attitude survey gathered information regarding each student's attitude toward reading independently at the beginning of the year. These questions were generated to provide more data toward the research question. By assessing my students authentically from the start, I was able to support their "feelings of efficacy as literacy learners" (Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2004, p. 26).

Results of the BOOKMATCH survey given in the fall showed that students only thought about a few main criteria when choosing books for independent reading. They looked at the cover of the book, opened the book to look at the amount of texts or illustrations on the pages, and then made their decision. Only 8 of the 22 students said that they always finish a book that they select. I think it is important to note here that I do encourage abandoning a book, especially if understanding and interest are gone. However, one BOOKMATCH hypothesis suggests that if enough criteria are considered, the book chosen will be just right for that individual, and this should limit the amount of abandonment by increasing the amount of engagement between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1991). Morrow, Pressley, Smith, and Smith (1997) shared the belief that reading achievement can increase with an increase of engaged reading.

Student responses from the initial BOOKMATCH survey regarding "reasons why I might not finish a book" are shown in graph form (see Figure 5). After reflecting upon those student survey responses, I decided to change reading workshop time. Student responses to why they might not finish a book, such as "Time" or "Word difficulty," led me to change our schedule to ensure that we all had more time to read. I explained to students that we would talk more about the reading strategies we use and help teach one another so that we could attack difficult words when reading independently. All of this would help us to become better readers.

FIGURE 2
Whole-group brainstorming of criteria

Pre-BOOKMATCH

What criteria do we use to choose a book? How do we choose books?
- looks like a good book
- looking at the pictures
- look at the cover
- hear others reading that book
- look for a specific illustrator
- look inside the book at the words the words might sound good
- you read some of it
- if I want to learn about the

Stuff it teaches
- read the title
- the words look good by the author
- might look funny
- if you can read the title, you can probably read the book
- think about the movie
- you already read the book

Post-BOOKMATCH

What criteria do we use to choose a book? How do we choose books?
- By how many words on each page.
- Make sure the words are not hard.
- You can use your strategies.
- You can use BOOKMATCH.
- You can ask yourself, is this book just-right?
- Ask yourself if you're interested in the book...Cause why read it?
- You can go back & read with

- You can read the title and view the cover.
- You can read the author's name and see if you've heard a book by them before.
- Look at the illustrator and author and are you interested?
- You can skip the word.
- Ask yourself, is this book too hard, too easy, or just-right?
- You can see if the print size is big enough or too small.

Do I look at the length of the book?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at how much I already know about the topic?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at how difficult the words and concepts are?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at the genre?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at how appropriate the topic is for my age or maturity?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at how I can relate to the book?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at how interested I am in the topic/subject, author, illustrator, etc.?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at how the book is organized (layout/format)?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do I look at the style of writing (natural language that flows)?	☐ Yes	☐ No

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
How often do I finish the book I select?	5	4	3	2	1
How often do I choose a book because I am familiar with the author?	5	4	3	2	1

What are some reasons why I might not finish a book I start reading?

The independent reading attitude survey included open-ended questions. I found these to be most beneficial (see Figure 6). For example, on the initial survey, Beth and John (all student names are pseudonyms) did not define themselves as readers when responding to number 10 in the second section: "Are you more like the person who *likes to read* or the person who *doesn't like to read*? Why do you think so?" Conferring with students like Beth and John became a high priority.

In conferences with students, I focused on which books they were currently selecting and on building self-confidence. I praised often. Using the language of BOOKMATCH, I was able to describe to Beth and John which decisions led to just-right books and which did not. With teacher scaffolding, these students gained confidence as readers as they experienced more success. I was pleased with the amount of responding and explaining that all my students offered by the end of the year. I believe it is important to note that on the independent reading attitude survey responses after BOOKMATCH (see Figure 6), both Beth and John defined themselves as readers.

Taking another look at the BOOKMATCH survey responses (see Figure 5), one can see the

FIGURE 4
Independent reading attitude survey

You read each statement silently as I read them aloud. After each statement, circle the word that best describes your reading behaviors.

