Differentiating instruction by way of ability grouping and integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies through the use of instructional leveled text with struggling 3rd grade readers to improve comprehension, accuracy, and fluency

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Differentiating Instruction by way of Ability Grouping and Integrating Appropriate Reading Skills and Strategies Through the Use of Instructional Leveled Text with Struggling 3rd Grade Readers to Improve Comprehension, Accuracy, and Fluency

By

Mallory Spaeth

A Graduate Field Experience
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Signature Page

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for Mallory Spaeth
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether differentiating instruction by way of ability grouping and integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies through the use of instructional leveled texts with struggling 3rd grade readers would improve their comprehension, fluency, and accuracy. Seven 3rd grade students considered to be struggling readers participated in this study. During the study, the participants met with the researcher 20-30 minutes daily, four times per week, for a total duration of eight weeks. The intent of the group instruction focused on comprehension skills, strategies, and oral reading fluency and accuracy skills. Overall, the results suggest that differentiating instruction for struggling readers by providing instruction that focused and reiterated comprehension and fluency skills and strategies helped to improve comprehension and fluency.
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CHAPTER ONE

Program Design

In this chapter, the context for the action research is discussed. The context of this chapter is comprised of a description of the participating school, the school’s programming model, policies and procedures, staffing information, research to support best practices, and finally an overview of the action research design.

Program Design Project

Research suggests that students who struggle in reading require additional intervention in conjunction with traditional instruction to develop and improve their skills and abilities (Baker, Gersten, & Lee, 2002). At the school where this research project took place, quarters are split into four parts of the school year where teachers meet and confer to decide which students are struggling and meet the necessary qualifications for remedial intervention. Being an active researcher and gathering information regarding best practice strategies in reading comprehension is part of implementing and carrying out the intent of this research. This action research is the researchers personal contribution toward the attainment of this research question. Does differentiating reading instruction by way of ability grouping and integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies with struggling 3rd grade readers help improve comprehension and fluency?

School Description

The school district involved in this action research study is based on a community of schools comprised of 27 total learning facilities serving approximately 10,000 students. The mission of the involved school district is to equip all students with a foundation of knowledge and skills through quality instruction, opportunities, and a positive learning environment, in an active partnership with the family and community, reinforcing values which will inspire them to
access the opportunities of this society, strive for excellence in their endeavors and contribute as responsible citizens.

The school in which this action research took place is an urban school in the Bay Lake area of Wisconsin with a current enrollment of 375 students. The involved school is federally funded by the Wisconsin Students Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program which allowed the school to have classrooms K - 3 with a student ratio not exceeding 18:1 where teachers use a variety of both whole-group and small group reading instruction methods. The fourth and fifth grade classrooms averaged about 25 students per class and teachers traditionally used only whole group reading instruction. The student population lived primarily in the surrounding neighborhood with approximately 50 students being transported to school via bus. The majority of families were economically disadvantaged. To compare the student demographics in detail, 1.1% of the students were American Indian or Alaska Native, 21.1% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 11.7% Black, 28.3% Hispanic, and 37.9% were White. Furthermore, 16.5% were considered to have a disability, 80.5% were economically disadvantaged (receiving free or reduced meals), and 29.6% were Limited English Proficient.

**Programming Model**

The curriculum in which this research took place was consistent with district, state, and national standards. According to the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (2011) in regards to literacy texts, students should be able to recount stories to determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. Additionally, this action research also explored another Common Core Standard (2011) for Grade 3 in area of Language and Speaking which states that students should be able to read fluently while reading at an understandable pace. Small group intervention that incorporated
instruction of comprehension skills and strategies as well as fluency strategies helped support and address these standards as outlined in this action research plan.

The researcher completed this action research project by implementing basal textbooks and supplemental leveled reading texts during a daily 60-minute reading block. Leveled reading books were carefully selected by the researcher to align with each particular basal passage for use during explicit, small group instruction. During each literacy session, 30-minutes were devoted to whole-group instruction that involved explicit instruction of specific comprehension skills and strategies as well as instruction on oral reading fluency skills. The other 30-minutes was divided between two groups: one group of students worked on comprehension activities aligning to the basal text of the week, and the other group of seven students meeting with the researcher to improve comprehension, accuracy, and fluency strategies through the use of leveled texts.

**Policies and Procedures**

During collaborative Professional Learning Meetings (PLC) consisting of the school administrator, reading and mathematics interventionist, as well as the four 3rd grade teachers, a common reading procedure was established to evaluate and group students requiring reading intervention in third grade. A common goal for the grade level is to meet the needs of each student through literacy, particularly struggling readers, in order to improve comprehension and fluency. To do this, teachers actively evaluated and discussed the needs of readers monthly using informal assessment scores and teacher observations. From here, the educators decided which students would best benefit from reading intervention. Three main areas of assessment include text comprehension, accuracy, and oral reading fluency, the topics of which this action research is based and designed. Considering the educators’ goal is to meet the needs of readers’
comprehension, accuracy, and fluency, this action research benefited and informed educators in understanding best practices that are valuable in helping struggling readers.

Staffing Information

The focus of school staffing was to provide students with the utmost education and interventions allowable and necessary to help students achieve academic success, particularly in mathematics and reading. Careful planning and scheduling was used to observe, address, and plan instruction for struggling readers on a quarterly basis. Similar to the expectations of this action research plan, teachers were responsible for evaluating and differentiating classroom curriculum to fit the students’ individual needs. The school employed a variety of teaching staff. With only one school administrator, the involved school consisted of 35 full time teachers, and 15 educational assistants. Additionally, one reading and mathematics interventionist was employed who provided literacy and math support to students below the 20th percentile in either subject area. Special Education students were serviced through the school Emotionally Disturbed program to receive additional support behaviorally and academically. It was the role and responsibility of classroom teachers to evaluate and differentiate classroom curriculum to fit students’ individual needs.

Student Population

The students in this research study were from a third grade classroom. The classroom consisted of 15 students; 8 boys and 7 girls. Seven 3rd grade students which were considered to have low reading abilities as determined by a reading comprehension assessment and an oral reading fluency assessment participated in this study. Of the total participants, three of the participants were females, four males. According to the Developmental Reading Assessment or DRA (Beaver, 2001) results for January 2013 reading scores indicated that participants were
below the expected grade efficiency level of 34. The DRA assessment is used to assess students’ instructional reading level based on reading comprehension of both expository and narrative texts as well as oral reading accuracy.

Figure 1.1

*DRA Pre-Test Results (Jan. 2013)*
Evolutionary research illustrates that reading comprehension is an essential part of a readers’ ability to comprehend text and a struggle for many professional educators to succeed in teaching. The capability for an educator to master the complex understanding of comprehension and teach its related concepts allows students to advance in their reading achievement. In order to activate the spark for students to read, teachers must use motivating techniques to engage students. Motivating techniques such as activating background knowledge, reading the pictures of a text (picture walk), and making predictions are some ways to help students to be actively engaged in constructing meaning and connecting prior knowledge with new information, thus giving students the motivation to read and comprehend text successfully (Pearson, Dole, Roeler, & Duffy, 1992). As educators delve into intense comprehension instruction, reading strategies are explicitly taught to help aid students in the comprehension process. As reading strategies are
introduced, modeled, and practiced, readers’ improve comprehension of texts they encounter and ultimately move towards a gradual release where they begin to use reading strategies independently (Neufeld, 2005).

Explicit teaching and modeling is a successful way for educators to differentiate students by ability level in order to improve comprehension skills beginning at students’ instruction levels. In order for students to become efficient readers whom use reading strategies independently, students must receive instruction on various reading strategies that aid in comprehension through the use of the gradual release model (Fisher & Frey, 2003). In this model, the teacher begins instruction assuming all responsibility of tasks. Over time, students are gradually exposed and expected to begin using the given strategy on their own. At the conclusion of this model, the reader assumes all responsibility of the strategy with no teacher support required for accuracy.

The next component that aides in the comprehension process for reading is oral reading fluency and accuracy. Simultaneously, comprehension and fluency develop and work together as a pair in conjunction with reading accuracy. The true connection lies in the fact that in order for readers’ to comprehend, they must have strong decoding skills to obtain oral reading fluency. In a reading model explain by LaBerge and Samuels (1974), readers must be able to take visual inputs and decode the inputs successfully to make sense of the text they are reading. This process, called automaticity, says that a reader’s brain is that of a computer. The reader processes several inputs of letters, words, numbers, and phrases and decodes them. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) believe that when readers have strong decoding skills, the focus for reading is on comprehension on the text. In detail, if the reader is spending most of his or her attention on decoding what the text says in an effect to obtain reading accuracy, comprehension, the ability to
recall, is irrelevant. However, as students build a strong decoding basis, they can focus their attention to comprehending text; the ultimate goal of the literacy process.

As students focus their attention on summarizing text versus decoding, comprehension of text inevitably leads to the readers’ ability to read with oral reading fluency. To improve fluency, best research practice indicates that students should be reading text at their instructional level. Like LaBerge and Samuels (1974) indicated previously, students simply cannot comprehend text if the literature is too difficult to decode. Using appropriate texts at instructional levels allows readers to improve oral reading fluency. For appropriate text selection, educators must evaluate and assign students to differentiated reading groups where leveled texts are being implemented appropriate for the small group of readers. The ultimate benefit to this ability-based reading instruction is that readers’ receive explicit instruction and modeling for reading strategies appropriate at their level.

Primary teachers must model the use of fluency, accuracy, and comprehension strategies, guide and scaffold the reader’s use of the strategies, and monitor the individual use of the strategies by the reader (Duke & Pearson, 2002). In turn, this allows the educator to scaffold instruction as the student progresses towards higher levels of literacy. That is, when fluency, accuracy, and comprehension strategies are taught effectively, improvement in student comprehension of the texts they read occurs and students learn to use the strategies independently, thus becoming efficient, independent readers (Neufeld, 2005). As professional educators implement and utilize ability-based reading groups where instructional techniques are being appropriately modeled and scaffolded, literacy success will be evident in all readers.

After careful examination of best practice research on appropriate teaching strategies for instructing comprehension, accuracy, and oral reading fluency in young readers, a research study
was designed to examine the effects of using ability based reading instruction as a means to increase overall comprehension, fluency, and accuracy in reading through explicit modeling and instruction of various comprehension and fluency skills using leveled texts.

**Project Overview**

For this action research project, the researcher intentionally focused instruction for a small group of struggling readers by differentiating students into groups based on reading ability to identify and meet their literacy needs based on best practice research, school assessments, and personal inquisitions of the effects on comprehension, fluency, and accuracy through intervention instruction. This research topic was chosen initially in response to the researchers former undergraduate experience as well as current reading practices taking place at the school where the research was conducted. The researcher noted that during undergraduate training experience, little emphasis was placed on providing reading instruction to students by using the concept of dividing students based on ability and reading level leaving the researcher with a lack of differentiated teaching experience. Furthermore, reading teaching practices at the participating school vary from classroom to classroom. Some teachers use only whole group reading instruction where all students read the same level text. Other teachers use a variety of whole-group and small group instruction by using leveled texts appropriate to the students based on a variety of reading assessments. Due to the researchers inquisition about best practice for reading instruction as well as a lack of training experience within this topic, the researcher decided to investigate this question using a small group sample population to determine if ability based reading instruction does help students improve their literacy achievement.

Three times per academic year the students, who attend the participating school used in this study, from first grade through fifth grade were given the DRA assessment to determine
students’ instructional reading level (see Appendix G). From here, teachers identified which students were below the expected instructional grade level and grouped them accordingly within the classroom to provide reading instruction at their level. For the context of this study, those from this third grade classroom whom tested below the instructional level expected were asked to participate in the study through parent consent. Students were carefully selected to participate in the study based on pre-test results affirmed using the DRA (Beaver, 2001) reading assessment. Because the DRA assessment (Beaver, 2001) takes careful look at overall comprehension of text, the researcher decided to focus the intent of this action research project based on the concept of increasing overall comprehension. Statistically speaking, students with high-fluency reading comprehend better, read faster, and read with greater accuracy than low-fluency readers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Therefore, two additional focuses for this action research project were added to supplement the literacy comprehension process for struggling readers: fluency and accuracy. Explicit instruction, modeling, practice of fluency and accuracy skills, and comprehension strategies were implemented during small-group instruction using leveled texts at instructional levels to support overall comprehension.

Over the course of six weeks, instruction was scaffolded to provide students with exposure and explicit modeling of various comprehension skills and strategies as well as fluency and accuracy strategies to support reading achievement. Data retrieved through pre-tests, post-tests, anecdotal notes, and weekly fluency assessments aided in confirming or refuting this proposed action research inquisition.
Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the components essential to this action research project were discussed. These components were: programming design project, school description, programming model, policies and procedures, staffing information, student population, best practice research, and a project overview. The intervention for which this action research is designed was established to improve student reading comprehension and oral reading fluency and accuracy through explicit instruction and modeling of reading skills and strategies as well as oral reading fluency skills using instructional leveled texts. The researcher hypothesized that student reading comprehension scores as well as fluency and accuracy scores would increase as a result of explicitly teaching reading skills and strategies. While this chapter outlined the components of the action research, the next chapter highlights existing literature on ability-based reading instruction, oral reading fluency and accuracy strategies, and reading comprehension teaching methods.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Supportive best practice research on current reading trends and interventions suggests that teaching reading comprehension, fluency, and accuracy is a complex process that requires educators to carefully select and prepare reading instruction to meet the needs of all readers at diverse learning levels. The purpose of this action research study was to investigate the use of ability-based reading group intervention through the use of instructional leveled texts using explicit instruction, modeling, and practice with various reading strategies to improve overall comprehension, fluency, and accuracy skills for struggling 3rd grade readers. An effective, thought-out lesson plan design based on best practice research, teaching experience, and dedication was evident when implementing this intervention. To effectively meet the needs of diverse readers, particularly those struggling in literacy, teachers must begin by first accurately assessing students and identifying individual student needs prior to planning instruction. Differentiating reading instruction for struggling 3rd grade readers through the use of ability grouping where teaching and modeling of specific reading strategies is implemented creates efficient, independent readers with improved comprehension and fluency. Differentiated reading instruction allows teachers to modify learning outcomes, instructional activities, and pacing of instruction to meet students’ individual needs, such as providing remedial assistance or enrichment activities (Chorzempa & Graham, 2006). Educators who take advantage of small reading groups that have a strong focus on implementing appropriate accuracy, fluency, and comprehension strategies create an opportunity for reading improvement in all literacy learners.

This comprehensive chapter summarizes a variety of research studies that pertain to the purposed questions of this action research project: Does ability-based reading instruction help
readers improve overall literacy scores and achievement? Do fluency and accuracy skills help improve comprehension in elementary aged children? Does the use of explicit reading comprehension strategies during instruction help improve overall reading success? The first group of articles takes a careful look at the use of ability-based, or differentiated, reading groups to improve literacy. The subsequent group of articles examines connections between fluency and accuracy in order to improve reading achievement. Finally, the third group of articles concentrates on studies where reading comprehension skills and strategies were used to improve literacy development through explicit instruction and scaffolding using leveled texts.

