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Effects of repeated reading and explicit vocabulary instruction on fluency and comprehension

Kristie Cushman

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The Effects of Repeated Reading and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction on Fluency and Comprehension

By
Kristie Cushman

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Rebecca Dominguez
(Advisor)

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Completing this case study has been a valuable learning experience for me as a student and teacher. I have learned much about myself and ways to better meet the needs of my students. Like teaching, this case study took a great amount of time, effort and dedication. I could not have done this alone, and greatly appreciate those who have helped me through the process. Therefore, I must give credit where credit is due.

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Abstract

This case study focuses on Kennedy, a hardworking fourth grade student with a learning disability in reading. Kennedy struggles with fluency and comprehension. To begin, Kennedy was assessed using the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). The results of this assessment in conjunction with existing research were used to develop an intervention plan. The intervention included the use of repeated reading and explicit vocabulary instruction to increase fluency and comprehension. At the end of the study, the QRI-5 (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011) was once again used to assess Kennedy’s progress. The results of the assessment indicated that Kennedy increased her instructional reading level by about one year.
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Introduction

Kennedy
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Introduction

Many people take reading for granted, however for those who struggle with reading, daily life can be a challenge. Take for instance, reading a phone bill, a recipe, or even a birthday card, without the skills necessary for reading, these simple tasks become painstakingly difficult, and one’s self-esteem is greatly hindered. Many children learn to read naturally, but for those that do not explicit instruction is crucial. Even with explicit instruction, some students will continue to struggle in one or more areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. When students struggle, specific interventions are necessary as part of a balanced literacy approach. As an educator, it is important to provide meaningful instruction that will ensure the success of all students as they transition into tomorrow’s leaders.

Background Information

Personal Background

Kennedy was a 10-year, 3-month-old fourth grade student at the time of the study. She attends year-round bilingual school in an urban school district. Fifty-seven percent of the students are enrolled in the bilingual program. The population of students is dominantly Hispanic, followed by African American, and small percentage of Caucasian students. This elementary school receives funding and programming through P-5 and Title I grants, which are provided to schools with high poverty populations. Ninety-six percent of the school’s students receive free or reduced lunch. When it comes to economic and educational background, Kennedy’s family falls above the mean, as her parents are professionals in the community with college degrees. Socially, Kennedy gets along well
with her peers and is a hardworking young lady. In spite of this, Kennedy continually struggles academically.

I began working with Kennedy through the Title I program when she was in first grade. She was identified as being in the bottom 15 percent of students not labeled with a learning disability (LD), in the area of reading and were not receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) services. Shorty after the commencement of Title I reading interventions, her classroom teacher and I began noticing signs of a possible learning disability in reading, and called a Student Support Team meeting to discuss our concerns and brainstorm ideas with the school psychologist, counselor, principal, and Kennedy’s parents. At that time, Kennedy’s parents were reluctant to have her labeled as being a special education student.

As time passed, Kennedy made some gains in reading; however they were minimal, which raised red flags. By the end of second grade, Kennedy had two years of Title I reading interventions. Accommodations and interventions were provided in the classroom, and her parents worked diligently with her outside of school. By the beginning of third grade, Kennedy’s mother decided to have her tested for dyslexia. Kennedy was clinically diagnosed as having dyslexia about a year prior to the study and subsequently identified as LD within the school system.

Implications of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a neurological learning disability that affects decoding, therefore interferes with fluency and comprehension. A deficit in the phonological component of reading is typically the underlining cause of dyslexia (Dyslexia, n.d.). Dyslexia is a
specific learning disability that is a lifelong condition. However, with early intervention, success for the student is possible. For this reason, the law requires that students with dyslexia receive targeted instruction by a special education teacher as outlined in their individual learning plan.

**Placement**

Although Kennedy is not in the bilingual program, placement in the LD program ultimately landed Kennedy in the bilingual inclusion classroom for fourth grade. In this classroom, the homeroom teacher works closely with the special education teacher who pushes into the classroom for a large part of the day. The school has gone to this inclusion model as much as possible to meet the least restrictive environment (LRE) requirement laid out in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). In Kennedy’s classroom, the special education teacher works with LD students in the classroom in conjunction with the regular education teacher using a team teaching approach. In addition, the special education teacher occasionally pulls students out for instruction as appropriate. Although this meets the requirements for LRE, working in a group with the other LD students was not always appropriate, as Kennedy’s academic level was significantly above theirs. Therefore, Kennedy continued to be pulled for Title I instruction as a reading intervention. This decision was made after careful consideration of input from Kennedy’s teachers and parents; parent input is another critical component of IDEA.

**Strengths and Challenges**

Kennedy comes to the table with many strengths. First of all, she has an extremely supportive family that provides academic and emotional support. In addition, Kennedy
has had the opportunity to experience many things that have given her a solid foundation and background knowledge. Nevertheless, Kennedy has been diagnosed with dyslexia. In addition, it is suspected that there may also be attention issues that have not formally been diagnosed. These two circumstances couple to hinder Kennedy’s short-term memory, therefore making reading difficult. Kennedy may be solid in a skill one day, but act as though she has never heard of it the next. For this reason, constant repetition and patience are necessary. Kennedy has a difficult time recalling sight words on a consistent basis and has to be reminded of decoding strategies often. These challenges greatly affect her fluency, and therefore obstruct comprehension.

These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. Adopted by the IDA Board, November 2002. This definition is also used by the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2002.

**Common Core Standards**

After considering the student and school environment, it was decided that an intervention which increased vocabulary and fluency would be an appropriate means of enhancing comprehension and overall reading achievement. In addition to looking at Kennedy’s academic needs, it was necessary to consider the Wisconsin State Standards. Currently, Wisconsin is following the Common Core Standards. The remainder of this section will align the standards with the instructional practices used in the case study.
In the area of reading, it is necessary for students to “read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences.” (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO] & The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA], 2011, p.10). This was accomplished through repeated reading and the comprehension questions. Repeated reading allowed for multiple chances to gain understanding while the comprehension questions were both explicit and inferential in nature. Multiple formats of repeated reading such as repeated oral assisted reading (ROAR), echo and choral reading, along with teacher modeling were used to increase fluency in the areas of speed and prosody, which is a reading standard in the area of fluency RF:4 (CCSSO & NGA, 2011).

In addition to repeated reading and questioning for comprehension, direct vocabulary instruction was used to increase the student’s understanding of words that were used in the text aligning with standard RL:4 (CCSSO & NGA, 2011). These lessons included student friendly, contextual based definitions. Technology was incorporated to increase the understanding of the words, as well as their pronunciation. Together these methods of vocabulary instruction were used to increase overall comprehension of the text fulfilling standards L:4:a and L:4:c (CCSSO & NGA, 2011). The Common Core standard RF:3 was met through vocabulary instruction in conjunction with discussion and integrated word study skills such as phonics and word analysis as a means to boost both fluency and comprehension (CCSSO & NGA, 2011).

Furthermore, discussion was used for standards RL:3 and RL:5 to identify various types of story structures such as sequencing and story elements (CCSSO & NGA, 2011). Graphic organizers aided in these discussions to organize thinking and make concepts
more concrete. Discussions also served as a means to summarize and synthesize the texts, using the main idea and details from the text, and then expanding on them. This practice incorporated standards RI:1, RI:2, and RI:3 (CCSSO & NGA, 2011). Finally, these discussions allowed Kennedy to collaborate in order to work through the text and increase her understanding of the text satisfying standards SL:1:a, and SL:1:c (CCSSO & NGA, 2011). Various contexts for discussion were employed such as conversing one-on-one with the teacher, a partner, and in small group. Taking into consideration Kennedy’s strengths, needs and the standards, I was able to develop an appropriate intervention to increase her reading skills.

