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Motivation and syllabification intervention

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of syllabification and extrinsic motivators on the decoding skills of one 12-year-old African American male with severe reading deficits. The student was from a large urban district and attended a public school where he received Individualized Education Plan (IEP) services for a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). The subject participated in six sixty-minute sessions over the course of four weeks, engaging in phonics strategies that centered around a third-grade level novel the participant choose. He was also subject to external, student-led trackers that monitored progress in the areas of decoding and vocabulary. While quantitative and qualitative evidence report a child who is willing to apply new literacy strategies and take academic risks, there were substantial limitations to the study, including time and a lack of post-intervention data. The case study did, however, reinforce that students with high ego-value who are historically likely to disengage in the face of challenging or unfamiliar academic tasks may respond positively to external motivators and identity-centered interventions.
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Chapter One

Introduction

Experts have identified five necessary components of literacy development among school aged children: phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. Additionally, academia has looked toward varied levels of motivation within students who possess learning disabilities or who are below grade level in one or more of these five areas. This case study revolved around a student who demonstrated significant deficits in reading, and sought to utilize previous research in the field of phonics to build upon those findings. Inconsistent test scores and anecdotal information also revealed a student who became easily frustrated with new or unfamiliar academic tasks. This study, then, became an intervention which addressed the child’s need for phonics strategies and increased continued motivation.

Introduction to the Child

The participating student, regarded as DQ throughout this report, was a 12-year-old eighth grade African American male who attended a public school in a large urban district. Previous tutors reported an extremely bright boy who would continuously ‘shut down’ when he didn’t feel confident with the task at hand. Reportedly, this disengagement was triggered by not being able to sound out certain words, taking quantitative assessments, and reading books that weren’t of interest to the subject. School staff and documents reported a high level of respect towards adults most of the time and ability to get along well with peers consistently. It should be noted that this student participated in several summer math and reading programs and that there was a high level of family involvement and advocacy regarding his academic delays.
DQ had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) prior to this study and carried a label of Specific Learning Disability (SLD). He received special education services as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004).

**Special Education Law**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) states that all children with disabilities are able to access a free and appropriate public education as dictated by that student’s special education needs. IDEA ensures that educators are able to secure the necessary resources to foster achievement for students with disabilities. DQ’s classroom placement was made according to the components of IDEA, and made certain that he would be given the same opportunities as his peers, disabled or non-disabled. Although DQ’s IEP has been compliant with the law and enforced as directed by his IEP team, an intervention is required to address severe delays in phonics and decoding (www.idea.gov, 2011).

**Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading Literature and Writing are requirements for instruction that focus on what a student should learn by the time the student completes sixth grade. The CCSS appropriate for the student intervention within this action research are as follows:

- Reading and Language Standards for 6-12, Grade 6, Reading Literature and Language
  - RL.6.1. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choice on meaning and tone.
- **RL.6.3.** Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

- **RL.6.2.** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

- **L.6.4.** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- **L.6.4.** Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word.

- **L.6.4.** Consult reference materials (e.g. dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.

- **L.6.4.** Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g. by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

- **RL.6.10.** By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiency, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org), 2012).
The next chapter details research that was informed by the CCSS in order to address motivation and specific phonics deficits exhibited by the subject. Decoding strategies were imparted via an intervention that revolved around the major concepts of analyzing literature. Extrinsic reinforcements encouraged continued motivation and academic risk-taking within a child who historically rejected challenging tasks.

The current case study begins with an intensive look into peer-reviewed research that addresses all literacy components, as well as the strategies implemented within this intervention. The case study is then described and results, both quantitative and qualitative, are discussed. To conclude this report, connections from the current intervention to established research are made and the implications of this case study are explored.
Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature

This chapter summarizes peer-reviewed articles that explore literacy interventions relevant to adolescents in middle and high school. The first seven articles explore explicit treatments in comprehension, decoding, and fluency among students who exhibit academic deficits. The final five studies address how demographics, culture, and individual interest inform a child’s motivation to learn. Together, these twelve articles paint an educational picture where explicit instruction, consistent feedback, and topically engaging content facilitate meaningful learning experiences.

Literacy Interventions for Older Learning Disabled Students

In this first section, seven research studies are presented. These studies demonstrate the complexities of strategic interventions among older students with learning disabilities specific to reading and writing. Since intervention practices should reveal best practices in raising the self-efficacy and achievement levels of struggling readers, the studies included reflect the spectrum of literacy instruction. These studies illustrate the importance of the practitioner as a reflective professional who implements optimal curricula based on the decoding, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and writing needs of her developing literacy students.

This first study reviewed the effects of tiered interventions that focused on similar literacy components but varied in levels of intensity. The purpose of the Vaughn, et al. (2010) investigation was to examine “the outcomes of a comprehensive researcher-provided intervention with older students with reading difficulties” (p. 4). Ultimately, the study was designed to explore “the effects of a secondary intervention (Tier 2) provided in relatively large groups (10-15 students) on the reading-related outcomes of individuals with reading difficulties”
Motivation and Syllabification Intervention

(Vaughn et al., 2010, p. 62). The authors hypothesized that this intervention would improve the reading levels of Tier 2 students and close the gap between struggling and proficient readers within one school year.