**Effective Grouping Techniques for Reading Instruction**

Effective literacy educators understand and take full use of a variety of grouping techniques to deliver meaningful reading instruction to young children struggling to read and comprehend text. A variety of grouping methods include a limited amount of students per group, one-to-one teacher intervention, teacher directed instruction, peer assisted instruction, and heterogeneous or homogenous grouping. This particular section discusses some of these important practices and the outcomes gained.

In the first study conducted by Vaughn, Thompson, Kouzkanani, Bryant, Dickson, and Blozis (2003), a 13-week study provided identical supplemental reading intervention with struggling second grade readers using three small group formats: 1:1 (one teacher with 1 student), 1:3 (one teacher with 3 students), and 1:10 (one teacher with 10 students). Across all three groups, the instructional elements utilized in their study included phonological awareness, word study, reading fluency, and comprehension. The authors were particularly interested in determining any resulting evidence that supports smaller group sizes as being more effective for increasing reading performance in struggling monolingual readers as well as English language
learners. Primary means of data collection included pretesting, post-testing, and follow-up testing four weeks after the completed study by using the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (as cited in Texas Education Agency, 1998), Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Word Attack and Passage Comprehension (as cited in Woodcock, 1987), Test of Oral Reading Fluency (as cited in Children’s Educational Services, 1987) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Segmentation Fluency (as cited in Kaminski & Good, 1996). Letter naming, phoneme segmentation, nonsense words and oral reading of leveled passages were weekly subtests used to monitor the progress of the students. The use of an Intervention Validity Checklist during teaching observations provided notes and ensured consistency in intervention lessons.

The researchers conducted this study in 10 Title 1 elementary schools in an urban setting of the Southwest. When comparing the sample population, the majority of the 77 total students were boys (52%), as well as Hispanic (74%). The other population included 22.1% African American students and 3.9% Caucasian students. Ages for the 77 participants ranged from 6.9 to 9.2 years old. Of the three involved teachers, two female bilingual and three female monolingual teachers having at least one year of teaching experience teaching reading to struggling students provided the instruction.

Because of there indications that phoneme segmentation is a reliable predictor of reading ability, the researchers first tested the students using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills – phoneme segmentation to determine group assignments. The results of that assessment determined which group the students would be placed for the study; either the 1:1, 1:3, or 1:10 group. Concluding pretesting data, students in each group received 30 minutes of the same intervention, five times a week for 13 weeks totaling 58 sessions. The instruction elements for the intervention included six minutes of fluent reading (repeated reading), six
minutes of phonological awareness (oral activities), 10 minutes of instructional reading (provided support in decoding and modeled comprehension strategies), six minutes of word study (explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle and word patterns), and 20 minutes of progress monitoring (sub-testing). Teachers were observed nine times throughout the study. The checklist provided information regarding both the instructional components and teacher monitoring of student engagement during the instruction.

As expected, the results of the study were not a surprise to the researchers. Substantial gains for the 1:1 and 1:3 sample groups using the four focus areas of instruction showed higher overall gains as opposed to the 1:10 group. Subsequently, there were no significant differences between the 1:1 and 1:3 groups. Furthermore, this research study revealed that English Language Learners performed as well as, or better than, monolingual students in all of the groups although the researchers could not determine specifically which components of the instructional provided the most gains. Results also support past research that has shown reading interventions implemented for monolingual students is beneficial to English language learners as well.

This study demonstrates the practical implication that explicit and concentrated reading instruction is advantageous for all struggling readers. Furthermore, this study implies that whether students are taught utilizing a one-to-one or one-to-three intervention program, successful gains can be expected with comparable results. For students who did not make adequate gains within any of the groups, further research could include extending intervention to determine possible increase in their results. Isolating the extent of how each implemented component used in the intervention contributed to the success of English Language Learners, would expand our instruction competence as well.
The study by Vanghn et al. (2003) focused on implementing the same intervention while using varied group formats. The following study, conducted by Mathes, Torgesen, Clancy-Menchetti, Santi, Nicholas, Robinson, and Grek (2003), utilized three different instructional delivery arrangements; however; all groups remained similar relative to size and student ability.

Mathes et al. (2003) conducted a 16-week study to examine two differentiated instruction approaches, small-group teacher-directed instruction and peer-assisted instruction, with the lowest achieving struggling readers. Similar materials and comparable routines were used by both teachers and peers during the small group instruction. Providing differentiated instruction to students in small groups has been shown to be more effective than whole class instruction with struggling readers; therefore, the researchers were particularly interested in determining any resulting evidence that supports small group peer assisted instruction as being a more effective arrangement than student’s completing independent work. The primary means of data collection included pretesting and post-testing measuring word identification, word attack, passage comprehension, accuracy and fluency of word reading processes, and phoneme segmentation; bi-monthly assessment of reading growth (running records of oral reading fluency and phoneme segmentation fluency); and observation during instruction.

Six elementary schools in a Southeastern school district participated in the study. Twenty-two first grade teachers participated in this study along with 89 low-achieving first grade male readers. The student sample included 45 Caucasian, 37 African Americans, and 7 classified as Other. Eighteen teachers in the sample were Caucasian, 3 African American, and 1 classified as Other. Seven teachers conducted the peer-assisted instruction consisting of 31 students, seven conducted the teacher-directed small group instruction consisting of 30 students, and eight conducted instruction in the control group that consisted of 28 students.
Peer-assisted instruction involved three 35-minute sessions per week for 16 weeks. The 35-minute session was broken down into two 15-minute sessions: sounds and words and story sharing. Paris of students, one high reader with one low reader, alternated roles of coach and reader. Five minutes were allotted for transition time. The first part of the lesson including sound and word instruction provided students with a lesson sheet containing five activities: letter sounds (automatic recognition of letter-sound and combination sound connections), hearing sounds (phonemic segmentation of words), sounding out (increased unknown word identification to fluency), sight words (automatic recognition of high frequency words), and passage reading (fluency reading of connected text). During the second half of the lesson including story sharing instruction, student activities included pretend read (predicting what was happening on each page utilizing the picture), read aloud (echo reading), and retell (sequencing the events of the story).

Small-group teacher directed instruction involved three 30-minute sessions for 16 weeks and included the same two sessions of sounds and words and story sharing. Differences for this group was the time dedicated to each session was flexible and teachers were able to scaffold instruction according to the students’ needs in order to achieve their goal of making certain the students mastered the sounds and words segment. Finally, the control group provided reading instruction in their usual way with no recommendations or feedback from the researchers.

The researchers concluded that teacher-directed instruction and peer-assisted instruction results on most measures compared to the control group varied significantly. For instance, measures of segmentation, non-word efficiency, and word attack subtests showed a great deal of improvement for the teacher-directed instruction group. In addition, the teacher-directed instruction group demonstrated greater gains in the word identification, passage comprehension, and word efficiency subtests as compared to the control group. Finally, the results also
suggested that utilizing peer-assisted instruction while the teacher worked with small reading groups was more productive than the traditional centers or seatwork where students were sitting by themselves attempting to complete activities without support.

The study by Mathes et al. (2003) focused on the importance of how small group formats provided more opportunities to practice reading strategies individually allowing students to attain ownership of the reading process comparable to their peers. While the study by Mathes et al. (2003) focused on small group instruction to improve literacy skills by allowing students more opportunity and attention for instruction, the following study by Tobin and McInnes (2008) explored how educators used similar small group reading instruction with struggling readers to improve literacy skills using a scaffolded teaching approach.

In the third study conducted by Tobin and McInnes (2008), a careful analysis explored the popularity of differentiating reading instruction to benefit all students. The purpose of their study was to determine if a variety of teaching methods along with a scaffolded approach to learning would benefit struggling readers. Tobin and McInnes (2008) listed two research questions that drove their experiment. 1) How do teachers come to understand and address the literacy needs of academically diverse learners? 2) How may differentiated instructional methods address the needs of struggling literacy learners in the regular classroom? The independent variable was the teacher and classroom; more importantly, how the differentiation took place within the classroom. The dependent variable was the way in which data was collected (observational field notes, video recordings, audio recording of interview with teachers, and collections of student assignments).

Tobin and McInnes (2008) used a sample that consisted of grade 2/3 classrooms (children aged 7-9) in which teachers differentiated instruction in a small city in Central Canada. The ten
teachers who participated from Aberdeen School District were teaching mixed-grade classrooms. To ensure accuracy of the experiment, the teachers provided two 3-hour workshops. Key emphasis was placed on meaningful reading tasks, flexible grouping, and on-going assessment and adjustments for all students. Teachers received instruction for a variety of reading strategies to use for struggling readers. In addition, teachers reviewed guided reading practices and ways to engage the class in meaningful and manageable literacy activities. Finally, two special education teachers were assigned to support the experiment by providing in-class coaching and modeling.

Tobin and McInnes (2008) completed a threefold method of research. 1) Teachers had three observations sessions lasting 45 minutes each. Here, the researchers collected observational field notes that described any aspect of instruction relevant to a teacher’s understanding of, or attempt to address the needs of academically diverse students, video recordings of each classroom, and collections of student works. 2) Two visits were given afterwards in order to complete 30-minute interviews of the teachers. Interviews followed a systematic protocol, but allowed for exploration of interesting aspects of the immediate or past observations. 3) Data analysis of teachers followed to determine if any patterns were presented in either recordings of classroom observations or interviews.

At the conclusion of the experiment, Tobin and McInnes (2008) decided to interpret the data from only two teachers. Although each of the 10 teachers exhibited some degree of differentiation, these two teachers practiced differentiation in a way congruent with the research literature and provided support for struggling learners. The two teachers selected, Cynthia and Margot, were alike in that they had a good teaching relationship with the district and that their classrooms were literacy rich with books. On the other hand, Cynthia and Margot differed in
their years of teaching experience: Cynthia at 25 years and Margot at 6 years of teaching experience. Furthermore, the teachers differed in their use of differentiated instruction. Cynthia used guided reading and literacy centers; whereas, Margot used book bundles and a menu of work products for differentiation.

In Margot’s classroom, consisting of over 300 books, students chose appropriate books from different categories each week. During the week, they were given a menu of choices to complete for different tiered reading and writing assignments. Margot would conference with each student offering direct instruction of reading strategies and modifications that could be made to their work. Each week started with a high-quality children’s book where students were given a menu to chose from different activities that related to the text. As a result, students received modeling of the strategies, but also independent work time to work on their skills. To support struggling readers, Margot consistently planned small group reading instruction to keep students focused and connected with the text. Margot conferenced with struggling readers more often than with efficient readers to monitor their progress and motivation.

In Cynthia’s classroom, the language arts block consisted of three components: shared reading and writing instruction, literacy centers, and guided reading groups. Of the 28 students in Cynthia’s class, she identified 21 students needing support through guided reading. Her guided reading sessions last 30 minutes each and occurred four times per week. With her struggling readers, she provided 10 minutes of listening to students read, 10 minutes for making words and using decoding strategies, and finally, the last 10 minutes were devoted to introducing a new text through the use of prediction, vocabulary building activities, and comprehension strategies. While students participated in guided reading, the remaining students rotated through different literacy centers. Cynthia modeled the goals at each center during the week and met
with students who needed modifications on an individual basis to describe how their goals at each center differed.

In sum, Tobin and McInnes (2008) conducted an experiment that presented two examples of teachers who were able to provide successful differentiated reading instruction, under different teaching contexts, to foster all readers. Margot allowed students to choose a response option that would allow them to connect with the text. Through tiered activities, she designed ways for struggling readers to stay connected with the text. Additionally, Margot created a schedule that allowed her to meet with struggling readers for more frequent direct instruction. Her direct instruction included scaffolding and comprehension monitoring students needed to understand how to use reading strategies independently and guided students in their written responses to text. By doing so, Margot allowed all students to excel in such a way that each student showed reading progress based on their ability. To determine the overall effectiveness of the study, the researchers used video recordings of each classroom, audio recordings of interviews with teachers, and a collection of student assignments to assess student growth in literacy. Data analysis proceeded by searching for patterns of meaning related to the initial research question by reviewing video and audio recordings. Each frame from the recordings followed a similar relationship: how teachers differentiated for literacy learners and how each teacher came to their own realization and understanding of differentiation.

Tobin and McInnes (2008) collected differentiated instruction research from Cynthia which also helped to support struggling readers. Cynthia used differentiated reading instruction for struggling readers while the rest of the class was engaged in meaningful literacy activities. With the use of shared reading and writing, Cynthia modeled how text works. Students within in class connected with the text with the use of scaffolding instruction, choices for independent
work, and by making appropriate choices for students. Most importantly, Cynthia engaged students in text using a variety of interesting topics. She celebrated small successes for each reader, which made them feel proud of their accomplishments.

While Tobin and McInnes (2008) found differentiated reading instruction to benefit struggling readers, Ryder, Burton, and Silberg (2006) were able to provide beneficial instruction to struggling readers by providing students literacy lessons that used a combination of direct instruction and non-direct instruction to support literacy growth and achievement.

Ryder et al. (2006) conducted a study that explored the use of direct and non-direct instruction for lower level readers. The purpose of their study was to examine the effectiveness of Direct Instruction (DI) compared with that of more traditional reading instruction approaches (non-DI) with urban and suburban students in Grades 1 – 3. Ryder et al. (2006) listed one research question that drove their experiment. 1) What effects, if any, does Differentiated Instruction (DI) have on low-level readers in urban and suburban area schools? The independent variable was the teacher and classroom; more importantly, DI versus non-DI classrooms. The dependent variable was the way in which data was collected (reading achievement tests, classroom observations, teacher interviews, and teacher questionnaires).

Ryder et al. (2006) used a sample that consisted of three Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) and four Franklin Public Schools (FPS). About 98% of students at MPS were African American and nearly 95% received free and reduced lunch. Compared to FPS, approximately 89% of students were Caucasian, with only 10% receiving free lunch. By the third year of the study, only 80 (46 urban and 34 suburban) students participated as a result of student mobility, incomplete tests or changing schools. Only one of the MPS schools used DI exclusively for 1.5 hour blocks each day. The second MPS school used a variety of DI and non-DI reading
instruction. The third MPS school used basal reading instruction. On the other hand, FPS used regular classroom instruction with DI being provided to low-level readers as a means for remediation.

Ryder et al. (2006) completed a method of research consisting of four parts. 1) A standardized reading test was given before and after the experiment took place. This was used to determine if there was a relationship between reading progress and DI. 2) Classroom observations provided by graduate students were used to compare the relationship between classroom instructional variables, the nature of explicitness in the teacher’s instruction, and reading achievement. 3) Graduate students then interviewed teachers at the end of the 2nd and 3rd years of the experiment to see teachers’ perceptions of reading instruction, instructional materials, and reading strategies used within the classroom. And 4) Teachers completed questionnaires that asked about their educational background, teaching philosophy, and estimates of time spent on various components of reading instruction.

At the conclusion of the experiment, Ryder et al. (2006) evaluated and compared the results between MPS and FPS. When comparing the reading achievement for Grade 1 students, the results suggested that students who received DI during Grade 1 displayed less growth in reading achievement from year to year compared with non-DI counterparts. Overall, the reading achievement scores of FPS students for Grade 1 and Grade 2 were significantly greater than were those of MPS students in the same grades. Furthermore, the interaction that occurred between method of instruction and district for Grade 3 students suggests that DI students in FPS outperformed all groups, including those of FPS non-DI students, whereas MPS non-DI students outperformed MPS DI students. Teacher interviews reported that teachers altered their instruction to the best of their ability to meet the needs of their reading students. The majority of
teachers purported that DI was a good corrective tool and was useful for building phonemic awareness skills and increasing fluency. Teacher questionnaires at the end of the school year consisted of a series of structured open-ended questions. Grade 1 and 2 teachers spent the same amount of time on DI reading in order to maintain validity. However, Grade 3 DI teachers dedicated approximately 5 hours more per week toward their reading instruction than did non-DI teachers. Between Grades 2 and 3 it was apparent that teachers differed in their implementation of DI. Non-DI teacher demonstrated a focus on more comprehension building skills; DI teachers maintained similar instruction from second to third grade.