**Overview of Case Study Research**

Throughout the next four chapters, I will go into great detail of this case study. The following is a brief overview of what will come. In chapter two, I provide my theoretical perspective, providing insight to how I teach, followed by research that supports both my beliefs and the interventions used in this study. The procedure and intervention process will be explained in chapter three. In chapter four, I will lay out the data obtained during the case study. Finally, in chapter five, I will discuss my findings and relate them to the existing research. I will describe the results of the intervention, both its strengths and limitations. In closing, I will discuss future recommendations for Kennedy to continue increasing her reading skills.
Chapter 2: Theories & Research

Introduction

All teachers come from a different background; therefore teaching perspectives are bound to vary from teacher to teacher. However, it is imperative that teachers develop and define their perspective regarding literacy instruction for students with learning differences, so that instruction is structured and consistent. This chapter portrays my theoretical perspectives regarding literacy instruction. In addition, to ensure fidelity and validity in instruction, all methods should be researched based. Therefore, this chapter also includes a review of previous research in the areas of repeated reading and vocabulary instruction as a means to increase fluency and comprehension.

Theoretical Perspectives

Adults who love to read did not just happen to discover the joy of reading by coincidence. At some point, they were motivated by taking an aesthetic stance and made a connection with texts. As teachers of diverse students, it is necessary to provide opportunities for children to read texts to which they can relate (Rosenblatt, 2005). But that is not enough. The atmosphere in which reading takes place has to be inviting (Mathewson, 2004), instruction must be individualized to meet the needs of and connect to all students (Chamberlain, 2005; Willis, 2002), and students must view themselves as readers. This is especially true for students with reading difficulties.

Aesthetic Stance

Explicit, scaffolded instruction of comprehension strategies undoubtedly improves students’ abilities to understand and synthesize text. However, no amount of skill instruction can create a love for reading. According to Rosenblatt (2005), for
students to become truly engaged in the reading process, teachers must provide opportunities for aesthetic reading. In other words, students must read rich literature such as poems, stories and dramatic texts with no required outcomes. The focus should be on living the experience through evoking the senses. Furthermore, students should be given the opportunity to discuss this experience with peers and the teacher (Rosenblatt, 2005; Sipe, 1999; Tolentino, 2007; Unrau & Ruddell, 1995) in order to expand their understanding of the text. Throughout this case study, I used partner reading, and discussion to allow for conversation. In addition, a variety of texts were used that I thought would be of interest to the students.

Aesthetic reading not only fosters a love for reading, it also permits students to learn and reinforce literary skills on their own without the influence of outside pressures that may otherwise stifle this learning. For example, Rosenblatt (2005) states that knowledge of figurative language and story structure may be acquired naturally via pleasure reading. Additionally, young children develop an appreciation for language even before they understand the meaning. As evident by their response, youngsters are intrigued by nursery rhymes and silly songs (Rosenblatt, 2005). Surely it is the feeling they experience that has drawn them to the text. Since students are drawn to the text, aesthetic reading will have a positive impact on the overall reading ability of students.

**Intrinsic Motivation**

In addition to fostering a love for reading, an aesthetic stance provides motivation for students. When students feel an emotional connection to a text, they are likely to keep reading it. However, students must also be effective readers when taking an efferent stance (Rosenblatt, 2005). It is especially important to maintain a high level of motivation
in these instances. In this study, I provided the students with a purpose for reading each story or text. This provided purpose and aided in overall understanding. When students are given authentic, meaningful reasons for reading, they are more likely to develop internal motivation over time (Mathewson, 2004).

A teacher cannot directly create intrinsic motivation; however, there are things that can be done to encourage it. For example, having a variety of books available in the classroom that are appropriate for students reading levels and interests offer a choice. Using this technique may persuade students to choose text through the peripheral route (Mathewson, 2004). Moreover, Mathewson (2004) states that providing a purposeful context for reading may persuade students to read a text through the use of the central route. For example, telling students that reading a short passage will help them understand how people lived before the Industrial Revolution presents them with a reason to read the text. When motivated students develop a love for reading, their opportunity for success grows exponentially.

**Diversity**

When considering students’ emotions and motivations connected to reading, it is important to consider who the students are. Most teachers today are middle class, Anglo women. This is in sharp contrast to the majority of students whom are increasingly diverse in culture and language (Chamberlain, 2005; Willis, 2002). Therefore, it is imperative that teachers seek out relevant texts when planning lessons. Not only will students preserve an emotional connection to the material (Rosenblatt, 2005), they will be validated for whom they are, and classroom tasks will become authentic. Willis (2002) says that taking into account the students’ perspective increases motivation. This is done
by respecting the differences in historical backgrounds and providing instruction and resources from varying points of view (Willis, 2002). When a variety of perspectives are included in learning, all students will have their horizons broadened.

**Zone of Proximal Development**

Once a child has the desire and motivation to read, it is crucial that the teacher provide texts that are assessable to the child. For a student with reading difficulties, this means finding texts that have a low readability while maintaining a high level of interest. These are the texts that will take students from their actual level development to their potential level of development (Vygotsky, 1962 & 1978). The area between these two levels is better know as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and it is here that learning and growth take place (Vygotsky, 1962 & 1978). Through interactions with the teacher and peers, the student will be able to increase her ZPD, and therefore her reading ability (Vygotsky, 1972 & 1978). The teacher’s role is to facilitate this growth by providing texts at an instructional level, scaffolding instruction, and allowing peers to work collaboratively to problem solve and draw conclusions. Success breeds success, so it is important that students are motivated and provided with appropriate leveled texts to initiate the success cycle.

**Summary of Theoretical Perspectives**

The question remains, how does the teacher pull all of these things together; desire, motivation, interest and ability? For this study, all of the above were taken into consideration and planned for. The researcher knew the students that she would be working with, and was able to find texts that would appeal to their background, interests and academic levels. She put the student, referred to as A.E. in a group in which her
strengths would help her be a successful contributor, while the strengths of her peers would help build up the areas she needed most. Using texts that were within Kennedy’s ZPD and using a repeated reading approach with explicit, scaffolded instruction, allowed A.E. to see her growth each week as her fluency and comprehension increased. Transparency of purpose was accomplished again through explicit instruction, while consistency of comprehension questions and scaffolding helped A.E. focus on what was important. Finally, allowing for time each week for A.E. and her peers to choose and talk about texts of their choice helped to build camaraderie and encouraged the love of reading.

Research

When designing a plan for intervention, it is important that it be a researched based best practice. At the time if this study, Kennedy was struggling both with fluency and comprehension, so it was imperative to find an intervention that would address both issues. Since vocabulary knowledge is a key component to comprehension, building vocabulary also had to be addressed. In addition, like many students who struggle with reading, the intervention had to be enjoyable and show Kennedy that progress was being made. This will aid in increasing motivation and foster a love for reading. The following articles provide support that an intervention based around repeated reading with an emphasis on robust vocabulary will have a positive effect on Kennedy’s fluency and comprehension.

