Effects of explicit comprehension strategy induction & self-efficacy of use for a middle school student with a learning disability

Mary-Beth R. Boling

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The Effects of Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction

& Self-efficacy of Use for a Middle School Student with a Learning Disability

By:

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2-25-12 (Date)
Dedication

- This is lovingly dedicated to my wonderful husband Chris and fantastic son Jonathan, whose love and support during this entire process was immeasurable. Loving thanks are given to Callie, who sat by me loyally as I wrote this paper.

- Heartfelt thanks are given to my advisor, Lori Ladiges, for her wonderful guidance and support.
Abstract

This case study examined the effects of explicit comprehension strategy instruction for a student with a learning disability and self-efficacy of use. The sample consisted of a sixth grade female student who attends a public charter school, diagnosed with a specific learning disability, needing support with reading and math. The student, working with different genres of text, practiced making connections/predictions, answered questions, worked with main idea and supporting details and cause and effect, using graphic organizers. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (1987), Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4) (2006), and Reading Behavior and Interests Survey provided pre and post-test data. Positive gains were made with retelling, vocabulary comprehension, and increased text complexity with look backs; however, the results of passage comprehension showed a negative regression.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction to the Student

The reading process can be arduous for a student who has a learning disability. Older students, particularly those in middle school who continue to struggle with phonological and phonemic skills, are often constrained by the text. When a student employs extensive energy decoding words, limited effort and skills are available for comprehension. “Successful comprehension of texts is the result of the efficient use and integration of lower order, word-level processes such as, decoding and higher order processes such as schematic knowledge and self regulation strategies” (Pressley, as cited in Lee, 2004, p.50). There are multiple reasons why a student may struggle with comprehension, especially a student with a learning disability. This chapter introduces the student participant in this case study who was identified with a learning disability. It provides insight into identified needs of her Individual Education Plan (IEP), clarification of meeting those needs, while meeting Wisconsin Core standards, and addresses the laws supporting the rights of students with learning disabilities.

A.C. is a sixth grade student who participated in this case study. She is an African American, female student attending a K4-8 public charter school, in the spring semester and early summer school of 2010. A.C. was 12-6 years old at the beginning of the study and 12-9 years old at the end. She is a very sweet, but shy individual, and was eager to participate in the research study focusing on explicit instruction of comprehension strategies to determine if there would be increased self-efficacy of use. She was selected for this study by the recommendation of her English/Language Arts teacher, who felt she would benefit from one-on-one modeling and
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instruction for comprehension. This is an area where she needs support and is specified within her Individual Education Plan (IEP).

A.C. completed a Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey during our first and last meeting (See Appendix B). She stated that she enjoys reading, and will read sometime 40 minutes per day. She enjoys picture books and recently finished reading *Ramona the Brave*. She likes plays, science fiction, novels, and folk/fairy tales. She enjoys bike riding. She stated that she enjoys school, and is respectful and compliant in the classroom. A.C. struggles with decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension and was eager to participate in this study.

One of A.C.’s academic goals is to increase her reading level one year, from a mid-third grade level to a mid-fourth grade level. Since comprehension is a struggle, this would be accomplished by implementing a variety of strategies to improve comprehension including work with main idea and supporting detail, making connections and predictions, asking questions, and making inferences. AC needs support with giving answers with clarity and accuracy. In the past, the quality of responses did not accurately reflect her knowledge. AC will also identify and discern the structure of a text to support understanding, including new vocabulary. Since AC reads below grade level, another goal is to improve her fluency while reading with accuracy and expression. Words were often decoded incorrectly, therefore changing the meaning of the text.

In order to gain a clear understanding of A.C.’s needs, a survey was administered to clarify some of A.C.’s current reading behaviors. A post survey was also administered to gain insight into her personal self-efficacy after the intervention. It is clear that some of her initial responses support the need of explicit comprehension instruction. This goes back to the original
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notion that students with learning or reading disabilities may be constrained by the text, and do not have the necessary tools to support their comprehension.

A.C. responded to questions about how she approaches reading. Before she reads, A.C. does not make a plan to help her understand the material better. She does not preview the text that she is going to read, or look at the text’s organization. She stated that she does ask herself questions about important ideas, and will make summaries for nonfiction texts. When she is reading a fiction text, she makes predictions about the story she is reading. When text is confusing, she will ask for help. She stated that the most important part of a chapter is where the action is going on. When asked what reading strategies she used to help her understand, she stated that she sounds out the words.

Connection to the Law

A.C. qualified for a specific learning disability in fall, 2006 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). A.C. has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and receives instruction in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), which includes inclusion in the general education Language Arts classroom, as well as pullout for reading support in the Special Education classroom. A.C.’s reading goals in her IEP consist of the following: comprehension of text, utilizing multiple comprehension strategies, reading with fluency and accuracy, and identifying structure within the text. In this section, the six provisions of IDEA (2004) will be discussed and applied to A.C. The six provisions are: least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, parental involvement, individualized education plan, due process, and appropriate assessments.
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The evidence of change within the field of special education is clear. Previously, schools had self-contained classrooms for students with learning disabilities. Students are no longer grouped by specific learning disabilities and the one size fits all approach has been replaced with individualized instruction meeting the needs of the struggling learner such as A.C. Most schools provide full inclusion classrooms for instruction. The collaboration between the classroom teacher, other learning specialists, special education teachers, and parents is central to optimize student success.

**Least Restrictive Environment and Free Appropriate Public Education**

A.C. attends Reading/Language Arts classes in the general education classroom. This was determined to be the least restrictive environment (LRE) for her instruction. She has opportunities to listen and participate in large and small group reading activities. Her individual education plan (IEP) specifies time for pullout to support her reading and writing efforts, especially relating to comprehension of texts, which takes place in the Special Education classroom. In addition, A.C. is provided with a free appropriate public education (FAPE), A.C.’s rights under IDEA (2004).

The student’s instruction must occur in the least restrictive environment (LRE). According to (Keuhne, 1998, para. 4), the least restrictive environment is “knowledgeable about all possible environments capable of maximizing the freedom of the student with disabilities to associate with non-disabled peers, if the general education classroom is not an appropriate placement.” A student must be granted opportunities, and placement may or may not be in a general education classroom. The student placement is not permanent and can change. When a student is in the least restrictive environment, teachers, support staff, parents, and administrators
explicit instruction of comprehension strategies
communicate and collaborate with each other to determine the best learning environment for the child.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is indispensable. Parents have superior knowledge about their child, and need to be actively engaged in the child’s educational process, especially when the child has a learning disability. Parental involvement in the IEP process helps to assure the child’s needs are being met. A.C.’s parent is involved in IEP meetings and is instrumental when making decisions for A.C. Parents need to be active participants to assure the needs of their child are being met during the IEP process and that instruction takes place in the least restrictive environment.

Individualized Education Plan

When the child has a learning disability, the IEP or information gathering process is a time to reflect on a student’s strengths and weaknesses and implement a plan to meet specific goals and needs of the student. “IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel and students to work together to improve education results for children with learning disabilities” (www.ldonline.org/indepth/iep, 2010, para. 1). Parental input in this process is invaluable.

Specific goals for A.C. include support with decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. The Wisconsin Common Core Standards (2011) “Anchor Standards for Reading” identifies “Key Ideas and Details” with specific literacy interventions for A.C. (p.60). Common Core Anchor Reading Standard One (grades 6-12) asks the student to read closely to determine what the text explicitly says, make logical inferences, cite textual evidence to support conclusions and
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Standard Two asks A.C. to “determine central ideas or themes and analyze development” for fiction and informational text (p.60). Standard Four under “College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading” asks students to “interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text,” as well as the “craft and structure” used by the author (WI Dept. of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 60).

One of the key goals identified by A.C.’s Language Arts teacher, as well as a goal identified in her IEP, is to work on enhancement of her comprehension of text. Wisconsin College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard Ten asks students to “read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (WI Dept. of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 60). Explicit instruction of comprehension strategies will help facilitate this process in an attempt to meet her educational goals. The goal is independent, cognizant use of strategies to comprehend various texts.

Due Process

Specific goals and objectives for the student are identified, but may not be met for the student with a learning disability. Parents may disagree with the school on the course of action that needs to be taken to educate their child. When a child does not meet eligibility requirements for a student with a learning disability, parents can seek discourse through due process of the law. According to the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), (2002), a hearing can be set to resolve the disagreement between the parents and the school. A “hearing officer” or neutral third party will attempt to resolve any concerns. There are a number of reasons why a parent requests a hearing including specific goals, specific services, or placement decisions. The end result should center on what is the most “appropriate education”
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for the child, and the parent should be an active participant. A.C.’s parent has received her due process rights from the school.

Appropriate Assessments

In 2006, A.C. was given appropriate assessments to determine whether she had a learning disability. The Woodcock Johnston III Assessment was administered by the school psychologist to determine academic functioning. Along with this assessment, classroom observations were made. A.C. was also given the ELF-4 by the school’s Speech Pathologist to evaluate expressive and receptive language. The results of these assessments determined that A.C. has a learning disability. A reevaluation completed in 2009 indicated similar results. The results of these assessments help to determine specific learning goals that A.C. needs support with.

The school to date has not fully implemented RTI and is in the process of setting up this program. An RTI team continues to work, attends monthly seminars, and discusses the structure of what RTI will look like in our school. It is difficult to identify what tier A.C. would qualify for. It is clear that as a school, A.C.’s learning goals continue to be a central focus with a result of continued growth and evaluation of her progress.

Conclusion

Chapter one provides an introduction and overview to A.C., the student participant in this case study. Through assessment, it was determined that she has a learning disability. A.C. has an IEP that specifies goals to meet her specific needs, particularly comprehension of text. The chapter identifies the connection to current law, including least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, parental involvement, individualized education plan (mentioned earlier), due process, and appropriate assessments. It identifies A.C.’s rights under the law and
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reflects how this process encompasses her learning. All of these components provide a pathway for experiencing success. The cumulative effect of all these factors is integral and lead to student success.

In order to meet the educational goal of improved comprehension, a plan was initiated for explicit instruction of comprehension strategies. Research about explicit instruction and modeling of comprehension strategies identifies the importance of this instruction for students and the effect it has on student learning. Chapter two reviews eight research articles and looks at the significance of this comprehension instruction. Explicit instruction of comprehension strategies should be deliberate, well-planned, and authentic to yield the best results. The research highlights various applications in different classroom settings and the results of following different protocols.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literacy process is complex and requires the acquisition and application of multiple skills to construct meaning from texts. This process can become particularly difficult for students with a learning disability. When a reader struggles with decoding, fluency and comprehension, effective instructional methods and assessment are necessary in order to facilitate achievement. This may dictate the need for additional teacher training to gain insight into developmentally appropriate pedagogy to assist students with literacy instruction. In order to address the needs of a student in this case study, the researcher evaluated the effectiveness of explicit comprehension strategy instruction within the balanced literacy process.

This chapter contains personal theoretical perspectives surrounding literacy instruction and assessment while working with students who have learning disabilities. It suggests developmentally appropriate pedagogy to support these theories. This chapter also includes information that examines research articles supporting explicit instruction of multiple comprehension strategies and potential benefits. The final section is tied to my case study research and highlights the reasoning used for A.C.’s intervention.

Theoretical Perspectives

A teacher must recognize a student’s abilities in order to implement an effective intervention program. The intervention identifies student strengths and needs, while guiding preparation for instruction. A teacher’s view of instructional pedagogy is based on theories, beliefs, and experiences as one provides instruction based on specific curricular objectives. One must recognize the purpose behind an intervention with a goal of desired outcomes. My personal attitudes about the literacy process follow. I believe it is socially constructed, it occurs within a
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social environment, and merges a balanced blend of process skills. This premise is evident throughout my case study and supports the organization of this chapter.

**Social Interaction & Reading**

Literacy is highly valued in our society and each student should have an opportunity to develop these critical skills. Social interaction with family and culture begins at birth and helps the child develop a frame of reference for the world around him. “Vygotsky’s Theory, called the Cultural-Historical Theory, is the idea that child development is the result of interactions between children and their social environment” (Leong & Bodrova, 2001, p. 48). A child’s view of the world around them is influenced by what they receive and perceive.

During this time, cognitive and linguistic threads of literacy develop and are in place before formal reading instruction ever begins (McCordle, Scarborough, & Catts, 2001). Equally important is the social interaction that takes place within a formal educational setting. Teachers must be responsive to the children’s articulation of thoughts and co-construction of meaning (Tolentino, 2007). Social interaction is a necessity and provides a framework for literacy learning and development.

The importance of effective literacy instruction is evident because it provides a foundation that leads to personal achievement. The most fundamental premise of good literacy instruction is to present learning environments that developmentally address needs and motivate students. Student development is always changing and never static, and pedagogy should reflect this (Antonacci, 2000). Students who do well with the process are motivated to read, practice more, have greater expectations placed on them, and acquire greater cognitive skills, which in turn leads to better reading (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994). Students with learning
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disabilities require similar expectations and experiences at their developmental level. Effective literacy instruction for students with learning disabilities provides a foundation that leads to personal achievement. The most fundamental premise of good literacy instruction is presenting learning environments that developmentally address individual needs and motivate students.

Reading & Writing

Reading and writing are interchangeable, and as students begin to develop writing skills, they are mastering one of the highest forms of language. As students write, they must constrain their thoughts in order to clearly convey meaning, and this process is cognitive in nature. Writing is also an act of communication that takes place within a social context and medium (Hayes, 1996). The writing process requires knowledge of language and rules, as well as understanding the social purpose of the written text. When a student struggles with the reading process, it is likely that they will encounter greater difficulty expressing thoughts in written prose.

Social Construct & Reading

As children enter the formal educational setting, they use language and knowledge developed by social interaction with family, culture, and other outside influences. A theoretical literacy study completed by Tolentino, demonstrates that “talk empowers children to share what they know about reading, writing, and making meaning” and we should provide a contextual setting for conversations that permit children to co-construct meaning (2007, p.2). Providing an educational environment, which invites open dialogue, leads to personal growth because it allows children to share their social experiences and knowledge. Unrau & Rutledge (1995) discussed the importance of problem solving within a social context. Children who have learning disabilities should be engaged in dialogue as participants in the co-construction of knowledge.
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Proficient readers employ semantic and syntactic clues, while poor readers are constrained by the text (Adams, Jager, & Henry, 1997). When a reader struggles with fluency, decoding, and comprehension, developmentally appropriate lessons are necessary to meet the needs of each learner. The writing process may also present difficulties because writing is a social, higher-order activity allowing us to communicate with others, and a student may lack experience necessary to realize success (Hayes, 2004). Students with reading deficits will benefit from effective literacy instruction that occurs within a social construct created by teachers, provides developmentally appropriate instruction, and encourages students to become active participants in the writing process.

Literacy instruction is a lifelong process and is “not a static end state” (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994, p. 96). In order to provide an optimal learning environment for all students, it is imperative to provide a social-constructivist curriculum, challenging, but developmentally appropriate lessons, and active participation with the writing process. According to McCardle, Scarborough, and Catts (2001), studies have indicated that there are reliable associations when looking at a child’s early abilities and later performance. Social interaction, responsible for the development of early skills, should be nurtured within the formal classroom environment. Similarly, the developmental level of instruction should reflect student ability and need. Students should receive instruction within one’s “Zone of Proximal Development” in order to maximize learning potential (Leong & Bodrova, 2001, p. 48). Students are motivated when instruction is at an appropriate level and success is realized. Finally, the writing process must be taught within proper contextual setting, so students recognize the reciprocity of writing and reading in the literacy process.
Learning is a dynamic process where knowledge is imparted. When working independently, a student may progress to a point and become stagnant. When students receive instruction within one’s Zone of Proximal Development, students have an opportunity to progress when given appropriate support. In order to facilitate this, a teacher must understand student abilities. Students are able to acquire new knowledge and experiences when supported by a more knowledgeable other, such as a teacher. Communication between student and teacher is essential. Responsibility for the task and exchange of knowledge is slowly given to the student, where they take final responsibility for learning. “Social interactions with others and particularly with adults are the vehicle for exposure to scientific concepts in instruction and for participation in the directive, indicative, and communicative functions of language which then become internalized” (Vygotsky, as cited in Fox & Riconscente, 2008, p. 384). It is clear that the language used is an essential component for understanding. It allows the transfer of responsibility to take place, and the student is metacognitively aware that this has taken place.