In sum, research on effective teachers and instruction suggests that a particular curriculum is not the reason for higher reading scores, per se; rather, it is the elements of teacher explicitness. Ryder et al. (2006) suggest that certain characteristics of teachers, rather than instruction method that they embrace, is the factor that correlates with high-achieving classrooms. Therefore, it is not only important for teacher to use a variety of teaching practices, but to constantly research and gain knowledge of new teaching practices to support struggling readers.

The study by Ryder et al. (2006) focused on the effects of using explicit direct instruction to improve overall reading comprehension as opposed to using non-direct instruction. While Ryder, Burton, and Silberg (2006) examined the use of direct and non-direct reading instruction, a similar study by McIntyre, Jones, Petrosko, Powell, Powers, Newsom, and Bright (2005) examined the difference in literacy achievement by comparing the results of the difference between students receiving direct, supplemental reading instruction as an extension of whole group reading instruction versus those students that did not receive supplemental instruction to conclude that supplemental reading instruction did in fact improve reading achievement.
McIntyre et al. (2005) carried out a two-year quantitative analysis in collaboration with a state program known as Early Reading Intervention. This state program was offered to schools in an attempt to improve the reading achievement of primary grade students reading at low levels. The respected authors observed the implementation and effects of using supplemental reading programs with first and second grade struggling readers. Supplemental programs that were included in this study involved small groups or one-to-one instruction with attention focused on specific literacy instruction in addition to whole group, traditional classroom reading instruction. The authors compared phonics and reading comprehension achievement of second grade students who received daily supplemental reading instruction to those students who did not receive daily supplemental reading instruction. Phonics instruction was assessed, but not specifically taught within the supplemental program. The collection of data included pretests and posttests using an informal word sound assessment. This assessment required students to write two sentences that the research dictated orally. Additionally, another informal reading assessment was given to measure retellings and comprehension through oral and silent reading of fiction and nonfiction passages.

To begin, the authors tested 196 first and second grade students from 17 different schools in Louisville, Kentucky that had taken advantaged of the Early Reading Incentive Grant program provided by the state. 20% of the lowest achieving students within the classroom were identified by participating teachers. The sample was then narrowed to include 39 first graders and 20 second graders who had at least 30 minutes of secondary instruction each day. 57.2% of the students were boys compared to 42.5% of the students being girls. The student ethnicity included: 79% Caucasian, 16.3% African American, and 4% other. The majority of students, 56.5%, received free breakfast and lunch, whereas 25.5% did not and 18% were unknown.
Teachers ranging from 3 to 27 years of experience consisted of 2 men, 27 women, and 1 African American woman.

Two years of data was collected and interpreted. During the first year, students were given a pretest taking place during October and November with a posttest in May. In the second year of study, students pretested in September and post-tested again in May. First grade students were assessed in phonics and reading. However, second grade students were only tested in reading. Two trained authors scored phonics results using the sound word test. The reading assessment determined the current reading level of the students at the time of testing. Researchers observed teachers two times a year for approximately 90 minute during both traditional and supplemental reading instruction. Researchers took comprehensive notes during observations and completed same-day interviews with teachers.

As predicted by the researchers McIntyre et al. (2005), the children who received supplemental instructional outperformed children who only received regular classroom instruction. More in depth, the 39 first graders and the 20 second graders achieved significantly higher on the informal reading inventory passages as compared to the 84 first grade and 43 second grade students who did not receive the supplemental instruction. Additionally, no significant increase in phonics achievement for the 39 first graders was present due to the fact that no phonics instruction was incorporated in the supplemental reading instruction.

In comparing the results, the researchers McIntyre et al. (2005) identified several limitations when comparing the outcome of this study. Not considered, but attributed to the success of reading achievement, the authors identified several areas that may have affected the results of the outcomes which included: poverty, home discourse and literacy practices, education level of parents, and the general ability of the children. Another pitfall was that the
study solely based on the researchers’ vague definition of “supplemental instruction” (daily or almost-daily literacy for an additional 30 minutes or more) and several different intervention instruction models (book club, Carbo Reading, Reading recovery, Early Reading Intervention, and a locally designed model) were used during the “supplemental instruction” settings. This suggested that no particular intervention model was more successful than another. Although the researches concluded that supplemental reading instruction was beneficial, the researches noted that effective teaching is critical as well. Therefore, the use of small group reading instruction was proven effective when students received supplemental reading instruction that focused on effective reteaching of whole group literacy concepts. Providing supplemental instruction that increases the amount of time children read and the quality of teaching during instruction including scaffolding, discussion, and feedback are crucial elements in helping struggling readers become successful. The overall results of this study suggest that literacy teachers must continually research, plan, and implement effective daily supplemental reading instruction, particularly with struggling readers, to improve literacy achievement as a result of explicit, small group instruction.

While McIntyre et al. (2005) addressed the benefits of using supportive reading instruction to improve reading achievement in primary elementary students, the next article takes a careful look at providing reading intervention to struggling readers in upper elementary classrooms. No matter the time of a child’s literacy development, reading achievement should continuously be assessed and adapted to meet the needs of each reader.

Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) conducted a study that compared the effects of two balanced and strategic reading interventions on the reading skills of upper-elementary and middle school students with reading disabilities. In their research, they found instruction older
students with reading disabilities presents unique challenges as well as opportunities. For example, there is concern that developmentally, older students have passed the age when many believe reading skills are most easily gained. On the other hand, older students have increased cognitive advantages and a growing world knowledge that gives them an advantage over younger students. When conducting their study, they were specifically interested in examining whether balanced, systematic and intensive reading instruction resulted in meaningful effects on the reading skills of older children with reading disabilities. In addition, they wanted to know whether a greater degree of explicitness in comprehension strategy instruction leads to relatively higher gains in reading comprehension.

Eleven tutors were hired by the researchers to implement the treatment conditions. Each tutor attended 14 hours of direct training on implementation of the treatment conditions. Prior to training, tutors were randomly assigned to the treatment conditions. During implementation of the lessons, tutors received frequent supervision and feedback. The tutors were observed at least twice a week during the tutoring sessions and were given corrective feedback after each observation. In addition, weekly staff meetings were held in which tutors were provided group supervision by one of the principal investigators. Finally, the researchers collected student data from a variety of pre and post measures that assessed decoding, fluency, and comprehension.

Principals recommended participants in this study from local schools. In order to be included, students had to meet certain criteria set by the researchers. Students who were formally identified through their schools or by other professionals as having an emotionally/behavior disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or severe hearing or vision impairments were excluded from the study. English language learners were also excluded from the study. Only one participant in the study was formally diagnosed with Attention Deficit
Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The sample included 21 students ranging in age from nine to 14 years old. Participants were randomly assigned to the two treatment conditions. The study took place in a community-based reading clinic and instruction took place in classrooms separated by dividers.

The study was conducted at the beginning of summer break and lasted six weeks. The students were randomly assigned to two treatment conditions. The treatment conditions were delivered on a one-to-one basis. Students received five weeks of one-on-one tutoring four days per week, for one hour per day, for a total of 20 hours. Both treatment conditions had exactly the same training in phonological awareness/analysis, strategic decoding, and reading fluency. Only the reading comprehension component of the instructional packages was manipulated. The two treatment conditions varied with regard to the degree of explicitness with which reading comprehension strategies were taught.

In treatment one, reading comprehension strategy instruction was based on techniques used during guided reading. Tutors modeled specific comprehension strategies for students during the first three to four sessions, and guided practice predominantly during the middle and final sessions. Strategies were presented simultaneously. From the first day of the intervention, students were exposed to all the reading comprehension strategies. With this type of instruction, it is assumed that students will naturally pick-up on the purpose of the strategies and begin to use them independently.

In treatment two, students received instruction based on the assumption that students with reading difficulties would benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension. This condition consisted of direct instruction of each strategy, the purpose behind it, and the value of each strategy for comprehending text. Tutors presented the strategies one at a time and allowed
students as much time as they needed to master the strategy before introducing a new strategy. Only one strategy was introduced per session. With this type of instruction, it is assumed that students will not naturally begin to use the strategies on their own, but rather transference of control of the strategies was explicitly moved from tutor to participant by using the following sequence of procedures: direct explanation, modeling, collaborative practice, and independent practice.

The researchers Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) found the following results to support whether a balanced and strategic approach was effective within group comparisons. Paired sample t-tests were used to investigate whether posttest scores on the dependent measures were significantly higher than pretest scores for each intervention. In both condition one and two, the effect size for decoding and decoding related skills was medium. On the letter-word identification subtest, condition one made more significant gains. Condition two did not make significant gains in word identification. For reading fluency, condition one showed daily gains of .35 correct words per minute, whereas students in condition two showed daily gains of .29 correct words per minute. When comparing reading comprehension, both groups made significant gains on both tests of training measure, oral retelling quality, and main-idea identification.

Overall, the researchers Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) compared whether a greater degree of explicitness in comprehension strategy instruction leads to greater gains between group comparisons. Results indicated no differences between intervention groups in terms of gains in decoding and decoding-related skills. There were no statistically significant differences between groups on the reading fluency subtest. For reading comprehension, students in condition two outperformed those in condition one on oral retelling and main idea
identification. Condition two also showed a tendency toward greater gains on the far-transfer measure of reading comprehension than did the students in condition one.

The results provided support for the researcher’s belief that upper-elementary students with significant delays in learning to read are still amendable to reading instruction. Accelerated learning is essential for students with reading delays to overcome the cumulative effects of years of falling behind in school. These findings suggest that a balanced and strategic intervention can accelerate the learning of older children with reading delays over a relatively short time. Additionally, the researchers found that the more explicit the comprehension strategy, the higher the likelihood that older students with reading delays will make significant gains in reading comprehension.

Although each of the studies examined a different type of grouping technique to provide reading instruction to struggling readers, results show the desirable effect of working with struggling readers in a smaller group format. Tobin and McInnes (2008) determined that using differentiated reading instruction benefited struggling readers by scaffolding instruction based on readers’ abilities. Similarly, Ryder et al. (2006) determined that a combination of direct instruction and non-direct reading instruction benefited low-level readers and determined that using a variety of instructional groupings and teaching methods benefited readers achievement. Finally, McIntyre et al. (2005) determined that the use of an early supplemental, small-group reading intervention provided substantial gains for more needy students in reading achievement and overall comprehension. All studies revealed that using specific instructional grouping techniques increased literacy achievement for struggling readers. Educators who strive to provide beneficial reading instruction to all students should make use of supplemental grouping
techniques that focus on repeated and continuous reading. Additionally, corrective feedback and scaffolding of all literacy strategies will assist in helping students to improve literacy skills.

Research supports effective grouping techniques to foster elementary readers. As teachers become more informed about the effective variations of groupings, they become more prepared to effectively address struggling readers within their classrooms. Grouping techniques allow all students to progress forward beginning at their instructional level. In addition to appropriately selecting reading groups within the classroom, teachers must understand and consider instructional strategies that support fluency and accuracy that will benefit the unique needs of each of their students. In the next section, research is presented which supports the connection between fluency and accuracy as a correlation to reading achievement and comprehension.

**Effective Teaching Practices for Accuracy and Fluency Instruction**

It is crucial that teachers understand key components of fluency and accuracy instruction to further facilitate reading comprehension skills for struggling readers. Knowing how to instruct and provide this intervention for all students is essential in the development of proficient readers. The following section examines research on fluency and accuracy instruction beneficial for student success.

O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) conducted a 14-week study that evaluated two methods of improving reading fluency for struggling readers. The authors were particularly interested in the causal connection between reading rate and comprehension. The two intervention methods utilized in this study were repeated and continuous reading as both have theoretical associations to specific elements of reading. The primary means of data collection
included pretests, midway tests, posttests, note taking using researcher designed logs, and student observations during reading.

Forty-eight low skilled 2nd and 4th grade readers were selected from eight classes (four classes of each grade) to participate in this study. Specific eligibility criteria was used to identify six struggling readers from each class to be used for the study. The ethnic makeup of the 48 total participants included 50% European American, 29% Hispanic or Mexican American, 18% African American, and 3% other. Due to unforeseen circumstances, only 37 students completed the study. Of the official 37 participants, 16 had been previously identified as having a learning disability and seven were English language learners. For comparison and validity sake, the researchers also monitored the progress of two average readers in each class.

Six students from each class were separated into groups of three based on their pretest fluency scores. Students were randomly assigned to a repeated reading group, a continuous reading group, or a control group for each group of students. Instruction included 15 minutes of practice reading aloud to a trained adult listener three days a week for 14 weeks if a student was placed in one of the two intervention method groups. Within the repeated reading group, students read each page of text three times, whereas the students in the continuous reading group read more pages from the same book, but without repeating pages. Both groups read for a total of 15 minutes each session. In the control group, no intervention from the researchers was provided. However, the students received school support to which they were entitled by the school.

When the researchers O’Conner et al. (2007) compared the results, both the repeated and continuous reading groups increased over 20 words per minute in reading rate. The control group however made only minimal gains. There were no considerable variations found between
students who practiced repeated or continuous reading in regard to the measure of reading rate or fluency. As expected, the average readers performed at higher levels than the other three groups by the end of the study. In comparison between fluency and comprehension, post-testing results showed gains at the sentence and passage levels even though no direct comprehension instruction was included in the study.

The data obtained from this study suggest whether continuous reading or repeated reading with corrective feedback is implemented into a teacher’s classroom, they are both effective interventions aimed toward improving reading rate that can benefit struggling readers. In order to improve fluency of the poor readers in their classrooms, teachers should include oral reading practice everyday in their instructional routine.

While fluency had a significant impact on comprehension as discussed in the pervious study, the author of the following study concentrated on the use of fluency and accuracy instruction to improve comprehension.

DeKonty, Applegate, and Modla (2009) conducted a study that tested students for fluency and accuracy in regards to comprehension. The student participants had been identified as strong, fluent readers by their classroom teacher or their parents, and were a part of the top reading group in their classroom. Considering the results of other research regarding the connection between fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, the authors were particularly interested in determining whether these fluent readers could also demonstrate a high degree of comprehension at their grade level. The research analyzed the connection between fluency, accuracy, and comprehension results. The primary means of data collection included comprehension, fluency/accuracy tests using narrative and information text selections, a retelling rubric, and a fluency rubric. Oral readings of the passage and retellings were audio taped. These
tests incorporated text-based literal questions, low-level inference questions, inferences questions, and critical response questions.

The study consisted of 171 children spanning from grades 2 through 10, 60 males and 111 females, living in Northeastern states. Eighty-six percent of the participants were Caucasian and 14% minorities. Additionally, 109 attended public schools, 45 parochial schools, 17 private schools, and two home-schooled. Sixty students were in grades 2 and 3, 57 students were in grade 4 and 5, and 54 students were in grades 6 through 10.