1. I enjoy free reading time at school.	Always	Sometimes	Never
2. I feel that books are boring.	Always	Sometimes	Never
3. I like to recommend good books to my friends.	Always	Sometimes	Never
4. I read if the teacher assigns it as homework.	Always	Sometimes	Never
5. I think reading is hard.	Always	Sometimes	Never
6. I like to read when I have spare time.	Always	Sometimes	Never
7. If I start reading a book, I finish the book.	Always	Sometimes	Never
8. It takes me a long time to read a book.	Always	Sometimes	Never
9. I like to read when I'm not at school.	Always	Sometimes	Never
10. I try to find books by my favorite authors.	Always	Sometimes	Never
11. I'd rather watch TV than read a book.	Always	Sometimes	Never
12. I only like certain types of books.	Always	Sometimes	Never
13. I think I am a good reader.	Always	Sometimes	Never
14. I learn new things from free reading.	Always	Sometimes	Never

Please respond to the following in writing.

1. What do you think is the easiest thing about reading when you are alone?

2. What do you think is the hardest thing about reading when you are alone?

3. What do you like about reading alone?

4. What do you dislike about reading alone?

5. Describe your favorite place to read and why you like to read there.

6. Who do you know who likes to read? _____

7. How do you know this person likes to read?

8. Who do you know who doesn't like to read? _____

9. How do you know this person doesn't like to read?

10. Are you more like the person who *likes to read* or the person who *doesn't like to read*? Why do you think so?

What are some reasons why I might not finish a book?
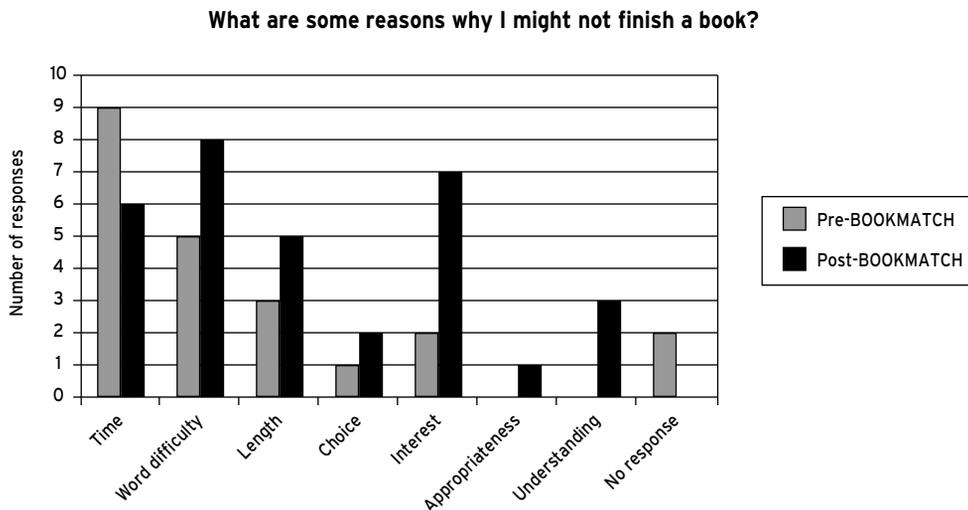
increased number of responses to "What are some reasons why I might not finish a book?" Comparing the post-BOOKMATCH with the pre-BOOKMATCH student responses, one could conclude that post-BOOKMATCH the students were equipped with the language to define multiple reasons for why they might not finish a book.

Modeling BOOKMATCH

In the middle of the fall semester, I created a color BOOKMATCH poster. I mentioned to my class that I used most of the students' ideas to create questions that we could learn to ask ourselves when choosing books for independent reading. The BOOKMATCH criteria were determined before the school year started.

From there, student use of BOOKMATCH began. Very slowly, day by day, as I read a book aloud, I modeled using certain sections or main letters from the BOOKMATCH poster. Demonstrations went something like this:

> When I chose this book to read aloud to you this morning, I only knew that the topic would be of interest to you. The topic of this book happens to be friends.