Vocabulary Instruction

Nelson and Stage (2007) conducted a research study utilizing contextually-based multiple meaning vocabulary instruction to improve vocabulary knowledge and reading
comprehension. In this study, 283 third and fifth grade students from a small mid-western public school district were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control groups. Although the district was small, the population was diverse with thirty-two percent of the students in the study receiving free or reduced lunch (Nelson, & Stage, 2007). Students in the experimental group received direct vocabulary instruction in addition to the core curriculum, whereas students in the control group received only the core curriculum instruction. The classroom teacher provided all instruction.

To begin the study, all students were pretested using the Gates-MacGintie Reading Test 4th edition (GMRT-4) (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000), and placed in one of two categories: low or high/average. Students with a score of 30 or less on the normal curve equivalent were placed in the low group, where students who scored above 30 were placed in the high/average group. Following the pretesting, students in the experimental group were provided direct instruction on multiple meaning vocabulary words. Each of these target words were taught for two days during a 20 to 30 minute vocabulary lesson that was embedded into the core curriculum, and each word was presented nine times in six different contexts. At the end of the treatment period, the students were once again assessed using the GMRT-4 (MacGinitie et al., 2000).

Overall, students in the experimental group made significant gains in both areas, in contrast to minimal or no gains made by students in the control group. In vocabulary, students in the low group improved an average of 9.92 points, whereas those in the control group only went up 0.17 points. Again in comprehension, students in the low group improved 17.43 points on average, and the control group increased their scores by 3.61 points. Furthermore, students with low pretest scores made the largest gains of any
subgroup. The results of this study suggest that contextually based multiple meaning vocabulary instruction is effective in increasing vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Lovelace and Stewart (2009) also found that explicit vocabulary instruction has a positive effect on students’ reading success. Their study focused on the effects that robust vocabulary instruction has on word knowledge. Lovelace and Stewart were especially interested in improving vocabulary knowledge in the African American subgroup, therefore, five African American second grade students were chosen for this study. All five students had an average intelligence quotient (IQ), however they possessed low vocabulary skills.

To begin, each student’s vocabulary knowledge was tested using a zero to three-point scale: zero being no knowledge and three for full concept knowledge. Over the next four weeks, the students then received robust vocabulary instruction in small group sessions twice a week for thirty minutes. Once a week, on a nonintervention day, the students were given a probe to monitor progress. These probes consisted of 18 words: six instructional words, six common words, and six unfamiliar words to serve as a control. Two weeks after the intervention concluded, the students were given a posttest, again using the zero to three-point scale. In addition, some of the texts used were specifically chosen for their link to African American culture, while others were chosen from the standard curriculum.

Although the cultural context of the texts had little influence of the results, the posttest indicated that all five students made significant gains in their knowledge of the instructional words. In contrast, they did not make gains in terms of the control words.
These findings indicate that direct vocabulary instruction is crucial for attaining increased word knowledge.

Yet another study done by Lubliner, and Smetana, (2005) focused on closing the achievement gap between children coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The researchers hypothesized that comprehensive vocabulary instruction would increase word learning skills and comprehension, therefore narrowing the gap between above average students and their counterparts in the Title I.

Fifth grade students from two California schools were included in this study. One school, the control, had a rating of above average performance. The second school, the experimental group, was from one of California’s lowest performing Title I schools. Students in the experimental group received 12 weeks of comprehensive vocabulary instruction that facilitated encoding of student selected words, as well as, mastery of clarifying strategies.

At the beginning of the study there were significant differences in vocabulary, word learning skills and comprehension between the two groups. Conversely, there were small, non-significant differences after the intervention. These findings demonstrate strong gains, indicating that the intervention was successful in narrowing the achievement gap. Therefore, this study indicates that vocabulary instruction is a good choice in my own student’s intervention.

The ability to read and understand words in the written form is ultimately the key to comprehension. If a student is unable to move beyond a single word’s meaning, she will not be able to comprehend the text as a whole. Therefore, it is important to provide vocabulary instruction that allows students to be successful. The previous research
supports this thinking, in that all showed significant growth in students’ reading skills when vocabulary instruction was utilized.

**Repeated Reading**

Although understanding what one has read at the word level is imperative for comprehension, simply lifting the print from a page of text is the first step in comprehending. Successfully completing this task is called fluency. Repeated reading is one strategy for increasing fluency for students who have reading difficulties. The following section analyzes research in the area of repeated reading.

In addition to a full lexicon, students must obtain a certain level of fluency before they are able to focus on comprehension. One strategy for increasing fluency is repeated reading. Vadasy and Sanders (2008) completed a study to determine the effects of repeated reading on fluency and therefore comprehension. For this study, fourth and fifth grade students with low reading rates were recommended by their teachers. The students were then screened using Dibels Oral Reading Fluency (Good, & Kaminski, 2002). Cut scores below 93 and 104 corrected words or “correct words”? per minute were used for fourth and fifth grade students respectively. Qualifying students were then paired up randomly, and assigned to either the control or experimental group.

Students in the control group received instruction in the general classroom, however students in the experimental group received supplemental tutoring using quick reads. Vocabulary, reading rate, and passage comprehension were among the dependant variables being measured. A 16-week intervention period followed the pretest. Each lesson started with an introduction of the new vocabulary and the topic. Students then read the text for the first time. Next, the students read the text two more times with the
Running Head: REPEATED READING AND VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

tutor, and followed with a timed fourth read. Two comprehension questions followed
each passage along with a review of vocabulary. To conclude the study, both the
experimental and control groups were given the Dibels again (Good, & Kaminski, 2002).

At the end of the study, Vadasy and Sanders (2008) found that the students in the
experimental group had significant gains in both vocabulary and comprehension. On
average, students in the experimental group outperformed the control group by three to
four standard points on the posttest (Vadasy, & Sanders, 2008). Looking at it from
another point of view, the experimental averaged in the 30th percentile for word and
passage comprehension, where the control group averaged in the 25th percentile for word
comprehension and in the 10th percentile for passage comprehension (Vadasy, & Sanders,
2008). These results provide evidence that repeated reading coupled with direct
vocabulary instruction is effective in increasing students’ reading ability, and that it
would be wise to use these methods in my own intervention design.

Cooper, Bochken, McWilliams and Pistochini (2000), also researched the
effectiveness of repeating reading on overall reading ability. Fourth grades from
throughout the United States performing one to three years below grade level were
chosen for this study and randomly assigned to one of two groups; a control group and
treatment group that received instruction in the reciprocal reading method (RRM)
(Cooper, et. al., 2000). This method includes explicit vocabulary instruction and has a
strong emphasis on repeated reading. The dependent variables in this study included the
Qualitative Reading Inventory-II (Leslie, & Caldwell, 1995) for fluency and retell, and
the Gates MacGintie Reading Tests (MacGintie, & MacGintie, 1989) for vocabulary and
comprehension.
Once students were assessed and assigned to either the control or RRM group, interventions began. Students in the RRM group received small group instruction five days a week for 40 minutes a day in addition to their classroom instruction. Each lesson followed the same structure, and the intervention spanned a fifteen-week period on average. Each day started with revisiting or rereading prior texts followed by a quick review of the previous lesson, focusing on comprehension strategies. Next, the students completed a picture walk to preview the new reading, and read the selection. Each lesson ended with a written response. In each of these lessons, a great emphasis was put on rereading texts to gain a better understanding.

At the conclusion of the study, students in the RRM group significantly outscored those in the control group in answering questions and comprehension. Students in the RRM group averaged a raw score of 38.0 when answering questions versus 29.1 for the control group. For comprehension, the RRM students averaged a raw score of 20.8 whereas the control averaged 18.9 points. Once again, this study supports that interventions that incorporate repeated reading are beneficial for students performing below grade level. Since RRM incorporates repeated reading and vocabulary instruction to increase comprehension, this study provides strong evidence that the intervention plan that I have developed for KENEDY are appropriate.