At the Tier 1 level, all students received instruction in literacy strategies during regular content classes. The independent variable of this study was a more intensive Tier 2 intervention, which included three phases of specialized supplemental instruction to groups of students. The dependent variables were a series of standardized tests, including the Woodcock Johnson III Test of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew, and Mather, 2001), the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (Torgeson, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1999), The AIMSweb Reading Maze (Shinn & Shinn, 2002), and The Test of Sentence Reading Efficiency (Wagner et al., in press). These assessments measured growth in “word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension” (Vaughn, et al., 2010, p. 2).

The sample for this study included ‘typical’ and ‘struggling’ sixth graders from two southwestern urban middle schools. These qualifiers were determined by results of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills standardized test. Students in a special education program were selected, although those enrolled in “alternative” curriculums, having a 2.0 grade equivalent or lower reading level, or possessing a significant sensory disability were exempted from participation in this study. In total, 327 students participated in this study: 212 subjects were in the Tier two treatment group while 115 were in the Tier one comparison group. Of both groups, 79% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 52% of the group was female. Ethnic breakdown was as follows: 46% African American, 40% Hispanic, 12% Caucasian, and 3% Asian. While Tier 1 students received literacy instruction embedded in their regular content classes (graphic organizers, word parts, example/non-example, note taking...
guides) throughout the school year, Tier 2 students engaged in three stages of intervention that addressed decoding and phonics in the first, fluency and comprehension in the second, and applying those strategies to narrative or expository readings in the third. Tier 2 intervention was conducted with groups of 15-20 students 50 minutes a day for an entire school year. Seven of nine interventionists had masters degrees and/or additional reading certifications.

The Tier two treatment included 25 lessons that paired students with each other to partner-read in order to increase fluency. They were also explicitly taught how to deconstruct multi-syllabic words. Students advanced through the program based on their success in phonics and syllabification; these strategies were taught explicitly and on a daily basis. New vocabulary was introduced in context, using examples to teach words. Instructors also modeled comprehension strategies, helping students to reread for relevant information.

Though students who received Tier 2 treatment made slight gains in word attack, spelling, comprehension, and decoding, researchers state that this progress might have been due to other factors, such as group size or age. Statistically significant gains were made only in sight words, where treatment students performed better than their comparison counterparts, (Vaugn, et al., 2010). Researchers also concluded that because both groups received additional Tier 1 instruction in literacy, gains among struggling, Tier 2 readers- might have been diminished.

The authors suggested that less generalized, more specific interventions may be more effective in reconciling achievement gaps. The authors acknowledged the incomplete body of research surrounding tiered interventions among older students, and concede that additional research in this field is necessary.

Implications of the Vaugn et al.(2010) study suggested that intervention may be more effective in concentrated doses of explicit instruction rather than generic programs that address a
collective unspecified population. The study demonstrated the need for accurate diagnostics and planned treatments that address student deficits and explicitly teach reading strategies. The following study addresses and measures the outcomes of explicit teaching strategies among middle school students.

In their research, Allinder, Dunse, Brunken, and Obermiller-Krowlikowski (2001) determined the effect of specific and directed reading instruction on the fluency and comprehension levels of at-risk readers. The researchers hypothesized that providing explicit reading prompts or cues would increase fluency levels and thereby comprehension.

The independent variable of this study was 50-minute reading sessions that incorporated explicit comprehension, phonics, and fluency instruction three times per week for ten weeks. The dependent variable was a series of maze tests which were administered every week in the context of curriculum based measurements. The maze assessments instructed students to fill in every seventh word of passage from three possible choices (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, & Ferguson, 1992). These activities were completed on a computer with grade-level 350-word stories and measured comprehension.

The sample included 50 seventh grade middle school students in a suburban Midwestern school; 51% of participants were male, 30% had identified disabilities, and only 6% were of minority status. The study was facilitated by two teachers, one with five years teaching experience and the other with twelve, and a speech and language pathologist who had fifteen years of experience. The 50 students were divided into three remedial reading courses. The first was co-taught by the five-year teacher and speech pathologist who had four students with disabilities and twelve total students. The second class was taught by the teacher with 12 years of teaching experience and a para-educator who had ten years of experience; they’re class
consisted of five children with disabilities and nineteen total students. The third class was taught by the twelve-year teacher alone. She also had five students with disabilities but 21 total students.

Participants were then randomly placed in one of two groups: a group that employed specific reading and explicit decoding strategies, and a group teaching no explicit decoding strategies. Prior to whole-group meetings, each student met with his or her teacher for five minutes to discuss the day’s reading strategy. In these meetings, the participants nominated for a strategy-group received a bookmark that contained one of six strategies reviewed in the phonics portion of whole-group instruction: inflection, punctuation, self-monitoring, pace, word-endings, or tracking. Students in the non-strategy group received a bookmark that simply said, “do your best.” All teachers then repeated the same instructions: “Take out your bookmark. Remember to have it in front of you as you are reading. You are supposed to pay attention to what is written on it. Make sure you read the bookmark. It is important to do what it says” (Allinder, Dunse, Brunken, & Obermiller-Krolkowski, 2001, p. 52).

The study revealed that there was statistically significant difference between the strategy groups and the non-strategy groups in terms of fluency and comprehension. The students who received specific reading cues outperformed those participants that merely were told to do their best. This implies and confirms that descriptive prompts were more effective than general encouragement. The researchers stated that no student showed unease with reading aloud during this study and urged future literacy programs to incorporate fluency into daily routines. Also, this study was implemented by educators who were familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Individualized strategies were tailored to subjects based on needs and emphasized with the bookmark reminders. The authors highlighted the necessity of creating
interventions that scaffold and develop student needs. The next article details decoding strategies that addressed individual student’s literacy needs.