Only students considered strong, fluent readers by the classroom teacher or their parents were utilized in this study. All participants in the study were tested by graduate or undergraduate students as part of their coursework. The graduate and undergraduate students were trained in administering the test passages and calculating the scores using rubrics and a computer program. Each student was tested using two narrative passages at his/her level. One was read orally and the other read silently by the student. After each reading, the student was required to retell the story containing the story elements along with a personal response and answer 10 open-ended comprehension questions in order to measure their higher order thinking skills. Test scores revealed that 52 students were classified as advanced comprehenders (scores of 85% or higher), 62 of the students were considered proficient comprehenders (scores between 63% and 80%), and 57 of the students were classified as struggling comprehenders (scores of 58% or lower).

Results also revealed that only 30% of the “strong, fluent” readers achieved high levels of both literal and higher order reading comprehension and 36% scored as proficient readers with the need for future instruction in higher order comprehension thinking skills. The most unexpected finding in their study was that one third of these “strong, fluent” readers struggled with comprehension at their grade level. Furthermore, 29 out of the 57 struggling
comprehenders had received a percentage score on the text-based comprehension that surpassed their score on the higher order comprehension by 30 or more percentage points. In comparing grade levels, no unusual patterns were noted to comprehension or fluency/accuracy performance.

In reviewing other studies and contributing to the problem of students becoming fluent readers yet lacking comprehension, the researchers DeKonty et al. (2009) were of the opinion that teachers rarely require or challenge students to think more critically about what they have read and generally are expected to simply answer literal questions. The results imply evidence of a strong connection between full reading comprehension, which is regarded as complex, higher level, thoughtful response to text, and student engagement is more complex literacy tasks.

Implications of this study further suggest that educators may only be assessing fluency when considering their students reading proficiency and are assuming that if the student is fluent and accurate, they must also possess full comprehension skills. Whether considering fluency and accuracy as a prerequisite to comprehension or the belief that fluency develops after comprehension is achieved, it is critical to assess both fluency and critical thinking comprehension skills when determining the reading proficiency of students because of their strong connection within the literacy process. Therefore, meaningful fluency and accuracy instruction is needed in young readers in order for them to obtain the ability to comprehend higher levels of text and think critically about the literature they are reading. O’Connor et al. (2007) examined instructional practices for small group instruction for a means of improving fluency skills in young readers. Then, Dekonty et al. (2009) discovered that besides the assessment of accuracy and fluency, teachers must take a careful look at readers’ abilities to read fluency and accurately, but to then apply those skills with critical thinking and analysis of text.
It is imperative that teachers are aware of assessing both accuracy and fluency in relation to comprehension to obtain an accurate measure of a student’s reading proficiency.

The above section described the importance of fluency and accuracy instruction in regards to text comprehension. The last section of research articles examines a variety of practices for reading comprehension in elementary-aged students.

**Effective Teaching Practices for Reading Comprehension**

Educators need to effectively model and implement reading comprehension strategies to promote student efficiency in reading for a variety of texts. Effective modeling and implementation allows teachers to help foster struggling readers into becoming proficient, independent readers. In this final component, various researchers studied the use of reading comprehension techniques to improve literacy skills for struggling readers.

Vernon-Feagans, Gallager, Amendum, Ginsberg, Kainz, Rose, and Burchinal (2010) conducted a study which explored the effectiveness of a new diagnostically-based reading intervention called Targeted Reading Intervention (TRI). The purpose of their study was to investigate whether or not a newly developed professional reading program geared toward schools of low-income students would produce substantial reading comprehension gains for struggling readers in early elementary schools. The researchers listed two questions which drove their experiment: 1) Would the TRI produce greater gains in initial reading comprehension and vocabulary for kindergarten and first grade struggling readers in experimental schools compared to similar struggling readers in control schools? 2) Was there any evidence that the kindergarten and first grade struggling readers who received the TRI were actually making greater gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary than the non-struggling readers in the same classrooms, suggesting that they were “catching up” with their non-struggling peers? The independent
variable was the type of instruction: regular classroom versus Targeted Reading Intervention. The dependent variables were the tests used to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

The sample consisted of three Southeastern United States schools with over 75 percent of school children eligible for free and reduced lunch. All schools were Title 1 schools, but none of these schools participated in Reading First. Schools were paired and matched based on demographic characteristics (free and reduced lunch, school size, and minority enrollment). The three schools included 20 classrooms, eight experimental classrooms and 12 control classrooms. Teacher access to classroom aides for the experimental classrooms varied from day to day depending on scheduling of different support staff.

Vernon-Feagans et al.’s (2010) method of research started with a selection process. Kindergarten and first grade students were evaluated to determine if a reading struggle was present in each of the children. From there, students were assigned to either be part of the control group or the struggling readers group. Struggling readers received TRI instruction from late fall until spring, whereas non-struggling readers received regular classroom reading instruction based on the North Carolina Course of Study. Students were administered a variety of pre and post standardized assessments to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

At the conclusion of the experiment, the researchers decided to use an “intent to treat” approach for analysis. Kindergarten intent to treat analyses of sight word recognition and decoding skills revealed that the experimental struggling children gained significantly more from fall to spring on vocabulary with an effect size of 1.03. It was also revealed that Kindergarten struggling readers gained significantly more than non-struggling peers for sight word recognition, with an effect size of .77. First grade intent to treat analyses of the sight word recognition and decoding revealed no significant effects and no significant catch-up.
Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) then evaluated the results of their findings. The results of the reading program, which consisted of 15 minute, one-on-one sessions, revealed that Kindergarteners would benefit from use of the program. In detail, struggling kindergarteners would benefit from the new reading approach for word reading skills. Significant evidence showed that struggling kindergarten readers were catching up to their non-struggling peers, gaining double the number of points in comparison to their non-struggling peers over the school year. Unfortunately, no significant evidence was shown between first grade classrooms. As a result of their findings, Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) support the idea that classroom teachers, in addition to reading specialists, are able to effectively support struggling readers, especially kindergartners. Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) suggest that further long-term studies should be completed to determine the effectiveness of TRI instruction for reading in other grade levels besides kindergarten.

As Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) explored the use of the TRI instruction to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary in a small group format for kindergarten students, the next article examines the effects of another enriched reading program to improve comprehension for upper elementary students.

Reis, McCoach, Coyne, Schreiber, Exkert, and Gubbins (2007) conducted a study to investigate the effects of an enriched reading program on 226 urban elementary students reading comprehension, oral reading fluency, and attitude toward reading in two elementary schools. The purpose of their study was to investigate whether or not exposing students to books in their areas of interest, providing daily supported independent reading of challenging self-selected books using differentiated reading instruction, and interested-based choice opportunities for assessment would improve comprehension, fluency, and motivation. The researchers listed one
question which drove their experiment: 1) Do students who participate in the SEM-R score significantly higher on measures of oral reading fluency, comprehension, and attitude as compared to students who participate in remedial activities and preparation for the state achievement tests? The dependent variable was student post-treatment scores on measures of oral reading fluency. The independent variable was the type of group: control group versus treatment group.

The sample consisted of 226 urban elementary students ranging from third through sixth grade within two different elementary schools. All schools had diverse populations and a majority of students identified as both economically disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically diverse.

Reis et al.’s (2007) method of research started with a randomized selection process where students were placed into a control or experimental group. Teachers were also randomly selected to either implement the School-wide Enrichment Model in Reading (SEM-R) treatment or to continue teaching the preexisting, nonsystematic remedial reading activities and state achievement tests preparation in the daily afternoon literacy block. All students continued in their regularly scheduled 90-minute reading morning reading program. Teachers selected for the experimental group participated in a full-day professional development session to receive training on the SEM-R program. At the in-service, teacher received written information about the SEM-R project, a collection of classroom books at different instructional levels, and a comprehensive reading list developed for the intervention. Students were administered a variety of standardized assessments to determine the effectiveness of the intervention in relationship to reading comprehension, reading attitude, and reading fluency. For reading comprehension, students read a passage and were then asked to complete a multiple choice test, which asked
students to recall facts, make generalizations, and draw inferences. Reading attitude was measured by asking students a series of 20 questions that related to reading in various situations or with various reading genres. Pre and post-test results were scored to determine improvement towards reading attitude. And, finally, oral reading fluency was assessed by comparing pre and post-test results which assessed students’ speed and accuracy when reading connected text.

Reis et al. (2007) concluded whether any group differences existed on reading fluency and reading attitudes prior to the start of the reading intervention. There were no statistically significant differences between the treatment group and the control group on either fluency or attitudes toward reading. In addition, there were no statistically significant differences between the schools on measures of reading fluency or attitudes toward reading. After controlling for pretreatment fluency scores, the main effect of treatment was statistically significant, meaning that after the pretest for fluency was controlled, treatment students outperformed control students. When comparing reading comprehension, the treatment group had higher scores than the control group in four of the seven comparisons. The control group of third graders from one school outperformed the comparable treatment group by over seven points on the assessment. The control group in the fourth grade outperformed the treatment comparison class by 2.27 points. Whereas, the control group in fourth grade scored less than .5 points higher than its treatment comparison class. The treatment groups outperformed their control counterparts in four of the seven comparisons of reading attitude. The researchers found statistically significant mean differences in post-intervention oral reading fluency scores favoring the SEM-R intervention group. Significant treatment effects in students’ attitudes toward reading favoring the SEM-R treatment group for attitudes towards reading. However, the mean comprehension scores of students who participated in the SEM-R were not statistically different from those of
the control group. The short nature of the study suggests that comprehension, fluency, and motivation improved, but a long-term study would be suggested for comparison sake.

While the SEM-R intervention by Reis et al. (2007) suggest that small group instruction improves comprehension, the author of the following study concentrated on the use of oral reading feedback strategies to improve reading comprehension in children with low reading ability. Reading feedback strategies assist students in processing text and have been recognized in improving comprehension in struggling readers.

Linda K. Crowe (2005) conducted a five-week intervention study comparing two oral reading feedback techniques to determine which method ultimately would improve reading comprehension of children with low reading ability. A decoding strategy and integrated approach were the two types of corrective feedback strategies used. The decoding strategy included pre-teaching vocabulary, sounding out words, and using word structure cues to decode unfamiliar words during reading. The integrated approach implemented during reading, consisted of discussion, prompts, and cues that helped establish the topic, simplify complex sentences, explain new and unfamiliar vocabulary, and connect ideas across passages and text. Pre and post-testing means of data collection were used to measure comprehension and 40 story related comprehension questions coded for types of details remembered: naming (label for people, places, and objects); lovatives (reference to locations); action relations (phrases or clauses containing an action verb); description (adjectives, adverbs); and inferences (predictions or conclusion based on the reading). Approximately half on the testing and intervention sessions were audio or videotaped for reliability purposes.

The participants in the study included four male and four female children between the ages of eight and 11, grades three through five. The research occurred in an elementary school
located in a Midwestern city composed of families with lower middle to low socioeconomic status. School staff identified the participants based on the following criteria: were between the ages of eight and 11; no identified intellectual, behavioral, or neurological deficit; no reported history of hearing loss; identified as having a language impairment, qualified for remedial reading, or identified as having a learning disability in reading, oral or written expression; and received reading assistance only at school.

Over five weeks, four students were placed in each intervention group. Students received one hour of intervention two times a week. There was a two or four day interval between all intervention sessions for the purpose of assessing long-term reading recall through the use of comprehension questions. For consistency, both intervention groups read the same book throughout the sessions. At the beginning of each session, the two groups answered five to six comprehension questions about the reading during the previous session. The decoding group would practice reading and defining 10 vocabulary words from the chapter they would be reading. During reading, students were encouraged to sound out words or reread misread words. When students could not sound out a word, the instructor would assist by dividing words into syllables to help with decoding and provided phonemic clues. Story elements were discussed sporadically during reading. On the other hand, the instructor within the integrated approach group consisted of conversational strategies during reading to help students construct meaning from the text. The instructor asked students to make predictions, activated students’ background knowledge, summarized or encouraged students to summarize pages read, defined and explained words unfamiliar to the students throughout the reading, pointed out and explained pronoun references, and solid connections were made between sentences, paragraphs, and chapters.
As the results were interpreted, the author determined that the four students who were instructed by means of the integrated approach made significant gains in reading comprehension as compared to the four participants of the decoding based group whereby no gains were made, and two of the participants showed decreased score from pre-test to post-test. Crowe (2005) obtained the results of the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test by subtracting the standard score or the two tests. A substantial difference was evident. The 40 long-term comprehension questions affecting reading recall for both group participants again indicated that the average number of details recalled by students in the integrated approach group was considerably higher than that of the decoding-based group.

This study proved that the integrated instructional approach is an effective intervention for facilitating reading comprehension in students with low reading ability based on Crowe’s (2005) results. Further results implied that the integrated instruction approach demonstrated positive results achieved in comprehension even though the intervention took place for no more than 10 hours. Furthermore, the study revealed that students in the integrated instruction group became more actively involved in the reading process, whereas the decoding based group demonstrated less interest and lacked involvement during the sessions.

As the study by Crowe (2005) examined how corrective feedback during small group instruction could improve overall comprehension scores, the final article by Hall, Sabey, and McClellan (2005) researched the effectiveness of a small group instructional program to address comprehension of expository text.

Hall et al. (2005) conducted a 6-week study to examine the effectiveness of an instructional program designed to teach second graders how to comprehend expository text. This small group instruction took place during guided reading lessons. Within the small group
format, three instructional programs were used; Text Structure, Content, and No Instruction. The main intent of the intervention was focus on text structure awareness in order to facilitate comprehension and recall. The authors of this study were particularly interested in determining the benefits of small group expository text instruction during guided reading to improve comprehension. The primary means of data collection included both pre- and post-assessments that incorporated four measures: summary of a compare/contrast text, identification of clue words in a paragraph, a matrix, and vocabulary. Post-assessment involved five additional measures: three summaries of compare/contrast text, summary of an unstructured text, recall of words, overall use of clue words, and conceptual understanding of compare/contrast.

Furthermore, teacher observation (not including the No Instruction groups) took place once per week for roughly 45 to 60 minutes and recorded notes based on how well the teacher followed the lesson outline, the total time spent on the lesson, and student engagement.

A Title 1 suburban elementary school in Mountain West was used for the study. Forty-six percent of the students received free or reduced-rate lunch and 12% of the students were English language learners. Second grade students were used in which 46 were males and 26 females. The school population was comprised of 87% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, 1% Pacific Islander, and 1% Asian/Other. Five teachers with one to five years of teaching experiences volunteered to participate and deliver instruction within the study.

Three to four second grade students were placed in homogeneous guided reading groups and randomly assigned to one of three conditions: Text Structure, Content, or No Instruction. The Text Structure group contained eight guided-reading groups with a total of 31 students. The Content group contained four guided-reading groups with a total of 17 students. And, lastly, the No Instruction group contained eight guided-reading groups with a total of 24 students.
Interventional instruction included lessons two or three times a week for 20 to 25 minutes per session.