(Student responses and smiles toward their latest best friends confirm that they do like the topic.) But I'm going to think aloud for you as I think about the letter *B* in BOOKMATCH, or "Book length." And so I ask myself (as I place my finger under the words of the following question on the poster), "Is this a good length for me?" Well, let me browse the book (I now turn through each page of the book) and see what I think. Yes, I can say this is a good length for me. I definitely still feel comfortable with the length of this book after browsing through the pages. To make sure, I'm going to ask myself the next question (again I point to the words on the poster and the next bulleted question under *B* for "Book length"), "Is it too little, just right, or too much?" Okay, this question really makes me think about whether or not I want to read a book this length (again I browse the book). I would have to say, for me, right now, this is just right. It is not too long, but long enough that the book will take a while, and I will be able to think as I read. For me, it is a just-right length. And finally, I can ask myself (I point to the words of a question on the poster a final time) "Do I feel like committing to this book?" (A student, Lisa, raises her hand and asks what *committing* means.) Such a great question, Lisa...I can tell you are not only being a good listener, but you are making sure you understand this part of BOOKMATCH before you go off to find a book on your own. (Discussion occurs with the whole group about the word *committing*.) I do feel like committing to this book

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FIGURE 6
Student responses from an independent reading attitude survey question

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10. **Are you more like the person who** *likes to read* **or the person who** *doesn't like to read*?
    Why do you think so?

Beth's response before BOOKMATCH:

I am like the prsen that dausen't

Beth's response after BOOKMATCH:

Becuse The person who likes to read it is me.

John's response before BOOKMATCH:

I JON'T NO

John's response after BOOKMATCH:

A person ho likes to read A chapter book beacase I read

---

and to doing my best to get through the book. I will now read this book because I think these questions have helped me to choose a book with a just-right length. I'm on my way toward making a BOOKMATCH.

After holding an interactive read-aloud with *The Long, Long Letter* by Elizabeth Spur (1996), this very important demonstration and minilesson was over. The students were then challenged to

think about "Book length" when choosing books that morning for independent reading. When independent reading time was over, students were given an opportunity to sit in the "share chair" and tell what went well for them while choosing books that day. The purpose of this wrap-up session was to hear firsthand from the students how they used *B*, "Book length" of BOOKMATCH. The next day's minilesson with BOOKMATCH would include thinking aloud about book length and then adding other criteria (not necessarily in the order on the poster). Eventually, the students were introduced to all of the questions that readers ask to choose a just-right book and make a BOOKMATCH.

Although I would like to say that the reason the minilesson sessions went so well was because of the countless hours spent developing the BOOK-MATCH form, I must give credit to the act of demonstration. With each modeling of BOOK-MATCH, book-selection behaviors, and think-alouds, the power of demonstration was obvious. Students were shown questions, understandings, and connections that they could apply to choosing "texts for themselves so that they develop a sense of themselves as independent readers" (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 1996, p. 28). When think-alouds were exercised as a teaching approach within the classroom, they became routine, were used as needed in a variety of real situations, and were broken down with clear details and steps (Duffy, 2003). Students thought about their own thinking process, slowing it down in order to make decisions as readers and learners.

After several weeks of discussing components of BOOKMATCH in the morning focus, students were given a BOOKMATCH bookmark. This exact duplicate of the poster was a treasure to my students as they now could ask themselves many questions about the books they chose for independent reading. Because my procedures built up to this moment, the students were very familiar with the questions on the bookmark or knew to ask a friend, if needed. After all, Szymusiak and Sibberson (2001) told us how, "purposeful conversations with and without us" (p. 77) can occur about books.

The terminology became natural to the students as they thought about "Book length," "Ordinary language," "Organization," "Knowledge prior to book," "Manageable text," "Appeal to genre," "Topic appropriateness," "Connection," and "High interest." At no time did my students or I think about the reading levels of the books. We simply searched for just-right books. Visitors to our school wanted to know more about "this BOOK-MATCH" that the students shared with them. Something very good was shaping our independent reading time, as well as the environment of our classroom.

BOOKMATCH remains an instructional tool

As students were off choosing just-right books, finalizing a BOOKMATCH, and gradually spending longer periods engaged in reading, other changes began occurring. Students now shared ownership of our classroom library. They voiced their opinions about certain topics or text sets into which the books should be sorted. Minilessons now focused on explanations and discussions of what made up a certain genre and which books in our library represented each genre. Reference charts were made to help students remember the many genre names and updated to include photocopies of book covers as examples of each genre. The examples, of course, came from our own classroom library (see Figure 7). The purpose of these charts was to help foster independence in my students (Taylor & Pearson, 2002).

