Differentiating Instruction by way of Ability Grouping and Integrating Appropriate Reading Skills and Strategies with Struggling 2nd Grade Readers to Improve Comprehension and Fluency

Jean Kroll

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Differentiating Instruction by way of Ability Grouping and Integrating Appropriate Reading Skills and Strategies with Struggling 2nd Grade Readers to Improve Comprehension and Fluency

By
Jean Kroll

A Graduate Field Experience
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
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Signature Page

This Graduate Field Experience
Has been approved for Cardinal Stritch University by

Sarah Norenberg
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10/1/2011
(Date)
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether differentiating instruction by way of ability grouping and integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies with struggling 2nd grade readers would improve their comprehension and fluency. Four 2nd grade students that were considered to have low reading abilities as determined by a phonological awareness screening test, oral reading assessment, and observation participated in the study. This individualized leveled reading group met with the researcher approximately 20 minutes daily, four times a week, for the duration of 6 weeks. The focus during this small group meeting concentrated on decoding, fluency, and comprehension. The results suggested that overall; participant’s demonstrated growth in comprehension, fluency, and phonics skills over the course of the intervention.
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Chapter One

Program Design Project

A great deal of research confirms that students that struggle in reading require early intervention to develop and improve their skills and abilities. My study revealed how incorporating differentiated instruction by way of ability grouping and integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies for struggling 2nd grade readers improved their comprehension and fluency. A current school improvement goal at our school is to increase reading comprehension. Researching and gathering information regarding best practice strategies in reading comprehension is part of implementing and carrying out our goal. My action research is my contribution toward the accomplishment of this school goal. The context of this chapter is comprised of a description of the school, our programming model, decision making processes, policies and procedures, staffing information, student academic data, research to support best practices in the area of my research, and finally an overview of my action research.

Context

School Description

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is a system of schools composed of 114 K-8 elementary schools and 13 high schools serving approximately 33,000 students. Geographically the Archdiocese encompasses the counties of Racine, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Walworth, Waukesha, Ozaukee, Washington, Dodge, Fond du Lac, and Sheboygan. The system includes schools in rural, urban, and suburban settings.
My research was conducted at a parochial school located in southeastern Wisconsin, within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Our school is a community, connected by faith, worship, and education based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The philosophy of St. Joseph School is to create an environment that enables all students to achieve their fullest spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and psychological potential.

Our school is a suburban school with a current enrollment of 126 students. There is one classroom per grade level K4 through 8th. The average classroom size is 13 students. The student population lives primarily in the three surrounding cities. Some families are economically uncomfortable and receive tuition assistance to attend this school. Approximately 2% of our student population is multi-racial, 2% is Asian and the rest of our student population is Caucasian. Approximately 3% of our students have special needs or an I.E.P. that requires assistance on either an emotional, physical, or academic level. In addition, we have approximately 2% of students that receive free or reduced lunch.

**Programming Model**

The curriculum is consistent with archdiocesan, state and national standards. Our school is Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation (WRISA) recognized and accredited by the Archdiocese. Our Mission Statement is: We are committed to nurturing each student’s potential while developing the foundation for lifelong Christian faith, strong academic advancement, healthy self-esteem and service to our greater community. Reading instruction is delivered utilizing a literature based curriculum for all grades.

Specific to my action research, I utilized our recently implemented basal based textbook and supplemental leveled reading books provided by *Pearson Scott Foresman Reading Street*.
(2008) during my daily reading block of 90-minutes. Approximately 45-minutes would be
dedicated to large group teaching that involved explicit instruction in oral language, phonics,
spelling, and comprehension skills and strategies specific to our weekly story. The last 45-
minutes would be divided between three small individualized, leveled reading groups that placed
more focus on decoding, fluency, and comprehension.

**Decision-Making Processes**

Schools are supported by the Office for Schools, which is responsible for establishing and
monitoring the implementation of Archdiocesan policies, regulations, and accreditation standards
relative to educational practices in Catholic Schools. Central office staff consists of a
superintendent, three associate superintendents, and a human resource person. Each school
system is independently operated and site-based, meeting their financial obligations and service
needs at the local level. Discussions and decisions are made collectively by the priest, parish
council members, the principal and school board. Ultimately, final decisions are governed by the
priest.

**Policies and Procedures**

A common goal for our school faculty is to modify classroom instruction so that students
will be actively engaged in their learning and retain more of the information taught as evidenced
by their increased performance on various assessments including a standardized test. To
accomplish our school improvement goal, our action plan to ensure mastery level achievement in
reading comprehension includes individual staff members reviewing Archdiocese Exit
Expectations for their specific grade level, meeting as teams to discuss alignment of the Exit
Expectations with the Wisconsin State Standards for each grade cluster, staff researching and
gathering best practice strategies to share with entire staff, and finally implementing those strategies as a school. Considering our school goal to improve overall student comprehension, my action research will benefit and inform our school staff in understanding best practices that are valuable in helping struggling students, regardless of their grade level, with reading.

Staffing Information

The school employs a full time administrator along with 10 full time teachers, 4 part time teachers, two aides, and two part time administrative assistants. Our school has specialty teachers for art, music, physical education, and Spanish. No additional support services are provided at our school such as a reading specialist, or a special education teacher. Any students considered as having special needs are tested by the Special Education Department at the local elementary school. Complete reports are provided by them as well. Classroom teachers are responsible for and expected to modify the curriculum to fit the students’ individual needs.

Academic Data

According to our March 2010 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, 2008) results, we outperformed the national average as well as the Archdiocese in all grades relevant to reading comprehension as shown in Figure 1 below. However, as a Catholic School we carry high academic expectations for all of our students and would like all classes to perform consistently at a percentile of 75 or higher in reading.
In examining the current 7th grade class, their reading scores have increased over five years with the most significant gain from Grade 5 to 7. Our scores were below the Archdiocese in years 2006 (Grade 3) and 2008 (Grade 5), with a national percentile of 69 and 71 respectively; however, a national percentile of 86 in 2010 (Grade 7). (See Figure 2 below.)
My Study

Student Population

My research will be conducted with students from my 2nd grade class. My classroom consists of 13 students; 5 girls and 8 boys. Four 2nd grade students that are considered to have low reading abilities as determined by a phonological awareness screening test, oral reading assessment, and observation will participate in the study. All four students are male, all are Caucasian, native English speakers, come from middle income families and have attended our school since kindergarten. According to our March 2010 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, 2008) results for first grade, which include the participants (now 2nd grade) in my action research, were very low in reading comprehension. All students’ national percentile ranks were below 50 as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3
Project Overview

For my action research I focused on differentiating instruction for struggling readers by way of small groups to isolate their individual needs and scaffold my instruction to strengthen their comprehension and fluency. I met with my participants approximately 20 minutes daily, four times a week, for the duration of 6 weeks. As stated above participants were chosen due to past test scores and observations. During small group I focused on word study (word identification skills by the use of decoding strategies), comprehension and fluency. Data collection included pre-testing, post-testing, running records, videotaped sessions, student work, and anecdotal notes.

Best Practice Research

Research has shown that reading comprehension is an intricate process that has been a challenge to many. An educator’s ability to understand and teach these processes will foster student comprehension. Since these processes involve active involvement by a reader, teachers must use motivating methods in teaching comprehension. When comprehension strategies are taught effectively, improvement in student comprehension of the texts they read occurs and students learn to use the strategies independently (Neufeld, 2005). Primary teachers must model the use of these strategies, guide and scaffold the reader’s use of the strategies, and monitor the individual use of the strategies by the reader (Duke and Pearson, 2002).

Differentiating instruction by way of explicitly teaching and modeling strategies to students who struggle in reading, can lead them to improvement in their comprehension and fluency. Explicit teacher modeling of the strategies is crucial to a student’s proper usage and aids them in becoming more strategic readers (Bishop, Reyes, and Pflaum, 2006). The final
Objective of teaching comprehension strategies is to assist students in reaching self-regulated, independent use of the strategies, including knowing when they are needed and applying appropriate strategies for the text, or content, they are reading (Neufeld, 2005). Fluency and comprehension can develop simultaneously. Whether considering fluency as a prerequisite to comprehension or the belief that fluency develops after comprehension is achieved, repeated reading using decodable text that focus on specific phonic skills, can improve both fluency and word decoding skills. This can be accomplished by grouping students to maximize the delivery of instruction for escalating growth of struggling readers. Grouping students also provides educators with the opportunity to build and scaffold instruction specific to each individual’s needs which is essential in the development of proficient readers. When educators implement and utilize small reading groups and understand and consider instructional techniques that will benefit their students, the result is reading success for all students.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I discussed elements significant to my action research project. These included our school description, the programming model, decision making processes, policies and procedures, staffing information, student population and academic data, my project overview, and best practice research. Research shows that first and second-grade students who do not learn to read will most likely struggle with reading throughout their lives, so effective reading interventions are critical as soon as deficiencies are evident (Vaughn, Thompson, Kouzekanani, Bryant, Dickson and Blozis, 2003). For struggling readers, much research reveals that small groups are more effective for intensive teaching purposes and allows the students to demonstrate what they know and receive immediate feedback and scaffolding. Therefore, my action research demonstrated effective ways to facilitate learning in struggling readers and boost
their literacy achievement. This chapter focused on elements of my action research, the following chapter discusses research articles associated with my action research.
Chapter Two

Introduction

Oftentimes children who are struggling readers are not provided with instruction on specific reading strategies necessary; therefore, it’s difficult for them to use them as independent reading skills. Differentiating instruction by way of explicitly teaching and modeling strategies to students who struggle in reading, can lead them to autonomous use of reading skills and improvement in their comprehension and fluency. Implementing and utilizing small reading groups along with various instruction techniques, such as modeling fluency and demonstrating strategy use through think alouds with leveled readers, and well-informed educators, can result in reading success for students. This chapter will outline research associated with differentiating instruction to improve reading comprehension and fluency. Research topics include making the most of grouping techniques, instructional techniques, professional development in the area of literacy for teachers, and decoding and phonics instruction.

Grouping Techniques

There are various ways to group students to maximize the delivery of instruction for escalating growth of struggling readers. These methods can include a limited amount of students per group, one-to-one teacher intervention, teacher directed instruction, peer assisted instruction, heterogeneous or homogenous grouping. This section discusses some of these important practices and the outcomes.

Vaughn, Thompson, Kouzkanani, Bryant, Dickson and Blozis (2003) conducted a 13 week study providing identical supplemental reading intervention with struggling second grade readers using three small group formats; 1:1 (one teacher with 1 student), 1:3 (one teacher with 3 students), and 1:10 (one teacher with 10 students). Across all three groups, the instructional
Improving Reading Comprehension and Fluency

The elements utilized in this study included phonological awareness, word study, reading fluency, and comprehension. The authors were particularly interested in determining any resulting evidence that supports smaller group sizes as being more effective for increasing reading performance in struggling monolingual readers as well as English language learners. The primary means of data collection included pretesting, post-testing, and follow-up testing four weeks after the completed study via the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (Texas Education Agency, 1998), Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Word Attack and Passage Comprehension (Woodcock, 1987), Test of Oral Reading Fluency (Children’s Educational Services, 1987), and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Segmentation Fluency (Kaminski & Good, 1996). Letter naming, phoneme segmentation, nonsense words and oral reading of leveled passages were weekly subtests used to monitor the progress of the students. The use of an Intervention Validity Checklist during teacher observations provided notes and ensured consistency in intervention lessons.

This study was conducted in 10 Title 1 elementary schools in an urban area of the southwest. The majority of the 77 students were boys (52%), as well as Hispanic (74%). The remaining sample included 22.1% African American students and 3.9% Caucasian students. The participants ranged in age from 6.9 to 9.2 years old. Two female bilingual and three female monolingual teachers, with at least one year of experience teaching reading to struggling students, provided the instruction throughout the study.