Staudt (2009) also investigated the effects of repeated reading on comprehension. Her research involved two fourth grade students with diagnosed learning disabilities. The intervention in this study used poems as the bases for text choices. Each week, a new poem was introduced, modeled and read repeatedly. The poem was reread daily, followed by a different question to assess comprehension. Spirally back of previous poems was
also done on a regular basis. In addition to the repeated reading, vocabulary instruction was incorporated to increase comprehension.

After a year of this intensive intervention, the students showed significant growth in both word recognition and comprehension. On a widely used comprehension assessment, one student increased 13 percentile points, and the other 29 percentile points. These gains can be attributed to reading speed and word attack skills that also increased as a result of repeated readings, showing that this intervention would also benefit my student.

Yet another study on repeated reading was conducted by Therrien and Hughes (2008). This study compared the impact that repeated reading versus question generation had on comprehension and fluency. For this study, 32 fourth through sixth grade students with diagnosed learning disabilities were randomly assigned to one of the two groups. Students were pretested to find instructional reading levels. These levels determined the level of text used during the intervention. The interventions were completed daily for 10-15 minutes over a five day period.

Students in the repeated reading group read the text cold to obtain a “correct words per minute” (cwpm) baseline. They were then told to reread the passage two to four more times until they reached a pre-established cwpm based on their reading level. Finally, students were given corrective feedback. In contrast, students in the question generation group read the passage, then were prompted and coached to answer basic questions about story structure and plot. If students were unable to correctly answer the questions, the answers were provided for them. After the intervention, both groups were given eight comprehension questions, four factual and four inferential.
The results are as follows. Students in the repeated reading group averaged a cwpm rate of 95.1 on the first read and increased to an average rate of 116.3, where the students in the question generation group averaged 93.6 cwpm. Furthermore, students in the repeated reading group answered 13.4 comprehension questions correctly on average, while the question generation group averaged 12.3. Once again, this study indicates that repeated reading is beneficial for increasing comprehension in students with learning disabilities, and that this type of intervention will also increase Kennedy’s comprehension skills.

Finally, O’Connor, White and Swanson (2007) carried out a study that compared the effect repeated reading versus continuous reading on fluency and comprehension. 37 second and fourth grade students were selected to participate in this study from among eight classes. Students were given a pretest to determine eligibility and needed to score 12 to 45 words per minute (wpm) in second grade, and 20 to 80 wpm in fourth grade. This range indicated that students were below level in reading, however had enough word recognition to participate in the study. Qualifying students were then randomly assigned to one of three groups, repeated reading, continuous reading and control.

Students in the experimental groups received a 15-minute intervention three times a week for 14 weeks. Each intervention group read the same text, however those in the repeated reading group read each page three times whereas those in the continuous reading group read each page only once, covering more material. Students in the control group received neither intervention, however may have received special education instruction or Title I services if applicable.
At the conclusion of the study, the results indicated that both the repeated and continuous reading groups showed significant progress in fluency and comprehension compared to that of the control. The students who received the repeated reading intervention increased from 41 to 74.33 wpm in fluency and from a standard score of 83.38 to 92.50 on passage comprehension. Students in the continuous reading groups went from 44.8 to 65.40 and 83.40 to 90.40 respectively. However, students in the control group only increased six wpm, and dropped in passage comprehension from a standard score of 82.20 to 78.40. All in all, this is further evidence that repeated reading is a viable intervention for increasing both fluency and comprehension.

**Summary of Research**

All in all, the research readily supports the use of explicit vocabulary instruction and repeated reading to increase fluency and comprehension. Therefore, it was this research that formed the interventions designed for A.E. The articles discussed stress the importance of vocabulary knowledge and fluency when the goal is comprehension.

The research by Nelson and Stage (2007), as well as that of Lubliner and Smetana (2005) demonstrates that direct explicit vocabulary instruction increases both vocabulary knowledge as well as comprehension. However, there is no evidence that contextually based vocabulary instruction nor comprehensive vocabulary instruction is better than the other. Lovelace and Stewart (2009) also used explicit vocabulary instruction as the focus of their research. The findings of this study suggest that explicit instruction has a positive effect on word knowledge. These three studies confirm that an appropriate strategy was chosen to increase Kennedy’s vocabulary knowledge, leading to increased comprehension.
All of the repeated reading studies showed an increase in comprehension. In all of the studies, the students made gains in fluency and comprehension, showing a strong connection between the two. These findings support the use of repeated reading as an intervention to increase Kennedy’s reading skills. Furthermore, the research by Vadasy and Sanders (2008) shows that repeated reading also had a positive effect on vocabulary, providing more evidence that repeated reading is a strong intervention for students who have reading difficulties.

The research suggests that explicit vocabulary instruction accompanied by repeated reading would provide a beneficial intervention for increasing Kennedy’s vocabulary knowledge, fluency, and ultimately comprehension. Fluency is thought to be the bridge from phonics to comprehension. Therefore, it is fair to say that increasing Kennedy’s ability to lift print through repeated reading, and understanding of word meaning through explicit vocabulary instruction are critical for successful comprehension. Furthermore, it is clear that the fore mention research supports these intervention strategies.

**Conclusion**

This chapter started by highlighting my own theoretical perspectives and how they affect the types of interventions that were appropriate for A.E. By reflecting on these perspectives, I was able to pinpoint Kennedy’s greatest needs and develop an intervention plan. The research presented was then used to support my perspective and support the effectiveness of the plan I created. The details of Kennedy’s intervention are outlined in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Case Study Procedures

Introduction

This chapter will describe the steps used during the intervention to gather data, as well as provide a background on the student. To begin, I will supply a complete description of the child’s academic background related to this study. Next, the intervention steps will be presented followed by how the data was collected.

Description of the Sample

Description of Kennedy

At the time of this study, fall 2010, Kennedy was ten years and three months old. Kennedy was at the beginning of her fourth grade year, and was placed in an inclusion classroom for the first time in her educational career. In third grade, Kennedy received a clinical diagnosis of dyslexia, and after several meetings with her parents, teachers and school psychologist, it was decided that she would qualify for special education services under a specific learning disability in reading. Kennedy had always been a hard working student, however even with accommodations and interventions in the classroom, she was in the bottom 15 percent of students at her grade level in reading based on the Measures of Academic Progress (Northwest Evaluation Association, 2011), and nationally normed computerized test.

Dyslexia, a neurological disorder, affects Kennedy’s ability to decode words, interfering with her fluency and comprehension. Although decoding is a skill that needs to be intervened now, it will be a life long struggle for her. Therefore, it is necessary to provide Kennedy with other tools that will aid in fluency and comprehension.
In spite of these challenges, Kennedy did have several strengths. First and foremost, she was a hardworking young lady who was a pleasure to work with. In addition, she had a supportive family that was encouraging and understanding to Kennedy’s learning style and difficulties. Finally, the family support served to increase her background knowledge and providing a basis for comprehension.

**Academic Background**

Prior to the special education placement for a learning disability, Kennedy did qualify for speech and language support. In spite of this, she had not received support from the special education teacher, because it had been determined that her speech and language was not the cause of academic delays. Furthermore, at the time of special education placement for reading, Kennedy was on the verge of being dismissed from the speech and language program altogether.