**Pedagogy**

Developmentally appropriate pedagogy is an effective means to assist students struggling with literacy instruction. “A combination of whole language techniques with a strong decoding programs seems especially appropriate for many youngsters with reading disabilities, and would probably benefit many non-disabled readers as well” (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994, p. 102). Students who struggle with reading can have difficulty with the most basic phonological skills. Since the reading process is an active process, instruction should be carefully planned to reflect individual progress being made. Simultaneously, strategy instruction must also be included as part of the plan. Students with learning disabilities need “scaffolded support” with
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explicit strategies instruction and made cognizant of the need of learning and internalizing these
skills.

**Differentiated Instruction**

Individualized literacy instruction may focus on skills not limited to fluency, phonological awareness, comprehension, or writing. Differentiated instruction is a method that “promotes high-level and powerful curriculum for all students by varying levels of teacher support, task complexity, pacing” and considers such items as readiness, personal interests and individual profile (Werderich, 2002, p. 746). This developmentally appropriate instruction meets individual student needs. Students can also be supported with developmentally appropriate instruction within Vygotsky’s “Zone of Proximal Development” and as students progress, a gradual release of responsibility takes place. (Leong & Bodrova, 2001, p. 48). Students should recognize the value and relevance of individual instruction, because this is directly correlated with motivation.

One of the most difficult tasks to master in the literacy process is writing, because it forces one to constrain thoughts in order to communicate beliefs. “Students who have learning disabilities and struggle with writing may have difficulty executing and monitoring many of the cognitive processes writers need to effectively manage during the writing process (Saddler, Moran Graham, & Harris, 2004, as cited in Saddler, 2006, p. 291). Such skills include knowledge of grammatical skills, spelling, punctuation, as well as purpose and expression of ideas. The necessity of developmental instruction is overriding. Saddler (2006) also highlighted the importance of teaching strategy instruction to students with learning disabilities, so they may obtain familiarity with the entire writing process. There is a social component tied in with the
writing process. Writing has specific purpose because it is a means of communication. “It is also social because it is a social artifact that is carried out in a social setting” Hayes, 2004, p. 1401. Students with learning disabilities will benefit from exposure to many opportunities to write with purpose.

The implementation of a word study program requires a careful assessment of a student’s phonological awareness. “First, in order to recognize printed words, children need to become aware that spoken words are composed of smaller elements of speech (phonological awareness): to grasp the idea that letters represent these sounds, the alphabetic principle; to learn the many systematic correspondences between sounds and spelling (decoding)” (McCardle, Scarborough, & Catts, 2001, p. 230). The purpose of word study is to help students build automaticity in word recognition, as well as fluency. When teachers provide opportunities to work in a social construct, the ability to decode words and language becomes more automatic. According to Spear-Swerling & Sternberg (1994), word recognition processes are central and linked to reading acquisition. Students develop and attain decoding skills and possess orthographic knowledge that allows them to move beyond identifying single letter sounds.

Phonological awareness is enhanced, as students learn to read. Adams (2004) indicated that skilled readers exhibit well-developed skills with spelling, word recognition, syllabication, and understanding of morphemes. “The most frequent causes of reading disabilities are found at the level of letter and word recognition” (Adams, 2004, p.1225). The implication for instruction is clear. Word study intervention should address the deficit that exists. This may include simple letter sound correspondence, predictable letter patterns using certain phonemes, consonant blends, onset-rime, and digraphs. Students “begin to recognize the segments (chunks) in words and to become more flexible in their ability to recognize multiple other examples of taught letter
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patterns” (Wolf, Miller, & Donnelly, 2000, p.382). Intensive modeling and scaffolding may be required throughout various stages of this literacy process, and students should participate extensively to build the desired literacy skills. It is apparent that significant student effort is required for decoding, yet it is crucial to examine what, if any effort is made by a student with a learning disability to understand the text being read.

Extensive modeling of strategies, as well as guided instruction will provide an optimal learning environment for all students. “The teacher needs to be aware of the level of support and assistance that can foster learning” (Antonacci, 2000, p.24). This correlates directly with the developmental needs of students. According to Spear-Swerling & Sternberg (1994), strategy deficiencies are common among individuals with reading disabilities, and the developmental needs must be considered when designing and implementing instruction. The goal is for students to self regulate use of strategies. All students will benefit from explicit modeling of strategies, especially in a co-constructivist classroom, which provides opportunity for discussion and practice.

Guided Reading

Guided reading provides instruction with social interaction at a developmentally appropriate level. “Guided reading is referred to as mediated learning or assisted learning because of the nature of instruction” (Antonacci, 2000, p. 33). Students engaged in guided reading construct knowledge with language that directly relates to learning. Antonacci (2000) also states that students are helped because they develop a system of usable strategies for reading. Students, who are unable to read whole texts because of phonological difficulties, can
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engage in this process because of the scaffolding provided by the teacher. Written responses can also be modeled by the teacher and co-constructed within the group.

Antonacci (2000) also discussed the importance of placing students in dynamic groups. As students master specific skills related to prediction, decoding, or comprehension strategies, groups should change to meet specific developmental needs of the students. When students realize success with activities in the guided group process, it motivates them to remain engaged as active participants. Guided instruction is a direct means of providing students with disabilities necessary developmental support of literacy within the classroom. Students with disabilities can experience success with more difficult processes because of the support provided.

Students should be introduced to various genres of texts with varying levels of difficulty in order to provide diverse experiences for readers. “Literary experience of readers and their social interaction with each other” clearly affect the view developed about specific pieces of literature (Sipe, 1999, p. 121). Students are able to share their own ideas based upon breath of experience. The teacher can model author purpose, and students can gain understanding about how a piece of literature holds multiple meanings for different people. This can be tied with one’s personal knowledge base formed by early social interaction.

Conclusion of Theoretical Perspectives

Teachers working with students identified with reading disabilities will benefit from effective literacy instruction that occurs within a social construct created by teachers, provides developmentally appropriate instruction for students with social interaction, and encourages students to become active participants in the writing process. When students are engaged in developmentally appropriate instruction within a social construct, they are more likely to be
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active participants in reading acquisition. Instructional practices such as word study, strategy use, guided instruction, and exposure to different genres and levels of text will directly influence the progress that students recognize as literacy learners.

The increasing difficulty of the curriculum in the post-primary grades becomes evident to students, but particularly those with learning disabilities. The students move from learning to read and then read to learn specific content. A struggling reader may not believe they possess the personal attributes to successfully accomplish specific reading goals. This relates to self-efficacy. “Attributions are important to consider in instructional planning for students with LD because even the most proven instructional technologies may be ineffective with students who do not believe they possess control over their learning” (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p.214).

When students with learning disabilities are given explicit learning tools, they may lack confidence and motivation to employ them. This has direct relevance with the middle school student in my case study. Although extensive modeling and scaffolding took place, it took time for A.C. to trust herself to begin to use specific comprehension skills independently.

All students must be actively engaged while reading to understand meaning and purpose of text. This can be accomplished through effective and deliberate strategy instruction with continuous monitoring and feedback. It is necessary to reflect on the significance of explicit comprehension strategy instruction for students with learning disabilities. Current pedagogy specifically addresses this evolvement of specific comprehension strategy instruction. This evolvement is reflected in research that has been reviewed to write this chapter. The following review of research and scholarly articles reflects various facts and opinions on the significance of explicit comprehension strategy instruction, self-monitoring, and self-efficacy of use.
Research-based interventions must be used when looking to meet specific learning goals and objectives and to improve the skills and abilities of a struggling reader. In this case study, the intervention plan examined whether explicit comprehension strategy instruction would develop A.C.'s ability to effectively use specific comprehension strategies while promoting self-efficacy of use. The goal was to improve comprehension by use of multiple, explicit strategies with an attempt to self-monitor understanding of text and improve her overall reading ability. The research articles provide insight and defend instruction of explicit comprehension strategies and self-efficacy of use. The research reflects a change in attitudes towards the magnitude of explicit strategy instruction and pedagogy used today.

The following research articles are organized into three categories. Each category impacts effective comprehension strategy instruction as well as self-efficacy of use. The first group of research articles focuses solely on comprehension strategy instruction and the results of this intervention. The second group of research article focuses on comprehension strategy instruction and self-efficacy of use. The final group of research articles examines teacher preparation for strategy instruction. Each category is part of a collective whole that leads to effective comprehension strategy instruction and self-efficacy of use for students.

Comprehension Strategy Instruction

The first four research studies focused on explicit comprehension strategy instruction. The first study by Wigfield and colleagues stated that an advanced reader is “motivated” and “strategic” in comparison to the limited academic behaviors exhibited by a struggling reader (Wigfield, Guthrie, Perencevich, Taboada, Lutz Klauda, McRae, and Barbosa, 2008).
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Engagement with the text is multifaceted and requires that specific learning behaviors are actively engaged. The goal of this study was to enhance “reading engagement,” while simultaneously achieving continued student success with reading.

Limited studies have been conducted showing the correlation between personal engagement in reading with enhanced achievement. Comparable but limited studies identified “four variables that influence students’ reading motivation” (Wigfield et al., 2008, p. 432). These included allowing students to make individual choices, reading motivating texts, understanding the purpose of instruction, and providing shared experiences in reading. Studies have focused on some elements such as asking higher level questions, but then no correlation was made determining whether the effects of reading comprehension instruction were associated with reading engagement. This study looks at a “combined instructional framework” that accomplishes this (Wigfield et al., 2008, p. 433).

Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich (2004) developed a model called “Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction or (CORI)” as cited in Wigfield et al., 2008, p. 433). This program included six instructional practices based on the engagement model of reading. It supports the idea that readers personally connect with the text being read and employ various strategies. Comprehension is enhanced, because students want to read. In this study, researchers attempted to determine the “effects of instruction on reading engagement”, and then determine if the instruction for reading comprehension affects “the level of engagement during instruction” (Wigfield et al., 2008, p.433). Other control classrooms focused on other strategy or traditional instruction.
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There were three questions guiding this research study. The first looked at the measure of student engagement with reading comprehension in a classroom-based study. The second examined reading engagement and comprehension implemented by teachers in a CORI classroom versus teachers using strategy instruction and conventional based instruction. Finally, it examined the student level of reading engagement by the instruction of treatment groups on reading comprehension.

“The original sample for the study included 492 fourth-grade students from five schools in a small mid-Atlantic city who participated with parental permission” (Wigfield et al., 2008, p.434). The ethnicity and gender of the participants did not vary between schools or the district, and 68% of the subjects were Caucasian, 20% African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 4% Other. The program was administered for 12 weeks. After the pre and post analyses, 315 students were included in the final report. There were “15 teachers included in the data analysis, five CORI, seven Strategy Instruction (SI), and three Teacher Instruction (TI)” (Wigfield et al., 2008, p.434). Two schools were assigned to CORI, two to Strategy Instruction, and one to Teacher Instruction. Instruction took place in the classroom setting, as well as examination of pre and post-test data.

In the beginning of the study, “The Gates-MacGinitie Comprehension Test as well as an author designed performance assessment of reading comprehension and strategy use” (Wigfield et al., 2008, p.435), and “The Gates-MacGinitie Standardized Reading Test provided a general measure of reading comprehension not related to the specifics of the instructional approaches in this study (Wigfield & Associates, 2008, p.435),” and were given in the beginning of September, 2003. A post-test follow-up occurred in December. The performance assessment looked at a number of items including schema, student questioning, scanning for information,
explicit instruction of comprehension strategies

Comprehension of multiple texts demonstrated through writing knowledge. Students were asked to provide different written responses and these were scored through use of rubrics to determine student progress and ability. There were two levels of text, easy (grades 2-3) and complex (grades 4-6). The texts focused on environmental concepts and were randomly distributed to the classrooms.

An index was used to determine student progress with learning engagement. A student that is engaged in the reading process demonstrates cognitive, behavioral, and motivational characteristics, and a scale was completed for each student based on the teacher’s perceptions in each classroom. Students completed a short version of the “Motivations for Reading Questionnaire” and rated their own motivation (Wigfield & Associates, 2008, p. 437). This looked at intrinsic motivational factors such as inclination for accepting challenge, personal participation, inquisitiveness, and effectiveness. The responses were analyzed on a scale to determine reading engagement. The motivational practices included in this study were limited and did not affect the results. Nonetheless, these intrinsic factors are important to consider when conducting research and how it will influence the participant(s) in the study.

Explicit, systematic comprehension instruction was provided in the fourth grade CORI classrooms for 90 minutes each afternoon. The explicit instruction was entrenched in comprehension practices such as activating prior knowledge, questioning, searching for information, summarizing, graphically organizing, and knowledge of story structure. Each strategy was taught for a one week period in the order listed. During the next six weeks, strategies were integrated. Story structure was taught throughout the duration of the program. Strategies were modeled by the teacher and students were given necessary support based on need. Appropriate “scaffolding” was given during the learning process and when students
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practiced in guided groups. This aligns with the recommendations for multiple strategy instruction that is described in the National Reading Panel Report (National Reading Panel, 2000). Prior to the implementation of the study, the CORI teachers attended a 10-day workshop that provided extensive preparation for planning instruction.

Strategy Instruction (SI) was a second treatment condition used in the study and implemented in third grade classrooms. Teachers attended a five-day workshop on how this format would be taught. Teaching took place each afternoon for 90 minutes and was identical with explicit comprehension strategy instruction in CORI and the research-based recommendations (National Reading Panel, 2000). The sequence of strategies taught was similar, but the materials for SI differed and included basal reading programs and trade books. Explicit support for student motivation was not part of the SI intervention, yet it was clear that teachers attempted to motivate students to read. Student self-efficacy was supported through secure use of strategies. The Teacher Instruction (TI) classrooms had 90 minutes of daily reading instruction and language arts without any additional teacher training. Use of basal programs, trade, and vocabulary books were used. Most instruction took place in the classroom, unless a student met certain parameters of a struggling reader.

The implementation of each program was videotaped and assessed for quality of instruction. A six-point scale was used to assess the dependent variable, which included the six instructional practices consisting of “knowledge goals for instruction, autonomy support, use of interesting texts, collaboration support, science processed connected to reading, and strategy instruction” (Wigfield et al., 2008, p. 444). The independent variable was each instructional group.
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The results showed that CORI teachers scored higher than both the SI and TI teachers. SI teachers scored higher than TI teachers. CORI was rated higher in all six engagement practices, SI scored higher on engagement practices of strategy instruction and use of texts, but not on the other four.

The data from the study revealed several useful aspects in respect to comprehension and student engagement. The data showed a strong correlation between reading engagement and reading comprehension. When a student is highly engaged, they read purposefully. They have intrinsic motivation to engage and use various strategies. The results from this study indicated that reading engagement must be included as one of the tools during instruction and it is central for comprehension.

Another intriguing and yet important concept about reading engagement is how it can influence the effectiveness of instructional practices. In this study, the CORI instructional method resulted in stronger student engagement. This has an implication for instructional design because if reading instruction increases student achievement and therefore comprehension, greater effort should be place on practices motivating students to learn. This study focused on three different types of instruction and the results of each intervention. The next study looks at explicit comprehension strategy instruction using informational texts, one that can be a difficult genre for many students.

The complexity of the reading process affects students who struggle and those with learning disabilities. Explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction is a tool to support students who have reading disabilities. Another challenge for students who struggle is the genre of text and what should be done when encountering text with more complexity. Informational
texts present a challenge for many students, especially students with reading disabilities. An experimental research study conducted by Elizabeth Lee (2004) examined the effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on comprehension of nonfiction texts.

“Successful comprehension of texts is the result of efficient use and integration of lower order, word level processes such as decoding and higher order processes such as schematic knowledge and self-regulation strategies” (Pressley, as cited in Lee, 2004, p.50). It is essential to stop and reflect on what occurs when students have limited exposure and knowledge of the world around them. When students encounter unfamiliar content in a text, including new vocabulary, they must know how to self-monitor their understanding of the material. Thus the problem emerges, nonfiction text is the most challenging genre, because it asks someone to self-monitor and understand unfamiliar concepts. The importance of explicit comprehension strategy instruction to support understanding of nonfiction text is necessary.