Since phoneme segmentation is a reliable predictor of reading ability, the researchers first tested the students using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-phoneme segmentation to determine group assignments. With these results they placed the students in either the 1:1, 1:3, or 1:10 group. Once the remaining pretest data were collected, the students in
each group received 30 minutes of the same intervention, five times a week for 13 weeks totaling 58 sessions. The instruction elements for intervention included six minutes of fluent reading (repeated reading), six minutes of phonological awareness (oral activities), 10 minutes of instructional reading (provided support in decoding and modeled comprehension strategies), six minutes of word study (explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle and word patterns), and 20 minutes of progress monitoring (sub-testing). Throughout the study, each teacher was observed nine times. The checklist provided information regarding both the instructional components and teacher monitoring of student engagement during the instruction.

The results of the study were not surprising to the researchers. Throughout each of the four focus areas of instruction, findings indicated overall substantial gains for the 1:1 and 1:3 sample groups as compared to the 1:10 groups. However, there were no significant differences between the 1:1 and 1:3 groups. This study also revealed that English language learners performed as well as, or better than, monolingual students in all of the groups although the researchers could not determine specifically which components of the instruction provided the most gains. These results also support past research that has shown reading interventions implemented for monolingual students is beneficial to English language learners as well.

The most practical implication from this study is that explicit and concentrated reading instruction is advantageous for all struggling readers. Another result of this study implies that whether students are taught utilizing a one-to-one or one-to-three intervention program, successful gains can be expected with comparable results. Further research in this area for students who did not make adequate gains within any of the groups, could include extending intervention to determine possible increase in their results. Isolating the extent of how each
implemented component used in the intervention contributed to the success of English language learners, would expand our instruction competence as well.

The study of Vaughn et al. (2003) focused on implementing the same intervention while using varied group formats. The following study, conducted by Mathes, Torgesen, Clancy-Menchetti, Santi, Nicholas, Robinson and Grek (2003), utilized three different instructional delivery arrangements; however, all groups remained similar relative to size and student ability.

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

This study was conducted in six elementary schools in a southeastern school district. Twenty-two first grade teachers participated in this study along with 89 low-achieving first grade male readers. The student sample included 45 Caucasian, 37 African American, and 7 classified
The teacher sample included 18 Caucasian, 3 African American, and 1 classified as Other. Seven teachers conducted the peer-assisted instruction consisting of 31 students, seven conducted the teacher-directed small group instruction consisting of 30 students, and eight conducted instruction in the control group that consisted of 28 students.

The peer-assisted instruction involved three 35-minute sessions per week for 16 weeks. The 35-minute session was broken down into two 15-minute sessions: sounds and words and story sharing. Student pairs of a stronger reader and a weaker reader alternated roles of coach and reader. Five minutes were allotted for transition time. During the sounds and words session, students were provided a lesson sheet containing five activities: letter sounds (automatic recognition of letter-sound and combination sound connections), hearing sounds (phonemic segmentation of words), sounding out (increased unknown word identification to fluency), sight words (automatic recognition of high frequency words), and passage reading (fluent reading of connected text). Throughout the story sharing segment, student activities included pretend read (predicting what was happening on each page utilizing the pictures), read aloud (echo reading), and retell (sequencing the events of the story). The small-group teacher directed instruction involved three 30-minute sessions for 16 weeks and included the same two sessions of sounds and words and story sharing as well. The only differences within this group instruction was that the time dedicated to each session was flexible and teachers were able to scaffold instruction according to the students’ needs in order to achieve their goal of making certain the students mastered the sounds and words segment of the lesson. The control group provided reading instruction in their usual way with no recommendations or feedback from the researchers.

The outcome of the study revealed that teacher-directed instruction and peer-assisted instruction results on most measures compared to the control group varied significantly. In
particular, measures of segmentation, non-word efficiency and word attack subtests showed a
great deal improvement for the teacher-directed instruction group. In addition, the teacher-
directed instruction group demonstrated greater gains in the word identification, passage
comprehension and word efficiency subtests as compared to the control group. The peer-assisted
instruction group exhibited gains in these areas as well when compared to the control group;
however, not as substantial. This study also revealed that both instructional approaches fostered
reading growth of more than a half a standard deviation better than the control group.

The findings from this study imply that both teacher-directed instruction and peer-
assisted instruction, on average, increase reading performance compared with typical instruction
for low achieving struggling readers. Another result of this study implies that receiving
instruction from a teacher is more significant and effective than similar instruction provided by a
classroom peer. However, the most practical implication from this study is that utilizing peer-
assisted instruction while the teacher is meeting with small reading groups is more productive
than the traditional centers or seatwork where students are sitting by themselves attempting to
complete activities without support. Implementing this design into my own classroom during my
action research will undoubtedly show positive results as well.

Although both studies varied comparatively with grouping and instructional methods,
results show the desirable effect of working with struggling readers in a smaller group format.
Vaughn et al. (2003) felt that when students are placed in smaller group formats, not only can
students that struggle in reading easily demonstrate their knowledge, but teachers are allowed to
instantly provide corrective feedback as well. Mathes et al. (2003) focused on the importance of
how small group formats provided more opportunities to practice reading strategies individually
allowing students to attain ownership of the reading process comparable to their peers.
Along with determining what type of grouping format to use with students, educators must understand and consider instructional techniques that will benefit the unique needs of each of their students. This information follows in the next section.

**Reading Instruction Techniques**

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

McIntyre, Jones, Petrosko, Powell, Powers, Newsom and Bright (2005) conducted a two year, large quantitative analysis in conjunction with a state program, Early Reading Intervention, offered to the schools to improve the reading achievement of primary grade students reading at low levels. The authors examined the implementation and effects of using supplemental programs with first and second grade struggling readers. The supplemental programs included small groups or one-to-one instruction with attention focused on specific literacy instruction in addition to their regular daily classroom reading instruction. The authors compared phonics and reading comprehension achievement of first grade students and reading comprehension achievement of second grade students who received daily supplemental reading instruction to those students who did not receive daily supplemental reading instruction. Phonics was assessed but not specifically taught within the supplemental reading instruction models. Data collection included pretests and posttests using Clay’s Hearing Sounds in Words Test (Clay, 1993), a phonics task that required students to write two sentences that the researcher dictated to them, and the Flynt-Cooter Informal Reading Inventory (Flynt & Cooter, 2001), a reading assessment
that included oral and silent reading of fiction and nonfiction passages, retellings, and comprehension questions. In addition, data collection also consisted of observing teachers in their classrooms, taking field notes, and interviewing the teachers about their practices.

The authors originally tested 196 first and second grade students from 17 different schools in Louisville, Kentucky that took advantage of the Early Reading Incentive Grant program provided by the state. Participating teachers were requested to identify 20% of the lowest achieving students within their classrooms. The researchers narrowed their sample to 39 first graders and 20 second graders who received at least 30 minutes of supplemental instruction each day. The targeted group consisted of 57.2% boys and 42.5% girls. The student ethnicity included 79% Caucasian, 16.3% African American and 4% Other, which were mostly Latino. 56.5% of these students received federal free breakfasts and lunches, 25.5% did not and 18% were unknown. The 29 teachers partaking in this study consisted of 2 men, 27 white women, and 1 African American woman with teaching experience ranging from 3 to 27 years.

Data collection occurred throughout the two year study. During the first year, student pretesting took place during October and November and post-testing during May. In the second year, pretesting occurred in September, with post-testing again in May. First grade students were tested in both phonics and reading, whereas second grade students only participated in a reading assessment. Phonics testing was scored by two of the authors who were trained in scoring the Clay test. Reading scores revealed the grade level on which the child was reading at the time of testing. Teachers were observed on average for 90 minutes two times a year. These observations occurred during the regular class literacy instruction as well as the supplemental instruction. Researchers utilized field notes to record what the teachers said and did and later typed a story-like account of what happened in the classroom during their visit. Teacher
interviews that included a specific protocol in relation to the targeted group of students, took place on the same day as the classroom observations.

The authors’ study concluded that children who received supplemental instruction during first and second grade outperformed children who only received regular classroom literacy instruction. Both the 39 first-grade children and the 20 second-grade children achieved significantly higher on the informal reading inventory passages as compared to the 84 first-grade and 43 second-grade students who did not receive the supplemental instruction. In addition and without surprise, there was not a significant increase in phonics achievement for the 39 first graders due to the fact that no systematic phonics instruction was incorporated in the supplemental reading instruction.

Even though the researchers tested and followed the children as individuals, there were several limitations they considered in regards to the outcome of this study. The authors recognized that poverty, home discourse and literacy practices, the education level of parents, and the general ability of the children are variables that can affect reading achievement; however, these elements were not considered in this study. Another shortcoming was that the study was solely based on the researchers’ vague definition of “supplemental instruction” (daily or almost-daily literacy for an additional 30 minutes or more) and several different intervention instruction models (Book Club, Carbo Reading, Reading Recovery, Early Reading Intervention, and a locally designed model) were used during the “supplemental instruction” settings. This resulted in no specific suggestion for any particular intervention model that was more successful than the others. Although the results showed that students who received more academic attention through supplemental reading instruction performed better than those who did not, the researchers felt it important to note that effective teaching is critical as well. Along with
providing supplemental instruction that increases the amount of time children read, the quality of teaching during that instruction should include scaffolding, discussion and feedback which are important components in helping struggling readers be successful. As I reflect on the struggling readers in my classroom and my attempts to reach all my students, it is important that I realize the significance of effectively implementing daily supplemental reading instruction to advance my students’ literacy achievement.

The previous study centered on supplemental instruction and its effect on reading comprehension for struggling readers. Knowing that many times struggling readers focus on decoding, it is important to provide poor readers with frequent opportunities to read. The following study focused on how repeated reading and continuous reading influenced reading fluency and comprehension in struggling readers.

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

There were 48 low skilled 2nd and 4th grade readers selected from eight classes (four classes of each grade) to participate in this study. Using specific eligibility criteria, six students from each class were identified as struggling readers and chosen for this study. Of the 48 students selected to participate in this study, the ethnic makeup consisted of 50% European
American, 29% Hispanic or Mexican American, 18% African American, and 3% other. Due to illness, accidents and mobility, only 37 students completed the study and of these 37 students, 16 were previously identified as LD, and seven were English language learners. The researchers also monitored the progress of two average readers in each class for comparison.

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

Both the repeated and continuous reading groups gained over 20 wpm in reading rate; however, the control group made minimal gains. There were no considerable variations found between students who practiced repeated or continuous reading in regard to the measure of reading rate/fluency. As anticipated by the researchers, the average readers performed at higher levels than the other three groups by the end of the study. The results of the study did not support the researchers’ hypothesis that along with increased fluency, repeated reading would improve word identification and continuous reading would increase vocabulary. No significant differences were found in these additional measures possibly due to the easy texts selected with few unknown words. As far as the causal connection between fluency and comprehension, post-
testing results showed gains at the sentence and passage levels even though no direct comprehension instruction was included in the study.

The results from this study imply that whether continuous reading or repeated reading with corrective feedback is implemented into your classroom, they are both effective interventions aimed toward improving reading rate that can benefit struggling readers. In order to improve fluency of the poor readers in their classrooms, teachers should include oral reading practice in their everyday instructional routine. If teachers incorporate effective vocabulary and comprehension instruction along with either of these interventions, overall improvement will occur in reading development. I currently tutor struggling readers, and I have discovered through practicum and reflection of my own teaching that effective reading instruction should include word study (involving new vocabulary instruction, word identification strategies, and phonemic awareness), comprehension, fluency and writing instruction. Other research has shown that all these components are dependent on each other and combining of all of these during instruction is most effective and ensures more success in reading development.