Our reading area became too small to hold the many containers into which the books were being sorted, and so the room was rearranged in order to have a second book area. Visitors to our classroom saw an area labeled *Books 1* and another labeled *Books 2*. We now had a "strong classroom library" that supported the act of students being "matched with books they can read" (Routman, 2003, p. 80). Both areas had plenty of space for walking around, a variety of chairs in which to sit comfortably, and a table. The change was positive and exciting for all involved.

Eventually, more research procedures were added to the mix of things. The poster-size BOOK-MATCH form worked so well that, before introducing the individual BOOKMATCH student form (see Figure 8), I visited the local copy store and created a poster-size laminated form, perfect for use with dry-erase markers. I used this poster

FIGURE 7
Genre chart with text examples from classroom library

during whole-group instruction to record my thinking aloud about BOOKMATCH and why I chose certain read-alouds. Recording my thinking process took the form of a guided writing session, which provided a visual of my thought process.

The individual BOOKMATCH student forms were a way for students to document their thinking when choosing books on their own during our workshop time. These forms were kept in a reading folder, and I could view them as needed. Before using the forms on their own, we had numerous discussions on what it means to explain your answer. (I learned quickly that many of the BOOKMATCH questions can be answered simply "yes" or "no"). My think-aloud demonstrations became my explanations. Robb's (2004) experiences with responsive teaching were similar to my own. I was able to "make my thinking visible to my students," (p. 5) as I started the scaffolding process. When confer-

ring was not possible, student thoughts about book selection were shared in written form.

Using a learning model described by Routman (2003), I added another twist to the original procedures, moving students from dependence to independence. Because my guided-writing sessions helped students become more independent when filling out their forms, I gave students the opportunity to start doing the morning think-alouds and demonstrations. Demonstrations by the teacher to the students, by students to the teacher, and now by students to other students were occurring. Students led the morning routine of minilessons on BOOKMATCH by sharing what was going on in their minds when they chose a book for independent reading. The following classroom vignette provides a glimpse of the student-to-student interaction that naturally occurred after Bill shared his

Criteria for choosing books	Student comments
B **Book length** ✓ Is this a good length for me? ✓ Is it too little, just right, or too much? ✓ Do I feel like committing to this book?	
O **Ordinary language** ✓ Turn to any page and read aloud. ✓ Does it sound natural? ✓ Does it flow? Does it make sense?	
O **Organization** ✓ How is the book structured? ✓ Am I comfortable with the print size and number of words on a page? ✓ Are chapters short or long?	
K **Knowledge prior to book** ✓ Read the title, view the cover page, or read the summary on the back of the book. ✓ What do I already know about this topic, author, or illustrator?	
M **Manageable text** ✓ Begin reading the book. ✓ Are the words in the book easy, just right, or hard? ✓ Do I understand what I read?	
A **Appeal to genre** ✓ What is the genre? ✓ Have I read this genre before? ✓ Do I like or expect to like this genre?	
T **Topic appropriateness** ✓ Am I comfortable with the topic of this book? ✓ Do I feel like I am ready to read about this topic?	
C **Connection** ✓ Can I relate to this book? ✓ Does this book remind me of anything or anyone?	
H **High interest** ✓ Am I interested in the topic of this book? ✓ Am I interested in the author/illustrator? ✓ Do others recommend this book?	

BOOKMATCH form and his thinking with the whole class.

Dan: I think what went well was, umm, since it looked like it was going to be a challenging book, and he was wanting to read a more challenging book, umm, then this was good that he chose it as a book to do BOOK-MATCH with. Umm, I think that went well.

Unknown: Why do you like mummies?