There is a vast difference between narrative and nonfiction texts. According to Lee (2004), up to 90% of reading instruction that takes place in elementary schools uses narrative texts. Narrative text requires the reader to respond to the text in a different way and is generally easier to read. Nonfiction text is read to acquire information or some type of application. A student must be taught how to work through the text in order to synthesize and attain the appropriate knowledge. The National Reading Panel’s (2000) report identified eight different comprehension strategies to support understanding. Some of these strategies are applicable with the use of nonfiction texts.

The goal of the experimental study completed by Lee (2004) was to see if a specific intervention for reading comprehension of informational text would help struggling fifth grade
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students, especially boys. Lee suggested that individuals apply strategies when understanding of
textual information breaks down. The goal of the study was to increase student awareness of the
world around them, acquire new vocabulary, and target interests of boys. The goal was learning
how to be a “strategic reader” and “conceptual growth” was a secondary objective (Lee, 2004, p.
54). The variety of nonfiction texts used for the study was each one-page in length.

The school was located in the inner city of a large urban area. The residents “drew from
First Nations and refugee families” (Lee, 2004, p.55). Two grade 4/5 classes from the same
school participated in the study. The experimental class had 27 students, 10 boys and 17 girls,
but only 22 participated. Since three students missed one of the testing periods, the results are
based on a sample of four fourth and 17 fifth grade students. The control class sample had 26
students, 14 boys and 12 girls. Four students were pulled for ESL pullout. Five students were
absent during the one of the testing periods. The final sample had 17 students from fifth grade,
and some students in the groups had limited English proficiency.

Once weekly, the experimental group was divided in two and taught by a classroom
teacher or the teacher-librarian. According to Lee (2004), the teachers received two hours
training in the instructional approach–collaborative strategy instruction and use of nonfiction
texts. This was a limited intervention completed in just ten lessons. Approximately eight to ten
students received 40 minutes of weekly teaching with the instructional approach. Students
demonstrated comprehension by expressing ideas from the text in one’s own words. The control
class received regular classroom instruction.

The students were pre and post-tested in February and June with the comprehension
subtest of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. The Green version of this test is intended to
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assess students at the end of grade three and the first half of grade four. Since many students were struggling learners, the classroom teacher suggested this level so students would not become frustrated. A t-test was used to compare the pre and post-test scores of the two groups. The pretest results for the comprehension subtest indicated no significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with means of 32.89 (Experimental) versus 32.32 (Control), respectively. The post test results between the two groups revealed a significant difference, even after a limited intervention. The post-test mean was 37.73 (Experimental) and 34.17 (Control), respectively. The t-score was 2.19, indicating a significant effect from the intervention, where p is less than .05.

Since this was a short study, it was clear that there are some limitations. The author suggested caution in generalizing results for the study. What is indisputable, are the results from the norm referenced Stanford Diagnostic Reading Comprehension subtest. The ten sessions of the “collaborative strategy instruction” influenced the students’ reading performance (Lee, 2004, p. 50). Teacher and student interaction revealed that support was needed with text and vocabulary. Even though students could read and answer “recitation type questions,” students struggled and needed support with summarization. It was difficult to summarize new information, when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary and texts.

Lee (2004) did not evaluate classroom practices of the teachers, but one fundamental goal of the study was influencing teachers to enhance use of nonfiction text for intermediate students supported with an instructional approach for comprehension. Teaching with instructional text is purposeful and students must apply and use cognitive strategies. The author suggested that teachers must have knowledge of comprehension strategies and the material being presented, and should “model” strategy use to students. Informational literacy is an area that requires explicit
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instruction of comprehension strategies for all readers, but especially for students who have reading disabilities. The next study also focused on comprehension strategy instruction and identifies the necessity of student’s conscious, critical thought to assist with understanding texts.

Empirical evidence stresses the importance of reading instruction that focuses on analytical thought and strategies that increase a student’s capacity to reason according to Cathy Collins Block (1993). Patterns of thought that students learn while they are young are later drawn upon in adulthood. When students are taught to critically think about a task at hand, it results in attainment of a greater depth of knowledge and personal ability to resolve the task. Cathy Collins Block (1993) discussed the results of a literature-based reading program that trained students on reading and thought-based strategies.

In this study, students received two-part instruction where the curriculum was centered on the pupil. Students were allowed personal choice of materials and learning goals. Block (1993) stated that students’ reading difficulties should diminish if students are taught how to think and reflect. The study was based on four broad ideas: First, student comprehension increases with exposure to regular instruction of strategies and their use. Second, struggling students may need an alternate type of instruction teaching them how to reflect and become a skilled reader. Third, a student who struggles with text may not be familiar with interpretative skills necessary for understanding the text. Fourth, a student who has internalized a repertoire of strategies has a greater likelihood of resolving difficulties with their own understanding and figuring out unfamiliar words.

The participants in this study were enrolled in three different schools, one private and two public. The schools were located in the Southwestern United States. The ethnic population of one
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school was 68% Mexican American, 16% African American, 14% Anglo, and 2% Asian. A second school was 52% Anglo, 30% African American, 12% Mexican American, and 6% Asian. The third school was 61% Anglo, 22% African American, and 17% Mexican American. The students in the study were in grades two through six; eight classrooms contained experimental students and eight classrooms had control students. There were 178 students in the Treatment Group and 174 students in the Control Group. Students were randomly assigned to the control or experimental groups.

Two weeks into the school year, research assistants were assigned to the experimental and control classrooms. Research assistants taught sixteen explicit strategy lessons 1.5 hours each day, twice a week, for duration of 32 weeks. There were a total of 16 strategy lessons. Block combined the strategies into eight groups including: “Basic cognitive operations, Fundamental thinking processes, Decision making strategies, Problem solving strategies, Metacognitive strategies, Creative thinking strategies, Strategies for working effectively in groups, and Strategies for studying and working more effectively alone” (Block, 1993, p. 141). In the control classroom, the assistant was there to assure that no strategy lessons took place. During the last day of instruction, the assistant videotaped the lesson in each participating classroom.

The standardized test of the Iowa of Basic Skills was used as a posttest to measure possible change in reading comprehension between the experimental and control groups. The scores of students in the investigational group were considerably higher for reading comprehension, vocabulary, and total battery scores. English grammar was not part of the experimental program. The mean of the treatment group was 51.08 versus the control group mean of 27.52. The intervention had a significant impact on comprehension. Similarly, the
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average score for vocabulary of the Experimental Group was almost twice the average score of the Control Group. There was over a 70 point difference when comparing the Experimental Group mean to the Control Group.

It is apparent that the strategy intervention had a significant impact on students’ self-regulation of use. Embedded in the classroom instruction for the Experimental Group was a myriad of written reflections and responses completed by students. Purpose of reading was always established. Students completed “thinking guides” and how they would apply strategies in their lives (Block, 1993, p. 142). Students also worked with a written guide to clarify their questions. During the lessons, the first part was completed in a collaborative setting and the second was completed for independent practice. This allowed students to practice and regulate the depth of their response. Experimental Group students received explicit feedback during the research about correct/incorrect use of strategies. Students were aware of errors and given corrective feedback.

Five individuals were asked to rate the instructional tapes from the experimental and control classrooms. The individuals rating the tapes were not given any insight into the purpose of the research or the classroom being observed. The people were asked to identify differences viewed in the tapes. The raters were asked to order the tapes by looking at student discussions of understanding and their thought process. The students in the Experimental group exhibited behaviors that supported well-developed thought. The raters compiled a list of traits that the students exhibited.

Other measures of assessment were given to both groups of students. Tasks such as identifying a first person narrator of text and completing an essay on reflecting on one’s
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cognitive processes in a written essay were completed and scored. One trend emerged from this research; the students in the experimental group receiving explicit strategies modeling, practice, and feedback clearly made significant progress in all areas assessed. The program detailed can be integrated into any instructional program during the school day. The results of Block’s research supported explicit strategy instruction as well as the development of critical thinking skills. The next study by Dole, Brown & Trathen (1996) also looks at comprehension strategy instruction and self-regulation of use, but only for “at-risk students” (p.62).

The comprehension study by Dole, Brown & Trathen examined how strategy instruction in reading affected performance of at-risk students (1996). The researchers wanted to see how student motivation was influenced by this type of instruction. The researchers hoped to find connections between the individual responses of two students and their comprehension performance with self-regulation of use during the study (Dole, Brown & Trathen, 1996).

There were three people who provided instruction for this research study. Participants included a Chapter 1 teacher, a graduate student and a researcher from this study. All three instructional participants were experienced upper elementary teachers. Any influence of stylistic instructional differences was avoided by use of prepared scripts for instruction, as well as equal rotation through each one of the three instructional interventions. The study lasted five weeks and students received one of three instructional interventions, Monday through Thursday. Six days were set aside to assess students.

When the school year began, teachers and administrators used the results from the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) and placed fifth and sixth grade students into approximately six homogeneous groups for reading. Teacher perceptions also influenced this decision. After
eliminating the highest and lowest groups, a total of 75 students were available for the study. Accounting for absences during various testing periods, the final sample had 67 students. The 39 fifth graders and 28 sixth graders had a mean percentile score of 25% on the SAT and were in the lowest quartile.

During the study, the researchers “randomly assigned students to one of three instructional treatments including strategy instructional treatment, story content instructional treatment, or the basal instructional treatment” (Dole, Brown & Trathen, 1996, p. 68). Strategy instruction was taught with a goal of supporting and expanding student knowledge about the structure of texts. Key areas of focus included predictions, characters, problem, resolution, as well as asking questions to clarify information. The students completed an adapted version of story map developed by Beck (1982), and later practiced similar skills independently. Lessons were planned so there was a gradual release of responsibility to the student. It began with strategy modeling during whole group instruction, continued with modeling by class leaders, practice in small groups, working in pairs and finally independent use. Coaches provided feedback when necessary.

The researchers had a second treatment focusing on story content. This teacher-led instruction was also scripted and focused on story maps, vocabulary, and key story concepts. Teachers set a purpose for reading and gave students an outline of information before asking them to complete independently. The third group’s instruction included traditional work with the district’s basal reading program. All texts used in this research came from the basal program.

When the researchers interpreted the results of the study, they reexamined the groups using the new SAT scores that were unavailable when the study began. There were notable
differences in the method students were grouped, so the researchers employed ANCOVA to eliminate ability differences. The results of the research indicated that strategy instruction scored higher than the two other types, including the second instructional treatment. A comparison of test results for story content treatment and the basal program indicated no significant difference on independent tests.

The administration of the two types of test assessments yielded another significant result. The researchers referred to this as “test time.” Half of the six total tests were given right after instruction and half were given after independent reading and work. The students in this study scored considerably higher on the version given during independent work. The two types of test design had no influence on the final results from the study. The researchers’ goal of finding a significant correlation between the three types of instruction, the style of test administered, and when it was given did not yield verifiable results.

The results of Dole and Associates’ research indicated the effectiveness of explicit strategy instruction, especially with struggling readers (Dole, Brown & Trathen, 1996). Teacher support including “modeling, coaching, and fading” provided the “scaffolding” the students needed to help internalize key concepts necessary to understand and engage in the process good readers use (p.73). Successful readers self-regulate use of strategies, which is important to attain and support comprehension. In this study, it appeared that students who received strategy instruction were actively engaged with exchanging ideas during the learning process. This instruction appeared to transfer to the self-regulated use of strategies during independent work.

This supported the importance and relevance of effective, explicit classroom instruction and practice for reading. The second intervention in this study focused on instruction of a
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declarative nature, where the teacher provides all of the necessary information to understand a text. This can assist in building schema for the student. The results of the study surprised the researchers because they believed that “content instruction” was more effective than the “strategy treatment” and this would be identified in the test results for independent use. The opposite was true (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996, p. 72).

The research goal of comprehension of “specific texts” did not vary from the three instructional methods used. This was likely due to the fact that all classroom instruction was carefully scripted and necessary changes were made based on anecdotal notes. Most likely, the scripting accounted for instructional differences of the teachers. The study also discussed the importance of “procedural and conditional knowledge” that are necessary for struggling readers to attain (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996, p. 73). It appeared that this condition was met.

The second phase of this research was an overview of two student profiles, but only a brief synopsis of key ideas will be provided. Student responses during the research were monitored and researchers looked for patterns of responses. Two students were selected; one was a “less capable” student who was successful using strategies and another student with stronger ability but resisted strategy instruction. Anecdotal information, written student responses and assessments were used during this part of the study to determine motivation.

The less capable reader was initially guarded as she began instruction. The more capable reader appeared open to the instruction taking place, or as the study called it, self-efficacy. As the study unfolded, the more capable reader began to struggle with components of the study and the less capable reader flourished and actively used concepts taught. The results of the comprehension assessment indicated growth for the less capable reader and a regression for the
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more capable reader. Personal motivation affected self-efficacy of use. “Utility value refers to students’ judgments about whether academic tasks will help them accomplish their goals” (Pintrich, Marx and Boyle, 1993, as cited in Dole et al., 1996, p. 75). Wade, Trathen, and Schaw (as cited in Dole et al., 1996, p. 82) stated that students benefit more from becoming metacognitive about the strategies they already use, rather than from learning different ones. This may explain what occurred. Regardless, it is essential to pay attention to these elements in order to provide the most effective instruction possible.

The previous four studies focused primarily on the importance of comprehension strategy instruction. Even though the parameters of each study differed, it is clear that various methodologies addressing this form of instruction resulted in positive outcomes. All students appeared to make positive gains. The next several articles will focus on explicit comprehension strategy instruction and self-efficacy of use. Once students have received instruction and personally used such strategies, research will look at students’ self-regulated use of such strategies.

Comprehension Strategy Instruction and Self-Efficacy

Keer & Verhaeghe conducted an experimental study of children in second and fifth grades (Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005). This descriptive research analyzes the usefulness of teaching explicit reading comprehension strategies and student perception of self-efficacy. It was followed by a program of additional teacher-led practice within a whole classroom learning environment, where students engaged in reciprocal or cross-age peer tutoring. The study addressed how skillful readers recognize that the reading process requires more than simple decoding of words. Good readers are flexible and cognizant of the need to employ a collection of explicit
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comprehension reading strategies while they read. An analysis of results of explicit comprehension strategy instruction of a whole group setting versus peer tutoring groups was made.

There were a total of “four naturally composed classrooms” that participated in this study (Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005, p. 5). There were two second grade and two fifth grade classrooms, where extensive interventions were made. The study lasted for one year and five separate hypotheses were tested. Since there are multiple hypotheses in this study, it is apparent that the authors of this research were attempting to obtain greater depth of information. Since the parameters of this researcher’s study are smaller, the focus will be on the results of one hypothesis. The results of hypotheses one is of particular interest and has relevance for this researcher’s case study. Hypothesis one looked at explicit strategies instruction and practice in teacher-led classrooms versus peer tutoring activities. The success of second and fifth grade interventions for reading comprehension was examined. This was compared to traditional reading comprehension instruction taught within a whole group setting.

It is essential to understand the authors’ view about comprehension in this research. The authors discussed cognitive and metacognitive strategies that good readers employ. Cognitive strategies are intellectual or behavioral activities that will increase the likelihood of understanding. Metacognitive strategies focus on the “product and process of reading,” such as self-monitoring and personal awareness of one’s own comprehension (Lories, Dardenne, & Yzerbyt, 1998; Van Den Broek & Kremer; Weisberg, 1988 as cited in Kerr & Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005, p. 2). The authors of this research discussed the importance of reading competence, which is accomplished with support from peers. It also looked at the idea of passive learning for students that is a result of teacher control exerted over the learning process. Self-
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efficacy was cited as an especially important component and affects personal orientation to the reading process.

The researchers’ intention was to assess explicit reading strategies instruction with an added value of two types of peer tutoring. The goal was increased comprehension and self-efficacy. There were three experimental groups and one control condition using “a pretest, posttest, retention test control group test design” (Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005, p. 5). Each experimental group was taught six reading strategies. Student practice took place in teacher-led whole group instruction, student cross-age peer tutoring activities, or reciprocal same-age activities. The control condition consisted of traditional reading with content specific questions. The study was held within the natural confines of each classroom. Students were allowed to cluster or group within their own classroom.

In second grade, there was no difference in results between the three experimental groups. Teacher-led strategy instruction yielded the same results as peer tutoring. A comparison of the experimental groups and the control group showed the same learning gain. Struggling readers made the same gains as the advanced readers. Future research in this area would require additional considerations such as cognitive and metacognitive demands of second grade students, as well as other developmental factors to determine if similar results would occur.