Researchers Bhattacharya and Ehri (2004) examined the effect of word-segmenting for older students with reading disabilities. Their guiding question was whether unfamiliar words would be more accessible to struggling readers using a whole-word technique or a strategy that deconstructed words into their syllable parts. Bhattacharya and Ehri (2004) hypothesized that this word segmentation would enable subjects to master vocabulary better than memorizing whole words.

The independent variable of this study was three groups of third to fifth grade students. The first group received explicit instruction in how to divide words into syllables and then blend sounds together. The second group received whole word instruction, while the third control group received no special instruction in regard to new vocabulary. All three groups were divided according to those at the third grade equivalent reading level and those at the fourth grade equivalent reading level, and all three groups were exposed to the same 100 new words. The dependant variable were a series of standardized and informal assessments, which included the Word Attack subtest (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001), a word learning test based on the uniform set of 100 new words, a subtle misspellings test, and a spelling treatment words test. Each measured growth in reading words aloud, spelling words and non-words, or analogizing (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004).

The sample for this study included 60 sixth-to-ninth graders from five urban middle and high schools in New York City. Students receiving free lunch in these high schools ranged from 75-93%. Subjects’ reading levels were between the third and fifth grade. Thirty-three boys and
27 girls participated in this study, and 25 Hispanic American, 18 African American, 12 European American, and five Asian Americans participated in the study.

Researchers spent six 30-minute sessions working with and testing students during their reading classes. A pre-test and post-test measured growth in spelling and word-reading and took two sessions in each group. The remaining four sessions were dedicated to syllable and whole word instruction (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004). Subjects were put into groups of three based on similar pre-test scores then placed into one of three groups; each group had 20 participants. A control group remained in reading class while a second group focused on ‘syllable’ training and a third group focused on ‘word’ training. The syllable group used direct instruction, modeling, and examples to teach common word parts that could be applied to 100 words. The word group used direct instruction, modeling, and examples to help the students memorize the same 100 words without analyzing word parts and syllables.

Researchers concluded that “syllable-training” did increase achievement in spelling and vocabulary retention among those at the third and fourth grade equivalent reading levels. Students exhibited similar mean scores on pretests, yet those receiving the treatment outperformed those receiving whole-word instruction or no treatment in all tested areas. Many of these words repeated common word parts, such as –tion or –ment, and patterns were explicitly stressed (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004). These findings suggest that in addition to focusing on comprehension strategies, middle and high schools should incorporate the direct instruction of decoding words according to syllables in order for its lower level readers to succeed in the regular education classroom. The following Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) investigation built on this supposition; they suggested that individualized, explicit interventions are more effective than passive, generalized treatments.
In their study, Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) determined the effect of explicit instruction in the areas of decoding, fluency, and comprehension. The study addressed “whether balanced, systematic and intensive reading instruction results in meaningful effects on the reading skills of older children with RD, and whether a greater degree of explicitness in comprehension strategy instruction leads to relatively higher gains in reading comprehension” (Manset-Williamson & Nelson, 2005, p. 62). Researchers hypothesized that teaching more than one aspect of literacy (decoding, fluency, and comprehension) by means of explicit instruction would increase the academic levels of students with major reading deficits, and suggested older students may require more intense interventions than younger struggling readers.

The independent variable of this study was the level of explicit instruction each group received. One group received supplemental literacy instruction with a high level of direct instruction, think alouds, and the gradual release of power over the material from the teacher to the students. The second group of adolescents received the same supplementary literacy curriculum, but teachers related reading strategies in a much more subtle way. This allowed for a more ‘authentic’ reading experience with content while embedding comprehension techniques along the way. The dependent variables included the Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement (2001) and daily curriculum based measurement, along with a social validity interview that was administered to participants upon completion. The goal of these assessments was to measure increased reading achievement.

The authors designated two groups of 21 total students who attended a reading clinic in an Indiana university-town and were nine to 14 years old. These students had to have scored at least two grade levels lower than their peers on the Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement (2001). The students had to score ‘at least one standard deviation below the mean’ on the
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) (Wagner, Torgeson, & Rashotte, 1999), and score above a 75 in intellectual functioning on the Reynolds Intellectual Screening Test (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2002). There were seven males to four females in the guided reading group, while the explicit comprehension group had eight males and one female. In the guided reading group, there were nine white students and two black students. In the explicit comprehension group, there were eight white students and one black student.

Group assignment was random. Group A was designated the explicit instruction group (EI), while group B was deemed the guided reading group (GR). Both received 20 supplementary literacy interventions over five weeks; the guided reading group revolved around the constructivist view that children will internalize reading strategies better when experiencing the strategies naturally and in context. In contrast, the explicit instruction group employed direct instruction that helped students access content. Both programs received the same phonics and decoding curriculums. Tutors taught students in both groups to employ the following five strategies: focusing on suffixes and prefixes, chunking, reciting each word letter, considering context, and discussing the meaning of words in real-world terms. The treatment group, however, received explicit strategy instruction in comprehension. While teachers in the GR group expected students to automatically use comprehension tools, instructors in the EI group repeatedly modeled strategies and scaffolded students as they practiced using the strategies. The instructors imparted self-monitoring skills that included goal-setting and regulation. The memory strategy, SUPER G, given to students represented ‘Set goals, Use prior knowledge, Predict what you think will be in text, Explain the main idea in your own words, Retell the most important parts of the text, and Give yourself feedback’ (Manset-Williamson & Nelson, 2005, p. 66). Eleven teacher-tutors were required to take at least 14 hours of additional literacy training,
and were monitored with treatment fidelity checklists to ensure that the same basic curriculum was being delivered to both groups.