Bill:	Because sometimes I believe in aliens and then it, I, it reminds me of monsters, and that reminds me of Scooby Doo, and then it reminds me of mummies.
Shawn:	Do you watch, like, mummy shows?
Bill:	Sometimes. Sue?
Sue:	Umm…umm…umm…I'm gonna share something that went well. You wrote about six of the boxes, and it is hard to write in those small boxes with markers, but you understood and you were able to still write all that you wrote.
Lex:	I liked how you explained "Why do you like this book?"
Jane:	Where did you get the book?
Bill:	Umm, fiction chapter books.
John:	Why do you like mummies, umm…why do you like mummies a lot?
Bill:	Because when I go to my grandma's house I watch Scooby Doo a lot.
Mrs. Wutz:	So it's almost a connection for you.
Bill:	Yeah, 'cause I know why, 'cause there's, like, a mummy in the show.
Jenny:	On "yes," because I read the genre before, where did you read it?
Bill:	Here in the classroom. Sally?
Sally:	Did you, did you ever find other books on mummies?
Bill:	Umm, no, but I do have a Scooby Doo book at home, but it is not mummies.

These students found out more about Bill's interests through the conversation, but they also gathered information about the process of self-selection. In another classroom discussion with Alexa, students collected specific information about matching themselves to a just-right book.

Alexa:	I think what happened was, was, I got to the point where I didn't wanna read the book anymore so I, like, set it aside.
Mrs. Wutz:	Did you understand the book?
Alexa:	Ya.
Mrs. Wutz:	Did you come across any hard words?
Alexa:	Some.
Mrs. Wutz:	Words maybe you could read, but you didn't know what you were reading.
Alexa:	Ya.
Sally:	Are you familiar with the movie of the book?

Alexa:	No.
Mrs. Wutz:	Explain why you asked that, Sally.
Sally:	Because, umm, I have the movie and I was wondering if you read part of it, umm, I was thinking the book might have some similarities.
Reggie:	Do you actually know the whole thing and what it is about?
Alexa:	No.
Dan:	Are you going to go back to the book when you understand most of those words that, that you didn't?
Alexa:	Yes.
Jane:	Umm, if you thought it was a "No" for committing, then it might have not been a BOOKMATCH.
Mrs. Wutz:	I'm glad you noticed that, Jane. It was a clue to Alexa right away.
Lisa:	Next time you could put "No" and then put why.

These examples are convincing. Bill shared more about himself as a reader and member of our literacy classroom community. Alexa showed how BOOKMATCH can be used after the selection of a book as a tool to monitor continued engagement in a text. As I handed over the responsibility of demonstrations, my students took it happily and confidently. What I thought was the start of a good thing had turned into something great!

Moving ahead with BOOKMATCH: Comprehension

As it stood, students were comfortable selecting books from the large variety available in the classroom library. Ongoing modeling helped students understand how to use BOOKMATCH questions. The students became efficient at documenting their understanding on forms within a reading folder. In a natural progression, as if influenced by the original research procedures of BOOKMATCH, my instruction changed, and two more methods were introduced. Together, reading logs and conferring provided further evidence for the effectiveness of BOOKMATCH.

I included a way for students to reveal their comprehension of the BOOKMATCH book. Reading logs, similar to forms used by Hindley

(1996) and Taberski (2000), served that purpose. Questions that students could use with their reading logs were eventually generated by the students and turned into a reference chart (see Figure 9). Students used the reading log before, during, and after the reading of the texts (see Figure 10). Student responses on the reading logs showed whether or not the students constructed meaning. If students answered "No" to "Did I finish this book?" they often were being literal. Many returned to the same book the following day during independent reading time. I may need to rethink that question in the future.

I also developed a way to monitor student understanding through individual conferences. The thought of daily conferences made me cringe—I knew I would never be able to meet with every student every day. Fortunately, because of the incredible amount of modeling beforehand and the overall scaffolding provided by BOOKMATCH, not everyone needed a daily conference. Time was

definitely on my side as students had built their independent reading endurance to an all-time high of 45 minutes without becoming distracted. So with just how many students would I be able to meet comfortably, discuss BOOKMATCH, and even perform a running record in 45 minutes? My goal was 4. That meant that out of the 22 students in my classroom, I would be able to meet with 20 of them in a week during independent reading time.

To manage these meetings, I placed student names on colored sheets that I flipped daily. Students became accustomed to their color and would remind me when it was their day. Making this rotational system visible to the students let them help me be accountable and consistent in holding the conferences.