In the fifth grade classrooms, struggling and advanced readers again found similar gains. There was a positive effect of explicit comprehension instruction on increased reading achievement, especially within the three experimental areas of the study. Long term effects showed the cross-age participants had sustained learning growth, while same age participants did
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not maintain growth from the intervention. A number of factors including motivation appeared to influence these results.

The cross-age tutors from the fifth grade classrooms had the most significant gains. The cross-age older tutor must place all of their energy towards the younger student who is being tutored. The tutor must be attuned to what the student does, recognize control over their own reading process, and be cognizant of personal comprehension monitoring while encouraging another to implement use of such strategies. One develops metacognitive skills by monitoring their own comprehension, while helping to regulate the reading process of another student. Motivational differences influenced the results of the same-age tutoring.

The research results indicated that the interventions did not affect self-efficacy of the second grade students. This doesn’t imply that second grade students are not engaged with this process, but it was not discernable in the final results. Self-efficacy of the fifth grade students yielded mixed results. Students who participated in the cross tutoring were less concerned with failure and negative self-efficacy results, as opposed to the same age tutoring groups or the control group. During the final tests at year end, a change in the same age group was reflected and it is also important to see if the study could be repeated with the cross-age group.

The results of this study supported the first hypothesis. It showed that explicit comprehension strategy instruction will enhance reading achievement. The results of standardized tests supported the cognitive views about comprehension instruction and its benefits. It is clear that additional strategies instruction is needed for younger students. It is reasonable to state that young students, or those still engaged with decoding, need additional support with explicit comprehension strategies instruction.
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The study had some limitations. First it acknowledged that increased comprehension can be directly related to improvement in metacognitive skills and use of reading comprehension strategies. The study by Van Keer & Verhaeghe (2005) “did not directly measure reading strategy use or metacognitive activity” (p.25). Measurement of results was attempted by the completion of questionnaires. It was difficult to establish validity of results and suggested other tools such as “think aloud protocols or recall interviews” should be used in future research (Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005, p.25).

The fidelity of the data collection for the experimental and control groups was not consistent. The experimental teachers did not systematically collect data. An analysis of activities in the control classes indicated that limited attention was paid to the efficient instruction of specific comprehension reading strategies. It was then difficult to collect data describing the approach used for explicit comprehension teacher-led instruction. Future research in this area should include documentation of systematic comprehension instruction taking place by means of a journal or observer. A lack of understanding about the systematic instruction generates a question about the results of the control groups. Questions emerge about what was explicitly taught for comprehension.

The study indicated that good readers employ a variety of skills such as self-monitoring, while using various reading strategies to fix comprehension when it breaks down. Struggling readers lack these skills. It is essential to demonstrate what good readers do and how to use flexible strategies for comprehension. Since reading is an arduous process, it takes years to have true self-regulation and use of varied comprehension strategies and engagement with many literary experiences. The one-year study could never accurately reflect this process, but a
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A snapshot within it. The implementation and instruction of reading strategy use in classrooms is warranted.

The previous study highlighted the importance of teacher commitment to explicit comprehension strategy instruction with practice in peer-tutoring sessions. Good readers develop intrinsic skills that allow them to navigate reading by self-monitoring their progress. It is equally important to understand how struggling readers or those with reading disabilities navigate through the reading process while attempting to use similar skills. A study by Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006) studied the impact of reading comprehension strategy instruction with students who have reading disabilities. It included self-regulation of use, student perceptions, and recognition of incorrect strategy use.

When students move beyond the post-primary grades, motivation influences student progress. When a struggling reader or a student with a reading disability loses motivation, it clearly impacts achievement. Student’s personal beliefs and enthusiasm towards reading is a better gauge of reading achievement than in the primary grades. When young children are engaged in the reading process, they are not able to clearly distinguish personal ability and effort exhibited. As Pressley (1998) stated, “The older the struggling reader, the more the struggle will be interpreted as reflecting low ability with the child unmotivated to learn to read” (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p. 214).

The sample in this study consisted of middle school students entering grades four through eight. Students were at least two years behind based on results of the Woodcock Johnson fluency and comprehension subtests and no student was fluent beyond a 3.5 GE. The IQ cutoff was above 75. The sample consisted of 21 students, with a mean age of 11 years, 6 months. One
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student dropped out after several weeks, so the final sample included 20 students, 15 boys and five girls. Seventeen students were Caucasian and three were African American. The students were randomly assigned to the two interventions. The first intervention received explicit, self-regulatory comprehension strategy instruction and the second intervention received less explicit strategy instruction.

The Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006) study occurred because of previous research conducted on reading proficiency outcomes and interventions. This current study looked at two reading interventions upon “reading self-efficacy” and “attributions to strategy use for reading success and failure” of middle school students with reading disabilities (p.216). Both groups received a form of strategy instruction for reading comprehension. It was hypothesized that the student group with explicit strategy instruction would have a more positive perception of self-efficacy, affecting recognition and proper use of strategies, than the less explicit guided group. The dependent variable of reading comprehension measured oral retelling, multiple choice questions on nonfiction reading, and the passage comprehension subtest of the Woodcock Johnson III (WJIII). The “explicit comprehension group” performed better than the “guided group” on two measures, oral retelling and identifying main idea (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p.221). The difference between groups approached statistical significance on WJ III.

A variety of assessment materials were used during this study. Nelson & Manset Williamson found that Schunk and Rice, created a way to measure reading self-efficacy. It measures a student’s perception of ability to correctly answer questions about the main idea of various passages. An average score was given ranging from 10 to 100. Another method of assessment was created by Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006) to determine reading attributions with strategy use. Two scales were created to determine attribute strategy success
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and failure. A modified version of the “Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children” (PANAS-C) (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, P.217) measured positive and negative effect of reading experiences for children. The testing procedures for attribution strategy success were conducted by three doctoral students who were blind to the research questions.

The instructors for the intervention procedures consisted of ten paid instructors with varying levels of college and post baccalaureate education. After 14 hours of training, the six-week summer study began. Four days were used for pre and post testing. Each intervention was delivered one-on-one by instructors. “Each student received 15 minutes of instruction for phonological awareness, 10 minutes for fluency instruction, and 35 minutes for comprehension instruction (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p.217). Seven different strategies were explicitly taught. Decoding was supported during comprehension instruction. Two observations with feedback were made of each instructor over the course of the study.

The “Guided Reading Group” Intervention had 11 student participants. Making predictions, summarizing, and asking questions were strategies used to support comprehension through this approach. “It is assumed students naturally catch on and use strategies independently” (Duffy, 2002 as cited in Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p. 219). Students were introduced to all comprehension strategies simultaneously and had opportunities to practice.

The Explicit Instruction Intervention consisted of strategy instruction, but the teachers presented a rationale for use as well as its significance in understanding texts. Students were taught the difficult task of “self monitoring and goal-setting” while reading (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p.219). The mnemonic “SUPER-G” was used and stood for “set goals, use
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prior knowledge, predict what you think will be in the text, explain the main idea in your own words, retell the most important part of the text, and give yourself feedback” (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p. 219). Students learned one strategy at a time until mastery through direct explanation, modeling, collaborative practice, and self practice. A mnemonic worksheet was used for written practice.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of covariance used pretest scores. The researchers wanted to determine any variations between the dependent variable of comprehension instruction. Guided Intervention had a higher posttest mean for reading self-efficacy than the Explicit Comprehension Intervention group, which approached statistical significance. Prior to the study, both groups identified high levels of self-efficacy preceding the interventions. It appeared that both groups may have misjudged their abilities, because scores were below average on different comprehension assessments. The Explicit Comprehension Group may not have rated their self-efficacy as high, because they worked with the strategy feedback program.

For reading attributions, ANOVAs were used to analyze data. It identified the significance of the student attributions with incorrect strategy usage in the Explicit Comprehension Group. Although both group showed gains, the students in the Explicit Strategy Group had bigger gains with attributions than the guided group intervention, which tended to decrease attributions. The difference between the two interventions was attributed to “strategy-value feedback” as well as the request to recognize and self-monitor the use of strategies (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p.220). Students in the Explicit Intervention group received feedback on correct and incorrect use of comprehension strategies. There were gains in reading comprehension, but no significant measures from the posttests.
Reading self-efficacy was overestimated by students in the study. Overestimation of student ability can occur with students who have reading disabilities. Self-efficacy is important, but an inaccurate perception can have negative influence on academic performance. Klassen (2002) suggested that “students with learning problems may have positive self-efficacy beliefs despite academic weaknesses and may not operate in the same way as a normally achieving student” (p.98). This may influence effort or personal engagement in the learning task. Several explanations were offered why students with learning disabilities may overestimate their ability. One is a means for self-preservation. Other explanations looked at meta-cognitive skills and personal perception of one’s ability. Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006) stated that when participants were asked about their confidence in answering comprehension questions, after reading, they probably called upon self-efficacy as well as metacognitive ability.

As previously mentioned, the students in the Explicit Comprehension Strategy Intervention initially overstated their ability to answer questions, were more realistic after the intervention. The Explicit Comprehension Strategy Intervention required to students use metacognitive skills more than the Guided Reading Intervention. Reading is a strategic process and good readers call on “cognitive, meta-cognitive and self-regulatory skills” (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p. 227). This interpretation is based on theory, and not the research that was conducted.

As with every study, there were some limitations. The small sample size made it more difficult to detect changes from the interventions. There were only three female students in this study, and one must be careful making generalizations about the results and students with reading disabilities. Only one finding was statistically significant when the two groups were compared, and two others approached significance. Additional information compiled by
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instructors or parents could provide insight into the findings, and specific reporting methods existed. Finally changes would need to be made for the reading attribute instrument to improve reliability.

When planning instruction for students with reading disabilities, it necessary to consider motivational factors. The focus in this study of explicit comprehension strategy instruction where students self-regulate use does not appear to influence motivation of students with reading disabilities. Students with reading disabilities need support helping to discern what they do understand and where additional support is needed. Students with reading disabilities need specific, explicit instruction so an accurate awareness of reading ability is made.

The previous study emphasized the importance of explicit comprehension strategy instruction and self-efficacy of use and its importance in the literacy process. It was significant to examine a student’s motivation and engagement with the reading process. This directly influences a student’s comprehension. Engagement with the text is multifaceted and requires that specific learning behaviors are actively engaged. The goal of this study was to enhance reading engagement, while simultaneously increasing reading achievement of elementary students.

The previous two studies examined the effects of explicit comprehension strategy instruction and self-efficacy of use. Once students are given the tools to be successful, there are attributes that lead to successful use of these strategies. The final research articles looked at teacher preparation for strategy instruction and how educators must deliberately and purposefully plan for this. It looked at some of the inconsistencies that exist with classroom instruction, as well as an overview of research in these areas.
Michael Pressley was a researcher and academician whose work clearly influenced the direction of literacy and research. Pressley and Allington presented an overview of reading instructional research and presented an analysis on the direction of funded academic research, to determine whether this research was representative of the most effective pedagogy available (Pressley & Allington, 1999). Pressley and Allington’s article, “What Should Reading Instructional Research be the Research of?” provides reflective insight supported by research on the direction of literacy instruction in our country (1999). Although this was written over a decade ago, it appears that it has influenced today’s literacy practices.

Pressley & Allington (1999) began with a review of research supporting a skills-oriented approach. This research was funded and supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD); it appeared to set the direction for research and literacy at this time. The organization directly supported research that skills-oriented instruction such as phonemic awareness and word recognition were the best approach for beginning literacy. Other researchers who assessed alternate methods of literacy found problems with the “internal and external” validity of studies.

Pressley & Allington, (1999) found that Troia suggested that random assignment wasn’t used in about half of the studies. The implication of this suggested that faulty research studies were driving the study of literacy instruction. Other factors, such as “fidelity of treatment,” were cited that generated questions about the validity of some work being done. In many instances, little was known about sample populations. According to Pressley & Allington (1999), a broad
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overview of results indicated support for the hypothesis that systematic phonics instruction improved word recognition. Yet limited reviews of the methodology used existed at the time.

The aforementioned overview of research does not imply that teaching an orderly phonics progression will not be helpful to struggling readers. There are additional factors that should be considered. According to Pressley & Allington (1999), research completed on the preschool students identified emergent literacy skills in students. “Parents and children reading together has the been the focus of a number of studies, with consistent correlations between opportunities for such storybook reading and children’s subsequent vocabulary and language development, children’s interest in reading, and early success in reading” (Sulzby & Teale, 1991, as cited in Pressley & Allington, 1999, p.8).

Pressley and others also participated in research on effective schools, but limited results were reported. It looked at what occurred in grade one classrooms where exceptional teaching and student engagement occurred. All teaching was based on student needs and all students were active participants in the learning process. Limited information was shared about this research, yet the end goal of all students engaged in the learning process is a desirable effect of all schooling.

Comprehension instruction can imply different things. Initially it was measured on a form of standardized assessment, and as mentioned earlier in this chapter, was not an explicit focus of instruction. Yet the process of student comprehension involves active engagement in the reading process. “Based on prior knowledge, they make predictions, relate story characters to their own lives, vary their reading speed depending on the relevance and difficulty of text, construct images, generate summaries, and reread when confused” (Pressley and Afflerbach, 1995 as cited
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in Pressley & Allington, 1999, p.14). A standardized assessment will not pick up the traits of good readers.

Children can learn these skills if taught. Enthusiasm for comprehension instruction increased. According to the authors, “successes were complemented by the rise of both metacognitive (Flavell, 1977) and Vygotskian (Vygotsky, 1978) theory, both of which specified that sophisticated thinking was due to the self-regulated use of cognitive processes like strategies” (Pressley & Allington, 1999, p. 15). A person should have access and knowledge of these strategies and understand how to apply them.

Pressley & Allington (1999) found that Palincsar & Brown indicated reciprocal teaching involves comprehension strategy instruction. The teacher models use of specific strategies and then releases responsibility of practice and use to a student group. With reciprocal teaching, the opportunity to lead and practice comprehension strategies in groups should evolve into use by each individual. Pressley & Allington (1999), found that Roshenshine & Meister mentioned reciprocal teaching yielded positive results, yet not on a broad scale. It did lead to research and practices of comprehension strategies instruction in classrooms and pedagogy that adopted some variance of this concept.

Pressley & Allington worked on development of a theory on comprehension strategy instruction. Pressley & Allington (1999) came up with the “descriptive theory of strategy instruction” (p.16). This eight step theory involves active engagement of teacher and students with strategy instruction. Students learned a range of comprehension strategies, were given instruction and necessary support as needed, demonstrated ability to apply and discuss strategies, learned how to apply various strategies with flexibility of use, students received teacher feedback
and stressed the importance of how students think. This became known as “transactional strategies instruction” (p.18).

“Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, and Schuder (1996) conducted a year-long quasi-experimental investigation of the effects of transactional strategies instruction on second grade children’s reading” (Pressley & Allington, 1999, p. 16). Struggling learners participated in transactional strategies instruction and the researchers looked for academic growth and success. There was little difference between the groups at the beginning of the school year, but the students who received transactional strategies instructions outperformed the other group on standardized assessments. It also appears that their responses to literature were superior as well as understanding of “content.” Additional validation of transactional strategies research was conducted by Cathy Collins Block and reviewed earlier in this chapter. Pressley, & Allington (1999), found that a study by Valerie Anderson of learning disabled students yielded similar results.

Another key element that Pressley & Allington (1999) highlighted was motivation and how it decreased as students get older. One solution is allowing students to select their choice of text to increase motivation. A curriculum that is interrelated will also keep students motivated. Similarly, this article also looked at student attributes. When looking at success and failure, a student may typically associate failure to one’s effort versus attributes. This also influences motivation.

Pressley was a pioneer with literacy and explicit comprehension instruction. This article contained additional information and opinions on literacy that will not be covered. Key points of Pressley and & Allington (1999) highlight the importance of quality research on effective
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literacy instruction. A key area of research and articles by Pressley support explicit comprehension instruction. This entails active engagement by students while engaged with the literacy process, self-regulation of use, and self-efficacy. Teachers model and scaffold wherever necessary. Students are not afraid to make mistakes, knowing that they will receive necessary support from teachers and other students to correct their comprehension.