Overall, these procedures revealed that students in both groups made “meaningful gains” in fluency, decoding, and comprehension (Manset-Williamson & Nelson, 2010, p.71), but students receiving explicit instruction saw the most improvement in comprehension. Students in the EC group made more significant gains than the GR group in retelling the story. In identifying the main idea, the EC group also made slightly larger gains than the GR group. And in multiple choice assessments, the EC group also improved verses the GR group. This investigation suggests that at-risk students who have significant deficits in processing text do benefit from a balanced curriculum of small-group reading tutoring. It also allows for the possibility that comprehension is further accelerated when explicit instruction occurs.

The implications of this study suggest that older students who are significantly behind in reading can make significant progress in a relatively short amount of time. The study suggests that teaching multiple components of literacy simultaneously can be effective when components are isolated and taught explicitly. The following study also investigates the effects of precise and balanced instruction. Researchers Monroe and Troia (2006) explored how children were able to process multiple and complex strategies when explicitly imparted in a structured environment.

Based on limited research in regards to older middle school students and written expression, Monroe and Troia (2006) devised an intervention that would explicitly teach more than one component of writing to students with learning disabilities. The guiding question that informed this study was whether or not students who received direct instruction in the organizational, revision, and self-regulatory strategies of writing would increase their academic levels in written expression. The authors hypothesized that this treatment would scaffold
students who had writing deficits, thereby equipping them with the tools to generalize these processes to other genres and across content areas.

The independent variable of this study was an intervention of 14 (45-minute) sessions that focused on pre, during, and post writing skills. The participants had all been diagnosed with a learning disability. Another group of three students with learning disabilities and similar academic characteristics were selected as the control group. The control group was exposed to the same curriculum but not the same direct and sustained instruction. The dependent variables were a series of post-treatment essays that were scored in five areas: content, organization, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions. These essays were then compared to baseline essays that were written prior to the intervention.

The sample consisted of three urban middle school students with learning disabilities who were nominated by the principal of their respective schools based on a score of less than 90 on the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised (CIBSR; Brigance, 1999). The IQ scores of these participants ranged from 80-93. Two of the three students with a learning disability were ESL learners as well; researchers cited previous research that asserted the deficits of these learners were similar to those of English-speaking students with learning disabilities. A control group of three additional middle school students with learning disabilities was used. Though researchers stated the school had 64% free or reduced lunch students, socioeconomic status was not a factor in selecting sample participants.

Intervention procedures revolved around explicit instruction in the pre-writing, organizational processes of essay composition. Students in the treatment and control group were exposed to several very specific prompts, acronyms, and graphic organizers that aided in the writing and revision process throughout all stages of the writing process, but students in the
treatment group received repeated and explicit instruction in those strategies. In the first phase, students wrote five essays using new strategies that focused on successful organizational models. DARE and SPACE were two mnemonic devices used to recall organization and regulation strategies (Monroe & Troia, 2006). DARE stood for Develop a position statement, Add supporting arguments, Report and refute counterarguments, and End with a strong conclusion. SPACE stood for Setting elements, Problems, Actions, Consequences, and Emotions. The essays that utilized these acronyms served as a baseline for the study. In the second stage they peer-reviewed one another’s work using a scorecard that encouraged writing metacognition, and then revised their own essays based on this feedback. These scorecards tracked DARE qualities, promoting self-regulation and including questions about word choice, clarity, details, counterarguments, and mechanics (Monroe & Troia, 2006). Monroe and Troia had each participant consider (2006) “whether his score was an improvement over his prior essay score, how many points he wished to receive on the next essay, and which area he would target for improvement on the basis of the ratings assigned by peers” (p. 23). This cycle was repeated with all five essays written in phase one and always concluded with whole group discussion about how to apply these strategies to other academic subjects and ultimately, life. The intervention concluded with a final phase where participants composed three essays and one narrative in order to gauge growth in each of the five areas of focus. All three students made significant progress, particularly in organization where the group average essay score increased by 86%. Additional gains were made in content (67%), sentence fluency (55%), word choice (45%), and conventions (26%). The posttest essay that measured organization, mechanics, and coherence revealed that students with learning disabilities in the treatment group did better than those in the control
group, and two of the students in the treatment group yielded scores comparable to students without disabilities.

Monroe and Troia (2006) assert that “typical classroom writing instruction could be improved substantially to meet the needs of poor writers if strategy instruction were integrated with process writing instruction, which may advantage good writers but not necessarily students who have writing difficulties” (p. 29).

Monroe and Troia (2006) explored how students with learning disabilities don’t always automatically pick up subtle instruction regarding literacy strategies and may require explicit instruction to make academic advances. Explicit instruction is also important in teaching reading comprehension. The following study asserts educators cannot assume that children with learning disabilities have absorbed the strategies that enable them to comprehend passages. Particularly with expository text, these strategies must be explicitly taught in order for students who lag in curricular subjects to comprehend new and unfamiliar material. Expository text can be challenging for students with learning disabilities because of its foreign and complex nature; in contrast, narrative text utilizes a student’s prior knowledge and is thereby more easily accessed. The following article explores the differences in these two types of text.