Beginning in first grade, Kennedy received small group interventions in the form of Title I. This meant that in addition to a two hour reading block in the regular education classroom, Kennedy was pulled out for small group instruction for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. This instruction corresponded to skills that she was working on in the classroom, however provided an opportunity for strategies and intense instruction in the areas of greatest need. For Kennedy this meant decoding, fluency and reading for understanding.
Description of Intervention Steps and Data Collection

Overview

In the beginning of this study, Kennedy was pretested to determine her current reading level. The testing was given in two sections. Word identification was used first to determine a starting point. Next, oral reading passages were given focusing on fluency and comprehension. The results of this testing were used to develop an intervention plan. The plan consisted of 30-minute lessons five days a week for four weeks. The lessons focused on fluency and comprehension. Kennedy participated in these interventions with three of her peers that were also struggling in reading. Repeated readings were used to increase reading speed and accuracy, as a means to increase comprehension. In addition, specific vocabulary instruction was used to aid in building background knowledge, increase word familiarity, and set the stage for understanding the text. Finally, explicit and implicit comprehension questions were used to assess comprehension and drive instruction. Throughout each week, Kennedy was timed on her reading and her responses to the comprehension questions were noted and given a quantitative score. The case study concluded with a post-assessment. The following sections will detail the steps in the intervention process and data collected in greater detail. The data collected will be presented and analyzed in full in chapter four.

Pre-Assessment

The Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011) was used to in this case study to assess Kennedy’s fluency and comprehension. It also provided a starting point for words per minute and corrected words per minute (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). The QRI-5 is an informal reading inventory designed to assess fluency,
word recognition, and comprehension. It uses both explicit and implicit questions to assess the latter. Both narrative and expository texts are utilized in the QRI-5 (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). At the beginning of the assessment, Kennedy was given several word lists to assess word knowledge. Using prior experience, I presented Kennedy with the pre-primer 2/3, primer and first grade word lists.

The next stage of the QRI-5 is the reading passages (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). Based on the scores Kennedy received on the word lists, she was given a pre-primer 3 narrative passage. The passage was about the search for a lost cat and dog, which were eventually found underneath the table. Kennedy read the passage orally so that miscues could be recorded. After reading the passage, Kennedy was asked to retell what she had read, and then answered a series of comprehension questions.

Due to the successful reading of this passage, Kennedy was asked to read another narrative passage; this one was at the primer level. This passage was about a field trip to a farm. The same procedure was followed as above. Finally, Kennedy was presented with an expository text at the primer level. The story was about animals that lived near a lake. This was the only topic that Kennedy was familiar with before reading the passage based on concept questions. After the three passages were completed, it was determined that Kennedy’s instructional reading level was at the primer level.

**The Intervention**

Based on the data collected from the pre-test, it was determined that an intervention including repeated reading and explicit vocabulary instruction was needed. The goal of this intervention was that fluency would improve, allowing Kennedy to focus on comprehension of the text. The intervention was set up so that Kennedy and three
other students who required similar instruction would meet together with me. The group met daily for thirty minutes, for a period of four weeks, this was in addition to the reading instruction attained in their classrooms.

**Lesson One**

On day one, I completed a running record and comprehension inquiry with Kennedy for the selected text, as well as provided vocabulary instruction and read the text to her. To begin, Kennedy was asked to read the text without any background or instruction. This reading was timed, and notations of miscues were taken. Following the reading, Kennedy was asked four comprehension questions, including two explicit and two implicit questions. Next, the robust vocabulary within the story was taught explicitly within context. Finally, the students listened to the passage on a CD, as they followed along in the book.

The second day began by me reading the passage aloud. This allowed me to model fluent reading while highlighting important information in the text. After the story was read, we reviewed the robust vocabulary. The words were always presented in context, and student friendly definitions were provided. Furthermore, pictures, real life objects, or gestures were used as much as possible to increase understanding of the words. Next, a graphic organizer (GO) was created to identify the story elements such as characters, setting and plot, and to highlight the important events that took place in the story. At the end of day two, the students read the story chorally.

Day three was started off with a review of the robust vocabulary and the GO. I then read a portion of the text aloud, modeling prosody, and the students repeated the selection. After that, I worked one-on-one with Kennedy and the other three students.
Using repeated oral assisted reading (ROAR) I would read a portion of the text, then Kennedy and I would read it together, and finally she would read in on her own. This process was repeated until the entire text had been read. During this time, the remaining students read the story with a partner and independently. At the conclusion of day three, we added any pertinent information to the GO that was not previously noted.

On day four, we played a game called “I have, who has?” to review the vocabulary. In this game, each participant has a note card with one vocabulary word, and a definition to another. On ones turn, the definition was read beginning with “who has.” The student with the vocabulary word matching that definition then read her card stating, “I have (word), who has (next definition).” The students then read the text a few more times both with partners and independently while I ROAR read with students one-on-one. We then completed and reviewed the GO.

Finally, on day five, I completed another running record of the same story and repeated the comprehension inquiry. The results from the cold read and day five’s read were then recorded and graphed. While I was working with the students individually, the other students were able to choose a book to read independently for aesthetic purposes.
**Subsequent Lessons**

The remaining three weeks utilized three additional passages, however the process followed was similar. Therefore, the remaining lessons will be outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Weeks 2 and 4** | **Day 1** | ● Cold read of the passage/running record comprehension inquiry  
● Introduction of robust vocabulary  
● Passage on CD |
| **Day 2** | ● I read the text aloud  
● Vocabulary review  
● KWL created  
● Choral reading |
| **Day 3** | ● Review vocabulary and KWL  
● Model prosody  
● Students read (partner, choral, independently)  
● ROAR read one-on-one  
● Update KWL |
| **Day 4** | ● Vocabulary game  
● Students read (partner, choral, independently)  
● ROAR read  
● Complete and review KWL |
| **Day 5** | ● Complete running record and comprehension inquiry  
● Aesthetic reading |
| **Week 3** | **Day 1** | ● Cold read of the passage/running record comprehension inquiry  
● Introduction of robust vocabulary  
● Passage on CD |
| **Day 2** | ● I read the text aloud  
● Vocabulary review  
● Story elements GO created  
● Choral reading |
| **Day 3** | ● Review vocabulary and GO  
● Model prosody  
● Students read (partner, choral, independently)  
● ROAR read one-on-one  
● Update GO |
| **Day 4** | ● Vocabulary game  
● Students read (partner, choral, independently)  
● ROAR read  
● Complete and review GO |
| **Day 5** | ● Complete running record and comprehension inquiry  
● Aesthetic reading |
Post-Assessment

At the conclusion of the four-week intervention study, Kennedy was once again assessed using the QRI-5 (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). Since it was deemed that Kennedy’s instructional level was at the primmer level at the beginning of the study, it was not necessary to give the word list portion of the assessment. Post-assessment started with passages at the primmer level. As with the pre-test, fluency, word recognition and comprehension were assessed. A narrative and expository text were provided, and Kennedy proved to be instructional on both. Kennedy was then assessed on a narrative and expository text at the first grade level.

Conclusion

This chapter started out by providing a description of Kennedy, a hard working student who had been struggling with reading since she first started school. It then, outlined the intervention plan created to meet her needs based on the pre-testing, and gave a day-by-day look at the lessons used. Finally, it closed with the post-assessment process. Chapter four will take an in depth look at the results of the case study.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the case study procedures in detail, as well as provided a full description of the student. This chapter will present the data collected throughout the study. To begin, the data from the pre-assessment will be discussed, followed by that collected during the study, and finally, the data from the post-assessment will be offered. The results will then be analyzed to determine the effects of the intervention.