Hilden & Pressley (2007) expressed the importance of explicit comprehension instruction in the classroom and its role in the reading process. In a qualitative, multiple case studies, the researchers provided professional development to teachers in reading strategy instruction to improve comprehension, with a goal of self-regulated strategy use for students. This type of instruction was mandated by Congress in 2001, by No Child Left Behind legislation (107th Congress, 2001). State or Core standards today specify the importance of this instruction. Both Hilden and Pressley (2007) realized that comprehension strategy instruction rarely occurred in classrooms around the country and wanted to gain insight why this took place.

Reading is an ongoing process, and requires strategy use and constant monitoring before, during, and after the act. Good readers are encouraged to be actively engaged in the reading process with use of comprehension strategies and self-monitoring in order to construct meaning from the text. Teachers should actively teach students how to use various comprehension reading strategies by use of modeling and scaffolding students for success. Students should be able to use such strategies singly or differentiate between strategy uses.

There are a number of factors and influences to consider when implementing and assessing this type of instruction. Internal factors of the school environment can influence the results of the study. This can include support from the administration, attitudes towards
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professional development and school resources. Another consideration is a teacher’s attitude, experiences, and comfort level with this instruction. Student motivation and perceived need also influence the success. When looking at all of the factors influencing explicit comprehension instruction and self-monitoring, it is apparent that numerous factors can influence the results of this instruction within classrooms.

Hilden & Pressley (2007) conducted research the previous year at two middle schools on student motivation. The following year, the principals contacted them to see if they would be willing to conduct research to improve teacher instruction of reading comprehension. This was offered as a professional development program at both schools. Twenty teachers initially expressed interest in the program, yet only five teachers participated in the program during the school year. The program took place from October through April in the 2003-2004 school year. The teachers all taught fifth grade in a small school district in Michigan. Four teachers had at least ten years of experience and one teacher taught for five years. The principal at one school was very active with the program, the other supportive, but unable to attend or participate in any meetings.

Teachers met in a cohort every four to six weeks for a total of 18 meetings between the two schools. The meetings were conducted by Hilden, Pressley or both. Informal meetings also took place between the researchers and teachers to provide feedback. The informal instruction focused on nine different comprehension strategies and student scaffolding during reading instruction. The study revealed that many teachers struggle with strategy instruction. To be most effective, strategy instruction should be introduced in early grades, so students can gain experience working with these strategies. When this doesn’t occur, strategy instruction becomes a cumbersome process, because of the extensive concepts that good readers use. It is interesting
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to consider the ramifications when explicit comprehension instruction is delayed to the later grades. Both teachers and researchers in this study modeled the strategies in the classroom. The teachers also had opportunities to watch video tapes of good comprehension strategy instruction.

Teacher observations took place monthly. The researchers used “grounded theory construction data collection” (Hilden & Pressley, 2007, p.57). The data collected included extensive field notes taken by the researchers during meetings, interviews, and coaching sessions. This information was shared with the teachers. Even with preparation, planning, practice, and feedback, the teachers faced numerous challenges related to comprehension strategy instruction in their classrooms. Teachers faced challenges when they implemented their comprehension strategy program, such as “classroom management, teacher attitudes, instructional decision making, concerns about texts, challenges associated with students, professional development concerns, time, timing in the curriculum and assessment” (Hilden & Pressley, 2007, p. 57).

The researchers worked with each teacher to address the series of challenges faced in the classroom. Teachers did not want additional new information to use; they preferred taking all of the elements learned about comprehension instruction from training and other sources and “synthesizing the pieces” (Hilden & Pressley, 2007, p. 57). Some teachers found it difficult to coordinate explicit strategy instruction with other elements of their classroom literacy program. Personal attitudes of some teachers towards strategy instruction also influenced the outcomes. This has direct implications on effective strategy instruction in the classroom.

Hilden & Pressley (2007) found that Duffy stated that students should be able to identify what good readers do to understand text, and when students understand various strategies, they
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are more likely to use them. According to the researchers, the teacher participants did a good job modeling and teaching the strategies to students. The teachers found releasing responsibility of use to students difficult to do. The teachers were uncertain how to get students to the point of self-regulating use. Hilden and Pressley (2007) suggested that written evidence of skills is one means of student accountability. Students successfully practiced in guided groups, yet struggled when attempting to use independently.

Appropriate levels of text are necessary or it will influence the results. A student must work on texts at their instructional level, or may lose motivation because it is too difficult. A student must read with purpose. Word attack and vocabulary inhibit readers, as well as lack of schema. During the study, teachers participating in the research had to adjust and change materials, because the materials supplied by the school were too difficult. A problem arises with a simpler text, because multifaceted comprehension strategies do not lend itself to instruction with a simple text.

Motivation to read has a profound effect on student progress. The apathetic student lingers in a state of limbo and limited progress is made. This can lead to behavioral or classroom management problems as indicated in this study. Large class size affects the quality of instruction and prohibits the individual support or scaffolding needed by some students to make progress. Large-sized classrooms influenced the quality of instruction during this study. When students do not or cannot take control of their learning, it affects classroom dynamics.

Assessment is an integral part of research because it measures each student’s baseline skills in the beginning and progress made towards an end goal. According to Hilden and Pressley (2007), they didn’t know of any method of well-validated informal assessments. The researchers
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suggested keeping thorough anecdotal records, which is a logical, necessary step if no formal assessments are completed. This also provides useful instructional information for teachers who use standardized assessments.

Time influenced several aspects of this study. First, the participating teachers could not find time to genuinely read the professional journals suggested such as “The Reading Teacher or books like Harvey & Goudvis’ (2000) Strategies that Work” (Hilden & Pressley, 2007, p. 65). The researchers attempted to encourage the participants, saying that it takes at least a year to master teaching the concepts because it influences how we think. A second concern arose regarding how this program would be continued in the next grade or introduced in earlier grades.

Teachers recognized benefits of implementing this program and began thinking more deeply and increasing the genres of texts used for instruction. Teachers observed students begin to flexibly use strategies, as well as the benefit of socially constructed responses. There were other positive results from instruction, yet the teachers in this research did not gain similar proficiency as others who were “observed.” According to Hilden and Pressley, the information compiled from this study supports the results of previous research; teachers do not become skillful teaching comprehension strategies during the first year. They concluded that teachers would benefit from ongoing professional development.

Hilden and Pressley (2007) identified other implications from their research. Teachers must be aware of their own “self-regulated” use of comprehension strategies as well of the progress of their students. Language use is a good indicator. Teachers should focus on personal language use as well as careful monitoring of student expression. We want students to fluently use strategies and receive appropriate feedback. Comprehension strategy instruction should be
implanted school-wide by all teachers, as opposed to a limited group. This brings focus to the limited number of teacher participants and possible resistance to this instruction.

The end goal for this research was “self regulated use of comprehension strategies” by students while reading (p. 51). When educators struggle or resist teaching new concepts to students, there are obvious implications. It is clear that the National Reading Panel (2000) identified the importance of explicit instruction for literacy. When teachers struggle implementing this instruction, it is evident we do not obtain the student self-efficacy desired. This clearly influences student reading progress. Also, fidelity of instruction throughout classrooms in this country has a profound impact on the progress students make. All educators and administrators can influence this direction, but it will take years to quantify these results.

Summary of Research and Connection to Case Study

The preceding research supports the premise of explicit comprehension strategy instruction, especially with struggling readers. It also represents a historical snapshot and evolvement of explicit comprehension strategy instruction. The research completed in my case study for A.C. supports explicit comprehension instruction, as well as skills such as motivation, self-regulation, and self-efficacy. The articles focused upon the necessary skills that facilitate effective comprehension instruction and successful methods of instruction to engage all learners.

The studies by Van Keer & Verhaeghe (2005) and Hilden & Pressley (2007) both suggested the importance of explicit comprehension strategy instruction. The studies suggested different means to accomplish this goal. In Van Keer & Verhaeghe (2005), the teacher instructs and hands off responsibility for practice to peer tutoring groups. Hilden & Pressley (2007)
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highlight the highly interactive role of the teacher and students in transactional strategies instruction. Block’s (1993) study suggested strategy instruction that is student-centered and literature-based, where students are given choices. Regardless, strategic reading that is taught within these methodologies facilitates practice of metacognitive skills. It calls upon students to understand and use a repertoire of strategies. Explicit strategy instruction for A.C. would provide insight, guidance, and practice to support her comprehension and provide insight into what skills good readers use. Dole, Brown, & Trathen (1996) suggested that comprehension strategy instruction influences awareness of student performance. Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006) suggested explicit strategy instruction is effective, but clear, useful feedback, especially with students who have reading disabilities is essential.

Many of the research articles suggest motivation and reading are strongly correlated and the concept of motivation is discussed in many comprehension research studies. The research highlights different aspects about the influence of motivation on the reading process. Van Keer & Verhaeghe (2005) identified negative motivational factors that influenced some fifth grade student participants in same group peer tutoring. Perception of one’s ability, either right or wrong, influences reading motivation. Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006) suggested a struggling reader or an older student with a reading disability is prone to developing motivational problems about reading. A.C. is a middle school student with a learning disability, so strategic support is needed.

Researchers also suggested that motivation and characteristics of attitude are “good predictors” of reading achievement. Wigfield, Guthrie, Perencevich, Taboada, Lutz Klaudia, McRae & Barbosa (2008) showed “direct evidence that it was the amount of reading engagement that improved reading comprehension” (p. 444). Dole, Brown, and Trathen’s (1996) study
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suggested that specific collaborative instruction could negatively affect motivation of a good reader. Pressley & Allington (1999) suggested the importance of motivating students, because there is a decline as students progress through school. The importance of necessary scaffolding and instructional support for A.C. is clear and motivation is essential for success with the reading process.

Nelson & Manset-Williamson’s (2006) study suggested that students with learning disabilities tend to have lower self-efficacy. When one has low self-efficacy with certain academic areas, one may avoid tasks, give minimal effort, or give up, because their judgment of their competence to complete certain actions or recognize a certain level of performance seems unattainable. The study of Van Keer & Verhaeghe (2005) revealed that self-efficacy is an important “construct” and it can affect one’s overall “orientation to reading.” Since A.C has a learning disability, it is poignant to consider her feelings throughout instruction with the reading process. It is also important for A.C. to receive authentic feedback for effort given in order to support the learning process. A student with a learning disability may have an incorrect perception of their ability. The results of Nelson and Manset-Williamson’s study (2006) revealed that students with a reading disability who received explicit comprehension strategy instruction had a less inflated view of their personal skills. It is important for A.C. to have an accurate self-perception of skills in order not to encounter greater difficulties later.

The research suggested other influences on reading comprehension, such as prior knowledge (Lee, 2004). Informational texts are more challenging for struggling readers. Low-income children may have less prior knowledge about a topic and its’ vocabulary, because exposure to topics occurs in the classroom. A.C. falls into this strata.
Explicit comprehension strategy instruction of non-disabled and students with learning disabilities is complex. There are intrinsic factors to consider about A.C.’s learning, as well as the external environment of school. Beyond explicit strategy instruction and reading comprehension, it is also imperative to consider other support that will be needed, such as decoding, vocabulary, and writing. The research provided information that will be considered.

Proficient readers apply skills that assist with self-regulation and monitoring of their own comprehension. Skilled readers develop certain habits of intellect and are actively engaged with the text during the reading process, specifically using multiple comprehension strategies to understand and engage with the text. “Knowledge of when and how to use specific strategies was a stronger predictor of whether students would independently use a comprehension strategy than students’ reading ability level or the readability level of the text read (Pressley, 2005b; Pressley et al., 1984, 1985 as cited in Block, 2008, p. 102). Teachers must actively engage all students with knowledge and practice with multiple comprehension strategies. This instruction will support greater understanding. The next chapter delves into explicit comprehension instruction for A.C. and examines the results affecting her comprehension, self-efficacy of use and self-regulation of use.
Chapter Three: Procedures for the Study

Comprehension instruction has evolved, especially over the last decade. Comprehension instruction carries a broad interpretation of meaning for educators and previous instruction may have only included answering in-the-book questions. Some educators did not ask deep thought-provoking questions or teach students how to think about or analyze text. The significance of understanding text has received increased attention in research and was identified as an area of concern by the National Reading Panel (2000). “The rationale for the explicit teaching of comprehension skills is that comprehension can be improved by teaching students to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they are reading” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 14). The same report also indicated that some readers naturally pick up on some strategies, but, “explicit or formal instruction in the application of comprehension strategies has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing understanding” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 14).

The recommendations in the National Reading Panel Report indicate that there are seven types of instruction that appear to be “scientifically based” to improve comprehension. The seven are: “comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, use of graphic and semantic organizers including story maps, question answering, question generation, story structure, and summarization” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 15). The preceding suggestions are targeted towards the non-disabled learner. It is important to stop and reflect whether this is also an effective instructional path for a student with a learning disability. It is also important to stop and reflect on student motivation and self-efficacy of use.
There are many considerations when planning instruction for a student with a learning disability. Students may struggle with vocabulary, decoding, fluency, and comprehension. The older student who struggles may have to put significant effort into basic skills, such as decoding and has limited energy available for understanding text. This person may lack necessary skills when encountering new vocabulary. When a post-primary student struggles, it can lead to decreased motivation to perform a task. Self-efficacy to use specific reading related skills may not exist. Comprehension is a likely struggle and this student also struggles with self-regulation of reading strategies.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of explicit comprehension strategy instruction, as well as self-efficacy and self-regulation of use. Specifically, the researcher sought to answer two questions about explicit comprehension strategy instruction: First, will explicit instruction of four comprehension strategies enhance understanding and awareness of textual purpose for a student with a learning disability? Second, will explicit instruction of comprehension strategies lead to self-efficacy and self-regulation of use? This chapter will discuss the procedures that this researcher used to answer the preceding questions.

The participant in this study was a sixth grade middle school student. The student attended a Milwaukee public charter school in Wisconsin. The student was an African-American female. The student was selected based on the recommendation of the English Language Arts teacher in her middle school. The student was diagnosed with a learning disability in 2006, while
in the second grade and received services from the Special Education teacher or assistant at the school. Her instruction included support with reading, particularly comprehension, as well as support with mathematics. The student was 12 years and six months at the beginning of the study and 12 years and nine months when the study was completed.

**Procedures**

The instructional intervention began with the administration of the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4) (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006), the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Form G (Woodcock, 1987) and a Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey (Appendix B). The pre-assessments and Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey were administered over two days approximately one hour long. The pre-assessments were analyzed to determine appropriate reading level, identify specific needs of the student, as well as facilitate quality instruction for the student. The Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey provided personal insight into intrinsic motivation of the student and an indication of personal interests. It provided insight into the student’s current repertoire of reading skills.

The results of the pre-assessments for the QRI-4 and Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests indicated that the student needed broad support with all areas of the reading process, especially understanding. (See Figure One in Appendix C for QRI-4 pre and post-test texts used). “Comprehension is defined as “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between the text and the reader” (Harris & Hodges, 1995 as cited in National Reading Panel Report, 2000, p. 14). Comprehension is the intellectual capacity to understand text. This report also indicated that there are three areas to work on for comprehension including
“vocabulary development and instruction, deliberate interaction of reader and text, and explicit instruction and use of comprehension strategies” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p.13).

The student in this study needed support with understanding text, so a repertoire of comprehension instructional strategies was planned, as well as self-monitoring skills for understanding. The student was also asked to monitor personal understanding of vocabulary to assure that the text she read was understood. This instruction supports the Wisconsin Common Core Standard regarding Comprehension. Standard Ten addresses the “range of reading and level of text complexity of student reading” (WI Dept. of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 60). According to Common Core Standard Six for Informational Texts, a student at a fifth grade level is expected to “analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent” (WI Dept. of Public Instruction, 2011, p.42). Common Core Standard Five states that a student should be able to “compare and contrast the overall structure of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts” (WI Dept. of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 42). The researcher and student met to review the instructional purpose of this plan and a schedule of instructional activities began.

The researcher used fiction and non-fiction text for this intervention, the types of texts a student would encounter in the classroom. There were a number of short passages as well as instruction with a novel. For part of the intervention, the researcher supported the student while she read a realistic fiction novel. The purpose for the selection of this literature was to support the student while reading a more challenging piece of text and to see if she was able to apply a series of comprehension instructional strategies with this literature. Wisconsin Common Core Standard Three states that a student must “analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text” (WI Dept. of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 60).
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The researcher and student met at least two times weekly for approximately an hour at a time. There were a total of sixteen meetings. The student had some absences, which extended the study for about a week and a half. The study began in mid April during the school year and ended in the latter part of June during summer school. Each day, the intervention began with an explanation identifying the purpose for instruction that the student could identify. The intervention took place in the pullout reading room at her school. The following chart highlights the introduction of each comprehension strategy and the progression in which it took place. There was a similar routine during each lesson. See figure one and Appendix A for the template.