Saenz and Fuchs (2002) hypothesized that a lack of explicit instruction in teaching older students how to process expository text has contributed to dwindling achievement among older students with reading deficits. The questions that drove Saenz and Fuch’s (2002) study were whether or not “secondary students with LD exhibit differential performance on reading fluency as a function of text type (narrative verses expository), and whether or not secondary students with LD exhibit differential performance on reading comprehension as a function of text type
and question type” (p. 34). A study was created to isolate those skills with the goal of informing
future practices in the area of reading comprehension among students with learning difficulties.

The independent variables in this study were two different text types: expository and
narrative. The dependent variables of this study were four narrative passages taken from the
Monitoring Basic Skills Progress standardized test (Fuchs, Hamlet, & Fuchs, 1997), as well as
four expository passages from the Timed Reading Series (Spargo, 1989). These passages were at
the fifth grade reading level and between 378 and 434 words long.

The sample consisted of 111 students from southwestern urban school settings. In order
to qualify for this study, students had to have a learning disability and have an actual reading
level between second and sixth grade. Thirty-eight percent of participants were from low
socioeconomic backgrounds. Of the 111 participants, 64 were African American, 46 were
Caucasian, and one was labeled ‘other’. Eighty of the subjects were male. There were 48 ninth
graders, 23 tenth graders, 28 eleventh graders, and 12 seniors.

This study began with two read-aloud pretests for each text type and concluded with two
different read aloud posttests for each text type. Readings would be scored in four areas: “words
read correctly in two minutes, total questions answered correctly, literal questions answered
correctly, and inferential questions answered correctly” (Saenz & Fuchs, 2002, p. 35). Students
had two minutes to read as much of each passage as they could, while scorers counted hesitations
and mispronunciations. Self-corrections were not scored as errors. Errors in reading the two
different types of texts were then averaged to determine significance. Students then responded
orally to ten comprehension questions without referencing the text. Examiners documented the
answers to eight ‘literal’ (questions that addressed prominent text details) and two ‘inferential’
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Students were also expected to label each question as easy, hard, or confusing.

Findings revealed that students read with greater accuracy, and fluency, on narrative texts. Furthermore, the students’ responses to the comprehension questions indicated that students with learning disabilities performed the same on expository and narrative literal questions, but better on narrative inferential questions than expository inferential questions.

The authors of this study assert that a lack or misuse of prior knowledge and difficulties with decoding hinders the upper level thinking skills necessary to comprehend expository texts. This may necessitate more explicit teaching of the decoding and vocabulary strategies that lend themselves to comprehending new expository material, particularly among students with learning disabilities. Exposure to vocabulary should include teaching new words before encountering them in context and mapping. Saenz and Fuchs also recommend direct instruction in summarizing and outlining techniques, as well as lessons that revolve around discerning main ideas through identifying topic sentences and their supporting details.

In addition to advocating explicit instruction, Saenz and Fuchs suggest that prior knowledge plays an important role in students who have learning disabilities. Morris and Gaffney (2011) expand upon those findings when they explored fluency within the context of a year-long case study. The purpose of this study was to expose a seventh grade student who read at a second grade reading pace to “supported contextual reading” in order to increase fluency levels (Morris & Gaffney, 2011). The authors hypothesized that zeroing in on this one aspect of literacy (fluency) and aggressively addressing the student’s main weakness would increase his ability to read with coherence and for comprehension. The guiding question of this study
included whether or not repeated, tape-recorded and guided reading supports would affect the number of words this child could read per minute.

The independent variable in this intervention was the intensive repeated reading and fluency strategies facilitated by a tutor with the student for sixty minutes twice a week, totaling 47 hours from summer through spring. The dependent variable was the data collected from taped repeated readings, as well as student work samples and the tutor’s working journals.

Because this was a case study, the sample was comprised of one seventh-grade male with a learning disability who read at the third grade level and was documented as taking medication for Attention Deficit Disorder and seizures. This subject was selected based on his participation in a university-affiliated reading clinic. It’s also important to note that for three years this student had participated in the Wilson Phonics Program (Wilson, 1996) at school, where his decoding skills increased from the first grade level to the third grade level. This child also had a high interest in history-related topics.

The intervention followed the same daily lesson plan: ten minutes of tape-recorder assignment checks (the tutor would record herself reading a passage and the student would take this home to practice for a shared reading the next day) and content discussion, thirty minutes of guided reading, ten minutes of repeated reading of text the child had already been exposed to, and ten minutes of the tutor reading aloud. Content was at or slightly higher than the student’s instructional third grade level and in the form of chapter books. The tutor accommodated the student’s interests and charted the number of minutes her student was able to read per minute, then shared this visual with him.

When the student began the intervention, he was reading third-grade level biographical passages at a rate of 100 words per minute on the fourth try. Data shows that by the end of the
intervention, he was reading 130 words per minute on the fourth try. When the student began reading novels, his fluency increased from 18 to 24 wpm on the third and fourth trials; the researchers state that “narrative text seemed to lend itself more to fluent reading” (Morris & Gaffney, 2011, p. 335). When text levels were raised to early fourth to fifth grade levels, fluency decreased so researchers reverted to text that was at the child’s instructional level and his fluency rates went back up. By the end of the intervention, the child had increased his fluency from the third to fourth grade level. IRI post-test information revealed very slight gains in vocabulary but marked a 33% increase in oral reading. Anecdotal observation revealed the charts this researcher used as feedback became a large motivator for the student.