The Text Structure and Content groups used informational books from a guided-reading collection, well structured compare/contrast paragraphs written by the authors of this study, graphic organizers, and paragraph frames. No additional materials were provided to the intervention with the No Instruction group. However, the Text Structure program included having the teacher introduce the text to the students including the content of the book, major vocabulary words, and highlighted comparison clue words (alike, both, similar, but, different, however and contrast), students “mumble read” the text to allow the teacher to “listen in”, discussed and revisited the text by reviewing the vocabulary words and major concepts. From here, graphic organizers were completed by students for comparisons and finally, students wrote summaries of the texts. During the content program group, the teacher introduced the text by activating background knowledge and discussing key vocabulary. Then as the teacher reiterated the concepts of the text, students highlighted important elements and completed graphic organizers. At the end of the lesson, students used their graphic organizers to write a summary of the text. The main focus of the Text Structure group was to emphasize the structure of the text as a way to assist in their comprehension, whereas the main focus of the content program was factual information and associated vocabulary.

Comparisons of pretest and posttest scores made by the researchers showed significantly higher scores for the Text Structure group than the Content group with the exception of the three strategy measures of recall of clue words, matrix, use of clue words, and the conceptual understanding of compare/contrast. For each of these tasks, the Text Structure group scored significantly higher than both the Content group and the No Instruction group. In addition, there
was no substantial difference between the Content and No Instruction groups in any of the measures.

After exploring and comparing the results of the intervention, the researchers concluded that the scores imply that the implemented text structure program was the most effective and the strategies and concepts utilized in this study revealed the necessity to organize expository information to make sense of expository texts. Although text structure awareness is only one strategy that supports expository text comprehension, a most practical implication from this study is that early extensive exposure to expository texts and quality designed instructional programs that employ comprehension strategies are reliable ways to address children’s difficulty with comprehending expository texts.

Because of the nature in which expository text structure is written, young readers, especially those struggling in literacy, tend to have a difficult time comprehending these texts structures posing a challenge for educators. Since expository text includes factual information, and more difficult vocabulary and concepts, educators must therefore know how to present, scaffold, and effectively teach comprehension strategies of expository texts for student success.

Best practice for reading research recommends that instruction allow students to be actively engaged in the reading process by creating a purpose for reading, providing important cues during reading to connect ideas within the text, and modeling how to summarize text (as cited in Adler, 2001). This instruction will facilitate reading comprehension to all students. Reis et al. (2007) concluded that allowing students to choose their own reading literature had an overall effect on student comprehension because students were actively engaged in the reading process. Therefore, teachers must give students some flexibility in choice of text instruction in order to actively engaged young readers. Additionally, Crowe (2005) noticed significant gains in
young readers who received corrective feedback from educators during small group instruction to aid and resolve misconceptions in elementary aged readers. And finally, Hall et al. (2005) carefully studied and concluded the need for educators to teach expository text structure with careful planning which implements instruction on various text structures, graphic organizers that support text structure, key vocabulary knowledge, and the ability to use graphic organizers to develop well-written, comprehensive summaries. It is imperative that educators are aware of assessing readers and providing reading comprehension instruction to aid in their literacy progression with all types of text.

Research supports effective small group intervention techniques that suggest students will obtain higher achievement in literacy. Furthermore, research also supports the concept that these focused instructional lessons with young children should include well-planned fluency, accuracy, and comprehension techniques to support all areas of literacy achievement, not just one particular area (as cited in Foorman & Torgeson, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002). As teachers become more informed about the effectiveness of implementing reading interventions during small-group instruction, they become more prepared to effectively address struggling readers within their classrooms. In turn, these differentiated, goal approached groups allow readers to be successful in becoming automatic, independent readers.

Conclusion

Research illustrates that reading comprehension is a multifaceted process that has been a challenge to completely understand (Stanovich, 2000). An educator’s ability to understand these processes will cultivate student comprehension. It is more evident than ever before that readers face many roadblocks when reading and it is educators’ responsibility to assist these young children in overcoming their individual reading obstacles. Because comprehension processes
involve active involvement by a reader, educators can help students rise above these obstacles through differentiating instruction by implementing small groups, explicitly teaching and modeling fluency, accuracy, and comprehension strategies, and by scaffolding students to help them reach their potential.

The Grouping Techniques section of this chapter focused on the various formats that can be used as an intervention for struggling readers to maximize their reading instruction time and facilitate the skills and strategies needed for reading comprehension. During small group format instruction which applies special concentrating on specific instructional elements, literacy achievement is gained for all readers and all types of text (Vaughn et al., 2003; Mathes et al., 2003).

The Fluency and Accuracy section of this chapter focused on underlying connection between fluency and accuracy in the comprehension process. Students must be able to read fluency and accurately in order to obtain optimal comprehension success. Therefore educators must assess student’s fluency and accuracy skills in connection with their ability to also comprehension text at different levels; a threefold connection (O’Connor et al., 2007; Dekonty et al., 2009).

The Reading Comprehension Techniques section of this chapter offered numerous methods used to help struggling readers improve their comprehension skills. One such group of researchers believes that students who are given a choice of literature materials to read will become actively engaged in the reading process which would ultimately lead to their comprehension of a variety of texts (Reis et al., 2007). Furthermore, another group of researchers support that concept that corrective, immediate feedback during small group literacy intervention will lead students to comprehending text and clearing misconceptions about
comprehension strategies and how to apply them to their independent reading (Crowe, 2005). Finally, special attention was applied to various comprehension strategies applicable to intervention groups working with young readers to improve their comprehension of informational texts as they differ vastly than traditional narrative literature. Using background knowledge, identifying key vocabulary, reading and highlighting text while applying it to supportive graphic organizers, and using visual to support summarization of text will help literacy learners comprehend and think critically in regards to non-fiction literature (Hall et al., 2005).

As Chapter Two examined literature associated with best practices in increasing students fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, Chapter Three describes the population, procedures, and data collection that pertains to this action research study which investigates using differentiated reading groups through small group instruction to improve struggling reader’s fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The intent of this action research project was to identify if using differentiation by way of ability grouping while providing instruction that included appropriate reading skills and strategies as well as oral reading fluency and accuracy skills with struggling 3rd grade readers through the use of leveled texts at students’ instructional level would improve overall fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. Will consistent, secondary small group reading instruction allow struggling readers the means essential to achieve reading success equivalent to peers? Does ability-based reading grouping allow students to receive meaningful, explicit reading instruction based on needs? Will the researcher be able to provide immediate feedback, or corrective feedback, as needed in order to track progress and effectively scaffold instruction for student growth in literacy?

The participants selected for this study are considered struggling readers as assessed and evaluated by the DRA (Beaver, 2001) Informal Reading Inventory. This action research project was specifically designed to offer struggling readers explicit reading instruction and implementation that focused on comprehension skills and strategies as well as oral reading fluency. The content of this chapter includes a detailed description of the sample population, day-by-day overview of the intervention plan, and an explanation of how data was collected and recorded throughout the study.

Sample Population

A total of seven participants were chosen for this action research project. The seven participants attended third grade at the public elementary school in the Bay Lake area of Wisconsin. Test scores in addition to classroom observation indicated that each of these seven
participants were considered struggling readers. Each of the seven participants came from a low-income family, either male or female, native English speakers, and had attended a school within this specific district since Kindergarten. The mean age of the sample was 8.9 years old with ages that ranged from 8 years 10 months old to 9 years 10 months old.

Student 1 was 8 years and 11 months old during the study. She is an only child in her family. According to the January 2013 DRA Informal Reading Inventory (Beaver, 2001), Student 1 scored a 28 as opposed to the grade level expectation of 34. At school, Student 1 enjoys reading, appears engaged and cooperative during independent classroom reading, and completes all nightly reading assignments. However, her parent reported that reading at home was a struggle and she often had to provide her child with some type of motivation in order for her to read at home. Overall, Student 1 had a positive attitude toward school, was cooperative and respectful, but reserved in personality.

Student 2 was 9 years and 3 months old during the study. She is the only child attending elementary school in her family. She is the middle child of three children. According to the January 2013 DRA Informal Reading Inventory (Beaver, 2001), Student 2 scored a 24 as opposed to the grade level expectation of 34. At school, Student 2 enjoyed reading and searching for new books at the library. Completion of her nightly literacy homework was inconsistent. Her parent reported that she did not like to complete reading homework at home. Overall, Student 1 had a positive attitude toward school, but was easily distracted and required constant supervision.

Student 3 was 9 years and 0 months old during the study. He is the youngest child in his family. According to the January 2013 DRA Informal Reading Inventory (Beaver, 2001),
Student 3 scored a 24 as opposed to the grade level expectation of 34. At school, Student 3 enjoyed reading non-fiction literature about the military and airplanes. He completed all nightly reading homework as assigned. His parent reported he is engaged during at-home reading, but struggled to read with appropriate fluency. The researcher noted this in classroom observations as well. Overall, Student 3 had a positive attitude toward school, was cooperative and respectful, but only participated in classroom instruction when called upon.

Student 4 was 9 years and 3 months old during the study. He is the youngest child in his family. According to the January 2013 DRA Informal Reading Inventory (Beaver, 2001), Student 4 scored a 28 as opposed to the grade level expectation of 34. At school, Student 4 expressed an abundance of energy and struggled to read independently without being distracted by his surroundings. He completed all nightly reading homework as assigned. His parents noted that he had a high-energy personality at home as well and thrived on motivational reinforcement. Overall, Student 4 had a likeable personality and tried hard to please adults.

Student 5 was 9 years and 5 months old during the study. He is the youngest child in his family. According to the January 2013 DRA Informal Reading Inventory (Beaver, 2001), Student 5 scored a 30 as opposed to the grade level expectation of 34. At school, Student 5 was easily distracted and needed constant reminders to remain focused on literacy tasks. He completed all literacy homework as assigned. His parent noted that behavior was inconsistent and unpredictable at home as well. Additionally, he enjoyed reading to his parent every night for one-on-one attention. Overall, Student 1 had a positive attitude toward school, tried hard to please adults, but his lack of focus consistently resulted in poor effort and scores on academics.

Student 6 was 8 years and 10 months old during the study. She is an only child in her family. According to the January 2013 DRA Informal Reading Inventory (Beaver, 2001),
Student 6 scored a 30 as opposed to the grade level expectation of 34. At school, Student 6 came to school everyday with a smile on her face. She loved to learn and looked forward to literacy time everyday. Her parents reported that she loved reading at home and looked forward to reading to someone so they could listen to her. Overall, Student 6 had a positive attitude toward school, was cooperative and respectful, but was easily confused and needed constant re-explanation.

Student 7 was 9 years and 1 month old during the study. He is the middle child in his family. According to the January 2013 DRA Informal Reading Inventory (Beaver, 2001), Student 8 scored a 30 as opposed to the grade level expectation of 34. At school, Student 8 enjoyed reading, tried hard to stay focused on literacy tasks, but was easily distracted. He did not return his reading homework to school on a consistent basis. His parent noted that he had an abundance of energy at home and was not always responsible for completing his assigned homework. His homework was only completed when he remembered to do so. Overall, Student 8 participated in classroom instruction, but had an inconsistent attitude toward school, and struggled to treat others respectfully at school.

This section described the seven students that participated in this action research. The following section discusses the procedures followed throughout this action research study.

Procedures

The intervention for this action research project focused on small-group, ability based instruction for a total of six weeks (as well as two weeks for pre-testing and post-testing), 20-30 minute sessions, for a total of four times per week as part of the traditional classroom reading block. During whole-group classroom reading instruction, the researcher modeled new skills and strategies to students by using think-alouds, verbalization, and creating anchor charts to
demonstrate internal thinking and understanding while reading and utilizing new concepts. Each week started out with an introduction of a particular comprehension strategy, as well as both an accuracy and fluency strategy through the use of texts featured in the third grade basal reading series that would be the classroom focus for the week. Then, the researcher met with the seven participants in a small group to reiterate the same skills and strategies through repeated, explicit instruction. The researcher started the small group lesson by explicitly restating the new material learned during whole-group instruction which then led to the instructor modeling the skills and strategies, while referring to the anchor chart created during the whole group instruction, as students observed and participated orally. Finally, the teacher gave step-by-step instructions during practice exercises as well as guided reading using leveled texts while assisting students with the newly taught skills and strategies to aid students and monitor their understanding of the new concepts. The researcher made use of leveled reading texts, both fiction and non-fiction, to teach and practice these skills with students. The researcher assessed student understanding and scaffolded instruction weekly by having the participants complete worksheets that aligned with the texts and focused on comprehension. To assess progression in oral reading fluency, the researcher also tested each student individually at the conclusion of each week to assess oral reading fluency using a fluency passage with rubric.

For validity, weeks three, four, five, six, and seven followed the same daily format as for week two. The only change from week to week was the focus for comprehension skills, strategies, and oral reading fluency strategies; they scaffolded from week to week and changed to improve overall comprehension and fluency.

During week two of the study, the researcher met with the seven participants four times for small group sessions for approximately 20 minutes. The secondary, small-group lessons
focused on explicit instruction of the skills and strategies introduced during whole-group instruction. During week two, the small-group received further instruction on theme and plot, activating schema or background knowledge, and reading orally with accuracy. Day one began with the introduction of a leveled reader text (see Appendix A) where the seven participants activated background knowledge related to the theme of the leveled text for the week. The participants shared their background knowledge (see Appendix B) with the researcher and a visual web was created to share their thinking. Next, the researcher introduced the leveled text (see Appendix A) for the week by outlining the title, author, illustrator, and completed a picture walk with students. Then, the group used the information they had already discussed and viewed to create meaningful predictions with the researcher (see Appendix B). The predictions were written on an anchor chart and posted on the wall where the group met. The researcher reviewed the meaning of plot that was previously explained during whole group instruction and asked students if they could predict a complete story using the predictions they had given. The researcher focused her instruction of plot by reiterating to students that plot is comprised of three parts of the story: beginning, middle and end. Further explanation to students focused in on the idea that understanding a story’s plot helps readers to comprehend and pinpoint the main idea of the story. The researcher instructed students on the next days lesson where each participant would take turns reading the text. At the conclusion of the lesson, students were asked to take the leveled text home and complete an oral picture walk with a family member (see Appendix B). Additionally, students were asked to share three predictions with a family member stating what they believed was going to happen during the story.

Day two of the weekly intervention lesson began by having students review the pervious days lesson. After the review, the researcher asked students to open their book to the beginning.
During the lesson, each student took a turn reading a page of the text. At the end of each page, students shared predictions as to what they predicted would happen next. The researcher periodically stopped to discuss various comprehension elements such as: setting, plot, and main idea (see Appendix C). The researcher also stopped on occasion to ask students various comprehension questions to check for understanding. From here, the researcher started a mini-lesson with the small group that focused on the fluency strategy for the week; reading with accuracy. After a brief explanation of this strategy, the researcher modeled the difference between reading with and without fluency. After the explanation, students were asked to reread the text using the accuracy strategy that was explained. For homework, students were asked to explain to a parent what reading with accuracy meant (see Appendix C). They also were asked to reread the text to a parent using the accuracy strategy.

On the third day of the intervention, the group started by reviewing the previous days work. From here, the researcher grouped students into pairs and asked the partners to take turns rereading the leveled text using accuracy. During this activity, the researcher observed and took notes recording observations for each student’s accuracy. After the activity, the small group returned together and focused attention on predictions. The researcher reviewed the predictions that the group had created on day one. The researcher asked the participants to think about which predictions were correct and how their predictions changed from page to page (see Appendix D). The researcher prompted students by saying, “Before we read the story, I thought that….was going to happen, but….happened.” Students took turns orally sharing how their predictions changed. As students shared, the researcher took notes. The lesson concluded by asking the participants to complete a worksheet that included focus questions about the theme and plot of the text (see Appendix E). For homework, students took the worksheet home and
shared the questions and answers they responded with to a parent.