**Figure One-Lesson Plan Layout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Comprehension Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Making Personal Connections: Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World/ Includes Practice with Making Predictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Review Making Personal Connections /Making Predictions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Three   | Summarizing (Main Idea & Supporting Details)  
Review: Making Personal Connections/Making Predictions |
| Four    | Summarizing & Review Making Connections / Predictions |
| Five    | Introduce Cause & Effect & Review: Main Idea, Making Connections /Predictions |
| Six     | Cause & Effect & Review: Main Idea, Making Connections / Predictions |
| Seven   | Introduce: Questioning & Review of Other Strategies |
| Eight   | Questioning & Review of Other Strategies |
At the beginning of instruction, there was a daily mini lesson given by the researcher, which included oral discussion, modeling, scaffolding, and practice of each strategy. Anecdotal notes were taken. Next, the student orally practiced the comprehension strategy after reading a passage of text. The student completed a final review of a specific comprehension strategy or strategies during the last segment of each session. The student provided written evidence of the skill or skills using one of several graphic organizers (see Appendix D). The writing took place after a passage of text was read.

Once all comprehension strategies were taught, then a brief review was provided daily with modeling, scaffolding, oral practice and anecdotal notes. After both student and sometimes the teacher read a passage of text, the student would attempt to apply or demonstrate use of each strategy by making various connections with the text, summarizing a passage of text, asking questions about what was read, and examples of cause and effect in the text. First this was attempted orally. A written component of these skills was completed by the student during each intervention. Daily anecdotal notes reflected the ability of the student to accurately use the strategies and recorded any difficulties that the student encountered.

Session one. Lesson one began with an introduction to the comprehension strategy of making personal connections and predictions and the researcher sought insight into any previous student experience with the skill. The student had experience with making predictions after reading, but had limited knowledge with making personal connections. The explanation and purpose of using
EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION OF COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

the strategy was given to the student. The strategy was introduced in the following sequence, text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world. The strategy of making personal connections was introduced to the student and initially modeled by the researcher. Text-to-self connections were practiced orally first after reading a short text. Afterwards, the other components of the strategy were practiced after reading text, and then a gradual release of responsibility was attempted. The student needed significant support during the first lesson, and it was apparent she had difficulty making the connections. The researcher supported her effort by asking questions, until she orally made several personal connections.

The final part of lesson one required the student to use a graphic organizer for making personal connections and predictions (See Appendix D). Again, the student made the connections with support from the researcher and wrote down her responses. The student completed the graphic organizer giving written evidence of the skill. The student reviewed what she had written before the end of the lesson.

Session two. Lesson two was a review of the comprehension strategy of making personal connections and predictions and was introduced using the same method. It began with a review and modeling by the researcher with a reference to text. A short passage was read and then the student was asked to orally make a connection using each strategy. The second day, the student took more risks and made attempts. She was successful with making several connections. She had some difficulty with text-to-world connections at this point. By the end of the intervention, this changed. As the intervention progressed, she was successful making these connections, but there were times she had difficulty with a passage of text and occasionally did not connect. The final part of the lesson always required a written practice of the skill and review. Making predictions needed minimal support, but was reviewed and practiced as well.
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Sessions three and four. Similarly, the instruction of the comprehension skills of summarizing text while looking at main idea and supporting details was supported in a similar method. The lesson began with a review of the previous comprehension strategy of connections and predictions with modeling, and then the strategy of summarization using main idea and supporting details was introduced. Modeling of the strategy was given and oral practice began after reading narrative text. The student had limited success using the new strategy the first time. She was able to give small details about the main idea in a chapter, but needed support with summarizing. She had some familiarity with the skill, but did not appear to have solid experience using it. The researcher prompted the student into giving responses. The student completed a graphic organizer identifying main idea and details while summarizing these ideas. The student used post-its to help organize her thoughts and this assisted with completion of the graphic organizer. Another graphic organizer was also used (see Appendix D). A student practice with making connections and predictions was completed orally and in writing. The student appeared slightly more confident with this today. The strategy of summarizing while looking at main idea and supporting details was practiced a second day before moving on to the third strategy. The student needed support using this strategy, but appeared to have increasing confidence with this and the others.

Sessions five and six. The next comprehension strategy of cause and effect asked the student to identify the cause of what happened in a text. A similar lesson format was followed with review of previous strategies and the new strategy. It asked for written support about why the student thought that something happened, and it asked the student to identify the result or effect. (See Appendix D for a sample form). While the student received instruction and support with the new strategy, the student was also asked to complete work with the other strategies
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simultaneously. Since we were in the third week of the intervention, the student needed less support because of repeated practice with the first and second strategies. The student received necessary support to assure that the comprehension strategy and evidence of written product was correct while using all strategies.

**Sessions seven and eight.** The final comprehension strategy of asking questions included answering a series of open ended prompts to analyze a text. This strategy was introduced using the same lesson format with a review of all comprehension strategies. During instruction of this strategy, a written journal was also completed part of the time by the student and included written evidence of these comprehension skills. The journal was also used to support making predictions, asking questions about the text, clarifying a thought or monitoring her thinking about a text, as well as cause and effect. Samples of the graphic organizers used are located in Appendix D.

The graphic organizers and student journal provided visual cues for the student during oral practice with all four strategies. The written component each day was facilitated though use of various graphic organizers supporting each skill or comprehension strategy. The student was asked to make personal connections, text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world, as well as making a prediction based on the content of a narrative text. Short prompts for making connections were provided to assist the student in drafting her response. Initial responses required researcher support. Samples of the graphic organizers used to collect data are located in Appendix D.

Each day, a review of a previous strategy or strategies provided the necessary support and exposure to the comprehension skills that hopefully will be internalized. The amount of time
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needed daily for oral instruction by the researcher varied after repeated exposure and review of the same comprehension skills. The release began to take place and the student needed less support with certain strategies. Regardless of where the researcher and student were in this intervention, the student always received feedback on oral and written responses and their accuracy. Oral feedback was a vital component through the process of this intervention, because it allowed the student to recognize success and make adjustments if there were errors. Feedback was also given on the written component as well.

Self-efficacy in use of comprehension strategies was determined in several ways. First, information was gathered from the Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey at the beginning and end of the intervention and analyzed. It examined what the student was doing to address comprehension and noted any use of strategies. During the intervention, anecdotal notes were kept to document the progress the student made and the written evidence that the student provided. Anecdotal notes were important and reflected any student progress made calling upon and using such reading skills.

Similarly, self-regulation and use of strategies was documented by the researcher. Notes were taken identifying areas needing significant support and scaffolding. Similar notes documented use of a comprehension strategy with some or minimum support. The progress that the student made during the intervention was documented with anecdotal notes and evidenced in student written responses. The final Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey was a method to identify if the student recognized personal progress and could easily express ideas about the use of comprehension strategies and use.
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**Sessions nine through sixteen.** By the final lessons, the student was asked to show understanding of all four strategies used for the intervention. This included making personal connections and predictions, summarizing main idea and details, asking questions about the text, and examples of cause and effect. It was an attempt to show competency and knowledge of how and when to use the strategies with fiction and non-fiction texts to support comprehension.

**Collection of Data**

The conclusion of the intervention included post assessments and completion of the Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey. The instructional intervention ended with the administration of the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4) (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006), the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Form H (Woodcock, 1987) and a Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey (Appendix B). The post-assessments and Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey were administered over two days and were approximately one hour long. They were administered to identify any growth the student made, especially in reading comprehension.

**Conclusion**

Explicit comprehension strategy instruction was identified as a necessary component of literacy instruction in the National Reading Panel Report (2000). Instruction addressing the importance of comprehension instruction is also addressed in the Wisconsin Common Core Standards. It is essential that students are taught how to interact and think about text. A consistent, methodological approach to comprehension instruction has been addressed because of the inconsistent approaches of this element of literacy instruction in our country. The goal of this intervention was to determine if explicit instruction of comprehension strategies would support and benefit a student with a learning disability.
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The results of this intervention will be revealed in the next chapter. It is clear that explicit instruction of comprehension strategies ask the student to interact with the text in a different manner. According to the National Reading Panel Report (2000), a lack of explicit instruction was identified, especially for the non-disabled learner. When a student has a learning disability, it is vital to stop and determine how this student is receiving literacy instruction. Granted, a student with a learning disability may be working with some fundamental reading skills, but it is essential to examine what is being taught to assist the struggling learner with understanding text.
Chapter Four: Results

This chapter will examine the results of explicit comprehension strategy instruction to improve understanding of text for a middle school student with a learning disability. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), this type of instruction is said to support student understanding of text. It was proposed in this study, that similar instruction would have some comparable effects when working with a student with a learning disability. This intervention was completed with use of several types of narrative and nonfiction texts including a novel. It is time to examine the results of the assessments to see if the intervention had the desired outcomes.

Presentation of the Data

Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4)

Two types of assessments were used to gather pre and post-test data. The first test protocol used to assess pre and post-test results were the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4), which is an informal reading inventory (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006). This “informal” reading inventory provides a means to help determine a student’s reading level. This can supply analytical information on how students decode words and understand them successfully. It can also recognize “conditions” that affect word recognition, miscues (mistakes) and understanding. When reporting scores from the QRI-4 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006), the following terms will be used to define reading levels: independent (98% or higher word recognition & 90% or more questions answered correctly), instructional (95% accuracy when counting miscues that change meaning or 90 % when counting all miscues, correctly answer at least 70% of questions), and frustration (accuracy of word recognition is less than 90% and less than 70% of questions are answered correctly).
There are three ways comprehension is assessed. The first is a student retelling of details and events from reading a particular narrative or nonfiction text. The researcher looks at details that the student can retell in the narrative that identify setting, a goal, events, or resolution to a problem in the text. The student retells main idea and supporting details with nonfiction texts. There are two other methods for evaluating comprehension; one is to ask the student to answer questions, first without looking back at the passage. The reader is then allowed to go back and revisit the text and search for answers, and this is called comprehension or understanding with look backs.

Table 1:

Results of the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension Component</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention Level</th>
<th>Post-Intervention Level</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retell</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer Explicit &amp; Implicit Questions</td>
<td>Three-Instructional</td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer Explicit &amp; Implicit Questions-</td>
<td>Three-Instructional</td>
<td>3 Explicit</td>
<td>Could perform look-backs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Look Backs</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>3 Implicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatically Identify Sight Words</td>
<td>17/20 = 85% Instructional</td>
<td>15/20 = 75% Instructional</td>
<td>Grew by 2 levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Student struggled with look back concept @ pretest /could only complete posttest

After reviewing the results from the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4, it was determined that the student had a slight increase for retelling information from the text (see Table 1). To be
specific, the student was able to retell about 11% of the details on a level five narrative text at the end of intervention, versus 7% retell of details on the level three narrative pre-test. This represents a 4% increase for the student in her ability to recall details immediately after reading a text, which represents a slight improvement with this comprehension skill.

The next measure for comprehension asked the student to answer explicit questions (answers found in the text) and implicit questions (answers not in the text, but asking the student to draw a conclusion). It is interesting to note that when the student answered explicit and implicit questions without look backs, there was no change or increase in her reading level. She remained instructional at a level three narrative text. The student was at a frustration level when asked to answer explicit and implicit questions independently on level four and five texts. The student was able to answer only four out of the eight questions correctly each time. The student struggled when trying to answer questions without the use of the text and there was no change in comprehension for this assessment.

The final means to assess changes in the student’s comprehension was answering questions with look backs. On the post-assessment, the student was instructional with look backs on the level six narrative. She answered three explicit and three implicit questions correctly with look backs out of a total of eight questions. This places her at an instructional level with a narrative level six text. She answered the questions independently, but I had to repeat the question several times. The repetition of the question appeared to calm the student. It is difficult to judge whether this is due to the fact that this student has a learning disability. It is important to note that the student had difficulty settling down during the onset of the post-tests. After multiple reassurances from the researcher, the student settled and offered some correct responses. It is
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important to recognize that the assessments appeared to cause restlessness and be cognizant of this, because it may affect the results.

The Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4), (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006) also has a series of sight word lists at the “readability levels” of the texts. According to Leslie & Caldwell (2006), to determine readability “they needed an indication that the passages were of increasing difficulty prior to empirical validation (observed confirmation). The difficulty of the passages was estimated through examination of the difficulty of vocabulary as measured by word frequency or number of syllables and average sentence length” (p. 457). A series of four different formulas were used to determine readability at the various passage levels. The word lists were administered at the beginning and end of the intervention. The student correctly identified the word, incorrectly identified the word and then made a self correction, or made a miscue (mistake).

The student was asked to read lists of words pre and post intervention. Each list contained 20 leveled words. The lists contained words reflecting different levels of text. During the intervention, the student was also asked to focus and monitor her comprehension, especially words she didn’t know. There was a significant increase in the student’s ability to automatically identify increasingly difficult words after the intervention. On the pretest, the student automatically identified 85% of the words on the level four word list, which is at an instructional level. On the level five word list, she was at 65% pre-intervention, which is a frustration level. On the post-test, the student identified 15 out of 20 words correctly on the level six word list (14 automatic & one self-correction), which is 75%, and she was at the instructional level. The student miscues revealed some phonemic patterns or rules that the student has not yet mastered.
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such as soft “g” & “c,” as well as long vowel silent-e. There was an increase in the student’s ability to correctly identify new words.

It is evident that the student made some gains in comprehension. Although it is a small gain, she was able to retell additional details on a higher level text at the post-intervention assessment. The student clearly struggled when asked to answer questions without being able to reference back to the passage read. There was no change in her comprehension when completing this task. When the student was allowed to use the passage to answer questions using “look backs,” she successfully completed this task for a higher level passage. As mentioned earlier, each question was repeated several times, due to the restlessness of the student. The student eventually seemed to settle down and was able to answer the questions with look backs. Although this is only a speculation, it appears that the student was excited to finish our work together. She seemed to realize that she was working with more difficult text with some success.

**Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised**

The second assessment administered pre and post-intervention was the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Forms G & H–Revised, (Woodcock, 1987). First, this is a norm-referenced, comprehensive set of tests. Norm referenced means that the scores of the student in this study are compared to other students the same age or grade. Scores or cumulative scores are given for each test. It allows the researcher to obtain a Grade Level Equivalent (GLE) for this student and to plan accordingly. Tests three through six are “achievement tests” of Word Identification (automatically indentifying words), Word Attack (reading a series of nonsense words following various phonological patterns), Word Comprehension-Antonyms & Synonyms Subtests, Word Comprehension Analogies Subtest (“the subject must be able to provide the three
words provided, understand the relationship between the first two words, and use that same relationship to determine an appropriate word to complete the second pair.”) and Passage Comprehension where the student must supply a given word using a variety of comprehension strategies (Woodcock, 1987). The word must be used in the correct context within the given text. Since the student took the four achievement tests in each protocol, it provided the researcher valuable information about areas where the student may struggle, aside from only passage comprehension. Scores or cumulative scores are given for each test. The results of the pre and post-tests are located in Table two.

**Table 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Word Identification*</th>
<th>Word Attack*</th>
<th>Word Comprehension*</th>
<th>Passage Comprehension*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form G Pretest</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form H Post-test</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>+.2</td>
<td>+1 word</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All results use the grade level equivalent norm. **W Score is a weighted score of the three subtests.

**Word Identification.** The student had a minimal increase on the post-test for word identification, identifying one additional word with a raw score of 65. A grade norm was used, and the student’s grade equivalency (GE) on the pretest was 3.9 (3rd grade, 9th month) and the grade equivalency on the post-test was 4.1 (4th grade, 1st month). The results of the post-test indicate the student is in the 19th percentile rank, which means she scored higher than 19% of
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other sixth grade students on the test. Her relative performance index is 32 and she would perform tasks with 32% mastery in comparison with average students who perform at 90%. On an instructional level profile, her independent level is 3rd grade, 3rd month. Her instructional level is 4th grade, 1st month, and her frustration level is 4th grade, 9th month (See Table 3). The student is 3 years and 7 months below grade level with word identification on an independent level. The majority of the words missed were multi-syllabic words, with various word patterns. Few words were missed at the phonemic level. Some sounds did not match syllables, but she attempted to decode words with difficulty.