Szymusiak and Sibberson (2001) believed that "Our reading reflects our favorite authors, our favorite genres, and our moods.... The sharing comes from many thoughtful conversations and a relationship built on what we know about each other

FIGURE 9
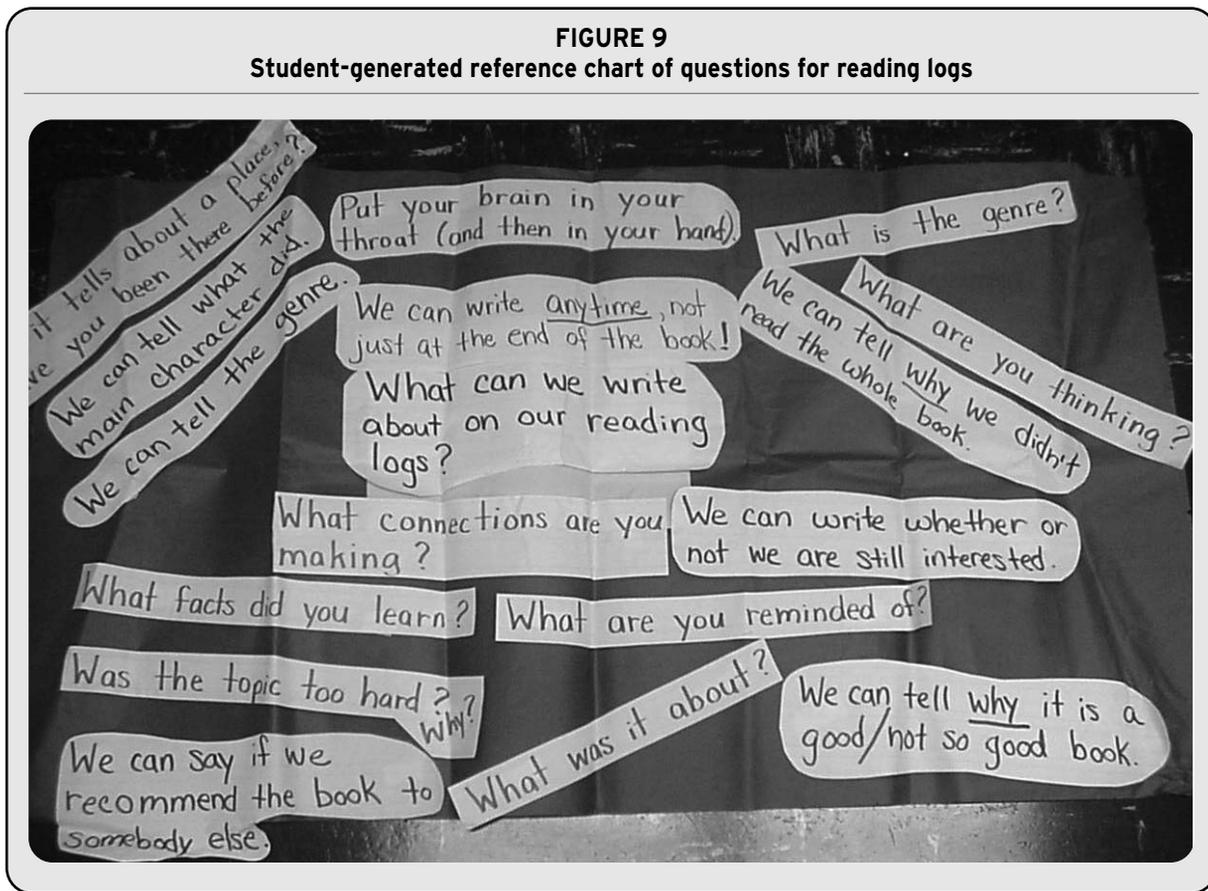**Student-generated reference chart of questions for reading logs**

FIGURE 10
Student reading log samples

Title: Whales and Dolph...

Author:

Did I finish this book?
Comments:
I think it is going to be a fact book. If it is a fact book I will read it.

Title: ready set read

Author: Joanna Cole

Did I finish this book? No
Comments:
I think that they put some funny jokes in the book. ☺

Title: Garfield

Author: Jim Davis

Did I finish this book? No

Comments:
I love this book cause I like his personality! ☺

Title: Chickens

Author: Beverley Randell and C...