This study was unique in that it focused solely on fluency. Though comprehension discussions were present, they became a means to an end; instruction revolved around oral reading activities devoted to fluent reading. The tutor selected texts that the boy was interested in and replaced those that were uninteresting. When the repeated readings of a random topic didn’t inspire gains, researchers looked towards and built upon the student’s prior knowledge. The study also reminds educators of the importance of selecting texts that are at a student’s actual fluency instructional level and letting the child track, or see, his progress. Because the tutor created a data chart and shared it with the student he was much more invested in his own progress (Morris & Gaffney, 2011).

The results of this study show researchers that building an intervention that employs the repeated reading of familiar, engaging material can be successful when the student is accessing content on his level and offered positive feedback (Morris & Gaffney, 2011). Not only did the authors explicitly teach and model reading strategies, they engaged the student in charting his own progress through the use of visual trackers. Morris and Gaffney (2011) recognized the
importance of building a curriculum that was meaningful to the child in order for him to practice basic literacy tasks.

Section one emphasizes two major areas of literacy best practice literacy instruction: explicit instruction and meaningful curriculum. Often times, older students with disabilities haven’t experienced success in literacy because they encounter courses that are founded on the principal that all students have internalized the mental strategies necessary to process new print information (Monroe & Troia, 2006). The aforementioned authors suggest educators reject that assumption and employ explicit modeling strategies that support student deficits (Manset-Williamson & Nelson, 2005). There is also considerable research that supports individualized interventions that accommodate student interest and facilitate increased motivation (Compton-Lilly, 2006). The following investigations continue to explore motivation among students with learning disabilities and discuss interventions that foster engagement and self-efficacy.

**Motivating Older Students with Learning Disabilities**

Effective teachers incorporate research-based interventions that address fluency, decoding, comprehension, and writing deficits. Methods are based on and tailored to a student’s academic needs. Increasingly, however, professionals must also acknowledge the social and emotional barriers that keep our children from engaging in strategies that raise their fluency levels.

Allor, Gansle, and Denny (2006) explored the effects of a game-based phonics intervention administered by a paraprofessional. This treatment considered the progress of six kindergartners, as measured by the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills--DIBELS (Good & Kaminski, 2003) and curricular based daily assessments. The researchers asked if engaging activities that encouraged interaction with letter and word sounds could affect the
achievement levels of struggling readers when the students were offered incentives and consistent feedback. The researchers hypothesized that because time limitations may impede teachers from being able to offer this type of intense supplementary help, other staff members could facilitate interventions when given explicit procedures.

The independent variable in this study was the Stop and Go phonics intervention game, which was facilitated for approximately 26 minutes per day for each student. The dependent variables were the DIBELS (Good & Kaminski, 2003) phoneme segmentation fluency and nonsense word subtests, which were given on a daily basis.

Based on their low scores on the DIBELS (Good & Kaminski, 2003) standardized test, six kindergarten students from a small southern elementary school were selected to participate in this study. The sample was comprised of one Caucasian male, two African American females, and three African American males. Only one of the students was receiving special education services (for reading, math, and physical disabilities).

The paraprofessional that administered these interventions did have Child Development Associate Credentials from the Early Childhood Council, as well as six years of classroom experience. Additionally, researchers provided two hours of training that addressing classroom motivation and behavior, how to play the Stop and Go game, and the basic blending and segmenting strategies involved. After the intervention began, two more training sessions reviewed and reinforced these procedures. The paraprofessional established baselines through four phoneme segmentation fluency subtests and one nonsense word subtest. Students received praise and awards for taking these tests. In tutoring sessions, students played the Stop and Go game, challenging their ability to blend and segment words while moving forward on a game board. Ten letters and four to six words were used. If the participant recognized either stop or
go letters correctly, he was praised. If he didn’t, he was given feedback and another chance to respond. In both cases the child moved forward on the game board. Likewise, students were able to move ahead when combining sounds to make words. Praise, feedback, and stickers were offered as external incentives throughout. For two boys, progress lagged, so researchers consulted with the subjects to determine more effective individualized rewards: a pen and Pokemon cards.

According to the DIBELS (Good & Kaminski, 2003) results, all six students made considerable gains in reading fluency and decoding. Four of these students earned feedback, praise, and stickers, while two of the boys earned feedback, praise, and a pen or Pokemon card. One student did not achieve the benchmark standard by the end of this study, but data shows progress after the incentive was changed from a sticker to the pen. All remaining participants achieved the benchmark; three students surpassed this standard. The benchmark, varied forms of the phoneme segmentation fluency subtest of DIBELS (Good & Kaminski, 2003), was offered daily to track progress.

Researchers discovered that this type of intervention could be administered by a para professional with the right training support. Given limited teacher time and resources, these implications are far-reaching. If the success of the Stop and Go Phonics game and similar explicit, individualized phonics interventions can be replicated by trained professionals, more students can potentially be assisted. Another theme of this study becomes the importance of establishing a no-fail environment. This game featured procedures that advanced the student on every turn, regardless of right or wrong answers. This crucial element of game intervention could potentially decrease a student’s anxiety over being wrong while increasing his or her self-efficacy and willingness to take risks. Finally, this study is important not only because it
highlights the effectiveness of explicit instruction, but because educators are moved to consider the notion that rewards and consistent feedback are essential to the growth and development of certain struggling readers. The next study determined that individualizing instruction to fit the needs and interests of a student can be powerful in increasing literacy achievement among reluctant learners. An appreciation of the subject’s character and identity is necessary to making gains with students who face considerable academic deficits or who may have been marginalized due to socioeconomic factors (Compton-Lilly, 2006).