On the fourth and final day of the weekly intervention lesson, students gathered with the researcher to review the skills and strategies for the week using the basal text that was introduced and used daily during whole-group instruction (see Appendix F). The researcher read aloud a sample comprehension question that related to the text and its plot. The teacher modeled how to reread the given page, the page given to students where the answer could be located, using oral reading accuracy. The researcher modeled to students how to answer the sample comprehension question by writing the answer and applying student input. From here, students completed two additional comprehension questions (see Appendix E) that related to theme and plot using the basal text. For homework, students took the comprehension worksheet and again shared their responses with a parent.
This section explained the procedures of this action research study whereas the next section discusses how data was collected and recorded throughout the study.

**Data Collection**

A variety of data collection sources were used by the researcher throughout the duration of this action research study. Pre-testing, post-testing, running records, students work, and anecdotal notes were used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of this intervention. The pre-test given during week one of the study consisted of the DRA Reading Assessment (Beaver, 2001) (see Appendix G). The results of this assessment in conjunction with classroom observations determined the seven participants for this study. After the seven participants were selected, an
informal oral reading fluency assessment, a Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), was also given to determine accuracy and fluency (see Appendix H).

During each 20-30 minute intervention session, the researcher took anecdotal notes, collected student samples, and completed running records for oral reading fluency. The anecdotal notes allowed the researcher to evaluate student achievement and progress in comprehension and fluency. Student samples, worksheets relating to leveled texts and basal texts, allowed the researcher a second chance to review the student’s ability to understand and model understanding of comprehension skills and strategies through written work. Finally, running records for fluency allowed the researcher to compare overall achievement over a period of six weeks. The researcher made an imperative effort to actively collect and evaluate data each week and adjust instruction for the following week to meet the comprehension and fluency needs for the participants involved.

Post-testing during week eight followed the same format as pre-testing during week one. The DRA Reading Assessment (Beaver, 2001) (see Appendix G) was again used to compare reading level and comprehension at the beginning of the study and at the conclusion to determine if students reading level increased as a result of text comprehension. On the other hand, the Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) was given one final time, a total of eight times during the study, to compare the overall trend of oral reading improvement over the eight weeks of the study (see Appendix H).

In this section, I have outlined and discussed the data collection sources pertaining to the evaluation and determination of the overall effectiveness of this intervention. The final section of this chapter re-illustrates the sample, procedures, and data collection used in this study.
Summary

The intervention used in this study addressed the researcher’s initial question about the efficiency of using small-group, ability-based reading intervention to improve overall comprehension and fluency in struggling third grade readers using explicit instruction and practice. Seven third grade students participated in this study that focused on small group instruction of comprehension skills and strategies as well as oral reading fluency strategies. Explicit instruction and practice of these skills and strategies were modeled and implemented during daily intervention time. As a result, data was collected and assessed to determine overall effectiveness. Within this chapter, I have discussed the sample population, procedures, and data collection admissible to improving comprehension and fluency. The following chapter illustrates that results of the data collected throughout this action research project and determines overall effectiveness of the researcher’s intervention.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Does differentiating reading instruction by way of ability grouping while providing instruction that included appropriate reading skills and strategies as well as oral reading fluency and accuracy skills with struggling 3rd grade readers through the use of leveled texts at the students instructional level help improve comprehension, fluency, and accuracy? This inquisition was the driving-force of this action research project. This in depth chapter explains the results of the data collected and analyzes what the data suggests in relation to the action research question. The evaluation of this data explains how the researcher determined and gave support to this research question.

Presentation of Data

Data collection was the sole driving force at answering this action research question proposed by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher carefully selected and tracked student achievement using a variety of assessment types.

One way the researcher adequately attempted to track student growth was to compare pre and post test results using the DRA (Beaver, 2001) reading assessment (see Appendix G). The researcher assessed students to determine an overall DRA (Beaver, 2001) instructional level during Week 1 and Week 8 of the intervention (see Appendix G). During the middle of 3rd grade, students were expected to have an instructional level of 34, which meant that students were reading instructionally at the average grade level for that time of year. DRA (Beaver, 2001) scores move by 4 points for each level of text mastered (see Appendix G). Therefore, a student reading at level 30 would translate to a student reading at the beginning of the year 3rd grade level. A student with a reading level of 38 would be the end of the year expected reading
level of a 3rd grader. Students selected for this action research project were chosen by the researcher because at the time of administration of the DRA assessment, (Beaver, 2001) participants were achieving below the expected grade level for reading (see Appendix G). Many of the students tested at reading levels in the 20’s which translated to a 2nd grade reading level (refer to Figure 1.1).

For validity, students were given a new reading passage for both pretest and posttest. The design of the DRA (Beaver, 2001) reading assessment (see Appendix G) allowed the researcher to use a new passage for both pretest and posttest at the grade level assessed using either narrative or expository texts. This ensured that the researcher gave each student a reading passage not previously seen or read before in order to obtain a true depiction of each participant’s reading level.

In order for the participants to increase their instructional reading level, students were reassessed using the DRA (Beaver, 2001) reading inventory (see Appendix G). Each student was given one higher level of text than previously administered on the pretest. In order to increase their score, students needed to obtain a higher level of oral reading accuracy when reading aloud to the researcher as well as demonstrate an instructional score for comprehension questions and tasks assessed using a rubric. Together, the accuracy score as well as the comprehension score determined whether or not the student improved, remained the same, or decreased.

When scoring the DRA assessment, the researcher focused attention on the comprehension component of the assessment rubric to determine if the participants could comprehend a higher level of text than used during the pretest. To do this, the researcher met with each student individually at the conclusion of the action research and selected a higher level
of text, narrative or expository, than previously achieved by the student. If the student’s comprehension score fell into the “instructional” section, this meant that the child was reading and comprehending a text at their instructional level. If the child’s score was below instructional, namely “intervention,” this meant the child was not accurately comprehending that particular level of text and then the researcher completed the assessment using a lower level text. On the other hand, if the participant’s comprehension score was “independent,” this meant the child was reading at this level with no instruction needed. As a result, the researcher chose a text, narrative or expository, one level higher, to retest for “instructional” level where the child was able to comprehend text accurately. Figure 4.1 shows a detailed depiction of the results prior to the intervention and again after completion of the intervention.

Figure 4.1

*Pre-test and Post-test DRA Comprehension Results*
Within the comprehension section of the DRA reading assessment (Beaver, 2001), several subcomponents were compared for each participant during pretesting and posttesting to determine if successful comprehension was achieved by using a slightly higher level text (see Appendix G). As the DRA assessment was individually administered to the student, the child listened to a brief description of the text and then read aloud the two pages of the text to the researcher. After this, the passages were collected and the participants were assessed on their ability to use text features and make predictions that went beyond the text read aloud. From there, the students completed the reading of the text independently. After reading, the students were asked to write a detailed summary of the story and answer a variety of comprehension questions. At the conclusion of the test, the researcher read each summary and assessed the summary and comprehension questions using the rubric. These after reading components included: scaffolded summary, scaffolded summary vocabulary, literal comprehension, interpretation, and reflection. When each rubric was scored and evaluated by the researcher, the researcher determined if any retesting needed to take place if the students’ comprehension level was below or above “instructional.” If the student scored in the “instructional” category, testing was concluded.

Also related to the DRA reading assessment (Beaver, 2001) was the administration and comparison of scores using the Accuracy component of the DRA rubric (see Appendix G). Under this assessment, the researcher scored and compared results of pre-test and post-test levels of reading accuracy. During the initial start of the test, the researcher listened to, wrote anecdotal notes, and analyzed each participant’s ability to read with accuracy, no errors. As each student read the beginning two pages of the text aloud to the researcher, the researcher timed and noted any oral reading mistakes the participant made during the assessment. From there, the
researcher counted the number of errors to determine the student’s accuracy in reading the leveled text. By comparing pre-test and post-test results for Accuracy using the DRA assessment, the researcher was able to infer if the intervention was successful in helping the participants improve their oral reading accuracy skills. Figure 4.2 gives a detailed illustration comparing pre-test and post-test results for oral reading accuracy using the DRA (Beaver, 2001) reading assessment rubric (see Appendix G).

Figure 4.2

Pre-Test & Post-Test Results for Oral Reading Accuracy

Running records were collected weekly by the researcher before, during, and after the intervention took place to assess the intervention’s influence on oral reading fluency. Fluency scores were calculated using the Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996)
using fluency passages self-selected by the researcher based on each students’ instructional reading level (see Appendix H). Prior to the start of the intervention this fluency assessment was given. Then, at the conclusion of each subsequent week, the fluency assessment was re-administered using a new passage to assess growth over time as a result of the fluency intervention and fluency strategies being modeled and practiced during small group instruction. Within the Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) several subcategories were assessed to determine an overall fluency score (see Appendix H). These subcategories included: reading rate, phrasing, intonation, pausing, stress, and integration of overall fluency strategies. To align instruction with assessment, the researcher explicitly taught and modeled each of these subcategories during the 8-week study to ensure that students would be assessed on fluency skills and strategies they fully understood. Figure 4.3 shows a detailed description of the overall oral reading fluency trend each participant demonstrated over the course of the eight-week action research study.

Figure 4.3

Progression of Oral Reading Fluency Achievement
Analysis of Data

The results of the DRA (Beaver, 2001) comprehension scores comparing pre-test to post-test (Figure 4.1) indicated a noticeable increase in the students’ comprehension levels using a higher level text for the majority of participants. That is, students showed improvement in their ability to successfully comprehend a higher level of text. However, relevant to the accepted comprehension level for instructional reading, only one student’s comprehension score did not show an increase at the conclusion of the intervention program. Detailed description for each participant are as follows: Student 1 showed an increase in comprehension by increasing instructional text level from 28 to 30, only one text level below grade expectancy as compared to two levels below. Student 2 showed an increase in comprehension by increasing instructional text level from 24 to 28, two text levels away from grade level expectancy as compared to three levels previously. Student 3 as mentioned above did not show an increase in comprehension for a higher-level text. Student 3 remained instructional for comprehension at level 24, still three text levels below grade expectancy. Student 4 increased instructional text comprehension by improving text levels from 28 to 30, one text-level away as opposed to two levels away from grade level expectancy. Student 5 initially scored a level 30 for instructional comprehension as compared to level 34 at post-test, now only one level below expectation. And, remarkably, Student 6 made an outstanding improvement by increasing instructional text comprehension levels from 30 to 38, an increase in two levels and now, one grade level above expectance. Across the eight-week study, the overall average increase of students’ instructional text comprehension levels increased by 0.86%, almost one text level per participant. The data suggests an overall increase in instructional text comprehension as a result of the intervention program.
Comparison of DRA (Beaver, 2001) Oral Reading Accuracy scores (Figure 4.2) contains data collected from pre-tests and post-tests for each of the seven participants. The data suggests that all seven participants demonstrated an increase in oral reading accuracy as follows. Student 1 increased oral reading accuracy scores from 94% to 96%, a 2% increase over eight weeks. Student 2 increased oral accuracy scores from 96% to 98%, also a 2% increase over eight weeks of intervention instruction. Student 3 demonstrated a 4% increase from 95% to 99% accuracy. Student 4 improved oral reading accuracy scores from 97% to 100%, a 3% increase demonstrating no reading errors at the conclusion of the study. Student 5 increased scores by 2% from 95% to 96% accuracy. Student 6 showed an increase over time from 95% to 99%, a total increase on 4%. And, finally, student 7 showed an overall oral reading accuracy increase from 97% to 98%, a 1% increase as a result of the study. One final component assessed and interpreted during this action research study was the comparison of fluency scores over time.

The researcher’s comparison of oral reading fluency results during the eight weeks of study showed an overall increase from beginning to end for each of the seven willing participants. Using the Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), the researcher administered weekly assessments using different leveled texts at the students’ instructional levels (see Appendix H). Using the rubric, students could have earned a full total of 24 points demonstrating full understanding and use of all fluency strategies (reading rate, phrasing, intonation, pausing, stress, and integration of overall fluency strategies). Comparison percentages for each participant from Week 1 to Week 8 are as follows: Student 1 increased oral reading fluency from 75% at pre-test to 100% fluency at post-test, a 25% increase. Student 2 increased fluency by 50% from a pre-test score of 50% to a post-test score of 100%. Student 3 increased fluency from 67% to 100% over the eight-week intervention. Student 4 also made a
significant increase over time in the area of fluency by improving test results from 75% to 96% respectively. Student 5 increased fluency by 33% over eight-weeks from 50% to 83%. Student 6 increased fluency from 42% at pre-test to 75% at post-tests, an overall increase of 33%. And, finally, Student 7 increased fluency by 50% overall from 42% at pre-test and 92% at post-test. The average increase in oral reading fluency over the course of the eight-week study for participants was 35%, a significant increase as a reflection of the intervention denoted by the data.

This section analyzed the results of the data collected within this action research study. The final section will summarize these results.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, an explanation of the research data collected was explained which both challenged and supported this action research question: Does differentiating reading instruction by way of ability grouping and integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies utilizing leveled texts with struggling 3rd grade readers help improve comprehension, fluency, and accuracy? The data collection for this action research project through the use of pre-testing, post-testing, anecdotal notes, and running records determined that the weekly, explicit intervention including comprehension skills and strategies as well as fluency and accuracy instruction suggested there was an overall rise in reading comprehension for higher leveled texts as well as oral reading fluency and accuracy for the majority of students. The final chapter of this action research project illustrates a complete examination of the data obtained in regards to best practice research and Common Core Standards, a detailed examination of the results, various strengths and limitations apparent within the study, and the researcher’s personal recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

The purpose of this research study was to investigate if providing daily, supplementary isolated instruction to struggling readers and differentiating instruction by way of explicitly teaching and modeling comprehension strategies along with fluency and accuracy instruction through the use of instructional leveled texts would allow the students who struggle in reading to demonstrate their learning, receive sufficient and immediate corrective feedback, allow a teacher to track and properly scaffold the students’ learning, and offer opportunities for reading success equivalent to their peers. In this chapter, connections to Common Core Standards and existing research are addressed in regards to the results of the data collected during this action research study as well as various strengths and limitations of the studies’ design and implementation, and finally recommendations for future research on this topic will be identified.

Connections to Academic Standards and Existing Research

This action research project, Differentiating Instruction by way of Ability Grouping and Integrating Appropriate Reading Skills and Strategies Through the use of Instructional Leveled Texts to Improve Comprehension, Fluency, and Accuracy for Struggling 3rd Grade Readers, was devised in response to the growing concern of struggling 3rd grade readers and their ability to read accurately, fluently, and demonstrate comprehension using a variety of texts. The main component of this research study was to address the needs of struggling readers through the use of explicit, small group instruction similar to the studies of Vaughn et al. (2003), Mathes et al. (2003), and Tobin and McInnes (2008). Vaughn et al. (2003) found that using a one-to-one or one-to-three grouping technique improved literacy for students as opposed to a larger group with a ratio similar to one-to-ten. Similarly, Mathes et al. (2003) used a small group instructional
technique along with peer-assisted group work to improve literacy achievement. And finally, Tobin and McInnes (2008) used small group reading instruction focusing on a scaffolded approach to teaching and modeling to improve reading achievement in young readers. These researchers studied and determined that providing small group reading intervention instruction to struggling elementary readers helped improve overall literacy achievement (Vaughn et al. (2003), Mathes et al. (2003), and Tobin and McInnes (2008). The overall concern of declining literacy achievement should be the forefront of all literacy teachers as it affects the student’s future academic success in every way. We as educators are responsible for closing this achievement gap by providing students with the necessary tools to be successful in regards to literacy. It was the intent of this action research project to provide supplemental literacy instruction which focused on the use of leveled texts to improve overall comprehension, fluency, and accuracy in an effort to improve literacy skills for students at an early age and to narrow the literacy achievement gap in young children.