Did I finish this book? No

Comments: I Noticed they sometimes put them in small cags, I think because I think that they are going to be each.

as readers" (p. 76). Conferences provided the opportunity for students to share and converse about their reading. For example, Jenny told me, "In this book I feel comfortable. In other books it's kinda choppy." We then discussed why that might be. She went on to explain, "I think I get how if you can read, I mean...if a Magic Tree House book was a just-right BOOKMATCH for you, then other Magic Tree House books will be too, probably." As a result of these meaningful conversations, a relationship was built not only with Jenny but also with other students. Figure 11 shares the questions

FIGURE 11
Guided questions for daily conferences with various student responses

Interviewing and conferring with BOOKMATCH forms

How did you use BOOKMATCH to help you select the book you're currently reading or have just finished?
- I thought about the genre and the pictures inside. I browsed it.
- I noticed that some words repeated.
- I looked, picked, and then walked through the book...words and size, that is one of the questions, and it was a good length for me.
- I saw the handwriting and never really saw it like this before. I really like pizza, and the back cover reminded me of when I was at my mom's friend's house.
- It had just the right amount of words.
- I didn't use the form, but I thought about the questions on the bookmark while I was looking.
- It did make sense.
- I read the title and was interested in what the animals would be on the front.
- Since I like tornadoes and facts, I thought hurricanes could be interesting to think about.
- I wanted to ask, "Does anyone recommend this?" and so I asked Sally, who already read it.

Were the criteria you used successful?
- Yes (Interestingly enough, no one responded no.)

How are you feeling toward reading at this time?
- Kinda good. Reading can be hard when someone next to you reads aloud.
- Really good, because at home we ordered Scooby Doo books and I read those here, too.
- I feel great about all these different books and book lengths...because, you know, I like these chapter books that can get your mind started on different things.
- I want to know more. I'm curious. It says in this book that he doesn't want people making fun of his cousin, Marco. I think he'll end up making a lot of friends.
- Good because now I'm covering words and breaking them up.

What will you look for in your next book?
- Harder words because these words are kinda easy, but I like the book.
- I will look for a chapter book.
- To try and get a little more challenging book.
- Just-right books...good for me.
- Junie B. Jones...well, she's sort of like me.
- Maybe I will look for a book that has...that makes me really want to read it.
- Things I know.
- Kinda a book like *Catwings*, the same length.
- Maybe I'll look in "Animals."

Is there anything else/any criterion you're using that is not on this form?
- What I noticed about the structure is that there is a page that shows the titles of other books.
- Five-word rule.
- I don't choose books if it doesn't seem like they have a beginning/middle/end.
- No.
- How long has it been since somebody read it aloud?

Set a goal: Look at previous forms and decide on goal for next book selection.
- Start the chapter books already in my book box before looking for more.
- To again choose a book that is a little challenging.
- Use BOOKMATCH and then come show you whether or not it helped me.
- Find a chapter book that's just right for me.
- Bigger books with more words.
- I'll try to finish this book before I see you again, or even...I'll be on my next one.

that guided my conference sessions and shows some student responses. Daily conferences became the part of instruction that I treasured most.

How does BOOKMATCH scaffold book selection for independent reading?

As the year came to a close and the data were analyzed, it was clear that BOOKMATCH was an effective scaffolding tool for the students. This article displays evidence of students' growth with independent reading as seen in more time spent reading, the development of terminology for effective book selection (see Figure 2), observable success of students selecting just-right books, meaningful conversations among students, movement from dependent to independent learners, and an increase in students' confidence in themselves as readers. Beth and John reminded me of how there is a relationship between reading attitude and appropriate book selection.

As the teacher, I also benefited from BOOK-MATCH as an instructional tool. I was able to produce an independent reading book-selection system without the use of levels. BOOKMATCH provided a snapshot of every student's selection process and not just a view of the vocal students who share in whole-class discussion. It also demanded higher expectations from students. BOOKMATCH guided instruction as I immediately changed my schedule to give students more time to read the books they self-selected. It reinforced the idea that think-alouds are a powerful way to see into the minds of learners, and it provided a way for students to gather information about themselves as readers. During conferences, students assessed their choices as I overlooked their use of BOOK-MATCH as a selection process.

The description of my classroom and the journey with BOOKMATCH demonstrates students' development of metacognitive strategies for book selection. Another benefit of BOOK-MATCH became evident when looking at the before and after attitude survey results. For example, Figure 12 shows changes in students' self-efficacy as readers.