The primary question surrounding Compton-Lily’s (2006) case study was “how one African American student’s evolving identity, which reflected his media, childhood, and cultural resources, intersected with literacy learning and became a tool to support his reading and writing” (p. 58). The author hypothesized that literacy and identity are not mutually exclusive, and suggested that the progress her student made in this study “is in part due to the intertextuality that was allowed to occur among Devon’s cultural resources (home culture and popular media culture), his classroom experiences, parental support, and the Reading Recovery (1993) lessons” (p. 65).

The independent variable in this study was the 30-minute pull-out sessions that Compton-Lily facilitated with her student everyday for 20 weeks. The structure of these interventions was based on a Reading Recovery (1993), model which is an established daily intervention that has the student working with well-known and unfamiliar text, phonics, and writing with the appropriate amount of assistance. The author soon Revised the content of these lessons, however, to reflect the student’s interests. The dependent variable became running and lesson records, work samples, and the student’s journal.
This student was a six-year-old African American first-grader. He had qualified for the intervention based on low-test scores and delays in the regular education classroom. Deficits were evident in reading retention and written expression. He attended an affluent mid-western elementary school on the voucher program, and was only one of four African American students in a class taught by a Caucasian teacher.

The author designed these interventions after strict adherence to the Reading Recovery program wasn’t engaging her subject or producing results. In this intervention, the student kept a writing journal, and limited time was given to phonics study; the majority of time was dedicated to investigating books and writing sentences. Student and parent interviews also proved important in engaging the student. Compton-Lily referred to her student’s progress as a ‘transformation’ at least three times throughout the article, citing an interview with the student and his mother as the turning point. In this program, the student was encouraged to “roam” for the first two weeks, where no new material was introduced and the child was able to work with the content of his choosing while being encouraged by the researcher. While many students enjoy these initial meetings, this student did not. He was hesitant and unenthusiastic. This child was asked to compose a book on the topic he liked; the student chose sea turtles but struggled when he couldn’t find meaning in the subject. It was during this process that he opened up about his love of video games, and the researcher constructed the remaining sessions around this topic. Pikachu, a Pokémon character, inspired interaction with words and text that sea turtles or conventional content hadn’t.

Through professional observation and work samples, the researcher concluded that this student became a reader who decoded text more frequently and used pictures less often to foster comprehension. He was able to use phonetic strategies and by week ten, accessed short-term
memory to write words. The researcher also reported increased metacognition and willingness to
go back and correct mistakes. Records show that the district-recommended curriculum stifled
this subject’s writing, but when given the freedom to write about something he valued, Devon
evolved as a writer. His journal shows an interest in communicating that which was important to
him: “Flareon’s power is fire, Pikachu’s power is thunder, Articuno looks like a bird”
(Compton-Lilly, 2006, p. 66). While Devon initially wrote 12 sentences about superheroes or
video game characters, his journal reveals 30 additional sentences that address other subjects or
books he choose to read.

The researcher constructed a world where pop culture became the means by which this
student acquired and generalized literacy strategies. “Devon’s interest in video games and
superheroes was not merely a topic of interest; video games and superheroes were central to
Devon’s identity and were potential tools that Devon could access when using, creating, and
relating to text” (Compton-Lily, 2006 p. 64). When Devon wrote or spoke about video game
characters, he became the teacher. This reciprocal teaching empowered and motivated him.
Ultimately, Compton-Lily argues that an intervention must be informed by the preferences of the
child, and that the facilitator must be diligent in uncovering these authentic interests when faced
with an unwilling reader/writer (2006). Student engagement and motivation is often times the
key to success in planning successful interventions. Likewise, Unrau and Schlackman (2006)
expand upon previous research in the fields of motivation and self-regulation as the following
study questions the “extent intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relate to the reading achievement of
students in middle school” (p.85). These researchers hypothesized that grade, gender, and race
are variables that affect intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and thus literacy achievement as a
whole. Specifically, researchers explored four major questions: “To what extent does intrinsic
and extrinsic motivation relate to the reading achievement of students in middle school? What are the relationships among gender, grade, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read, and reading achievement? To what extent do the variables and their relationships differ across Hispanic and Asian middle school students? Does intrinsic and extrinsic motivation change significantly over time for middle school students across ethnicities, school grade, and gender?” (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006, p. 5),

The independent variable in this study was the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire--MRQ (Wigfield, et al., 1996). This assessment measures attitudes and perceptions regarding reading and writing among middle school students in urban settings. Specifically, the MRQ measures self-efficacy, challenge, work avoidance, curiosity, involvement, importance, recognition, grades, competition, social motives, and compliance (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006, p. 3). The authors determined reliability scales that measured how these areas were or were not related and used this information to assess extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in relation to demographics such as ethnicity. Researchers ultimately used their findings to discern correlations between ethnicity and reading motivation.

The sample included data from 768 Hispanic and 264 Asian sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. All attended a diverse urban elementary school, and 90% of participants received free or reduced lunch. No students were ESL learners.