Analysis of the Data

Results From the Pre-assessment

The QRI-5 (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011) was used to assess fluency and comprehension. The assessment is in two parts; word lists and passages. To begin, Kennedy read a word list at the pre-primmer 2/3 (PP2/3) level. There were two miscues made, “some” for “same,” and “there” for “they.” On the PP2/3, Kennedy scored 85% accurate automatically, and 90% overall. This put Kennedy at an independent level for the PP2/3 word list. She was then given the primer word list. The miscues were graphically similar to the list words, and often had similar meanings. For instance, Kennedy read “song” for “sing” and “ever” for “every.” On the primmer word list, Kennedy also misread why, want, and there. Her score for correct words read automatically was 80%, putting her at an instructional level. Finally, she was given the first grade word list. Some of the miscues followed the previous pattern, however for a few it appeared that she only focused on the initial sound. These miscues included “chores” for “choose,” and “soon” for “sound.” Other words missed were “thought,”
“brain,” “put,” “and “heard.” Kennedy scored 50% and 55% respectfully for automatic and total word identification. This placed her at a frustration level, therefore the testing on word lists ended, and primmer was determined to be her instructional level.

Following the word lists, Kennedy was assessed on narrative and expository texts. Once again, these assessments looked at word identification. They also focused on speed and comprehension. Based on the results of the word lists, Kennedy was asked to read a narrative text at the pre-primmer 3 level PP3. It was a passage about a dog and cat that were lost. Throughout the passage the narrator searched for the pets and has found them by the end of the story. Before reading the passage, Kennedy was asked a series of concept questions. Her score for this was 44%, showing that she was unfamiliar with the topic. She went on to read the passage with 98% accuracy and a reading rate of 140 correct words per minute. After reading the passage, Kennedy retold what she had read hitting on 33% of the ideas that were in the text. Anything over 25% is considered to be a good score. Finally, Kennedy was asked a series of comprehension questions. Due to the level and topic of the passage, all of questions were explicitly answered in the text. Kennedy answered all of the questions correctly. At the PP3 passage level, Kennedy proved to be reading independently.

Next, Kennedy was asked to read a narrative passage at the primmer level. The passage was about a field trip a group of students took to a farm. Once again, Kennedy scored a 44% on the concept questions showing that she was unfamiliar with the topic. She read the passage with 94% acceptable accuracy, and a reading rate of 83 correct words per minute. Kennedy was able to retell 59% of the ideas she read in the text. The comprehension questions included for this passage were both explicit and implicit, and
Kennedy answered them all correctly, scoring 100%. Kennedy’s comprehension at the primmer level was independent. However, due to the low reading rate, her overall level was frustrational.

Kennedy was asked to read a second passage at the primmer level, this one being an expository text. She scored 67% on the concept questions, indicating that she was familiar with the topic. She read with 98% acceptable accuracy, and a reading rate of 80 correct words per minute. After reading, she was able to retell 72% of the ideas and answer 83% of the comprehension questions. The questions were once again explicit and implicit in nature. Kennedy’s fluency level was independent for this passage, however the comprehension level was instructional, placing Kennedy at an overall instructional level for the passage.

Taking into consideration Kennedy’s results from the word lists, and the results from the passages, it was deemed that Kennedy’s instructional reading level was at the primmer level base on the QRI-5 (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). Kennedy was at the beginning of fourth grade at the time of this study, therefore the results of this assessment put her instructional level approximately four years below her grade level. It was time to begin the intervention.

Results From the Intervention

The intervention consisted of a thirty minute, small group lesson that focused on vocabulary building, fluency, and comprehension. The group met five days a week in addition to the regular education reading block, and lasted for a period of five weeks. At the beginning of each week, Kennedy performed a cold read of the text. During the week, Kennedy received explicit vocabulary instruction, the group discussed the story in great...
detail creating graphic organizers on story elements, and I the teacher modeled fluent reading. By the end of each week, Kennedy had read the story ten or more times in a variety of ways including independently, with a partner, chorally, and ROAR. On the fifth day, Kennedy was once again timed on her reading of the passage and asked the comprehension questions.

Throughout the intervention, three data points were followed. Reading rate was based on correct words per minute (cwpm), accuracy took the number of words in the passage divided by the number of words read correctly, and comprehension evaluated the answers to four questions; two explicit and two implicit.

The following chart shows the data collected for reading rate.

As evident in Chart 1, Kennedy made significant gains in reading rate between the cold read and final read for each passage. The first week, she read a story about a boy that comes into contact with a rattlesnake while plowing the field with oxen. On the cold read, she read 60 cwpm; by the end of the week she read 86 correct words per minute. The second week was an expository text about a group of farmers working together to build a
barn. This time she increased from 63 cwpm on the cold read to 81 cwpm. Week three was once again a narrative passage. It was a parody of the three little pigs where they sued modern technology to find the wolf a new place to live with other wolves. For the cold read, Kennedy read at a rate of 61 cwpm and increased to 95cwpm by the weeks end. Week four consisted of an expository text about animals that live in the arctic. For this passage, she went from 53 to 71 cwpm. On average, she increased by 24 cwpm, which is about a 50% improvement. However from one cold read to the next, there was no significant change. In fact, the cwpm actually decreased as time when on.

The next chart takes a look at how accurately Kennedy read the texts.

Chart 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Accuracy in Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cold Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 2 shows that, once again, significant gains were made between the cold and final reads for each passage. The first week, Kennedy started out with an accuracy rate of 85% and improved to 92%. Week two she went from 82% to 92% accuracy. Weeks three and four improved from 80% to 91%, and 81% to 87% respectively. On average, Kennedy’s accuracy increase by nine percent. However, Kennedy once again was unable to carry this improvement over from one passage to the next.
The following chart shows the data collected on comprehension.

Chart 3

As fluency, reading rate and accuracy improve, it is only natural that comprehension would do the same. After reading, Kennedy was asked two explicit and two implicit questions. Each question was worth two points. Two points were awarded for fully answering the question, one point for a partial answer, and no points were given for incorrect or unanswered questions. After reading the first passage one time, Kennedy was able to answer the comprehension with a score of 63%, by the end of the week she was able to answer 75% of the questions correctly. The second week, she had a score of 38% after the cold read and improved to 63% by the end of the week. In weeks three and four she had comprehension scores of 50% and 63% respectively, however by the end of both weeks was able to answer the comprehension questions with a score of 100%. As evident in Chart 3, Kennedy’s comprehension improved significantly from each cold to final read. In addition, there was an increase in comprehension from passage one to passage four on the final reads.
Results From the Post-assessment

Following the four-week intervention, Kennedy was once again assessed using the QRI-5 (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). Because an initial reading level was already established, the word lists were not used for the post-assessment. The first passage was a narrative passage at the primer level. It was a story about a pig that learned to read despite being told that pigs do not read. Kennedy scored 78% on the concept questions, indicating that she was familiar with the topic. She proceeded to read with 98% acceptable accuracy at a rate of 105 correct words per minute. She scored 83% on the comprehension questions. The overall indication of the results put Kennedy at an instructional level for this passage.

Next, Kennedy was asked to read an expository text at the primer level. This passage was about the difference between living and non-living things. She scored 67% on the concept questions, showing that Kennedy was familiar with the topic. She read the passage with 91% acceptable accuracy at a rate of 79 correct words per minute. Once again she scored 83% for the comprehension questions. 91% acceptable accuracy is considered to be frustrational, however her overall accuracy was at an instructional level as was her comprehension, therefore it was determined that Kennedy had read this passage at the instructional level.