While fluency has a significant impact on comprehension as discussed in the previous study, the author of the following study concentrated on the use of oral reading feedback strategies to improve reading comprehension in children with low reading ability. Reading feedback strategies assist students in processing text and have been recognized in improving comprehension in struggling readers.

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

Four male and four female children between the ages of eight and 11 in grades three through five participated in this study. The research took place in an elementary school located in a midwestern city composed of families with lower middle to low socioeconomic status. Students were recommended by school staff who met the following conditions: were between eight and 11 years old; no identified intellectual, behavioral or neurological deficit; no reported history of hearing loss; identified as having a language impairment, qualified for remedial reading, or identified as having a learning disability in reading, oral or written expression; and received reading assistance only at school.

Over the five week study, four students were placed in each intervention group, with the students receiving one hour of intervention two times each week. There was a two or four day interval between all intervention sessions for the purpose of assessing long-term reading recall
through use of the comprehension questions. Both intervention groups read the same book throughout the sessions. At the beginning of each session both the traditional decoding based reading group and integrated approach group answered five to six comprehension questions about the reading during the previous session. The decoding based group would then practice reading and defining 10 vocabulary words from the chapter they would be reading that day. While reading the chapter, students were encouraged to sound out words and reread misread words. The instructor would supply words the student could not sound out or decode, divide words into syllables to help with decoding, and provide phonemic clues. Some story events were discussed sporadically during reading. The instruction within the integrated approach group consisted of conversational strategies during reading to help students construct meaning from the text. The instructor asked the students to look at the pictures and make predictions about the chapter, activated students’ background knowledge, summarized or encouraged students to summarize pages read, defined and explained words unfamiliar to the students throughout the reading, pointed out and explained pronoun references, and solid connections were made between sentences, paragraphs, and chapters.

The author concluded that the four students who were instructed by means of the integrated approach made significant gains in reading comprehension as compared to the four participants of the decoding based group whereby no gains were made, and two of the participants in fact showed decreased scores from pre-test to post-test. To obtain the results of reading comprehension from pre-test to post-test, Crowe (2005) subtracted the standard score of the post-test from the standard score of the pre-test. This difference was substantial between groups. In comparing results of the 40 story related comprehension questions affecting long term reading recall for both group participants, again these results indicated that the average
number of details recalled by students in the integrated approach group was considerably higher than that of the decoding-based group.

The results from this study imply that the integrated instruction approach is an effective intervention for facilitating reading comprehension in students with low reading ability. The author did note that other research shows that decoding-based reading intervention is beneficial in reading comprehension; however, was not successful for the students in this study. Implications of this study further suggest that the integrated instruction approach demonstrated positive results achieved in comprehension even though the intervention took place for no more than 10 hours. The study also revealed students in the integrated instruction group became more actively involved in the reading process, where as the decoding based group demonstrated less interest and lacked involvement during the sessions. Again most research recommends reading instruction that allows students to become actively engaged in the reading process by creating a purpose for reading, providing important cues during reading to connect ideas within the text, and modeling how to summarize text. This type of instruction should facilitate reading comprehension in all students.

Helping students with low reading ability make text comprehensible through oral reading feedback strategies allows children to become more actively engaged in the reading process. The authors of the next research study presented another important facet to improve student engagement during reading instruction; scaffolding reading tasks.

Lutz, Guthrie and Davis (2006) conducted a 12-week study that evaluated teacher practices and student engagement in learning using children’s reading comprehension as the performance guide. The authors were particularly interested in teacher effort to support students’
cognitive processes and motivation during instructional activities, specifically comparing the approach teachers scaffold student engagement during reading-science instruction as opposed to traditional reading instruction with basal readers. The researchers analyzed reading comprehension results, student engagement, literacy task complexity, and teacher scaffolding. The primary means of data collection included observational methods to assess affective, behavioral, cognitive, and social engagement by way of videotape; reading comprehension assessments including a measure of reading comprehension strategies and passage comprehension.

Four students (two relatively high achievers and two relatively low achievers) were selected from three 4th grade classrooms located in Frederick County, Maryland to participate in this study and were compared to their classroom peers. Of the 12 students selected for this study, two were African American, three were Hispanic, and seven were European American. The teachers in classroom 1 and 3 were European American females with more than 10 years of teaching experience, and classroom 2 was a European American male with over five years of teaching experience.

Teachers in classroom 1 and 2 were given and implemented a reading program that combines reading and science instruction. This program was accompanied by a guidebook with lesson plans, nonfiction and fiction trade books, worksheets pertinent to the strategies and science themes the students were learning, and materials for science experiments. The classroom 3 teacher implemented the traditional reading instruction using a basal reader that focused on basic skills with no comprehension strategy instruction and no science integration. Student reading comprehension assessments took place in September and December which included measures of comprehension strategy use and comprehension of a short nonfiction passage. In
mid-November, one lesson in each classroom was videotaped taking note of student engagement, literacy task complexity, and teacher scaffolding. Instruction took place over a 12-week period for 90 to 120 minutes per day.

Throughout the 12-week study, results revealed that both class 1 and class 2 students experienced greater growth in reading strategy use, reading comprehension, and experienced greater task complexity as compared to the students in class 3. Student engagement results determined that students in class 3 were more engaged in classroom activities than the students in class 1 or 2, and class 1 showed higher results than class 2. This result for class 3 could have been linked to the low level task complexity presented to the students in class 3. In regards to teacher scaffolding results, it is first critical to note that scaffold scores were calculated by the number of scaffolds used less one point for every undermining teacher behavior, such as conveying a negative expectation about students success, that occurred. Teacher scaffolding findings conveyed class 1 and 2 had similar patterns of high scaffolding at the beginning of the lesson, followed by a considerable decrease throughout the lesson. The teacher scaffolding in class 3 was also somewhat higher at the beginning of the lesson, but did not show such a dramatic decrease as in class 1 and 2. Furthermore, the scores for class 3 often appeared lower because of the relatively high occurrence of the teachers undermining behavior during the lesson.

Implications of this study suggests that students receiving integrated reading-science instruction, moderate engagement in learning and high complexity of literacy tasks during instruction confirms strong growth in reading comprehension and reading strategy use. The results further imply evidence of a strong connection between reading comprehension and student engagement in complex literacy tasks. Providing students with more complex tasks not only supports engagement but academic achievement benefits are noted as well. In addition, the
teachers of the students that demonstrated greater gains in reading comprehension used a larger number and variety of scaffolds throughout the lessons. Educators should be made aware of the value of integrating complex literacy tasks along with scaffolding to promote student engagement which inevitably increases their students’ achievement.

Each study within this section dealt with instruction techniques used to improve student reading comprehension and fluency. McIntyre et al. (2005) determined that use of an early intervention supplemental reading instructional program in addition to struggling student’s regular classroom reading instruction can provide substantial gains for more needy students in the area of comprehension. In contrast, O’Connor et al. (2007) concluded that the instructional techniques of repeated reading and continuous reading improved reading fluency and comprehension in struggling readers. Another instruction technique shown to improve struggling reader’s comprehension and fluency used by Crowe (2005) was an integrated approach to reading that utilized specific feedback to help children understand the message of the author. Finally, Lutz et al. (2006) looked at many effective ways of promoting student engagement during reading instruction, to improve reading comprehension and strategy use. All studies revealed that using specific instructional techniques increased the time a child spent reading, and ultimately improved struggling reader’s fluency and comprehension; however, corrective feedback is also a requirement. Supplemental instruction, repeated and continuous reading, feedback strategies and scaffolding for student engagement are some of the techniques used by competent educators.

Providing students with literacy tasks at their zone of proximal development avoids frustration in children and improves reading motivation because students feel successful. As
educators, we must know how to scaffold students during reading instruction. The following section discusses how teachers can accomplish this.

Literacy Education for Teachers

Preparing educators in understanding the needs of struggling readers provides them with the necessary tools to confidently and effectively support these students. Proper literacy education for teachers will boost literacy achievement in students as Spear-Swerling (2009) discovered during her research study.

Spear-Swerling (2009) conducted a three semester study that was two-fold. The study focused on teachers taking a language arts class including the requirement of tutoring second grade students as part of a special educator preparation program. The author was particularly interested in teachers’ knowledge base of reading, effectively applying that knowledge to facilitate learning in students, and student progress during a carefully designed literacy course along with a supervised field experience. Several methods of assessing the teacher candidates understanding of and experience in literacy instruction were utilized. The primary means of data collection for the teachers consisted of a background questionnaire, and self-ratings of their own knowledge in three areas of reading that included their general knowledge of reading and reading development, their knowledge of phonemic awareness, and phonics knowledge. In addition, a pretest and posttest on five measures of teacher knowledge that encompassed graph-o-phonemic segmentation, syllable types, irregular words, morpheme segmentation and an open-ended question test related to their general knowledge about reading was given. Second grade student’s measures included tests of oral vocabulary, phonemic awareness, pre- and post-test of basic reading and spelling skills, and phonics concepts.
The study was conducted in an urban school near the Southern Connecticut State University. The 45 white, middle income teachers (both undergraduate and graduate) were attending the university and enrolled in a required language arts course for special education certification. This course also entailed supervised tutoring of a second grader. The 45 tutored African American, native English speakers (35 male, 10 female) had mild to moderate word-decoding difficulty and were referred by their second grade teachers. None of the students were receiving special education services during the study.

Teacher candidate pre-testing took place at the beginning of the course and consisted of a background questionnaire requesting the following information: certification held, prior preparation, type of experience and years of experience; self-rating of their general knowledge about reading and reading development, phonemic awareness, phonics, and morphemic knowledge; and concluded with the test on five measures of teacher knowledge as described above. Post-testing was completed at the end of the course using an alternate form of the five measures of teacher knowledge test. Students were tutored by the teacher candidates once a week for eight 60-minute sessions (first and last session utilized for testing with six sessions committed to instruction) following their classroom language arts block. All students/teacher pairs consistently met at the same time and in the same place at the students’ school. The course instructor supervised all tutoring sessions, rotating among teacher/student pairs to observe and provide written feedback to the teacher candidates. The students were pre- and post-tested with the CORE Phonics Survey (Consortium on Reading Excellence, 1999) in both reading and spelling; reading and spelling of irregular words; knowledge of sounds for letters and letter patterns; and knowledge of phonics concepts. The pretest assessment results were used in the development of the structured lesson plan that would be implemented during tutoring sessions.
Instruction included letter sounds, phonics concepts (syllable types), reading and spelling of phonetically regular words, reading and spelling of irregular words, fluency, oral reading of text with comprehension, and listening comprehension. Teacher’s selected the skills and content they considered necessary for his/her students, but the instructional activities were specifically prescribed.

The results of the study pertaining to the teachers’ self perception of their reading knowledge did not vary significantly despite their background differences in age, years of teaching experience, and involvement in prior reading related courses. The outcome of teacher candidates’ pre- to post-test performance on the five teacher knowledge tasks showed considerable improvement; although due to the limited hours of course instruction, their scores remained well below the ceiling score. In addition, even though the study consisted of only six instructional sessions, the tutored student results from pre-test to post-test showed significant improvement. Increased growth was noted in all six reading and spelling measures with the most notable progress made on the specific skills taught during tutoring. From pre-test to post-test knowledge of letter sounds and patterns showed a 15% increase, CORE Phonics Survey-Reading Words (1999) a 13% increase, CORE Phonics Survey-Spelling Words (1999) a 10% increase, reading irregular words a 14% increase, spelling irregular words a 5% increase and phonics concepts increased 36%. There was no support to show any effect on student learning based on whether their tutors were undergraduates or graduates. In addition, no correlations could be found between teacher post-test performance on the knowledge measures and student growth during tutoring.