**Word attack.** The Word Attack Test of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests protocol provides information about how the student attacks and decodes familiar and unknown words. On both the pre (Form G) and post-tests (Form H), the student had a raw score of 22 and grade equivalency (GE) score of 3.8, which is 3rd grade, 8th month. The student is in the 22nd percentile, which means she scored higher than 22% of the sixth graders on this grade-norm test. Her relative performance index is 61/90, which means that she would perform tasks with 61% mastery in comparison with students who perform tasks at 90%. On the instructional level profile, her independent level is 2nd grade, 7th month. Her instructional level is 3rd grade, 8th month and her frustration level is 5th grade, 0 months (See Table 3). She is over four years below grade level on word attack at the independent level. The Word Attack Error Inventory was completed both pre and post-test to identify the types of miscues the student made and what type of instructional support was needed. She had difficulty at the phonemic level, with some vowel patterns, and diphthongs. Although the student experienced some difficulty with decoding, she did at times self-correct. Although this intervention focused primarily on comprehension strategy
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instruction, oral support was given with decoding in order to support her effort. This is an area that needs continued intensive support and which ultimately affects the student’s comprehension.

Word comprehension. The Word Comprehension Test of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests has three separate subtests: Antonyms, Synonyms, and an Analogies Subtest. The post-test results indicated a small increase in all three subtests for Word Comprehension. The composite score of the three pretests indicated the student had a Grade Equivalency (GE) of 3.8 or third grade, eighth month at the beginning of the intervention. The post-test results indicated the student had a Grade Equivalency of 4.6 or fourth grade, sixth month post-intervention. The test looked at antonyms, synonyms, and word analogies that associate common items. The student is in the 21st percentile rank, which means that she scored higher than 21% of the other sixth graders on this grade norm test. Her relative performance index is 66 out of 90, which means that she would perform tasks at 66% mastery in comparison with students who would perform at 90%. On the post-intervention instructional level profile, her independent level is 3rd grade 5th month. Her instructional level for word comprehension is 4th grade, 6th month, and her frustration level is 6th grade, 1st month (See Table 3). She is over three years behind at the independent level according to post-intervention assessments. The student made gains in word comprehension and this may be due in part to the request asking her to monitor her comprehension while reading.

Passage comprehension. The final test of the Woodcock examined passage comprehension. This post-test was administered on the last day of the intervention, and the student had a grade equivalency of 3rd grade 4th month. The student is in the 15th percentile rank, which means that she scored higher than 15% of other sixth graders on this grade norm test. Her relative performance index is 50 of 90, which means that she would perform tasks with 50% mastery in comparison with students at the same grade level who perform tasks at 90%. On an instructional
level profile, her independent level is 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade, 6\textsuperscript{th} month. Her instructional level is 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade, 4\textsuperscript{th} month and her frustration is 4\textsuperscript{th} grade, 7\textsuperscript{th} month (See Table 3). The student is over 4 years behind grade level on passage comprehension.

Table 3: Woodcock Reading Mastery Achievement Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test Data</th>
<th>Post-test Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Identification</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Attack</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Comprehension</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Comprehension</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the student regressed on her post-test results for passage comprehension. On the pre-test, she had a grade equivalency of 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade, 9\textsuperscript{th} month and a raw score of 33. On her post-test for passage comprehension, the student had a raw score of 31 and a grade equivalency of 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade, 4\textsuperscript{th} month. It is significant to reveal what took place during the passage comprehension post-test. As mentioned previously, during the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4), the student initially was unfocused and settled in to finish the assessment. On the second day of testing, the student seemed settled and completed earlier tests with breaks. During the Woodcock Passage Comprehension Test, several interesting events took place. First, the student made several comments while taking the test. She appeared over-confident while giving her answers. I told her she was doing well but needed to settle down and focus. On the
last several answers of the test she said, “I know that I am right” and tapped her finger on the desk. She actually had the “gist” of what was being asked, but it was not the correct response.

Table 4 Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests Instructional Level Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodcock Reading Tests</th>
<th>Independent G.L.E.</th>
<th>Instructional G.L.E</th>
<th>Frustration G.L.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Identification</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Attack</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Comprehension</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Comprehension</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research by Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006) focused on students who have a learning disability and self-efficacy towards personal ability and skills. A student with a learning disability may overestimate their ability to complete a task. This seemed relevant during the final post-assessment of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test for passage comprehension. This could account for the decrease in the raw score. Another relevant factor during the final post-assessment for passage comprehension was student comments made during the test itself. In the last half of the test, the student began to lose focus and made several noises. I encouraged her to keep going and asked if she was alright. She said, “Yes.” On the last six answers given, there was constant redirection between the student and researcher. This did not occur on the pre-test. First the student hung her head upside down, and I asked her to please sit up. She complied and smiled. After two additional questions the student asked, “How many more?” I encouraged her
EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION OF COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

again to keep going. When we came to the last question, she said, “Mrs. Boling, guess what, I am
going to Wisconsin Dells tomorrow.” I redirected the student back to the passage comprehension
test, but knew that she was unfocused on the task at hand. Finally, she said, “I know that I am
right,” after answering the last question and then she tapped her finger on the desk. This loss of
focus likely influenced the results of the assessment. The timing of the assessment for passage
comprehension may have influenced the results. This was the final assessment on the final day.
The student had opportunities for breaks and was able to get a drink of water if needed between
assessments, but this was the only assessment she truly struggled with.

Self-Efficacy and Monitoring Comprehension

This study also attempted to distinguish whether explicit instruction of comprehension
strategies will increase self-efficacy and self-regulation of use. Self-efficacy means the student
can effectively take a specific skill and independently attempt to implement its use. The
researcher wanted to determine if specific skills were modeled and taught, would the student take
those same skills and attempt to use them independently. An informal Reading Interest and
Behaviors inventory was administered before and after the intervention to gather insight into the
student’s self-perception of her personal knowledge and skill base. Anecdotal notes were
compiled during the intervention documenting the student’s daily progress while working on the
various comprehension strategies and skills. The following information reflects these efforts.

The beginning Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey reflected the student’s limited self-
perception of her skill set. The student responses were not well-articulated, even though during
the intervention, she demonstrated ability using some skills. The student offered insight on how
she approaches reading. When she begins, the student does not make a plan to help her
understand the material better. She does not preview the text that she is going to read, or look at the organization of a text. She wrote that she asks herself questions about important ideas, and will make summaries for nonfiction texts. When she is reading a fiction text, she can make predictions. When text is confusing, she asks for help. She stated that the most important part of a chapter is where the action is going on, but did not refer to it as the main idea.

The post-intervention Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey revealed the following information about the student’s self-perception. Originally the student indicated that she read 40 minutes each day. On the post-intervention survey, she indicated that she read only ten minutes per day. It is unclear whether she over-estimated her actions, or was reading less. Post-intervention, the student continues to state that she sounds out words to help her understand the material better. When asked what she does to remember important information, she gave the same response of asking questions about important ideas. She did not indicate use of making connections or summarizing important information after reading. The student indicated that she uses the skill of making predictions when reading a fiction book, but did not identify asking questions, drawing conclusions, main ideas, summarization, or causation as skills she would use to support her understanding of text. When asked what strategies she would use when reading non-fiction, she wrote down one of the strategies in the intervention, cause and effect. She did not indicate asking or answering questions, making summaries, making connections, or making inferences as any of these as strategies that would help support her understanding of text.

The remaining responses were identical to the pre-intervention survey. When confused, she wrote that she would continue to “ask for help.” She wrote that she would “read and see what got the most action” when trying to determine what is the most important part of a chapter. When asked what reading strategies she uses to help her understand the text, she wrote “I will see if a
teacher can help me or I will sound it out.” There was only one new strategy that she indicated she would use to facilitate understanding of the text and that was cause and effect.

Anecdotal notes written during the intervention indicate that the student’s skill set was more limited than what she perceived. She clearly could make a prediction based on events read in a narrative text. The student encountered difficulty with identifying main idea in narrative text or the main idea in a nonfiction text. This is based on the written responses completed by the student each day. She gradually improved with each practice. She also had some difficulty with answering both explicit and implicit questions. The student became more proficient as the lessons progressed, but the student demonstrated that she did not clearly understand how to independently implement and use all strategies. With scaffolding and support, she demonstrated knowledge, but not necessarily competence and independence of use.

When looking at student progress with each comprehension strategy, it is clear that the student made some gains with each strategy and effectively used most strategies correctly within a point in time. There is evidence that the student did not consistently use the strategies correctly each time, and some strategies took longer than others to complete a successful written practice.

**Conclusion**

Written evidence and anecdotal notes demonstrate that the student has some knowledge of explicit comprehension strategies, but cannot reproduce the results consistently. The student needed more support with certain strategies than others such as making personal connections, or summarizing a text. At times the student easily indentified the main idea in a story, and struggled with the next attempt. The student had some success with cause and effect. The student successfully asked and answered some questions recognizing some success. The student was
able to independently make some inferences. Although anecdotal notes indicate some progress and success with the use of the explicit comprehension strategies, the survey indicates there was a minimal change in her perception of her self-efficacy using these strategies. There was a minimal change in her self-regulation of use.

The next chapter will contain conclusions of this case study. Connections to existing research and connections to state standards will be discussed. Strengths, limitations and recommendations will also be included.
Chapter Five: Conclusions

The purpose of this case study was to determine if explicit comprehension strategy instruction would improve student comprehension, as well as increase self-efficacy of use for a student with a learning disability. This chapter compares the results of this intervention with existing reading research contained in Chapter Two. It examines Wisconsin Common Core Standards with actual student performance. An explanation of the intervention results will be examined, including student strengths and limitations. Finally a list of recommendations for home and school will identify what best supports student learning and growth for A.C.

Connections to Existing Research

“Good readers self-regulate their reading so as to construct meaning from text” (Hilden & Pressley, 2007, p.51). In order to progress and realize this level of competence, a person must acquire the comprehension skills necessary to synthesize text for understanding. The methodology needed to facilitate instruction and recognize these goals within the school setting is paramount and has been a topic of research and discussion for many years. “Learning to read and learning to teach children to read are both enormously complex tasks. In the last two decades much progress has been made in understanding both the acquisition of reading and the role that curriculum and instructional factors play in that acquisition” (Pressley & Allington, 1999, p. 9). Explicit comprehension strategy instruction is important factor in this acquisition.

This research study included an intervention of explicit comprehension strategy instruction which yielded mixed results for the student. When examining the results, the researcher feels it is important to look at it in the broader context of reading acquisition. The gains of the student were limited in relation to a much larger literacy goal of self-regulated use.
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The spotlight of explicit comprehension strategy instruction has received increased attention as a means to improve children’s literacy skills. Introduction of these skills in the primary grades has gained increased momentum. It is essential that a person with a reading disability such as A.C. also receive explicit strategy instruction, even if struggling with basic skills. The researcher is unclear whether A.C. experienced significant comprehension skills instruction in the primary and intermediate grades, since extensive modeling and practice were needed during the intervention. According to Block (1993), “Reading instruction must emphasize critical thinking and strategies that build students’ interpretative and reasoning abilities” (p.139). An end goal is self-regulation, self-efficacy of use, and constructing meaning.

Although the results of the research for A.C. indicated some improvement in areas of comprehension for understanding vocabulary, retelling, and increased difficulty of text, the student was able to articulate use of one comprehension strategy independently. This was evident especially in the Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey. The student referred to only one of the intervention strategies as means to help her better understand texts that were read. The student demonstrated some evidence using strategies during the intervention, but the student could not describe or refer to this work later. This could be due to the limited time frame of this study or limited exposure to explicit comprehension strategy instruction in earlier years, yet self-efficacy of use was clearly limited.

“One might expect that the students with RD would have lower self-efficacy than their typically achieving peers” (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006, p.225). According to Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006), very limited research has been completed on this, but the limited results of several studies reveal that this may be true. After the intervention, A.C. had difficulty expressing her thoughts about her comprehension work with texts on the Reading Interest and
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Behaviors Survey. The student made one reference to one of the four explicit comprehension strategies practiced and used during the intervention—cause and effect. She did not or could not articulate use of any other strategies. Her written responses reflect limited personal self-efficacy or self-regulation of use.

It is interesting to note and discuss what took place during the Passage Comprehension Test of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (Woodcock, 1987). Throughout the course of the intervention, A.C. appeared to gain some confidence as she practiced and worked with the different comprehension strategies. Evidence of this was seen in writing on various graphic organizers used during the intervention. When the student was taking the final passage comprehension assessment and neared the end, she responded orally with superfluous confidence. This may be due to A.C.’s inaccurate self-efficacy beliefs about how she understands text. “In his review of the literature on the self-efficacy beliefs of students with LD, Klassen (2002) concluded that these students’ tendency to hold optimistic but inaccurate self-efficacy beliefs may result in poor academic performance” (Nelson & Manset Williamson, 2006, p. 225). A.C. may have incorrect beliefs about her comprehension abilities or she may have been excited about an upcoming vacation she shared information about. In either scenario, there was an unexplained regression in the results for passage comprehension.

A student who has a learning disability may face additional challenges in their attempt to unlock the literacy code and self-regulate as they read. Aside from all of the fundamentals of literacy instruction, intrinsic factors such as motivation, perceptions, stamina for reading also influence progress and results. A.C. was clearly motivated to work during the intervention, yet experienced fatigue during some sessions. As she recognized some success, she appeared to gain some confidence with responses. According to Nelson & Manset-Williamson (2006), older
students with reading disabilities are “particularly at risk for developing motivational problems” (p. 213). With continued support and instruction, this researcher believes that A.C. will continue to progress as long as she continues to receive support with explicit comprehension strategy instruction, as well as other fundamental skills of literacy.

The researcher believes that the length of this research study does not permit one to definitively determine whether this intervention was effective or ineffective. The assessments revealed that some gains were made as a result of this intervention. Continued instruction for A.C. must include a program addressing decoding skills, vocabulary, background knowledge and explicit comprehension instruction. A.C. must also be taught to think about her thinking and self-monitor for understanding. Pressley (2001) said, “There is little doubt that instruction that develops these interrelated skills should improve comprehension.”

**Connections to Wisconsin Standards**

“Students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college, and/ or careers” (“Application to students,” ). The research of explicit comprehension strategy instruction with self-efficacy of use provided an opportunity for A.C., a student who has a learning disability, to work with various texts to improve comprehension and self-efficacy of use. The instructional intervention in this research met several sixth grade middle school standards.

The Common Core Anchor Reading Standard of “Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it” as well as “Determine central ideas and themes” were met through explicit instruction of comprehension strategies (Wisconsin Dept. of
Public Instruction, 2011, p. 60). A. C. had opportunities to interact with both fiction and nonfiction texts. A.C. practiced with questioning strategies including inferences as well as work with main idea. She provided some written evidence of these skills while reading different genres of text including a novel. While reading the novel, she did receive the necessary scaffolding to follow, recognize changes, and plot moves in a story. Although the final assessments did not reveal anticipated growth, A.C. showed a level of understanding through her written responses.

A.C. also received instruction addressing the English Language Arts College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard of “Craft and Structure” (Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 60). This standard looks at vocabulary and meanings of words as well as “figurative” language. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test of Vocabulary Comprehension indicated eight months growth GLE. This researcher believes that this standard was met. A.C. did recognize identifiable growth and received developmentally appropriate instruction especially for a student with a learning disability.

**Explanation of Results**

**Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests**

Explicit comprehension strategies instruction can be part of an effective plan to support student understanding of text, especially a student with a learning disability. The results of the post-assessment passage comprehension subtest of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests–Form H (Woodcock, 1987) indicated a net loss in the results for this student. It is unfortunate that part of the final assessment for passage comprehension was influenced by the student’s inability to sit
and finish the test, in a similar manner as the pre-assessment. The student’s grade equivalency for the post-assessment passage comprehension was 3rd grade, 4th month versus 3rd grade, 9th month in the pre-assessment.