The level of text was moved up to the first grade level, where Kennedy began by reading a narrative passage about mice living in a house that was for sale. She answered the concept questions with an 89%, so she was once again familiar with the topic. Kennedy went on to read with 94% acceptable accuracy (once again this was frustrational, however total accuracy was instructional) at a rate of 96 correct words per
minute. Kennedy was able to answer 80% of the comprehension questions. It was determined that, once again, this passage fell in Kennedy’s instructional range.

A fourth passage was given. This one was also at the first grade level, and was an expository text about the air around us. Kennedy scored 56% on the concept questions, indicating that she was familiar with the topic. She scored 88% acceptable accuracy and read at a rate of 67 correct words per minute. Kennedy scored 80% on the comprehension questions, which is in the instructional range, however since her acceptable and total accuracy were frustrational, it was deemed that Kennedy was frustrational on this passage.

Based on the results of the four passages from the QRI-5 that were included in the post-assessment, it was determined that Kennedy’s instructional reading level was now at the begging of first grade (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

The following table provides a visual of the data collected in the pre and post-assessments using the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readability Level</td>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Type</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Accuracy %</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable Accuracy %</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWPM</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retelling %</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension %</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Level</td>
<td>Ind.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Pre-Primmer 3 (PP3), Primmer (P), First Grade (1), Independent (Ind.), Instructional (Inst.), Frustrational (F). Scores with notation differ from the final reading level.
Conclusion

The data shows that Kennedy experienced a significant increase in the areas of reading rate, reading accuracy and comprehension. This is evident in the data collected from the cold and final reads during the four-week intervention, and seems to be attributed to repeated readings and comprehension instruction. Furthermore, Kennedy’s overall reading level from the pre-assessment to post-assessment increased by one year. Chapter five will discuss the connections to the existing research, strengths and limitations of this case study will be addressed, and recommendations for Kennedy will be provided.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will conclude the case study. To begin, I will provide a synopsis of Kennedy, and the challenges she faced regarding reading. Next, I will connect this case study with the existing research from chapter two. Following that, the results of the study will be explained further, along with a discussion of the case study’s strengths and limitations. Finally recommendations will be provided for Kennedy for home and school.

Kennedy

At the time of this study, Kennedy was a ten-year, three-month old fourth grader. She began receiving Title I instruction in first grade. In addition, Kennedy received speech and language interventions. At the end of third grade, she was medically diagnosed as being dyslexic, and it was decided that she would begin receiving special education services for a specific learning disability in reading. Kennedy had trouble decoding words and lifting print. This made comprehension very difficult. Kennedy was in need of explicit instruction fluency and comprehension. Previous research was used as a basis for developing an intervention plan that would improve Kennedy’s fluency and, in turn, her comprehension.

Case Study Results and Connections to Prior Research

Vocabulary Instruction

Nelson and Stage (2007) conducted a research study to determine if contextually based multiple meaning vocabulary instruction would improve vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Students were put into two groups, one a control and the other an experimental group that received special vocabulary instruction that was
embedded into the core curriculum. At the end of the study, the students in the experimental group had made significant gains in both word knowledge and comprehension, where those in the control group made minimal or no gains.

Lovelace and Stewart (2009) also studied the effects of explicit vocabulary instruction. Their focus was on the effect that robust vocabulary instruction has on word knowledge. Throughout the study, the students were provided explicit instruction on the words, as well as read them in context in their reading texts. Following the study, it was determined that direct vocabulary instruction is necessary for increasing word knowledge.

Finally, a study by Lubliner and Smetana (2005) hypothesized that comprehensive vocabulary instruction would increase word learning skills and comprehension. For this study, students from two fifth grade classes were observed: a control group from an above average school, and an experimental group from a low performing Title I school. At the beginning of the study, there were significant differences in vocabulary and comprehension for the two groups. However, after the intervention period there was a small, non-significant difference, indicating that the intervention was successful.

In this case study with Kennedy, explicit vocabulary instruction was used with each text. The words were presented in context, and student friendly definitions were provided. In addition, Kennedy was able to see and use the words in a variety of ways. Understanding the robust vocabulary for each text allowed Kennedy to recognize the words while reading and improved her understanding of the passage.
Repeated Reading

Repeated reading is a method to increase fluency. It also allows the students multiple exposures to the text, improving comprehension. Vadasy and Sanders (2008) conducted a study on the effects of repeated reading on fluency and therefore comprehension. Students in the experimental group received supplemental tutoring using quick reads. After reading a text several times, students were asked comprehension questions and reviewed vocabulary. By the end the study, students in this group had made significant gains in both vocabulary and comprehension.

Cooper, Bochken, McWilliams and Pistochini (2000) studied the effects of repeated reading on overall reading ability. For this study, vocabulary instruction and repeating readings were once again used. At the conclusion of the study, it was determined that students receiving the intervention outscored their peers in answering questions and comprehension.

Staudt’s (2009) research on the effects repeated reading has on comprehension had similar results. Her research focused on two fourth students diagnosed with learning disabilities in reading, similar to Kennedy. Vocabulary instruction was also incorporated into the intervention. The results of the intervention indicated that both students showed significant growth in word recognition and comprehension.

Another study by Therrien and Hughes (2008) compared repeated reading to question generation in regard to the effects on fluency and comprehension. While both interventions were successful, those receiving the repeated reading instruction did answer comprehension questions a slightly higher rate.
Finally, O’Connor, White, and Swanson (2007) conducted an experiment on fluency and comprehension comparing repeated reading to continuous reading. The repeated reading group read text multiple times, where the continuous reading group read only one time, but covered more text. There was also a control group that did not participate in either intervention. Once again both methods increase students reading rate and comprehension significantly, whereas the control group did not.

During this case study, Kennedy read each passage a minimum of ten times. In addition, modeling and practicing of fluent reading were incorporated. This, along with discussions the text using graphic organizers increased Kennedy’s fluency and comprehension.

**Explanation of Results**

This section will highlight the results of the case study, and offer an explanation for them. It will show how Kennedy did or did not improve based on the data collected during the intervention as well as the pre and post-assessments.

**Intervention Results**

Kennedy made significant gains in reading rate, accuracy and comprehension throughout the intervention from each cold to final read. These results indicate that repeated reading, explicit vocabulary instruction, and discussion of key point do increase a student’s fluency and comprehension. Therefore, it is fair to say that these interventions should be used with students struggling in reading. The results indicate that repeated reading with modeling and corrective feedback improve a students accuracy and speed, allowing them to focus on the content of the text. In addition, explicit vocabulary
instruction and the use of graphic organizers considerably improve students’ understanding of the text, increasing comprehension.

Kennedy did not show significant gains in reading rate or accuracy from one passage to another, in fact her scores tended to decrease as time went on. This may have been attributed to the content of the text and Kennedy’s familiarity with the topic. This points to the importance of building a student’s background knowledge before reading about an unfamiliar topic. In addition, the reading level increased slightly from one passage to the next, therefore slight decline in rate and accuracy could be expected.

On the contrary, Kennedy’s comprehension did increase from the first passage to the fourth passage when looking at final reads. This indicates that Kennedy was catching on to keying in on main points in the text. The results of this show that using a consistent structure and graphic organizer aid in the understanding of story elements and text structure.