When compared with a similar study, children’s pattern of progress in this study supports the idea that their improvements resulted from the tutoring program as well. Teachers’ self
perception of literacy related knowledge, particularly in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, and children’s general reading development, substantiates the need for professional development by teachers involving research based information. The findings from this study also imply that with concentrated course preparation and direction, teachers can serve as effective tutors for struggling readers. The success of this study included numerous factors: selection of appropriate students for tutoring, utilizing targeted assessments with clear implications of instruction, a prearranged lesson format, combination of course content with the fieldwork component of the course, and supervision by an instructor. Making use of targeted assessments and structured lesson plans will be valuable tools during my research.

The prior study explored the idea of the considerable knowledge and skills necessary for teachers to possess in order to have a positive effect on reading comprehension outcomes of students. The authors of the next study specifically considered how teachers can effectively foster their students’ comprehension in expository text.

Hall, Sabey, and McClellan (2005) conducted a 6-week study to examine the effectiveness of an instructional program designed to teach second graders how to comprehend expository text. This instruction took place during small group, guided reading instruction. Three small group instructional programs were used; Text Structure, Content, and No Instruction. Since text structure awareness is a critical element for facilitating text comprehension and recall in expository texts, this was the focus implemented for this study. Many previous studies have been conducted in the context of whole class instruction of expository texts; therefore the authors were particularly interested in determining the benefits of small group expository text instruction during guided reading. The primary means of data collection included both pre- and post-assessments that incorporated four measures: summary of
a compare/contrast text, identification of clue words in a paragraph, a matrix, and vocabulary. The post-assessment involved five additional measures as well: three summaries of compare/contrast text, summary of an unstructured text, recall of clue words, overall use of clue words, and conceptual understanding of compare/contrast. In addition, teacher observation (excluding the No Instruction groups) took place once per week for 45 to 60 minutes and recorded notes concentrated on how closely the teacher followed the lesson outline, time spent on the lesson, and student engagement.

This study was conducted in one suburban Title 1 elementary school in Mountain West where 46% of the students received free or reduced-rate lunch and 12% of the student body was English language learners. Seventy-two second graders from six classrooms participated in the study; 46 males and 26 females. The school population was comprised of 87% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, 1% Pacific Islander and 1% Asian/Other. Five teachers with one to five years of classroom teaching experience volunteered to participate in the study.

Three to four second grade students were placed in homogeneous guided reading groups and randomly assigned to one of three conditions: Text Structure Program, Content Program or the No Instruction Program. The Text Structure group contained eight guided reading groups with a total of 31 students; the Content group contained four guided reading groups with a total of 17 students; and the No Instruction group contained eight guided reading groups with a total of 24 students. The teachers met with each group two or three times a week for 20 to 25 minutes a session.

The Text Structure and Content groups used information books from a guided-reading collection, well structured compare/contrast paragraphs written by the authors of this study,
graphic organizers and paragraph frames. The No Instruction group incorporated their regular instruction with no additional materials provided. Throughout the Text Structure program the teacher introduced the text to the students including the content of the book, major vocabulary words, and highlighted comparison clue words (alike, both, similar, but, different, however and contrast), students “mumble read” the text to allow the teacher to “listen in”, discussed and revisited the text by reviewing the vocabulary words and major concepts, the students then completed graphic organizers for comparisons, next the students reiterated the comparisons, and to finish, students wrote summaries. During the Content program the teacher introduced the text to the students by discussing the vocabulary words and concepts in order to activate the student’s prior knowledge about the topic. Similar to the Text Structure program, students “mumble read” and the teacher “listened in”. When discussing and revisiting the text, the teacher reviewed the vocabulary words and major concepts found in the text, students completed graphic organizers highlighting main topics and subtopics, and at the conclusion of the lesson the students wrote summaries with the aid of their graphic organizers. The main focus of the Text Structure program was to emphasize the structure of the text as a way to assist in their comprehension, whereas the main focus of the Content program was factual information and associated vocabulary.

The overall outcome of the nine measures of the post-test showed significantly higher scores for the Text Structure group than the Content group with the exception of the three strategy measures of recall of clue words, matrix, use of clue words, and the conceptual understanding of compare/contrast. Within these tasks, the Text Structure group scored significantly higher than both the Content group and the No Instruction group. In addition, there
was no substantial difference between the Content and No Instruction groups in any of the measures.

The large differences found in the scores implies that the implemented text structure program was most effective and the strategies and concepts utilized in this study revealed the necessity to organize expository information to make sense of expository texts. Recognizing that the instruction lasted only six weeks, the results also suggest the strength of the program and the possibilities it carries if instruction extended throughout the school year. Although text structure awareness is only one strategy that supports expository text comprehension, a most practical implication from this study is that early extensive exposure to expository texts and quality designed instructional programs that employ comprehension strategies are reliable ways to address children’s difficulty with comprehending expository texts.

Expository text structure varies significantly from narrative text structure thus making comprehension of these texts even more difficult for students. Since expository text includes factual information, and more difficult vocabulary and concepts, educators must know how to present, scaffold and effectively teach comprehension strategies for student success. The following study includes teacher awareness of the important relationship connecting fluency and comprehension and why many teachers make the assumption that if a student is fluent, he/she must have the ability to comprehend text.

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

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

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

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

In reviewing other studies and contributing to the problem of students becoming fluent readers yet lacking comprehension, the researchers were of the opinion that teachers rarely require or challenge students to think more critically about what they have read and generally are expected to simply answer literal questions. The results imply evidence of a strong connection between full reading comprehension, which is regarded as a complex, higher level, thoughtful response to text, and student engagement in more complex literacy tasks. Implications of this study further suggest that educators may only be assessing fluency when considering their students reading proficiency and are assuming that if the student is fluent they must also possess full comprehension skills. Whether considering fluency as a prerequisite to comprehension or the belief that fluency develops after comprehension is achieved, it is critical to assess both fluency and critical thinking comprehension skills when determining the reading proficiency of students.
Literacy coursework along with field experiences for potential educators benefits both the educator and struggling readers. Teacher education must not only improve a teachers’ knowledge base of reading but must also provide opportunities to apply that knowledge with children during teacher preparation (Spear-Swerling, 2009). Since expository and narrative texts have different structural patterns, educators must also be aware of how to facilitate comprehension of non-fiction text for all students, but more than ever, struggling readers (Hall et al, 2005). Lastly, DeKonty et al. (2009) discovered that there may be a significant number of teachers who are evaluating the reading competence of their students based only on speed and accuracy, and excluding a student’s comprehension skills. It is imperative that teachers are aware of assessing both fluency and comprehension to obtain an accurate measure of a student’s reading proficiency.

The above section described the value of teacher education in all domains of reading instruction. Training should also include recognizing the importance of phonological awareness in early reading instruction. Decoding and phonics play a vital role in early reading skills providing a child with the ability to eventually read fluently and achieve comprehension. The following section illustrates this reality.

**Decoding and Phonics**

A great deal of research has uncovered the importance of instruction in phonological processing skills in relation to children’s later reading abilities. Understanding this relationship and teaching these skills can be approached using different methods. The following research summaries discuss the results of several interventions implemented with struggling readers and the benefits.
Beck, McCandliss, Perfetti & Sandak (2003) conducted a four month intervention study including 20 hours of instruction time, focusing on the decoding skills of children with below average reading ability using an intervention called Word Building (Beck, 1989; Beck & Hamilton, 2000). Their theoretical framework considers the premise that the alphabetic principal is a significant skill required in the development of overall reading achievement. Children with decoding difficulties commonly understand the letter sound correspondence for the initial grapheme but are unable to apply that knowledge to other positions in that word. Therefore, the authors were specifically concerned with analyzing the abilities and limitations of poor decoders and its correlation to other reading domains such as phonemic awareness, word identification, and reading comprehension. The primary means of data collection for this investigation was pre- and post-testing measuring decoding ability, word identification, reading comprehension and phonemic awareness. The specific instructional approach used for the decoding skills was the Word Building intervention program (Beck, 1989; Beck & Hamilton, 2000). This program included 77 lessons broken down into a series of 23 units containing three to five lessons per unit, preceded and followed by a short test. The experimenters transcribed all student responses during the sessions.

Initially, support teachers from the elementary schools in a large metropolitan area distributed a flier to parents describing the intervention study and requesting interested parents to contact the researchers. Telephone interviews were then conducted with the parents to explain the screening process and to determine whether the child met the criteria for the study. Children that had completed first grade, were between the ages of 7 and 10, and still exhibited reading difficulties were chosen for, and participated in this study. The sample included 24 children, organized into two groups, an intervention group and a control group. Each group consisted of
seven males and five females. The research took place in a laboratory reading center located on the campus of a large university in a large city in the northeastern United States.

Over the four month study, the students in the intervention group participated in 20 tutorial sessions, lasting approximately 50 minutes each, three times per week. Four additional sessions were required for testing purposes. The parents of the students in the control group were given reading materials and were persuaded to find reading support for their child while waiting to receive the intervention the following semester. Undergraduate students from the university were assigned a child in the intervention group to tutor throughout the study. Each lesson consisted of 5 to 16 alphabet letter cards, instructions to create a series of words using the letter cards, flashcards of the words that were created with the letters, and sentences that contained those words as well.

The study initially concentrated on short vowels, then proceeded with long vowels, progressed to vowel digraphs and finally r-controlled vowels. During the lesson, the child was instructed by the tutor to build words using the letter cards. Each new word was created by changing one letter of the word that preceded the new word. After each word was formed, the child was directed to read the word, and then was asked to insert, delete or exchange a specific letter card to create a new word. If the child struggled with pronouncing the word, the tutor would scaffold the child’s decoding attempts until the child was successful. Once the child completed the word building segment, the student was expected to pass a flashcard assessment with 80% accuracy. If the child did not meet the expectation, additional word building activities utilizing the same letters was provided until the student experienced success. The student was then given sentences to read that included both words from the lesson and similar words. The researchers predicted that the student would then have the ability to accurately decode similar
words. Upon completion of a unit, the student was given a post-test requiring a 90% or better in decoding accuracy.

The authors’ study concluded that the overall performance across pretest and posttest measures showed a significant increase in phonemic awareness, word identification, and reading comprehension for the intervention group. Specific to the impact of the decoding skills intervention program, students in the intervention group revealed a marked improvement in successfully decoding each grapheme position within a word rather than just the onset. Given that these students began to engage in full alphabetic decoding, their word identification and reading comprehension showed noticeable improvement as well. The control group made improvements in word blending over the duration of the study. However, they did not expand their development in more challenging phonemic awareness tasks such as blending non-words by applying what they already knew to decode all grapheme positions in an unfamiliar word.

The results from this study imply that the implementation of an instructional program that focuses on specific decoding skills for students that demonstrate poor decoding skills, will assist students in the process of self-teaching full alphabetic decoding of all letters in a word. Further, developing proficient decoding skills can strengthen word recognition skills and reading comprehension. The most practical implication from this study is the value of this program. Despite the minimal amount of instruction time involved, the program was found to be extremely effective. Educators could easily incorporate this program into their current curriculum to provide additional support for struggling readers with significant results.

While Beck et al. (2003) were focused on student achievement in phonemic awareness, word identification, and reading comprehension by implementing an intervention called Word
Improving Reading Comprehension and Fluency

Building (Beck, 1989; Beck & Hamilton, 2000), similarly White (2005) incorporated an analogy based phonics program to determine its’ effect on struggling readers decoding abilities and reading comprehension as well.