It is apparent that the length of the intervention may have influenced the results of the study, aside from the student’s inability to stay on task during the second half of the Woodcock Passage Comprehension test. Although the student received modeling, scaffolding and necessary support during instruction and demonstrated developing competency of these concepts in writing, it appears that the sixteen sessions were insufficient to increase passage comprehension for the student. In a study by Hilden & Pressley (2007), the researchers didn’t see anything to prove “that even one student became a fully self-regulated user of comprehension strategies over the course of a year, with students most likely to use the strategies when the teacher prompted them to be strategic” (p.73). When a student eventually becomes metacognitive using comprehension strategies, it should lead to improved comprehension of text, because the student is actively engaged while reading.

It is interesting to note that a similar result occurred when answering questions without look backs in the post-assessment of the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4. When the student was asked to answer a series of explicit and implicit questions about a passage, there was no change in the results from the pre-assessment. The student remained at level three for instruction. The student was then asked to look back at the text and answer questions. The student was instructional at level six texts with look backs. I had to repeat the questions for the student several times, but did not provide support actually helping her to look back. She was able to successfully answer the questions on her own. This appears to be a successful method to support
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her comprehension. It is a method that she is able to complete with support and possibly on her own.

The student was asked to monitor or think about her comprehension when reading. Did the text that she or I read make sense and did she understand new vocabulary encountered? Correctly decoding words without self-monitoring comprehension of content read is a fruitless activity. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Word Comprehension Test (Woodcock, 1987) measured her understanding of words. On the post test assessment-Form H, the student had an increase in word comprehension and a grade level equivalent of 4th grade, 6th month. Her pre-assessment grade equivalency was 3rd grade, 8th month. Asking the student to think about what she was reading and asking questions led to an eight month increase in the student’s ability to understand words read. Each student must actively think about what they are reading. This is clearly what every student should do while reading, especially a student who has a learning disability.

The student had sufficient support to navigate through various genres of text. This experiment did not focus on extensive instruction of word attack skills. Immediate and necessary support was given in an attempt to improve the student’s comprehension. The pre and post-test results of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests indicated that the student had a pre and post-test grade equivalency of 3rd grade, 8th month in word attack. There was no change. It would be interesting to see if increased phonemic instruction would lead to improved comprehension.

Word Identification was another of the four achievement tests of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests. The student had a slight increase in word identification and had a grade level equivalency of 3.9 on the pre-test versus 4.1 on the post-test. The word list increases in difficulty
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as the student reads a list of “isolated” words. This may be caused by the increased attention that
the student was asked to provide while she read.

**Qualitative Reading Inventory-4**

Similarly there was a much larger increase in the results of the Qualitative Reading
Inventory-4 word list. The student was 75% at an instructional level six word list on the post-
assessment; she was at an 85% level four on the pretest. The student appears to have the ability
to decode words at level sixth passage. She was not able to understand and answer questions
directly after reading a level six passage. She would likely have to answer questions using look
backs. There is likelihood that she would be able to answer some of these questions. It appears
that her decoding improved; I would predict that she could answer questions using the look
backs.

One of the questions to be answered from this research is whether explicit instruction of
four comprehension strategies would assist with improvement in the student’s comprehension.
When looking simply at independent strategy use by the student, the formal assessment results
indicated that there was limited progress made. The student did not successfully take command
of the strategies and could not apply all of them independently. The student did not express
knowledge of some strategies and the 16 sessions appears too short to effectively determine if
the strategies would affect student’s comprehension. The improvement in self-efficacy of use
was limited to one comprehension strategy, cause and effect.

**Strengths**

The student realized some success by the end of the intervention. She attempted to
monitor her progress. She was able to ask and answer questions about texts. Her ability to read
increasingly difficult words improved. She began working with the look back strategy and was able to answer questions about text she had just finished reading. She was able to write responses to questions and ask questions about texts. The student found success making predictions and making personal connections to text. There was improvement in making the three connections, text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. She did this independently. She made inferences by herself about text. She became more comfortable with main ideas and supporting details. The most difficult concept she seemed to face was use of the journal in summarizing events in a story. She needed more support with the global or big ideas behind a text.

The eight-month increase in vocabulary comprehension on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test shows that the interventions impacted A.C.’s understanding of new vocabulary while reading. It is clear that continued support and instruction in these areas will likely continue this trend. Similarly, A.C. demonstrated that she is capable of look backs by scanning text to find answers in grade appropriate fiction text. This demonstrates the need for explicit comprehension strategy instruction, particularly for students with learning disabilities.

By the end of the intervention, A.C. was able to talk about use of one comprehension strategy independently. A.C. made reference to the comprehension strategy of cause and effect on the Reading & Behaviors Survey to support her understanding. Self-regulation of strategies was the end goal of this instruction. The researcher believes that this is a spark for greater understanding.

Limitations

The student in this research study made progress as indicated by the written and oral examples completed, as well as some progress made on the assessments. Yet, there were
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limitations in this study which likely affected the results. The length of the study was too short. When a student has limited exposure to instructional concepts, a 2 ½ month intervention did not seem to provide sufficient time for the student to practice using the strategies. If teachers need at least a year to learn how to teach comprehension instructional strategies (Pressley, 2001), it certainly requires more time for a student to make progress and learn to use the strategies independently.

The researcher over-estimated the student’s previous exposure and work with comprehension strategies. The student had some basic knowledge, but had some difficulty articulating what she meant. This requires continued exposure to extensive modeling, practice and support. Additional support was needed with her writing as well. The student needs continued practice with her oral and written responses. A longer intervention would provide multiple exposures and practice with these concepts.

The researcher may have over-estimated the student’s ability and endurance to finish the final assessment. I am not certain what types of formal assessments she completed prior to the study, but it was clear that she needed additional time and ample breaks to accomplish this. Another concern was the student’s attendance. She did miss a week and a half of school. There were some sessions that had to be changed because she did not come to school. The sessions were completed, but absences may have influenced the progress.

A final limitation was the method used to determine self-efficacy. The Reading Interest and Behaviors Survey was administered with expectations that A.C. would be able to articulate thoughts about personal attributes used for comprehension and understanding text. The
researcher thought recent interactions with the comprehension strategies would have left a greater footprint. She was not able to do so.

**Recommendations**

The researcher has several recommendations for the student to continue working on comprehension at school and at home to facilitate additional progress.

**School**

In school, the Language Arts Teacher needs to support continued work with explicit comprehension strategies instruction with the passages A.C. is reading. The teacher needs to model these strategies and help this student make connections with the text. The teacher can pair the student with a strong reader and the two can practice orally working with the strategies together. The student needs multiple opportunities and clear feedback while practicing these skills.

The student needs additional practice constructing written responses so they adequately express an idea. The student will need extensive feedback about the progress she is making. The middle school teacher can provide the student with graphic organizers that make it easy for the student to work with the text. Constructive feedback is necessary,

The student should practice reading text and scanning for information. A.C. should receive instruction on what she can do when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary in the text. This is not limited to reading the next sentence or sentences, looking for familiar chunks of the word, or keeping a reference book nearby.
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The student should be asked to self-monitor and reflect on her reading. Can A.C. identify the purpose of the text? A.C. should be asked to reflect on her work. Clearly the teacher will have to model how this is accomplished. A.C. should reflect on her own thoughts about her progress working with comprehension strategies and then the teacher can provide feedback to compare.

In school, it is also necessary that this student be educated in accordance with the law. The school must follow her Service Plan, which is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Smith, 2001). The student will continue to attend English class in the general classroom. Any additional support needed to support her efforts with the reading process will be supported in the special education classroom. The student needs instruction in both phonological awareness and reading comprehension to meet her annual goals of improved decoding skills, comprehension skills, and fluency. The student needs to perform at a fourth grade level to meet the goals set out in her service plan. The teacher must be informed about the needs of this student.

Home

At home the student needs to practice with appropriate reading materials. The student needs to select materials that are not too difficult for her. A.C. needs to practice reading with an adult or older sibling to improve fluency and facilitate comprehension. These recommendations support the Wisconsin Model Standards (2009), specifically in English Language Arts standard A.8.1 and B.8.3.

A parent or adult sibling should continue to work with A.C. through use of a weekly action plan. Providing additional opportunities to build vocabulary skills, fluency and
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comprehension through use and practice of different strategies at home will support student growth. Students become better readers through increased exposure to texts. Teachers will provide her parent with clear examples of how they can support A.C.’s comprehension with regular feedback. This includes additional practice with look backs.

A.C. needs to continue to read independently at home to build stamina. This should equate to approximately 35 minutes per day. She can respond in a journal to open-ended prompts. She would then receive feedback from her teacher. She should also select different genres of texts to gain varied experiences while reading.

Conclusion

The student demonstrated some progress with explicit comprehension instruction and self-efficacy and self-regulation of use. She increased her word comprehension skills and ability to answer questions on texts with the help of look backs. She also worked on constructing appropriate responses that reflect understanding of text. At school she must continue to receive appropriate instruction under the law, which reflects the Wisconsin State Core Standards. She must also continue to receive adequate support at home in order to continue to adequately make progress that is needed. Her introduction to intense instruction with explicit comprehension strategies to promote self-efficacy and self-regulation of use offered experience with concepts that support her developmental needs with comprehension. A balanced approach to all the aforementioned skills will guide her development with the literacy process.
References


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educators and our general educators to comply with the provision. Retrieved from http://ldonline.org/article/6083


EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION OF COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES


# Appendix A

**Figure 1**  
Lesson Plan Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Lesson Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Activities:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix A
Daily Lesson Plan-Side Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes &amp; Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Lesson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Reading Interest & Behaviors Survey
Reading Interests & Behaviors Survey

It is important for me to get to know the interests, feelings and strategies you have and use as a reader. Your answers to the questions will help me understand your needs and interests as a reader.

1. Do you like to read (circle one) YES No Sort Of
   If you circled “Sort Of,” then please explain:

   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. How do you feel about reading and why?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. How much time do you spend reading?
   _______ minutes per day   _______ minutes per week

4. What are some of the books that you read lately?
   ________________________________________________________________

5. What is your favorite book and why?
6. What are the genres or types of reading materials do you like? (Circle as many as you want).

history       travel       plays       sports       science fiction
adventure     mystery     art         poetry       novels
biography     humor       nonfiction  folk/ fairy tales comics

other ________________

7. What are your hobbies and interests?

8. Before you begin to read, do you make a plan to help you understand the material better?

Yes ________________  No ________________

If Yes, what do you do?

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________
9. Do you look at material and how it is organized before you start reading?

Yes__________  No__________

If yes, what do you do?

_________________________________________________________________

10. What do you do to help you remember important information that you have read? (Circle all that apply)
a. Ask yourself questions about important ideas
b. Connect it to something you already know
c. Make a summary of the important information
d. All of the above.

11. As you read a fiction book, what do you do? (circle all that apply)
a. Keep making predictions based on the story you are reading.
b. Ask questions about people or events and draw a conclusion.
c. Think about important ideas and summarize what you read.
d. Look at what caused certain things to happen in the story and the outcome.
e. All of the above.

12. When you read nonfiction, what do you do? (circle all that apply)
a. Ask questions about the topic you are reading about.
b. Make a summary for each section.
c. Make connections with information you already know.
d. Look for cause/effect relationships in the text.
e. Make inferences to help me understand material better.
f. All of the above.
13. When you come to a part of a text that is confusing, what do you do?

14. How do you decide what is the most important part of a chapter?

15. What reading strategies do you use to help you understand text?
Appendix C

QRI-4 Pre and Post-Intervention Texts

Pre-Intervention Texts

1. “The Friend” Level Three, Pages 238-240
2. “Johnny Appleseed” Level Four, Pages 256-258

Post Intervention Texts:

1. “Johnny Appleseed” Level Four, Pages 256-258
2. “Martin Luther King Junior” Level Five, Pages 280-282
3. “Abraham Lincoln” Level Six, Pages 315-317
Appendix D

Samples of Graphic Organizers Used for Intervention

1. Making Personal Connections: Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World  Page 116

2. Active Reading: Making Predictions, Something New Learned. Ask a Question  Page 117

3. Main Idea/ Supporting Details: (Post-it notes used)  Page 118

4. Strategies Pyramid Non-fiction Main Idea/Supporting Details  Page 119

5. Cause & Effect  Page 120

6. Talking Back to Books as You Read (Used with Post-it Notes)  Page 121


8. 5W Map  Page 123

9. Double Entry Journal  Make Predictions, Make Connections, Ask Questions, Summarize, Clarify Reading  Pages 124-126
Making Personal Connections

Text-to-Self Connection:

Text-to-Text Connection:

Text-to-World Connection:
Active Reading

In the chart below, write notes about your thoughts as you read the non-fiction text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make a prediction:</th>
<th>Write something new you learned:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a prediction:</td>
<td>Write something new you learned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask a question:</td>
<td>Write something new you learned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask a question:</td>
<td>Write something new you learned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 2: Reading Nonfiction

Strategies: Pyramid (cont.)

Graphic Organizer

- Main Idea
- Detail
- Detail
- Detail

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#3271 Nonfiction Strategies—Grades 4–8
Cause and Effect

What was the cause or what happened?

Why do you think this happened?

What was the result or effect?
### Talking Back to Books As You Read

Here are some ways that you might talk back to your books on Post-It notes as you are reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I'm thinking...</th>
<th>I am noticing...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm wondering...</td>
<td>I can't believe...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This reminds me of...</td>
<td>This is confusing because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this part because...</td>
<td>Why...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the character is feeling ______ because...</td>
<td>I think ______ will happen next because...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most stories tell who, what, when, where, why and how. **Who** tells the names of the characters in the story. **What** tells the main events in the story. **When** tells the time in which the story happened. **Where** tells the location of the story. **Why** tells the reasons events happened as they did, and explains characters actions. **How** explains the actions the characters used to make the events happen. Fill in the boxes with details from your book.
Bridge to Terabithia

Double-Entry Journal

PURPOSE: to help you comprehend what you are reading as you predict, question, clarify, connect, or comment; to help you become a better writer.

DIRECTIONS FOR PUTTING IT TOGETHER:
1. Get three sheets of loose-leaf paper and staple them together in the top left-hand corner.
2. Fold the loose-leaf pages in half hot dog style to create two columns. Then, unfold.
3. Write your name and class hour in the top right-hand corner of the first page.
4. Number each of the pages 1 - 3 in the top right-hand corner.
5. Label each of the left columns “What’s in the Book” and each of the right columns “My Response”.
6. Label the top of each of page with the chapter and page numbers of the reading assignment. For example, page one will be “Chapter 1: pp. 1 - 18”.
7. Keep this Double-Entry Journal and a pen/pencil with you while you read.

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING IT:
1. Remember, reading IS thinking. This technique requires that you think on paper.
2. In the “What’s in the Book” left column, you will:
   ★ Record important, interesting, or noteworthy happenings from the book.
   ★ Give the page number of where you found it.
How you record the “What’s in the Book” is up to you. You may:

- Copy down a specific quote
- Write notes about the event, character, character’s words, etc.
- Create a diagram/graphic organizer of the event, character, etc.
- Draw the event, character, etc.
- Develop your own method

3. Then, in the “My Response” right column, you will:

- Record your reaction, response, reflection, or thoughts about what you wrote in the left column.
- Do this by making a prediction, asking questions, clarifying something, making a comment, or making a connection.

If you are having trouble getting started, check out these sentences starters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make a Prediction</th>
<th>Ask a Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>★ I predict that...</td>
<td>★ Why did...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ I bet that...</td>
<td>★ What’s this part about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ I think that...</td>
<td>★ How is this (fill in detail) like this (fill in detail)...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ Since this happened (fill in detail), then I bet the next thing that is going to happen is...</td>
<td>★ What would happen if...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ Reading this part makes me think that this (fill in detail) is about to happen...</td>
<td>★ Why...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ I wonder if...</td>
<td>★ Who is...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarify Something</th>
<th>Make A Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>★ Oh, I get it...</td>
<td>★ This is good because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ Now I understand...</td>
<td>★ This is hard because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ This makes sense now...</td>
<td>★ This is confusing because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ No, I think it means...</td>
<td>★ I like the part where...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ I agree with you. This means...</td>
<td>★ I don’t like this part because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ At first I thought (fill in detail), but now I think...</td>
<td>★ My favorite part so far is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ This part is really</td>
<td>★ I think that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a Connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ This reminds me of...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ This part is like...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ The character (fill in name) is like (fill in name) because...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ This is similar to...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ The differences are...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ I also (name something in the text that has also happened to you)...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ I never (name something in the text that has never happened to you)...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ This character makes me think of...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>★ This setting reminds me of...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>