The data collected during the intervention provides evidence that that repeated reading along with explicit vocabulary instruction does increase fluency and comprehension for a given text. Now we will look at the overall results of the study.

**Pre and Post-Assessment Results**

At the beginning of the study, Kennedy’s instructional reading level was at the primer level according to the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011). At the end of the four-week intervention, Kennedy was once again assessed using the QRI-5. The results of this post-assessment provide evidence that she made a years growth, as she was reading at a first instructional level (Leslie, & Caldwell,
2011). These results indicate that the intervention was successful, and could benefit other students with similar challenges in reading.

**Strengths and Limitations**

**Strengths**

Throughout the case study, there were several strengths that I could draw upon to promote success of the intervention. The most important of these was knowledge of the student. I had worked Kennedy since she was in first grade via Title I reading interventions. I was aware of her personal strengths, as well as, the challenges she faced academically, specifically in reading. For example, I knew that lifting print was impeded by a lack of decoding skills, and that it was caused by a lack of short-term memory rather than a lack of instruction. Therefore, Kennedy needed more: another way to increase fluency and improve comprehension. Knowing her personally also allowed me to understand her background and the wealth of knowledge that she brings on a daily basis.

In addition to knowing Kennedy well, I also knew her family. This provided more insight to the challenges Kennedy faced and how to address them. In addition, I knew that I had the full support of her parents, and that we were working as a team to help Kennedy improve her reading skills. Knowing Kennedy, her family, and background enabled me to develop an intervention plan that would best meet her needs.

Another strength of the study was the intervention design. It was a systematic approach that was predictable for the students. This meant that Kennedy knew what to expect each day, so that her focus could be on the reading strategies rather than on the nuances of the lesson. In addition, the procedure would be easy to repeat benefitting other students facing similar challenges in reading.
Limitations

A major limitation for this case study was time. In the short amount of time allotted for each lesson, it was often difficult to sufficiently cover all areas of the intervention; fluency through repeated reading and modeling, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension work, during the 30-minute intervention block. In addition, Kennedy’s needs for reading interventions are great, however in the narrowness of the study, all areas were not met. For example, word study and phonics work could benefit Kennedy’s reading ability. Additionally, I was not Kennedy’s classroom teacher, therefore I was unable to provide additional instruction throughout the core reading lesson that would have enhanced the intervention. For instance, building background knowledge could have increased comprehension, while looking at vowel patterns may have improved fluency. Furthermore, the intervention only lasted four weeks. Continuing for an entire semester or academic year may have allowed for more favorable results.

Recommendations

Recommendations for School

Throughout the intervention, Kennedy was able to read successfully. The following recommendations would allow her to continue that success, and help other students with similar needs. In order to increase fluency texts at the student’s reading level should be provided. Reading of these texts should be modeled, and repeated reading should be encouraged. In addition, readers’ theaters and poetry should be utilized to as a way to increase reading, as they lend them selves to multiple readings. These recommendations align with the Common Core Standard RF:4 read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
In addition to repeated reading, key vocabulary should be taught in multiple ways. Words should be presented in context and student friendly definitions should be provided. Since Kennedy struggles with memory, using object, pictures, or actions will help make the process more concrete. Making the words concrete would also aid in the understanding of new vocabulary for all students, especially those with similar reading needs. This recommendation relates to the Common Core Standard RL:4 determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, as well as L:4 determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and phrases.

Graphic organizers should be used with fiction and non-fiction to aid in comprehension. For fictional texts the focus should be on story structure, including such things as characters, setting, and plot events. This supports the Common Core Standard RL:3 describe depth of a character, setting, or event in a story. In nonfiction texts, summarizing main ideas and key details will be important, and graphic organizers will aid in this process. This recommendation aligns with the Common Core Standard RI:2 determine the main ideas of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Finally, word study and decoding should be taught explicitly and practiced regularly. Having a visual aid, such as a poster, modeling the process would benefit students like Kennedy. One way to aid in decoding would be the spot-and-dot method to break up multi-syllabic words into smaller chunks that can be related to the vowel patterns. In addition, decoding by analogy would also enable students to draw on what they know to improve their reading skills. These recommendations support the Common
Core Standard RF:3 know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

**Recommendations for Home**

Because Kennedy struggles with retention, reading with support at home is imperative to her academic success. Again, this is true for all students looking to improve their reading ability. There are a few things that families can to support reading skills. Modeling and reading for an aesthetic purpose is an extremely important step. This will encourage students to want to read, and allow them to enjoy the art of reading. For this, it is recommended that families read to their children daily, and allow their children to witness them reading for a variety of purposes. In addition to the given benefits, this recommendation is supported by the Common Core Standard L:3 use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

A second recommendation is to use repeated oral assisted reading (ROAR). By using the ROAR method fluent reading will be modeled and practiced while the text is read repeatedly. ROAR aligns with the Common Core Standard RF:4 reading with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

Finally, after reading a section of text, parents should ask their children to retell what they has read to ensure comprehension. If they are unable to provide an accurate retelling, the section should be reread and discussed. In addition, the family should be encouraged to ask questions related to the text. This corresponds with the Common Core Standards RL:1 and RI:1 refer to details an examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
Conclusion

Chapter five began by providing an overview of Kennedy and the challenges she faced in reading. It showed how despite being an eager learner, reading was difficult for her. The chapter then connected this case study to existing research. Results of the case study were provided and interpreted, and the strengths and limitations of the study were discussed. Finally, recommendations were made to best meet the needs of Kennedy for both home and school in order to continue supporting her reading success.
Appendix A

GO! Chart

- Characters
- Setting
- Problem
- Events
- Solution
Appendix B

KWL Chart

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>K</th>
<th>W</th>
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<tr>
<td>(What we already know)</td>
<td>(What I would like to find out)</td>
<td>(What I have learned)</td>
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Appendix C

Data Collection Sheet

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<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Reading Rate</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Reading Rate</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
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References


Glossary

Comprehension- the interaction between the text and what the reader already knows. It involves making connections, questioning and adjusting one’s own thinking. The end result is that some knowledge or information has been gained (Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction DPI, 2005).

Continuous reading- reading the text one time, covering a broader range of text (O’Connor, White, & Swanson, 2007).

Correct words per minute- includes accuracy and speed when reading (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

Explicit questions- have answers that can be found within the text. These questions assess one’s ability to remember and access information (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

Expository texts- are written much like a textbook and provide factual information (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

Fluency- automatic word recognition (DPI, 2005).

Formative assessment- an assessment tool that provides information on an individual student that aids in developing an instructional plan (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

Implicit questions- require the reader to infer, using what they have read and what they already know (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

Miscue analysis- looks at the types of miscues made during reading to help drive future instruction (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).

Narrative texts- contain story elements such as character, setting, and plot. These texts may be fiction or non-fiction (Leslie, & Caldwell, 2011).
Prosody- similar to fluency; taking into account speed and accuracy, while also looking at rhythm and expression.

Question generation- requires the answering of basic questions provided by the instructor, after reading a text one time (Therrien, & Hughes, 2008).

Repeated oral assisted reading- a process of repeated reading where the facilitator reads a section of text, then the facilitator and student read the selection together, and finally the student reads the selection independently. This process provides modeling and fluency practice.

Repeated readings- reading the same text multiple times to increase fluency and comprehension (Vadasy, & Sanders, 2008).

Robust vocabulary- also known as Tier Two words, occur frequently in literature and are used by individual with a mature language skills. Explicit instruction of these words increases a student’s language ability (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).