White (2005) conducted a yearlong study focusing on an analogy based phonics program and its effect on decoding unfamiliar words and reading comprehension. In this study, the instructional elements utilized by regular classroom teachers included 150 lessons created by P.M. Cunningham (2000). The author was particularly interested in the program’s effectiveness when implemented by regular teachers for low-and normally achieving 2nd grade students. The primary means of data collection included pretesting and post-testing. The pretest, taken at the end of 1st grade, consisted of three subtests: Reading Comprehension, Sight Vocabulary, and Phoneme/Grapheme-Consonants. The post-test, given in May of the students 2nd grade school year, contained Word Reading and Reading Comprehension subtests. Both of these tests were required by the state and were not specifically designed to assess the results of the intervention. Therefore, the author designed two tests that represented 50 of the 120 spelling patterns taught in the analogy based phonics program and was administered to 60 randomly selected students involved in the study.

This study was conducted in four public elementary schools in Hawaii and included 15 teachers and 280 grade 2 students. These schools were chosen based on test scores of entering kindergarten students, student’s socioeconomic status, and 2nd grade state test scores. Over half of the students (54%) were ethnically Hawaiian or part Hawaiian and almost all of the students spoke Hawaiian Creole English, a nonstandard dialect. The teachers, with experience ranging from 0 to 8 years, were voluntary participants in a comprehension-based reading program intended for native Hawaiian students at risk for educational failure.
The analogy based phonics program incorporated 150 lessons across an entire school year (30 weeks). Each lesson lasted 20 minutes and was taught daily to the whole class. Each week the lesson began with an introduction of six or seven “wall words” which were then displayed on a wall so the students could use them during reading and writing activities. Prior to learning the strategy of decoding by analogy, students must be familiar with particular skills including rhyming, initial phoneme identity, and knowledge of letter sound relationships. Therefore, the first five weeks of the program focused on these skills. Incorporating word family instruction and analogy decoding followed in the lessons shortly thereafter. During the lessons, teachers utilized a multisensory method of teaching the students how to read and spell the wall words with the intention of accommodating all types of learners. The wall words were placed in alphabetical order and were color coded according to vowel pattern. Throughout the week, the words would be reviewed while building the students’ skill to decode by analogy. As a reminder to the students throughout the course of the school day, the teachers made it a point to promote the use of the analogy decoding strategy during reading, and encouraged the use of the wall words as a spelling aid while writing. The last day of the week was dedicated to individual student assessment.

The results of the study revealed that the higher number of lessons completed by the classroom teacher had a significant and positive effect on both word reading and reading comprehension of the participants. Since the pretest and post-test were state required tests and were not intended to assess the students’ ability to decode by analogy, the researcher constructed two forms of a 40 question test that incorporated words containing a targeted spelling pattern. These results were added to the composite scores calculated from the pretest and post-test scores for word reading and reading comprehension. Using this method of scoring, significant gains
were revealed in both areas. Results from the researcher’s “created test” of wall word and novel word reading showed substantial student achievement in both areas as well.

The most practical implication from this study is that ordinary classroom teachers can effectively implement an analogy based phonics program within the context of a balanced literacy program that can produce positive results for struggling readers. Another result of this study conveys the importance of the teacher consistently placing an emphasis on transfer to unfamiliar words, applying the strategy during reading, and teacher modeling of this strategy. Further studies could include the long-term effects of this kind of phonics instruction on later academic achievement.

The results of White’s (2005) research found that an analogy based phonics program can be implemented easily into a balanced literacy program and is most effective when educators place an emphasis on student transfer of this skill to unfamiliar words. On the contrary, Gray and McCutchen (2006) were concerned with the role that phonological awareness and short term memory plays on comprehension.

Gray and McCutchen (2006) conducted a study focused on the relationship between phonological awareness, short term memory, and comprehension tasks in emergent readers. The authors were particularly interested in the role phonological processing plays in word identification through sentence comprehension and whether it is related to potential difficulties in developing readers. Several methods of assessing the student candidates use of phonological information were utilized. The primary means of data collection included group administered, standardized measures of the participants phonological awareness, word reading, and comprehension. List memory and sentence comprehension tasks were completed individually
utilizing lists implemented in other similar research. In addition, since the authors were concerned about the significance that learning to read may possibly have on children’s phonological processing, students were divided into two groups: novice readers and more experienced readers.

The study was conducted in an urban school district in the Pacific Northwest. The participants in the study included 152 students, 82 kindergartners and 70 first and second graders. Of the 152 children, 50% were European American, 25.7% Asian American, 15.7% African American, 7.1% Latino, and 1.4% listed as other ethnicities. None of the students received special education services and their primary reading instruction was taught within their regular classrooms throughout this study. As noted above, the students were divided into two distinct groups. Kindergartners were considered novice readers and first and second graders were regarded as the experienced readers group. The average age of the novice readers was 6 years and 2 months, the experienced readers 7 years and 6 months. The approximate percentage of boys included in this study was 55% novice readers and 57.1% experience readers.

All students were tested in the spring of the school year (May or June) examining their phonological awareness, word reading, comprehension, word list memory and sentence comprehension. The standardized test given to measure all participants’ phonological awareness was the *Test of Phonological Awareness* (TOA; Torgesen & Bryant, 1994). Sections of the test included matching initial and final phonemes to pictures. The *Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test* (MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1989) was administered to assess students’ word reading skills. The Listening Comprehension subtest of the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests* (Nurss & McGauvran, 1995) was used to test the Kindergarten participants. Students were required to listen to a story then respond to questions by choosing a picture answer. The Comprehension subtest, again
using the *Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test* (MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1989) for first and second grade participants, involved silently reading a passage, containing at most six sentences, and then choosing a picture answer for a response as well. The list memory task, administered individually, included 14 sets of five words each. All lists contained real words, however; seven lists contained rhyming words. Participants were expected to repeat the words in the same order they were given by the researcher. Finally, the students completed the sentence comprehension task that required them to simply listen to a sentence and identify sentences that made sense. Twenty-four sentences were used in the testing; 14 correct (both rhyming and non-rhyming) and 10 incorrect sentences.

The results of the study regarding the list memory task revealed that all students recalled more words from the non-rhyming list; however, the experienced readers recalled more of the words in sequence than did the novice readers. With respect to the sentence comprehension task although the more experienced readers selected more correct sentences than the novice readers, both the experienced and novice readers were more accurate when choosing the non-rhyming sentences. Pertaining to the standardized tests of phonological awareness, word reading, and comprehension of the novice readers, a substantial relationship was shown between both word reading and listening comprehension and phonological awareness. These relationships suggest that kindergartners that score above average in phonological awareness are 5 times more likely to score above average in word reading and 3 times more likely to score above average in listening comprehension. Likewise, the experienced readers encountered a substantial relationship between phonological awareness and word reading, revealing they would be twice as likely to score above average in word reading. However, only minimal gains were noted when comparing phonological awareness and comprehension of experienced readers.
Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and attend to individual sounds within words and apply those skills in word reading. The findings from this study imply that phonological skills do play a distinct role pertaining to the level of reading task being completed by the reader. These could include more complex comprehension processes or simply word reading and list memory. The results of this research suggest that phonological skills develop over time and are associated with working memory which facilitates comprehension. However, the extent of phonological processes contributed during comprehension is unclear. Further research is needed to determine the correlation between phonology, syntax, and semantics and how they contribute to reading simultaneously.

All three studies in this section examined the role of phonological awareness in relation to future reading success. Although each study utilized a different type of phonics program, their results were similar in that large gains were evident in both word reading and comprehension. Teaching students to transfer decoding skills to each position within a word improves attending to and decoding each grapheme position within a word, especially the medial and final position that students routinely pass over (McCandliss et al., 2003). Also allowing students many opportunities to transfer decoding skills to novel words containing similar spelling patterns promote self-teaching of skills (White, 2005). Gray and McCutchen’s (2006) study presented evidence that while phonology is important in word reading, it may play a less dominant role in comprehension for the reason that comprehension requires more complicated lexical processes

**Conclusion**

Research has shown that reading comprehension is a multifaceted process that has been a challenge to completely understand. A teacher’s ability to understand these processes will
cultivate student comprehension. By providing educators with proper literacy training, effective instruction in fostering comprehension can take place. With this in mind, and realizing that struggling readers face many roadblocks when reading, it is our responsibility as educators to assist them in overcoming these obstacles. Since comprehension processes involve active involvement by a reader, educators can help students rise above these obstacles through differentiating instruction by implementing small groups, explicitly teaching and modeling comprehension strategies, implementing phonics instruction, and scaffolding students to help them reach their potential.

The Grouping Techniques section of this chapter focused on the various formats that can be used as an intervention for struggling readers to maximize their reading instruction time and facilitate the skills and strategies needed for reading comprehension. During small group instruction, concentrating on specific instructional elements, such as phonological awareness, word structures and patterns, reading practice in a variety of texts, and comprehension strategy use, are essential to improve reading (Vaughn et al., 2003; Mathes et al., 2003).

The Reading Instruction Techniques section of this chapter offered numerous methods used to help struggling readers improve their comprehension and fluency. One such method worth considering is the implementation of supplemental instruction that is coordinated with the regular classroom reading program (McIntyre et al., 2005). Another method that influences reading comprehension and fluency for poor readers is through incorporating oral reading practice along with corrective feedback that establishes a purpose for reading, connecting ideas within and across texts, and summarizing portions of text after reading (O’Connor et al., 2007; Crowe, 2005). Lastly, Lutz et al. (2006) suggests scaffolding to support the performance of
students’ thought processes during instructional activities. This consists of students engaging in more challenging and complex literacy tasks to improve their comprehension.

The Literacy Education for Teachers section examined the value of educating pre-service teachers in reading strategies and skills of both narrative and expository texts to support struggling readers as well as in-service teachers’ participation in ongoing professional development. Effective teachers must possess the knowledge base about reading and provide supported opportunities in applying that knowledge with students (Spear-Swerling, 2009; Hall et al., 2005; Dekonty-Applegate et al. 2009).

The final section, Decoding and Phonics, discussed the benefits of integrating a decoding skills intervention program within a classroom balanced literacy program. Phonemic awareness and decoding is known to be a central skill in reading development and weak decoding skills have been linked to low-ability readers’ fluency and comprehension (Beck et al. 2003; White, 2005; Gray and McCutchen 2006).

As Chapter Two examined literature associated with best practices in increasing students reading comprehension and fluency, Chapter Three describes the population, procedures, and data collection, for my action research study, which investigated differentiating instruction utilizing a small group to improve struggling reader’s comprehension and fluency.
Chapter Three

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to establish whether differentiating instruction by way of integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies with struggling second grade readers in a small group setting would improve their comprehension and fluency. The following questions guided this study. Does daily supplementary isolated instruction offer struggling readers opportunities for reading success equivalent to their peers? Will differentiating instruction by way of explicitly teaching and modeling comprehension strategies along with additional phonics instruction allow students who struggle in reading demonstrate their learning, receive sufficient and immediate corrective feedback, and allow a teacher to track and properly scaffold the students’ learning?

The students used for this study are struggling readers and testing data indicated that these particular students would benefit from individualized reading instruction. The research design for this study included a focus on explicit instruction and discussion of comprehension skills and strategies along with phonics skills integrated within our reading story and related supplemental resources. Outlined in this chapter are a description of the sample population, specific intervention procedures, and the methods of data collection used in this research study.