The instruction for this research project was based on the framework set by Ryder et al. (2006), McIntyre et al. (2005), and Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005). Ryder et al. (2006) discovered that using direct instruction in a small group format helped to increase literacy achievement. Therefore, the design of this study focused in on a small group of identified struggling readers where direct instruction was provided at the beginning of each lesson to reiterate literacy skills and strategies being introduced and modeled. Similarly, Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) determined that providing reading intervention to upper elementary students would be one form of an educator’s response to improving future literacy success. In this study, upper elementary students were identified as needing more support in literacy achievement and were therefore placed into a group where they would receive
comprehension, fluency, and accuracy instruction. Finally, students were given supportive reading instruction throughout this study as they started to use and apply the newly taught concepts to their practice work with the instruction just like that of the research design by McIntrye et al. (2005). In order to provide the students the instruction necessary to improve their literacy achievement, this study was devised which identified struggling readers in need of reading intervention, provided direct instruction by modeling new skills and strategies, and gave support to students as they applied the newly learned concepts to their practice work.

Within this action research study, several Grade Three Wisconsin Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011) were addressed by way of implementing small group isolated instruction that differentiated instruction through explicit teaching and modeling of comprehension strategies in addition to accuracy and fluency strategies. Common Core State Standards (2011) are designed with the intention that students move forward in each grade level of literacy building on previously learned knowledge to obtain optimal comprehension of a variety of texts. The outlay for this action research study specifically linked to and addressed the Reading Standards for Literature which includes Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, and Range of Reading Level of Text Complexity and Foundational Skills Grade 3 that incorporate Fluency and Accuracy (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2011).

During the daily, small group instruction of this action research project, key goals addressed the reading standards by equipping students with the skills necessary to become self-directed, independent, efficient readers of all types of text. The above standards most relevant to this research project required students to demonstrate in-depth comprehension. To do this, students needed to demonstrate an understanding of key details in text, retell stories determining
the central message, describe the overall structure of a story, use information gained from the illustrations and text to demonstrate an understanding of the characters, setting, and plot (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2011). Before students are able to engage and comprehend in text, students must demonstrate a strong willingness and inquisition for reading as determined in the research study conducted by Reis et al. (2007). Therefore, the intent of this research design focused on leveled texts with various narrative and expository topics to engage readers. From there, the instructor used the leveled texts to model for students key comprehension, fluency, and accuracy skills that would support their literacy. As students started to apply these newly learned strategies to their practice work with the instructors support, students were given immediate, corrective feedback as they demonstrated their understanding of the concepts to the instructor. This model of implementing corrective feedback aligned closely with the research study conducted by Crowe (2005) where students were given feedback that aided in their comprehension success. Overall, this research project implemented both student motivation and engagement as well as corrective feedback to aide in the achievement and ability for students to increase their instructional text level while demonstrating adequate comprehension.

Another equally important aspect of this action research design, in addition to grouping techniques and comprehension techniques, was to improve fluency and accuracy skills for struggling readers. Well-educated teachers understand the important connection between a reader’s ability to read accurately and fluently while focusing attention on comprehension of text as past research of DeKonty et al. (2009) illustrates. According to the Wisconsin Common Core Standards (2011), educators must provide instruction that allows students to apply grade-level fluency and accuracy skills to improve overall comprehension. In order for students to achieve adequate comprehension, they must be first assessed to determine a reading level appropriate for
them to focus their attention on reading passages fluently and accurately as opposed to decoding
difficult text similar of the past research conducted by Dekonty et al. (2009). After the
struggling readers were identified within this study, they were given a leveled text supportive of
their reading level based on pre-test results. This is aligned with research by Dekonty et al.
(2009) which included instruction where students were given text they could read efficiently
focusing on accuracy and fluency rather than decoding. Supportive research by O’Connor et al.
(2007) was also applied to this action research study to improve fluency and accuracy in
struggling third grade readers. O’Connor et al. (2007) found that including instructional
techniques of repeated reading and continuous reading improved both reading fluency and
accuracy, and comprehension in struggling readers. Because of this applied research, repeated
readings were used daily as students used the same leveled texts each day as part of the small
group intervention work. Implementation of this repeated reading activity was used in
anticipation of increasing students’ fluency similar to O’Connor et al. (2007). Additionally, as
students in O’Connor et al.’s (2007) study increased their reading rate by 20 words per minute,
the participants in this study too did improve in their overall fluency and accuracy scores
utilizing informal reading inventory assessments.

While this section explored connections to existing research and standards, the next
section provides a detailed explanation of the results of this action research project which studied
how differentiated instruction by way of ability grouping through the use of explicit instruction
on comprehension, fluency, and accuracy skills and strategies implementing leveled texts
improved overall literacy in struggling third grade students.
Explaination of Results

The intent and design of this study was to establish whether differentiating instruction by way of individualized reading instruction that integrated appropriate reading skills and strategies with struggling third grade readers in a small group setting would improve their comprehension, oral reading fluency, and accuracy by using instructional leveled texts. Data results were based on two main assessments given to students before, during, and after the intervention: running records (weekly) which assessed oral reading fluency skills, and a benchmark test (pretest and posttest) that gathered information on comprehension along with oral reading accuracy skills. Overall, the majority of participants demonstrated growth in comprehension, fluency, and accuracy. Further explanation is as follows.

When analyzing the results of the participants’ comprehension records using the DRA informal reading assessment (Beaver, 2001), different texts were selected for both pretest and posttest. These texts were either expository or narrative. All but one participant made gains for instructional reading level as a result of the intervention and increased comprehension scores by reading a text of higher level while demonstrating adequate comprehension. A likely explanation for this rise in reading text level and comprehension is most likely due to the instructors use of both direct and scaffolded reading instruction when assisting the struggling readers in their application of the strategies and skills similar to that of the research studies conducted by both Tobin and McInnes (2008) and Ryder et al. (2006). Another explanation for these results could be the instructors use of explicit modeling in the small group format that reiterated comprehension skills and strategies introduced, modeled, and practiced during whole-group instruction similar to research by Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) who also found that the use of explicit instruction during small group intervention improved overall literacy
scores in young readers. Surprisingly, Student 7 increased comprehension and instructional text level by two text levels as opposed to just one level of the other participants. The most likely explanation for Student 7’s dramatic increase in levels is due to effort applied during reading tasks. Student 7 is very inconsistent with his work, especially literacy; his least favorite subject. Because of the small group format of the intervention, Student 7 likely thrived on the small group attention and therefore, applied more effort as corrective feedback and attention were consistently given by the researcher. Overall, students in this study demonstrated an increase in reading text level and comprehension which corresponds to research studies conducted by Tobin and McInnes (2008) and Ryder et al. (2006) which concluded that students who are assessed, given appropriate instructional texts, and receive meaningful literacy instruction based on needs tend to show an increase in overall literacy achievement over time.

However, it should be dually noted that Student 3’s scores did not increase or decrease, but rather stayed the same before, during, and after the intervention took place. The most likely reason for Student 3’s lack of increase in scores is due to his independent reading text selection. During silent reading time, library book checkout, as well as at-home reading, Student 7 will only engage in reading books revolving around warlike topics. Unfortunately, the written literature of these books contains a much higher reading level than Student 7 is able to comprehend. He is likely spending most of his reading engaged in trying to decode the text rather than reading for comprehension. The only time Student 7 is engaged in reading books at his instructional level is during small group intervention. The possibility for Student 7 to increase comprehension scores may have been more relevant during the instruction if appropriately leveled books of his interest were used to motivate and engage him similar to supportive research findings obtain by DeKonty et al. (2009) as well as Reis et al. (2007) where
both student interest and engagement were used with leveled texts to increase literacy
achievement. In sum, the majority of participants within this study demonstrated an increase in
comprehension; one of the three major instructional focuses of this research project.

As anticipated by the researcher, overall scores for oral reading accuracy increased when
comparing results of pretest and posttest. Oral reading fluency was also assessed using the DRA
informal reading inventory (Beaver, 2001). Given an instructional leveled book, students were
expected to read the first two to three pages of the text aloud to the researcher in which case the
researcher took notes of miscues and calculated total mistakes and each student’s accuracy
percentage. All students demonstrated an increase in oral reading accuracy. The rise in oral
reading accuracy scores pertaining to this research study is likely due in part to the intervention
lessons provided as well as that of similar research conducted by O’Conner et al. (2007) and
DeKonty et al. (2009) where fluency intervention was used with elementary aged children to
assist in comprehension achievement. During the intervention, students were given a fluency
focus for the week in which they worked on a specific fluency skill repeatedly to improve their
oral reading. The instruction provided during this research study, which focused heavily on six
different fluency skills, is likely the result in the rise of overall fluency scores because students
were provided with repeated, scaffolded instruction similar to the research study and design
conducted by Tobin and McInnes (2008).

The final component of literacy addressed by this action research study was the effects of
improving oral reading fluency. Oral reading fluency was assessed once per week for a total of
eight weeks using the Fluency in Reading K-3 Rubric (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) (see Appendix
H). Students were given a short passage at their instructional level to read aloud to the
researcher independently. A new passage was given each week to maintain validity and ensure
that each reading was a blind reading with no former instruction or knowledge of the passage. All students with the exception of Student 7 increased oral reading fluency scores in a steady, positive progressive trend. These research findings presented here which suggest an overall increase in fluency are consistent with findings made by Dekonty et al. (2009) that focused teachings on fluency strategies during small group instruction where students demonstrated similar results. When comparing Week 1 scores to Week 8 scores, each of these students made a significant increase in oral reading fluency over the course of eight weeks. These significant findings which suggest an overall increase in oral reading fluency are most likely due to the instructors’ use of focusing fluency instruction on reading rate and providing immediate, corrective feedback to participants as needed, which is consistent with research obtained in studies by O’Conner et al. (2007) and Tobin and McInnes (2008). However, Student 7 as previously mentioned struggled with effort on coursework. For Student 7, Weeks 1, 2, and 3 remained the same with neither an increase nor a decrease in his fluency scores. As Student 7 became more engaged and motivated by the small group lesson, he continued to put forth more effort in trying to improve his fluency with the assistance of the researcher’s corrective feedback. Over time though, Student 7 also showed an increase in oral reading fluency similar to the research results obtained by Crowe (2005) who also found that student motivation and engagement improved overall literacy scores.

As this section explained the results obtained throughout the study as well as implications for which the data suggest and concludes its overall effectiveness, the following section discusses strengths and limitations present in the study that became evident to the researcher at the conclusion of the study.
Strengths and Limitations

This action research showed improvement in reading comprehension, oral reading fluency, and accuracy after explicit instruction of these areas was implemented during daily, small group instruction by way of ability grouping and using instructional leveled texts to help support struggling readers. The research had both strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths of this study was the preexisting relationship the researcher had with the participants. The intervention occurred in the third quarter of the school year and the students were familiar with the researcher’s teaching style and expectations. The positive relationship allowed for the teaching of comprehension, fluency, and accuracy strategies to begin immediately as an extension of whole group instruction as a result of the familiar environment. Furthermore, instruction was completed during regular school hours using similar teaching techniques used throughout the traditional school day.

Another equally important strength of the intervention was the daily, repeated routine for each lesson. Each lesson implemented during the research followed the same procedure and was part of the school day at the same time each day. Each of the participants thrived on routine and demonstrated feelings of security that occur with regular routine. As the students quickly adjusted to the daily procedure, the routine became second nature allowing more time and attention to focus on the three specific areas of intervention: comprehension, fluency, and accuracy. To the researcher, it felt rewarding to see an increase in self-confidence in each of the participants and to also see them transfer their confidence into whole-group literacy discussions prior to each intervention session.

Finally, the structure of the small group format allowed the researcher to provide immediate, corrective feedback to each participant. This allowed the researcher to make
informal assessments of each student’s knowledge, scaffold instruction, and allow students to transfer these essential literacy skills into their independent reading. The ultimate goal of teachers of literacy is to teach students the necessary skills and strategies available to readers and to aid them in applying these skills and strategies to their independent work. By supporting readers in this way, educators create efficient, critical thinkers of a variety of texts. Therefore, this action research design allowed struggling readers opportunities to learn and apply literacy knowledge they gained to their own work, allowing them to think deeply about the literature they were surrounded by.

On the other hand, there were some limitations within this action research project that may have affected the results of this literacy study. One such limitation was the nonuse of a control group. By utilizing a control or comparison group, the researcher might have more clearly determined if the intervention proved successful for struggling readers receiving the supplemental support as opposed to struggling readers receiving only traditional, whole-group classroom instruction.

Another equally important limitation of the intervention was the short time span in which the study was conducted. Although eight weeks of instruction seems to be an adequate amount of time to pretest, apply an intervention, and posttest students, it is also a short time span in the development of a child’s literacy skills. Literacy knowledge is not necessarily learned and applied overnight, it develops over time for all types of readers. Therefore, if the intervention had lasted longer, the study may have yielded different results. Furthermore, students were given nightly homework assignments that related or reiterated literacy concepts that were addressed within the instruction of the study. The study may have yielded different results if conducted again in which case students would not have access to literacy instruction through the
use of an adult at home. Any instruction parents may have provided during the course of the study could have affected the overall posttest results, but the overall likelihood in increase is due to the intervention implementation as a whole.

Finally, another important limitation of the research study was to consider the timing for which this research project took place as well as the students’ background knowledge in literacy. Because the research was implemented during the third quarter of the school year, students had already received approximately 18 weeks of literacy instruction at the third grade level prior to the research taking place. This may have affected the results of the study because of the likelihood that some of the comprehension, fluency, and accuracy strategies had already been previously discussed before the intervention took place. Another aspect considered by the researcher was the idea that students may have received similar literacy instruction in Second Grade, but did not apply the knowledge consistently. Perhaps when the instructor reiterated some of the previously taught concepts that students had forgotten about, it reminded students how and when to use the strategies. Furthermore, the instruction and practice students completed with the researcher may have led to the students’ ability to remember and more appropriately use the strategies in regards to their independent reading. Finally, the researcher considered the results of Student 7’s overall performance and determined that the lack of evaluation and use of student interest in text choice may have affected the studies’ results. Perhaps if the researcher had incorporated student interests in the research design, the results might possibly have yielded higher achievement scores as students would have been more engaged in the texts they encountered. Overall, the researcher considered various strengths and limitations that may have affected the final results. These strengths and limitations will serve as a guiding point in the event that the researcher decides to repeat or extend the research study.
While this section focused on some of the strengths and limitations of the study, the following section provides suggestions for future research of these literacy topics addressed within this study.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Even though the outcomes of this action research project proved to be effective for the majority of struggling readers, recommendations for further research should be applied. Future research using this research study design should include the same instruction, but for a longer period of time. As previously mentioned, completing this study over a longer duration may have yielded different, or if not, better results. Next, the original design of this study did not include a comparison or control group. Struggling readers need intervention to become successful comprehenders and thinkers of text; this is evident. However, it would have been important to conclude if whole-group reading instruction using the exact same instruction as the supplementary, small-group instruction would have also increased literacy scores for struggling readers. In other words, would the struggling readers of the control group have increased literacy scores similar to those receiving the supplemental reading instruction if the instruction was the same for both whole-group and small group formats? As previously mentioned, incorporation of these ideas would provide a more valid measure of achievement. A more effective measure of the student’s ability to transfer the comprehension strategies and skills as well as fluency and accuracy components would also be beneficial in determining student success.