FIGURE 12
Pre- and post-independent reading attitude survey question

I think reading is hard.
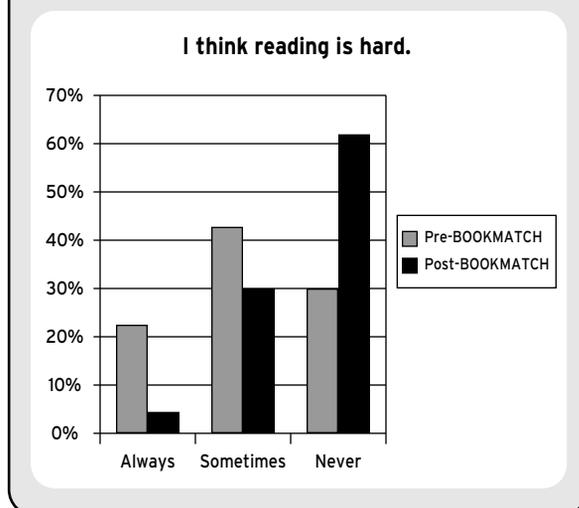
BOOKMATCH and the future

Occasionally, I had time to step back and watch BOOKMATCH in action. I found that it had become woven throughout our day. Students who brought books as their "share" item were using BOOKMATCH terminology and explaining why they chose that book in conversations with peers. Classmates who wanted to partner-read a book would first go to the BOOKMATCH poster and ask themselves about different book-selection criteria. During our afternoon writer's workshop time, BOOKMATCH was evident as we shared ideas for the structure of the texts we were writing. Student writing samples now included chapters, summaries, tables of content, and even written recommendations from peers—all items discussed in BOOKMATCH morning minilessons.

By spring, I looked back at my field notes and realized that I still had questions about BOOK-MATCH. These questions resulted from experiences with my students during the independent reading block of time. As I reflect and rethink BOOK-MATCH for the future, I will keep the following questions in mind: Where does the Five Finger Rule fit in BOOKMATCH? Should I add to the BOOK-MATCH criteria whether the student has read the book before or whether a teacher or student has read it as a read-aloud? Should I add a section about the

purpose for reading that particular book? Where does the terminology of "a series" fit? Do I need to have separate and slightly different BOOKMATCH criteria for different age levels? Should I change the original survey to add in an "I don't know" option? Should I change the format of the reading log? Would running records of students' ability to select just-right books have strengthened the argument that BOOKMATCH is an effective tool?

To further strengthen the belief in the effectiveness of BOOKMATCH, I realize that some change is necessary to the instruments I used. To test the hypothesis that if sufficient criteria were considered, the book chosen would be just right for that individual and would probably limit abandonment and increase engagement, I need to modify the survey terminology. On the surveys, the students understood "finish" to mean during one independent reading session. For example, students' specific responses show their misunderstanding of the word *finish* when telling why they might not finish a book: "Because at school it is time to clean up." "Because I don't hav inuf tim." "Because reading time is over." "Beacase they might be a chapter book." Students' understanding of the word *finish* needs to be clarified.

One thing is clear regarding BOOKMATCH and the future. I will continue to use it because my research reveals that it does provide support when students select books for independent reading. BOOKMATCH is a book selection tool for deciding if a book is just right, it promotes self-awareness as a literacy learner, and it provides daily ongoing discussion about texts. When browsing through the students' reading folders, it is evident that BOOKMATCH supports comprehension with its documentation of understanding. BOOKMATCH works well in a classroom that has a wealth of books for all readers, but I believe that results would be less positive in a classroom with a limited library. In this study, BOOKMATCH naturally guided my instruction of independent reading.

I turn back to Calkins (2001) and think about the future of BOOKMATCH. "If we're not teaching into our children's independent reading lives—if we're not drawing from and giving to those lives, how can we be certain our teaching is affecting them at all?" (p. 8). This action research made me think about the types of activities that I would like my students to be doing during independent reading time. I now think about the purposes of activities during independent reading and what my students will accomplish as participants. BOOKMATCH is a means by which any teacher can teach into the reading lives of his or her students.

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