Sample Population

The four participants used for this study were chosen from my second grade class of 13 students at a small Catholic School. These students are struggling readers determined by past test scores and classroom observations. All four participants are from middle income families, are male, Caucasian, native English speakers, and have attended our school since kindergarten.
The mean age of the sample was 7.9 years old with ages that ranged from 7.6 years old to 8.4 years old.

Student 1 was 8 years and 4 months old during the study. He is the older of two children in his family. According to the March 2010 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, 2008), Student 1 scored 5, 45 points below the national percentile. Overall, Student 1 has a good attitude about school, always tried his best, and was extremely determined to improve his reading and comprehension skills.

Student 2 was 7 years and 6 months old during this study. He is an only child in his family. According to the March 2010 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, 2008), Student 2 scored 30, 20 points below the national percentile. Unfortunately, Student 2 had a negative attitude regarding school and learning, defiant in trying without enormous amounts of praise and attention, and lacks self confidence, all of which inhibits him from performing at the best of his ability.

Student 3 was 8 years and 4 months old during the study. He is the oldest of two siblings in his family. According to the March 2010 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, 2008), Student 3 scored 15, 35 points below the national percentile. In general, Student 3 is cooperative; however, he lacks self confidence, does not participate unless called upon, and can be easily distracted and needs constant supervision.

Student 4 was 7 years and 8 months old during this study. He is the younger of two children in his family. According to the March 2010 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, 2008), Student 4 scored 28, 22 points below the national percentile. Generally, Student 4 has a good attitude about school, possesses self confidence, and is always willing to try. His only downfall
is that he rushes through everything he does to keep up with his peers. This hurts him academically.

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

**Procedures**

The procedure for this instructional intervention incorporated focused group work for six weeks, 20 minute sessions, four times a week, during the participants’ regular reading instruction block. Each week during whole group instruction, the entire class concentrated on a specific comprehension skill, strategy, vocabulary, and phonics skill through a particular story, including both fiction and non-fiction, from our basal reading series. These same skills and strategies were then discussed in more detail during small group instruction following whole group instruction. This was accomplished by way of a leveled reading book appropriate for the participants and decodable reading books that focused specifically on those same skills and strategies. The comprehension strategy was modeled and discussed during reading of the leveled reading book. To confirm their understanding and extend the concepts taught, a worksheet that further developed the comprehension skill and vocabulary was used. Participants also wrote sentences using the vocabulary words to verify their understanding.

Throughout week one, the participants met with the researcher four times for their small group sessions of 20 minutes. These sessions focused on explicit instruction that allowed the participants to discuss and demonstrate their understanding of the comprehension skills of theme/plot and main idea, comprehension strategy of predicting, seven vocabulary words posted
in the front of the classroom, and phonics instruction of long “i” patterns including words that contained i, ie, igh, and y. Day one began with application of long “i” sounds by sorting a list of words containing the long “i” patterns listed above. Participants were given a decodable reading book that listed long “i” words on the cover (see Appendix A), along with individual whiteboards. They were asked to make a chart (see Appendix B) on the whiteboard and sort the words according to their spelling patterns. Then students shared their work with the researcher and each other to compare answers. As a group, we then read all the words together. Next, the researcher began discussing the decodable reader by introducing the title and author, built background knowledge related to the topic, took a picture walk through the book and finally predicted what we thought the story was about. The researcher asked the participants to think about the plot as previously taught in the whole group setting, reminding students that the plot is what happens in the beginning, middle and end of a story and that reflecting on the plot helps them understand the main idea of the story. Participants then took turns reading a page of the story, followed by a discussion about characters, setting, plot and the main idea of the story. The students assignment was to read the decodable text three times to a family member.

Day two incorporated the appropriate leveled reader for this group. Again, this session focused on the comprehension skills of theme/plot and main idea, comprehension strategy of predicting, and seven vocabulary words. The lesson began by reviewing the vocabulary words and their meanings. The researcher then introduced the book by discussing and connecting the title with the cover picture, built students’ background knowledge, took a picture walk through the book, set a purpose for reading, made predictions, and reviewed the target skills of theme/plot and main idea to extend their understanding. Participants would then take turns reading the book while the researcher would stop them periodically to check their
Improving Reading Comprehension and Fluency

comprehension. The researcher then presented a mini-lesson on attention to punctuation and modeled fluency. Participants were then asked to reread the story focusing their attention on punctuation to facilitate fluency. Students were then required to read this book and the decodable reader from the previous day for their homework assignment.

On the third day we reread the leveled reader and utilized the Think and Share questions at the end of the story to revisit the book. Students were then required to complete the corresponding worksheets (see Appendix C) to further develop the skills and vocabulary taught throughout the week. Another strategic intervention decodable reader (see Appendix D) similar to the decodable book (Appendix A) presented on day one, was provided, read, and discussed with the participants. Both decodable readers and the leveled reader were required reading for homework.

On the fourth and final day, together we completed two questions on the comprehension tri-fold (see Appendix E) related to the main story from our basal reader. Located on the top of the tri-fold, students are given pages to reread to help in answering the questions. The researcher first read the question aloud, then read the required pages to the students (again modeling fluency), and finally modeled how to answer the question utilizing student input. Students then completed the remainder of the tri-fold independently or with a partner from the other reading groups.

Weeks two, three, four, five, and six followed the same format daily as during week one; however, the comprehension skills and strategies varied along with the phonics and fluency instruction each week. In addition, during phonics instruction, along with using whiteboards to sort words by patterns, different techniques were used such as building words (see Appendix F),
and printed word sorts (see Appendix G). Table 3.1 lists the weekly comprehension skills/strategy, along with the fluency and phonics focus throughout the six week study.

Table 3.1

6 Week Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Comprehension Skill</th>
<th>Comprehension Strategy</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theme &amp; Plot</td>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Attend to punctuation</td>
<td>Long i: ie, igh, y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cause &amp; Effect</td>
<td>Monitor &amp; Fix up</td>
<td>Read with expression and intonation</td>
<td>Comparative Endings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Compare &amp; Contrast</td>
<td>Text Structure</td>
<td>Read with accuracy and appropriate pace/rate</td>
<td>Syllables C + le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fact &amp; Opinion</td>
<td>Ask Questions</td>
<td>Read silently with fluency &amp; accuracy</td>
<td>Vowels, oo, u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Compare &amp; Contrast</td>
<td>Graphic Organizer</td>
<td>Read with appropriate phrasing</td>
<td>Diphthongs ou, ow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Theme &amp; Plot</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Read with expression</td>
<td>Diphthongs oi, oy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section explained the procedures of this research study, while the next section discusses how data was collected during the study.

Data Collection

Pre-testing, post-testing, running records, videotaped sessions, student work, and anecdotal notes were the main sources of data used to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. The pre-test consisted of the results of our March 2010 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, 2008) results for first grade. These results along with classroom observations, determined the students involvement in the study. Once students’ were chosen for the study,
Improving Reading Comprehension and Fluency

pre-testing also included a running record that was taken from each participant to determine their reading level, fluency, and comprehension (see Appendix H). The student was given an on-level reading passage and was timed for one minute. Students then returned to their desk, finished reading the passage, and completed five comprehension questions that incorporated inferential, literal, and critical analysis questions related to the story. These running records provided the researcher with words correct per minute, a level of comprehension, and an auditory model of their fluency. To assist in establishing a fluency score, a Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (see Appendix I), was used as well (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Throughout the intervention, each 20 minute session was videotaped and anecdotal notes were taken. Videotaping the sessions provided the opportunity for the researcher to refer back to the sessions and examine the participants more closely to determine students’ progress as well. Anecdotal notes supplied additional information observed in regards to comprehension, fluency, and phonics skills during a particular session.

A collection of student work also was used as a source of data. This work offered another chance to review a students’ grasp of the comprehension skills and strategies being taught. Items collected were worksheets correlated to the weekly leveled reader that included review of the specific comprehension skill and the weekly vocabulary being taught, comprehension tri-folds that again focused on the specific weekly comprehension skill, and the selection tests that included vocabulary usage and literal, inferential, and critical analysis comprehension questions. Determining the types of questions that were answered incorrectly the most by the participants, facilitated the researchers future planning and instruction.
Post-testing again included running records employing the same method noted above for the pre-test. A final unit benchmark test provided by *Pearson Scott Foresman Reading Street* (2008) was also given to the participants at completion of the intervention. Benchmark tests consist of two reading passages followed by literal, inferential, and critical analysis comprehension questions. Another important aspect of the benchmark test is that it presents two constructed response comprehension questions, one of which connects both stories. Students must apply learned reading skills and strategies in answering these questions.

In this section, I discussed the data collection sources relevant to the determination of the effectiveness of the intervention. The final section recaps the sample, procedures, and data collection used in this study.

**Summary**

The intervention used in this study revealed how implementing a particular weekly procedure for the duration of six weeks while working with struggling second grade readers in a small group scenario can develop and improve their comprehension and fluency. Four second grade students took part in the study that incorporated explicit instruction and required practice of the phonics skills, comprehension skills, and comprehension strategies taught throughout the week. Additionally, data was collected to substantiate the effectiveness of the intervention. Within this chapter I have discussed the sample population, procedures, and data collection relevant to improving student comprehension and fluency, the subsequent chapter presents the results of this data collection.
Chapter Four

Introduction

Can differentiating instruction by way of ability grouping along with integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies, and phonics instruction with struggling 2nd grade readers improve their comprehension and fluency? This inquiry directed the course of this research. This chapter reveals the results and analysis of the data collected throughout the study for the researcher to determine and support the answer to this question.

Presentation of Data

Running records were taken from each student to help determine the effectiveness of the intervention on the students’ fluency. The fluency rate used from *Pearson Scott Foresman Reading Street* (2008) at the time of pre-test was 66 to 76 words correct per minute, post-test was 74 to 84 words correct per minute, and 90 to 100 words correct per minute by the end of 2nd grade. Fluency scores were established using the Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (see Appendix I), (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). In addition, these running records also were used to determine the student’s ability to comprehend a passage at his instructional reading level and provided the researcher with information about the specific comprehension skills the student had or had not mastered. The questions included on the running record consisted of both multiple choice and constructed-response and provided the students with the opportunity to practice the comprehension skills and strategies taught each week. Participants were timed individually for one minute to determine words correct per minute, students were then expected to continue reading the passage aloud to the researcher, return to their desks and answer four multiple choice questions and one constructed-response type question in relation to the passage. The number of
questions correct determined the comprehension percentage score. Words correct per minute (WCPM) scores were determined by subtracting the number of errors from the total number of words read. Pre-test and post-test results of the running records are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>WCPM Pre-test</th>
<th>WCPM Post-test</th>
<th>Fluency Pre-test</th>
<th>Fluency Post-test</th>
<th>Comprehension Pre-test</th>
<th>Comprehension Post-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The benchmark test given at the completion of each unit incorporated comprehension of two reading selections through literal (L), inferential (I), and critical-analysis (C) questions. Each reading selection was followed by eight multiple choice questions that required the use of reading skills and strategies taught in conjunction with the reading selection; one constructed-response question; a text-to-self connection or a text-to-text connection awarded a maximum of two points each; generating a total score of 20 possible points for comprehension. The phonics section consisted of 12 multiple choice questions that focused on the specific sounds taught throughout the unit. All scores were determined by dividing the total number correct by the total possible points. Table 4.2 compares Benchmark Test 1, performed prior to the intervention, and Benchmark Test 2, completed after the intervention.
Table 4.2

Comparison of Benchmark Test 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L Test1</td>
<td>L Test2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. L=Literal Questions, I=Inferential Questions, C=Critical Analysis Questions