Future research should also explore how best to generate and record reading achievement for poor readers during routine general class instruction, as well as isolated instruction. Research that includes differentiating instruction for all learners, regardless if they are struggling or
advanced learners, to improve all students learning would help educators achieve the ultimate goal of reaching all students despite their academic needs.

**Conclusion**

The study, Differentiating Instruction by way of Ability Grouping and Integrating Appropriate Reading Skills and Strategies Through the use of Instructional Leveled Texts to Improve Comprehension, Fluency, and Accuracy for Struggling 3rd Grade Readers, set out to test the effectiveness of explicitly teaching comprehension, fluency, and accuracy skills to improve overall comprehension through small group instruction. This chapter focused on the connection this study had with regard to other best practiced research and the Common Core Academic Standards (2011), an explanation of the results of this study, its strengths and limitations, as well as recommendations for future research in this area. This research study confirmed results from other similar research studies and validated that differentiating instruction by way of integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies with struggling third grade readers in a small group setting would improve their comprehension, fluency and accuracy. On average, students demonstrated growth in all areas: comprehension, accuracy of oral reading, and fluency. The participants in this study became a little more self-sufficient and self-confident in their work habits and began to apply those same skills and strategies to their independent reading. As demonstrated by this study, explicit instruction of comprehension, fluency, and accuracy skills and strategies may provide an additional tool for students to use in demonstrating reading comprehension. Most noteworthy is that all teachers could easily implement the structure of this research and many other studies within their general classroom instruction with minimal or no training.
References


research has to say about reading instruction Third Edition. Newark: DE: International Reading Association, Inc.


The Best Guess – Day 1

Name: __________________

Building background knowledge!
Write and share a quick story about a time when you had to make a guess.

Make predictions!
Tell two things you think may happen in this story based on things we’ve discussed, pictures you’ve seen, and the first page of text we read together.

Homework: Complete a picture walk of this story while an adult watches and listens to you. 😊

Parent Signature: __________________
The Best Guess – Day 2

Define the following terms:

Theme:

Plot:

Setting:

Explain in your own words was the phrase “oral reading accuracy” means? What does it sound like?

Homework: Explain what “accuracy” means. Read the story fluently to an adult as he/she listens to you.

Parent Signature: ______________________
The Best Guess – Day 3

Name: __________________________

How did you predictions change during the story? Give specific examples and be ready to share with the group.

Homework: Take home your comprehension worksheet and share your answers to questions 1, 2, and 3 with an adult as they listen to you. ☺

Parent Signature: __________________________
Name: __________________

**Theme and Plot Worksheet**

**Text: The Best Guess**

1. How did the characters (the children in the neighborhood) act at the beginning of the story? What were they doing?

2. What did the characters do in the middle of the story?

3. What did the characters do at the end of the story?

4. How do you think Harlan felt after Nora got "the best guess" right? Do you think he regrets his decision to give a guess right away?

5. What was the "big idea" of the story?
The Best Guess – Day 4

Name:______________________

Define the following terms (skills and strategies we learned this week) in your own words.

Theme:

Plot:

Setting:

Accuracy:

For homework: Take home your comprehension worksheet and share your answers to questions 4 and 5 with an adult as they listen to you. 😊
Appendix G

Missing Sneakers
Written by Marcie Aboff
Illustrated by Bob Alley

A Benchmark Assessment Book
Teacher Observation Guide

**Tiger’s Whirlwind Day**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Date</th>
<th>Teacher/Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scores:</td>
<td>Teacher/Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Engagement __/8</td>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency ___/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Range: 6-7</td>
<td>11-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Selection Text selected by:</td>
<td>☐ teacher ☐ student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1. READING ENGAGEMENT

Ask the student to bring his or her reading record to the conference. If the Student Reading Survey was not completed prior to the assessment conference, read aloud the questions or survey and record the student’s responses.

### 2. ORAL READING FLUENCY

**INTRODUCTION**

*T: This book is called *Tiger’s Whirlwind Day*. It is about a girl named Karla who loses her cat *Tiger*. Read aloud pages 2 through 3. Show the student where to stop reading at the *.

**RECORD OF ORAL READING**

Record the student’s oral reading behaviors. Note the student’s fluency (expression and phrasing). Be sure to time the student’s reading.

**Page 2**

“Quick, Karla, hand me that rope!” Dad yelled, as clouds swept across the sun. “We have to get these trash cans tied down because there’s a storm heading this way.”

“Where’s Tiger, Mom?” asked Karla, handing Dad some rope. “We have to keep him in the house. You know my cat is a scaredy-cat. He doesn’t like wind or water.”

“I don’t know where Tiger is, but I do know the storm’s winds will be strong,” said Mom. “I’ll get the candies and flashlights ready in case the lights go out.”
Karla searched for Tiger. She felt the wind pick up and watched the leaves swirl around in the backyard. Then she heard a soft meow under the porch.

"Come on out, Tiger," said Karla. "A dangerous storm is coming this way!" Tiger inched his way out and followed Karla.

Page 3
Dad was gathering up the lawn chairs and table. More clouds blew in as Karla helped Dad carry the chairs into the garage. The sky darkened, and it seemed like the whole world was in a shadow.

Gusts of wind made the rope ladder to Karla’s treehouse dance like a puppet. The wind ruffled her hair and rippled Tiger’s fur. Karla lifted him in her arms as darker clouds began to roll in. She made it into the house just as the first drops of rain fell.

Time: ______ minutes:seconds

ORAL READING WORDS PER MINUTE, PERCENT OF ACCURACY
Use the student’s oral reading time to circle the WPM range.

| Word Count: 228 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes:Seconds</th>
<th>2:03 or less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WPM</td>
<td>2:03 or less</td>
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</table>

Count the number of miscues that are not self-corrected. Circle the percent of accuracy based on the number of miscues.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>.96</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the student’s score falls in a shaded area for either WPM or Accuracy, STOP! Reassess with a lower-level text at another time.
3. COMPREHENSION

TEXT FEATURES and STUDENT PREDICTION

Read aloud the questions/prompts on page 1 of the Student Booklet, and record the student’s responses on the same page. Do not give additional prompts. Students do not use the book when they record their responses on the first page of the Student Booklet.

Note: Continue with the assessment if time permits. Otherwise, have the student read the text and complete the Student Booklet at another time.

STUDENT READS AND Responds

All students may use the text to complete pages 2–3 of the Student Booklet.

1. Read the story. When you are finished, write a summary of what you have read and answer the remaining questions in the Student Booklet. If you have questions, please come to me (or raise your hand).

Note: For the students who have an Individual Education Plan in place for reading and/or written communication, follow the directions in their plan. You may read aloud the prompts on pages 2 and 3 of the Student Booklet and/or scribe their responses if required. Give no additional prompts.

While the student reads the text independently, complete the Teacher Analysis of Oral Reading on the next page and circle the descriptors on the DRA2 Continuum that best describe the student’s oral reading fluency.
## 4. TEACHER ANALYSIS

### ORAL READING

If the student had 5 or more miscues, use the information recorded on the Record of Oral Reading to complete the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student problem-solves words using:</th>
<th>Number of miscues self-corrected: ___</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ beginning letter(s)/sound(s)</td>
<td>□ never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ letter-sound clusters</td>
<td>□ at times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ blending letters/sounds</td>
<td>□ often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ onset and rime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ knowledge of spelling patterns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(analogies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ syllables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ rereading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ no observable behaviors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miscues interfered with meaning:</th>
<th>Miscues included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ never</td>
<td>□ omissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ at times</td>
<td>□ insertions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ often</td>
<td>□ reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ substitutions that were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ visually similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ not visually similar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of miscues not self-corrected:** ___

**Number of words told to the student:** ___

---

Copy each substitution to help analyze the student's attention to visual information.

- **e.g., getting (substitution)**
- **gathering (text)**

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### Oral Reading Rate: (Optional)

Use the formula below to determine the student's exact oral reading rate. Convert the student's reading time to all seconds.

\[
\frac{228 \text{ (words)}}{\text{total seconds}} = \frac{\text{WPS} \times 60}{\text{WPM}}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>228 (words) + ______</th>
<th>total seconds = ______ WPS × 60 = ______ WPM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---

### 12 Continuum

Use the information from the Student Reading Survey and the Student Booklet to circle the descriptors that best describe the student's responses for Reading Engagement and Comprehension.

Add the circled numbers to obtain a total score for each section.

Record the total scores at the top of page 1. Record the Comprehension score at the top of page 5 after the colon.

Note: If the Comprehension score is less than 14, administer DRA2 with a lower-level text.
Choose three to five teaching/learning activities on the DRA2 Focus for Instruction on the next page.
DRA2 FOCUS FOR INSTRUCTION FOR EXTENDING READERS

READING ENGAGEMENT
- Teach student strategies to select appropriately leveled texts for independent reading
- Introduce student to reading materials from a variety of genres
- Teach strategies to build reading stamina
- Create structures and/or routines to support reading at home
- Develop clear expectations for amount of independent reading
- Teach student how to use a reading log to monitor book selection and set reading goals
- Model/teach how to read for different purposes

Self-Assessment/Goal Setting
- Model and discuss strategies good readers use
- Help student identify 1–2 reading goals and a plan of action to improve reading
- Support revision of ongoing reading goals

ORAL READING FLUENCY
- Expression and Phrasing
  - Model and support reading in longer, meaningful phrases with appropriate expression
  - Have student practice appropriate expression with familiar texts
  - Have student participate in choral reading and/or reader’s theater
  - Teach student to heed punctuation
- Rate
  - Provide materials and time for repeated reading to increase reading rate
  - Teach student to read lower-level and/or familiar texts at an appropriate rate

Accuracy: Word Analysis
- Support and reinforce self-corrections of miscues
- Model and support how to take words apart (e.g., onset and rime, syllables) to problem-solve unknown words
- Teach how to use word chunks and analogies to problem-solve unknown words
- Provide spelling activities and word sorts to help student recognize patterns in words

COMPREHENSION
- Use of Text Features
  - Provide opportunities for student to discuss what he or she knows about the characters based on title and book cover, as well as opening paragraphs and texts read aloud
  - Teach student how to describe characters, using information from fiction text features (e.g., title, illustrations, and text)

Prediction
- Teach student how to make predictions based on title and book cover, as well as opening paragraphs of texts read aloud
- Model and support using background information to make meaningful predictions

Summary
- Share and identify characteristics of good summaries
- Model and co-construct written summaries of texts read aloud
- Model and support how to distinguish between more important and less important ideas and details
- Model and support how to write a summary in one’s own words
- Teach student how to use a graphic organizer as an aid to creating a summary
- Teach student how to identify story elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot)

Literal Comprehension
- Show student how to use key words to identify specific information from the text
- Provide opportunities for student to answer and construct literal questions
- Help student locate and record specific details
- Teach student how to use graphic organizers to keep track of story information

Interpretation
- Teach and share examples of inferences
- Model and teach student how to think about Why? questions while and after reading a text
- Model and teach how to support inferences with examples from the text
- Guide student opportunities to respond to inference questions orally and in writing

Reflection
- Help student identify important message in a story
- Provide opportunities to identify and discuss the most important event in a story
- Demonstrate and teach student how to support opinion with details from the text
The teacher reads aloud the prompts/questions and records the student’s responses on this page.

BEFORE READING

TEXT FEATURES

Think about the title, the pictures you have seen, and what you have read so far. Tell me what you know about Karla and Tiger.

Karla:

Tiger:

PREDICTION

What are 3 things you think might happen in the rest of this story?

1. 

2. 

3.
AFTER READING

Summary
Write a summary of this story in your own words. Include the important characters, events, and details. You may use the book and the words below to help you write your summary.

In the beginning,


Next,


Then,


After that,


In the end,
Appendix G. Cont.

Student Booklet

Tiger's Whirlwind Day

Page 3

Literal Comprehension
List 3 things that happened when something crashed against Karla's house during the storm.

The crash caused . . .

1. ____________________________

2. ____________________________

3. ____________________________

Interpretation
Why do you think Karla said Tiger had a whirlwind of a day?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Reflection
What do you think is the most important event in this story?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Tell why you think it is important.

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Reread what you have written to make sure your answers are the way you want them before you hand in your booklet.
What’s for Lunch?

What’s that noise? Oh! It’s my stomach! I didn’t realize how very hungry for lunch I am. My friend Jacob and I are outside playing a fun game, and it is lunchtime.

This morning Mom said she is making my favorite soup. Hot soup sounds really good, but playing with Jacob is so much fun. We keep playing the detective game we made up.

Soon, I hear my mother calling. I look at my watch and realize I am an hour late for lunch. Playing with Jacob is so much fun that I forgot all about the time. Now, I am going to be in trouble for not being home on time. I tell Jacob goodbye and run home as quickly as I can.

Cold soup for lunch doesn’t sound very good.
# A Scale for Assessing Fluency

Rate refers to the pace at which the reader moves through the text. An appropriate rate moves along rapidly with few slow-downs, stops, or long pauses to solve words. If a reader has only a few short pauses for word solving and picks up the pace again, look at the overall rate. The pace is also appropriate to the text—not too fast and not too slow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost no evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.</td>
<td>Very little evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.</td>
<td>Some evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.</td>
<td>Almost all the reading evidences appropriate rate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phrasing refers to the way readers put words together in groups to represent the meaningful units of language. Phrased reading should sound like oral language, although more formal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrasing</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost no evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading.</td>
<td>Very little evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading.</td>
<td>Some evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading.</td>
<td>Almost all the reading is appropriately phrased.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intonation refers to the way the reader varies the voice in tone, pitch, and volume to reflect the meaning of the text—sometimes called “expression.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intonation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost no variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Very little evidence of variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Some evidence of variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Almost all the reading is characterized by variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pausing refers to the way the reader is guided by punctuation (short breaths at commas; full stop at ending punctuation or dashes). Pausing also refers to how the reader uses the way print is organized on the page (line layouts, paragraphs, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pausing</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost no pausing to reflect the punctuation and the meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Very little pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Some pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Almost all the reading is characterized by pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stress refers to the emphasis readers place on particular words (louder tone) to reflect the meaning as speakers would do in oral language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost no stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Very little stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Some stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.</td>
<td>Almost all the reading is characterized by stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Integration involves the way the reader consistently and evenly orchestrates rate, phrasing, pausing, intonation, and stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost none of the reading is fluent.</td>
<td>Very little of the reading is fluent.</td>
<td>Some of the reading is fluent.</td>
<td>Almost all of the reading is fluent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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