Student work samples were collected throughout the study. Two particular worksheets the researcher found most beneficial for comparison were related to the weekly leveled readers used during week one (see Appendix C) and week six of the intervention. Both worksheets included questions linked to the specific comprehension skill of theme and plot. Making use of anecdotal notes taken during these weeks, along with viewing the videotaped sessions, and the worksheets themselves, this researcher noted a marked improvement of the students’ verbal responses regarding this comprehension skill compared to the written work. Worksheet one required the students to answer specific questions related to the plot of the story, whereas worksheet two expected the students to draw a picture and write a corresponding sentence to tell what happened at the beginning, middle, and end of the story. The final question on each worksheet asked about the theme or “big idea” of the story and students were required to write a sentence. Table 4.3 presents the questions and responses from the students.
Table 4.3

*Comparison of Student Responses on Worksheet 1 and 2 from leveled readers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot Questions</th>
<th>Week 1 - Worksheet 1 - Shy Ana Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did Ana act at the beginning of the story?</td>
<td>Student 1: Shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: Ana acted shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: She was shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: Ana was shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did Ana do in the middle of the story?</td>
<td>Student 1: Said you don’t have to go alone Papa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: She wanted to be alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: She was in the living room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: Ana came with her dad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did Ana act at the end of the story?</td>
<td>Student 1: Not shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: Ana was not shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: She wasn’t shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: She was not shy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the “big idea” of this story?</td>
<td>Student 1: Ana getting un-shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: It was about a girl who was shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: It’s about Shy Ana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: Ana is being shy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot Questions</th>
<th>Week 6 - Worksheet 2 – A Big Change Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Student 1: Eating dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: They were eating dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: They were eating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: Dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Student 1: Fixing the house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: They left their house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: They said bye to the pigeons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: Say good bye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>Student 1: Leading the goat home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: They got a goat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: They liked their home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: They get a goat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think about what happened in the story and how Jen felt. What do you think is the “big idea” of this story?</td>
<td>Student 1: The big idea is moving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: The big idea is moving to a new house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: The big idea of the story is parents and kids moving to a house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: The big idea is about them moving to a different place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Immeasurable data were also observed such as a visible increase in the participants’ confidence and involvement during the videotaped small group sessions as well as the whole group sessions. Examining the videotaped sessions from beginning to end demonstrated more independent effort on the part of the participants by the end of the six week intervention. Deeper thought processes were noted when orally asked more complex questions. Most student participants responded with more detailed answers to inferential and critical-analysis questions showing more meaningful thinking occurred. However, when a written response was required, students continued to be deficient in the ability to organize their thoughts on paper. For example, comparing responses on the comprehension tri-folds from early in the intervention to the end of the intervention, many answers were clearly written to quickly complete the assignment showing not much time, thought, or concern were taken by the participants either time. Table 4.4 illustrates possible thoughtful responses to questions and the responses provided by the students, revealing a lack of depth in their answers.
Table 4.4

*Responses by Participants on Comprehension Tri-folds along with possible thoughtful responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Question</th>
<th>Week 2 – Comprehension Tri-fold Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think that Dr. Carver served guests a meal made entirely of peanuts?</td>
<td>Student 1: To teach people that you can make lots of food from peanuts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: Refused to write an answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: Because he was George. He wanted them to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: They do not have a lot of money to buy food so they can grow food.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Possible Response**

He wanted to prove that peanuts were not just for snacks. He wanted to show people that they could be used in many ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Question</th>
<th>Week 6 – Comprehension Tri-fold Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What happens at the end of the poem? What is the theme, or big idea, of this poem?</td>
<td>Student 1: At the end of the poem he was happy. At the beginning of the poem he did not want to move.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2: He is happy at the end of the poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 3: The story is all about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 4: He likes the new home. The big idea is I like where I am.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Possible Response**

At the end of the poem, the boy decides he likes his new home, friends, and neighbors. The theme of the poem is that sometimes change isn’t always as bad as it seems.

This section presented data results collected throughout the intervention. In the following section, these results will be analyzed.

**Analysis of Data**

The results of the running records comparing the pre-test to post-test (Table 4.1) indicated a considerable increase in words correct per minute (WCPM) for all participants. However, relevant to the accepted fluency rate criteria put forth by the reading series, only Student 1 scores of 76 WCPM and 83 WCPM, fell within both the pre-test and post-test...
proficiency parameters of 66 to 76 words correct per minute and 74 to 84 words correct per minute respectively. Student 2 scored below for both pre-test, 55 WCPM, and post-test, 70 WCPM. Student 3 scored below the scale for the pre-test with a score of 64 WCPM, and within the range for post-test with a score of 75 WCPM, while Student 4 scored considerably above the ranges for the pre-test, 89 WCPM, and post-test 97 WCPM. Across the six week time span of the intervention, the average increase in WCPM for the four students was 10.25 words. The four-point rubric (see Appendix I) used to determine a fluency rate for the participants, is a type of formative assessment wherein score determination occurred during the entire instructional process. Results denote an increase of one point for all students with the exception of Student 2. The scores for this informal assessment were determined not only during testing, but through observation of in-class performance. Comprehension results indicated minimal improvement from pre-test to post-test results. All participants particularly continued to struggle with the constructed response questions on both tests.

Comparison of Benchmark Test 1 and 2 (Table 4.2), contains comprehension scores along with phonics scores. Student 1 and 4 demonstrated an increase in percentage of literal questions answered correctly from pre-test to post-test with scores of 80% to 100%, and 70% to 80% respectively, while student 2 and 3 scored significantly lower with scores from 70% to 40% and 80% to 60%. Inferential comprehension question illustrate increased scores for Student 2 from 60% pre-test to 67% post-test, Student 3 from 80% pre-test to 100% post-test, Student 4 from 40% pre-test to 100% post-test while Student 1 scores decreased from 60% pre-test to 33% post-test. A score of 100% on both the pre-test and post-test critical analysis questions were attained by Students 1, 2, and 4. Student 3 had increased his score from 0% pre-test to 67% post-test results. From pre-test to post-test results, Students 1 and 3 showed a 10% increase, Student 4
indicated a 20% increase, and the score of Student 2 remained the same in the overall total comprehension scores. The phonics results of Student 3 and 4 increased with pre-test scores of 58% and 67% respectively, and post-test scores of 75% for both participants. Student 2 showed a decrease in percentage from 75% down to 67% and Student 1 performed equally both pre-test and post-test scoring 67%. Results are inconsistent as the number of questions provided for each category (literal, inferential, and critical-analysis questions) varied across the two tests.

Comparison of student responses on worksheet 1 and 2 from leveled readers shown in Table 4.3 and responses by participants on comprehension tri-folds along with possible thoughtful responses shown in Table 4.4 indicated students continued struggle in the ability to critically analyze a story and organize their thoughts when responding to constructed response comprehension questions. Oftentimes participants were not able to apply the comprehension skills and strategies taught throughout the intervention in their written work.

This section analyzed the results of the data collected for the study. The final section will summarize these results.

**Conclusion**

This chapter reported data that both supported and challenged my research question; Can differentiating instruction by way of ability grouping along with integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies, and phonics instruction with struggling 2nd grade readers improve their comprehension and fluency? For the most part, the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study through pre-testing, post-testing, running records, videotaped sessions, student work, and anecdotal notes determined the effectiveness of the intervention showing a noteworthy rise in reading fluency with only slight improvement in comprehension. The final chapter will provide a full analysis of the data in relation to existing research, an explanation of the results,
the strengths and limitations of this action research study, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter Five

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to investigate if providing daily supplementary isolated instruction to struggling readers and differentiating instruction by way of explicitly teaching and modeling comprehension strategies along with additional phonics instruction would allow the students who struggle in reading demonstrate their learning, receive sufficient and immediate corrective feedback, allow a teacher to track and properly scaffold the students’ learning and offer opportunities for reading success equivalent to their peers. An explanation of the results of the data collected during this action research will be presented, the strengths and limitations of this specific action research study will be discussed, and finally recommendations for future research on this topic will be identified.

Connections to Wisconsin State Standards and Existing Research

Several Grade Two Wisconsin Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011) were addressed during this research study by way of implementing small group isolated instruction that differentiated instruction through explicit teaching and modeling of comprehension strategies and phonics instruction. These standards require the progressive growth of reading comprehension so that students moving forward through the grades are able to build on previous knowledge (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011). The structure of this research study specifically linked to the Reading Standards for Literature which includes Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity and Foundational Skills K-5 that incorporates Phonics and Word Recognition and Fluency (Common
Core State Standards Initiative, 2011). Within the routine of my daily small group instruction, my key goals addressed the reading standards by equipping students with the skills necessary to become self-directed, independent, efficient readers of all types of text. Standards that were particularly relevant to this research study required students to demonstrate an understanding of key details in text, retell stories determining their central message, describe the overall structure of a story, use information gained from the illustrations and text to demonstrate an understanding of the characters, setting, and plot, know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words, and read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011). In addition, students acquired the habits of what good readers do, which is essential to their future academic success.

There has been a great deal of research relative to my action research. A combination of related studies was used to direct the course of my action research, especially those by Vaughn, Thompson, Kouzekanani, Bryant, Dickson, and Blozis (2003), O’Connor, White and Swanson (2007), and Beck, McCandliss, Perfetti & Sandak (2003).

The instructional elements utilized in the study of Vaughn et al. (2003), included word study, reading fluency, and comprehension as did mine. The researchers implemented a supplemental reading intervention with struggling second grade readers using three small group formats; 1:1 (one teacher with 1 student), 1:3 (one teacher with 3 students), and 1:10 (one teacher with 10 students). The authors were particularly interested in determining any resulting evidence that supports smaller group sizes, as being more effective for increasing reading performance in struggling readers. The findings revealed overall substantial gains for the 1:1 and 1:3 sample groups as compared to the 1:10 groups. Using a 1:4 (one teacher with 4 students) group format, my action research also indicated gains across the same instructional elements. I
found that when students are placed in smaller group formats, students have more opportunities to individually demonstrate their knowledge, and I could instantly provide corrective feedback as well.

Relative to the O’Connor et al. (2007) study that concluded the instructional techniques of repeated reading and continuous reading improved both reading fluency and comprehension in struggling readers, I decided to incorporate repeated reading throughout my intervention. Students were required to read their decodable texts and leveled reading books at least three times a week at home in addition to our reading of these books during group time. I implemented this instructional technique anticipating an increase in students’ fluency as did in O’Connor et al. (2007). Although my participants did make gains in fluency, their increase in words per minute was not as substantial as the participants in the study of O’Connor et al. (2007) of 20 words per minute in reading rate.

Knowing that weak decoding skills are associated with struggling readers’ fluency and comprehension, the research results of Beck et al. (2003), affected my decision to include phonics instruction within my research. Phonics is a challenge for many children and helping children to learn the alphabetic principal and becoming skilled at applying that knowledge to other words within text is just as challenging. Beck et al. (2003) implemented a specific instructional program and students showed significant gains in both decoding and word recognition skills. Even though I did not use a specific instructional program as did Beck et al. (2003), I did use the same strategies and techniques that many phonics programs suggest. My student’s performance results were not as successful showing only an increase for two of the participants.
Explanation of Results

The purpose of this study was to establish whether differentiating instruction by way of individualized reading instruction that integrated appropriate reading skills and strategies with struggling second grade readers in a small group setting would improve their comprehension, fluency and phonics skills. Data results were based on two main assessments given to students before and after the intervention: running records which included words correct per minute, fluency and comprehension, and a benchmark test that gathered information on comprehension along with practiced phonics skills. Overall, participants demonstrated growth in comprehension, fluency, and phonics skills over the course of the intervention; however, further explanation of the data is necessary.

When analyzing the results of the participants’ running records, it must be noted that different narratives were used in the pre-test and post-test due to the structure of the reading series utilized during the research period. All participants made gains in words correct per minute (WCPM) throughout the study. One possible explanation for these results could be the use of repeated reading during the intervention and homework assignments. Repeated reading builds a student’s confidence and contributes to the skill of applying analogy based decoding in other reading materials allowing more natural reading. Even though Student 2’s WCPM did not fall within the accepted fluency rate criteria put forth by the reading series; he made the most gains, followed by Student 3, Student 4, and Student 1 respectively. Fluency determination by way of the Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3 (Appendix I) showed an increase of one point for all participants except Student 2. Although Student 2’s reading rate increased substantially, his fluency remained the same throughout the intervention. This could be due to his overall negative attitude about reading and noted observations during videotaped sessions of the student’s
inattentiveness. For the other three participants, focus on my modeled instruction of the weekly fluency skill and their cooperative attitudes, likely contributed to their gains. Comprehension scores on these tests remained the same for Students 1 and 3, with minimal gains for Students 2 and 4 which indicates the students continued struggle with the ability to critically analyze a story and also organize their thoughts when writing a response to questions. However; during group instruction when asked oral questions, immediate feedback and further discussion could be provided to the students and informal observations via videotaping sessions confirmed deeper comprehension.

Surprisingly, results of the benchmark tests seem to display many inconsistencies compared to my observations and our group discussions. These results were very confusing, seem skewed, and I believe to be a result of the style of this test. Benchmark tests were given across a two day time period for the reason that they were long and tedious. Nevertheless scores were mainly affected due to the number of questions established for each type of question posed; that is literal, inferential, and critical analysis. The results for literal questions seem to confirm them to be difficult for Students 2 and 3, while the scores for Students 1 and 4 illustrated an increase, which was my expectation since these questions should be the easiest to answer. However, pre-test included only one literal question and post-test included only three. Score results for the inferential questions compared with the critical analysis questions were puzzling due to the fact that I expected opposite outcomes. Again, the number of questions for each type played a role in the students’ scores: both pre-test and post-test inferential questions included 10 items, while pre-test critical analysis questions included five and post-test included three. An equal number of each type of question would have afforded more valid results. The outcome for Students 1, 3, and 4 did show a general increase in their total comprehension score which was an
average of the results of each type of comprehension question provided. Student 2’s score remained the same and again this could be due to his overall negative attitude about reading and the fact that observations and anecdotal notes exposed that he rushed through the testing.

Informal assessment that included both observation and anecdotal notes, demonstrated a noticeable increase in the participants involvement and participation not only during whole group reading instruction but across the entire curriculum. This implies that the process of transferring the skills and strategies learned during small group isolated instruction to other areas of the curriculum was developing. This data result is significant in the students’ future reading success throughout their education. The next section will discuss strengths and limitations of the action research coupled with the explanation of the results presented in the previous section.

**Strengths and Limitations**

While this action research had several noticeable strengths, it also contained some limitations. A significant strength of the study was the unwavering routine that was implemented daily and weekly. Students enjoy routine and the feelings of security that occur with it. Once the routine became second nature for all of us, more time and attention could be directed toward other needed areas of instruction. It was rewarding for the participants when they felt confident in completing tasks required of them. A second strength was the use of structured small group instruction that allowed this researcher to provide immediate feedback and participants were able to receive feedback from each other as well. This also gave the students confidence in responding during whole group discussions. The final strength was the development of their use of skills and strategies essential to becoming good readers. The McIntyre et al. (2005) study supported the fact that students that receive more academic attention
simply perform better. All in all and most importantly, implementing small group instruction along with specific modeling and teaching of reading skills and strategies revealed that this intervention had a positive impact on the participants.

One important limitation of this research study was the lack of a comparison group of struggling readers who did not participate in the study to determine if the degree of progress made by the participants could be related to the intervention. Utilizing a comparison group would have provided more concrete results to establish the genuine effectiveness of the study. Although the participant’s demonstrated improvement in comprehension, fluency, and decoding skills, an additional limitation was that the intervention lasted for only six weeks. Therefore, a teacher’s diligence in modeling and teaching these strategies throughout the school year for all students would most likely generate success for all. Research completed by both McCandliss et al. (2003) and White (2005), proposed that implementing a systematic phonics instruction is more beneficial than random phonics instruction that was utilized by this researcher in this intervention. As noted previously in the results of my phonics instruction, the absence of a systematic phonics program may have played a role in the minimal outcome achieved by the participants and proved to be another limitation in this research study. This section focused on some of the strengths and limitations of the study, whereas the next section combines these implications and suggests recommendations for future research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Even though the outcome of this action research proved to be effective for struggling readers, additional research could include implementation of the same structured study for a longer period of time, inclusion of a comparison group, and a more systematic approach to
phonics instruction. As previously mentioned, incorporation of these ideas would provide a more valid measure of achievement. A more effective measure of the student’s ability to transfer the comprehension strategies and skills taught would also be beneficial in determining student success.

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

**Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the connection this study had with regard to other research and the Wisconsin State Standards, an explanation of the results of this study, its strengths and limitations, as well as recommendations for future research in this area. This research study confirmed results from other similar research studies and validated that differentiating instruction by way of integrating appropriate reading skills and strategies with struggling second grade readers in a small group setting would improve their comprehension and fluency. The participants in this study became a little more self-sufficient and self-confident in their work habits. Most noteworthy is that all teachers could easily implement the structure of this research and many other studies within their general classroom instruction with minimal or no training. I myself have become more aware of the ease a small amount of change in my practice can benefit my students.
Literacy is more than merely the ability to read. One must understand what is read and apply that knowledge to be capable of expressing those ideas and achieve academic success. Implementing a balanced literacy program within the classroom can accomplish precisely that. The five components in teaching reading include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Children with low reading ability generally lack one or more of these components and with careful planning, teachers can design their lessons to include instruction in all five of these areas to facilitate achievement for all of their students.
References

Afflerbach, P., Blachowicz, C., Dawson Boyd, C., Cheyney, W., Juel, C. Kame‘enui, E.J., …


Appendix A

Decodable Reader

Rose Flies Home

Written by Kyle Hickey
Illustrated by Kerry Buckner

Phonics Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long i: i.e., ig, y</th>
<th>Syllables VCV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bright</td>
<td>spider(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sky</td>
<td>tiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spider(s)</td>
<td>left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fright</td>
<td>right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finds</td>
<td>child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my</td>
<td>flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cries</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

kind right
Appendix B

Sorting Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i</th>
<th>ie</th>
<th>igh</th>
<th>y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix C

Leveled Reader Worksheet – Page 1

Name __________________________

Theme and Plot
Write the answer to each question.

1. How did Ana act at the beginning of the story?
   
   2. What did Ana do in the middle of the story?
   
   3. How did Ana act at the end of the story?
   
   4. How did Ana change?
   
   5. What is the "big idea" of this story?
Appendix C

Leveled Reader Worksheet – Page 2

Name ____________________________

**Vocabulary**

Write a word from the box that means the same as the phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words to Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youngest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>half</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. more than a few

2. all by myself

3. one of two parts

4. daddy’s girls

5. belonging to them

6. baby of the bunch

7. pay money to get
Appendix D

Strategic Intervention Decodable Reader

About Kay
Written by Daniele Wood
Illustrated by Lisa Mendoza

Phonics Skills
Long e, i, igh, y
bright spider myself sky
child tiny mind nightnight
kind finds by right night
Syllables VCV
spider tiny before
Appendix E

Comprehension Tri-fold – Page 1

Title: Rosa and Blanca
Author: Joe Hayes

Focus: Based on what has happened in the story, what do you think is the big idea of this story?

Strategy: How did the events in the story help you predict what would happen next?

Pages to read: 414 - 417

Pages to read: 416 - 417

Skill

Respond:

Respond:

Name:

Date:
Appendix E

Comprehension Tri-fold – Page 2
Building Words Form

**Building Words**

*The Quilt Story (1)*

Using the letter tiles indicated below, rewrite each word according to written instructions. Write the new word in the boxes.

```
 a b e g j i m n p s t u
```

Start with: **jungle**

- ❖ Change the n to m, g to b. What is the new word?

- ❖ Change the j to t. What is the new word?

- ❖ Drop the t, change u to t, and m to a. What is the new word?

- ❖ Add an s at the beginning. What is the new word?

- ❖ Change the b to p. What is the new word?

- ❖ Change the t to a, and a to m. What is the new word?

- ❖ Drop the s, change a to m, and m to a. What is the new word?
### Printed Word Sort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hottest</th>
<th>brighter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>faster</td>
<td>happier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silliest</td>
<td>cutest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biggest</td>
<td>laziest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>longer</td>
<td>littlest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weaker</td>
<td>wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiniest</td>
<td>thinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coldest</td>
<td>smaller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prettier</td>
<td>nicer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadder</td>
<td>longer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Running Record – Page 1

Name

Read the selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

Pet Mouse

A mouse is a fun pet to have. But you have to take good care of your pet mouse.

A pet mouse needs a warm home. Get a large cage for your mouse. Fill it with paper so your mouse can stay warm and dry.

A pet mouse also needs food and water. Put a water bottle and food bowl in the mouse’s home. Make sure that the bottle is always full of water. Make sure that the bowl is always full of food.

A pet mouse needs to run and play. Build a playground for your mouse inside its cage. Make sure your mouse runs and plays every day.

If you take care of your pet mouse, it will be a happy, healthy mouse. In fact, the things your mouse needs are the things that you need. You need a warm home, food and water, and a place to play too!
Appendix H

Running Record – Page 2

Answer the questions below.

1. Why did the author write this selection?
   - to tell about his favorite pet mouse
   - to make people laugh at a funny mouse
   - to tell how to take care of a pet mouse

2. If you have a pet mouse, what is the first thing you need to do?
   - get a cage
   - get food and water
   - build a playground

3. Which sentence tells the author’s main point?
   - “Fill it with paper so your mouse can stay warm and dry.”
   - “But you have to take good care of your pet mouse.”
   - “Make sure that the bottle is always full of water.”

4. Why does the author think it is important to take good care of a pet mouse?
   - so you have time to run and play
   - so the mouse will be healthy and happy
   - so the mouse will be happy to see you

5. At the end, why do you think the author said that a pet mouse is a lot like you?
Appendix I

Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3

**Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3**

Fluency means more than a graceful oral reading performance. It’s the gateway to comprehension, interpretation, and ultimately, independence as a reader and writer.

To assess fluency development in young readers, Mansfield uses a four-point rubric targeting specific elements of fluency.

**RUBRIC FOR FLUENCY EVALUATION**

4  
- Reads **primarily** in larger meaningful phrases
- Fluent, phrased reading with a few word-by-word slowdowns for problem solving
- Expressive interpretation is evident at places throughout the reading
- Attention to punctuation and syntax
- Rereading for problem solving may be present but is generally fluent

3  
- A **mixture** of word-by-word reading and fluent, phrased reading (expressive interpretation)
- There is evidence of attention to punctuation and syntax
- Reading for problem solving may be present

2  
- **Mostly** word-by-word reading but with some two-word phrasing and even a couple of three- or four-word phrases (expressive interpretation)
- Evidence of syntactic awareness of syntax and punctuation, although not consistently so
- Rereading for problem solving may be present

1  
- Very little fluency
- All word-by-word reading with some long pauses between words
- Almost no recognition of syntax or phrasing (expressive interpretation)
- Very little evidence of awareness of punctuation
- Perhaps a couple of two-word phrases but generally disfluent
- Some word groupings awkward

*from Guided reading: Good First Teaching for All Children. Fountas, I. & Pinnell, G. “Using Assessment to Inform Teaching” (p. 86. Heinemann, 1996)*