In English classes, all students were administered the MRQ in the fall of their first respective year and once again in the fall of the following grade. After the second year, these students also took the Gates MacGinitie Reading subtest (MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1989). The authors computed MRQ information to reveal subset information in efficacy, challenge, work avoidance, curiosity, involvement, importance, recognition, grades, competition, social
comparison, and compliance. The resulting statistics were presented for the sample in its entirety, as well as in race and gender. Unrau and Schlackman (2006) offer: “we averaged the MRQ scales of curiosity, involvement, and challenge to operationalize students’ intrinsic motivation. To measure students’ extrinsic motivation, we averaged the MRQ scales of recognition, grades, social, compliance, and competition” (p.87).

Unrau & Schlackman (2006) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation decreased significantly in Asian and Hispanic male and female students as they progressed to sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. The authors did discover that the connection between motivation and literacy was stronger for Asian students than for Hispanic participants, and that girls “rated themselves higher than did boys in extrinsic motivation, suggesting that dimensions of the extrinsic composite, such as recognition, grades, social, and compliance, contribute to the motivation of girls to a greater degree than to that of boys, who appear to be significantly more motivated by competition than are girls” (2006 p. 9). They found that grade had a negative correlation with intrinsic motivation: the higher the grade in middle school the lower the intrinsic motivation, yet grade correlated positively with overall reading achievement (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006, p. 8). Ethnicity also proved statistically significant; Asian students scored higher on the Gates McGinitie than Hispanic students. Gender had a slight effect on reading achievement with boys scoring higher on the Gates McGinitie test, while girls were slightly more affected by extrinsic motivators than boys. These authors also discovered that while intrinsic motivation had a positive correlation to the reading achievement of Asian students, intrinsic motivation did not predict reading achievement in Hispanic students (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006, p. 8). Overall, this article suggested that extrinsic motivators become significant with
certain ethnic groups and girls. The following article investigates whether certain groups of students might internalize learning by receiving external incentives.

Miller and Hom (1990) explored the question of whether or not extrinsic rewards foster continuing motivation in students who encounter challenging academic material. The researchers hypothesized that incentives would encourage participants to focus on the ‘reward’ more than on their own anxiety over attempting difficult problems, and that the incentives would become more effective if the activity could potentially damage the participant’s ego (Miller & Hom, 1990).

The independent variable in this study was series of 30 computerized questions, including matching and anagram problems. The dependent variable was how many times the students attempted new questions after they received “failure feedback” (Miller & Hom, p. 540, 1990). Continuing motivation in the midst of this constant ‘failure feedback’ was measured by how many times subjects gave up (Miller & Hom, 1990, p. 540). Two groups were delineated- a group that was told they would be given very difficult or moderately difficult questions and potentially a money reward for correct answers, and a control group that was told questions were moderately difficult and given no money for their answers.

The sample for this study included 131 undergraduate college students, 65 of whom were students. Participants were volunteers taken from a population of 1500 who answered a psychology department solicitation for volunteers. Participants received extra credit in their Introduction to Psychology class.

The procedure involved 12 groups of students who tried 15 matching questions (some of which were solvable), and 15 anagram questions. A mirror was placed next to all computers in order to increase self-consciousness. Half of the participants were told that the task measured
their intelligence, while the other half were told it evaluated a meaningless skill. Some students received money for the number of questions attempted and all in this group were told that the questions were ‘very’ or ‘moderately’ difficult (Miller & Hom, 1990). All received ‘failure feedback’ on each answer. A separate control group was told that questions were only moderately difficult and would not measure their intelligence.

Researchers discovered that their hypotheses were correct: a statistically significant relationship existed between continued motivation and the difficulty of a task when rewards were offered. When subjects perceived that a difficult activity would evaluate their intelligence, incentives increased persistence after failure (Miller & Hom, 1990). From this study, Miller and Hom (1990) also determined subjects who were told questions weren’t as challenging and wouldn’t measure overall competence gave up more frequently (Miller & Hom, 1990). When a reward was offered for solving moderately solvable or very hard unsolvable Anagram problems, students persisted significantly more than their counterparts who were offered no reward (Miller & Hom, 1990).

These findings suggest that extrinsic rewards distract a subject from focusing on his lack of self-efficacy long enough to complete a challenging, seemingly unsolvable, academic task. Miller and Hom (1990) assert that when activities are qualified by degree of difficulty or relevance, external rewards may supplant performance anxiety because the subject wants to receive the reward. This preoccupation with incentive may foster motivation in learners who fear failure. In order to determine this, educators must consider the internal motivators that reside within students, as well as what attitudes and perceptions the students embody toward school and literacy. The following researchers address the psychological and emotional aspects of school that may impede or contribute to students’ willingness to learn.
The purpose of Fulk, Brigham, and Lohman’s (1998) study was to explore the differences in beliefs about motivation, self-efficacy, the purpose of school, and test anxiety in general education students and among those who have EBD and LD. The researchers hypothesized that because previous research had established that motivational factors were varied and complex among all learners, it was necessary to recognize and accommodate individual differences in order to prevent an already dwindling non-traditional learner graduation rate (Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998).

The independent variables in this study were three surveys: The Motivational Orientation Scale (Nicholls, 1989), The Purposes of School Scale (Nicholls, 1989), and The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). The Motivational Orientation Scale survey offered questions about intrinsic interest, ego orientation, avoiding work, easy superiority, and alienation (Nicholls, 1989). The Purposes of School Scale was designed to measure how school affected attitudes regarding wealth, social commitment, community spirit, loyalty, self-sacrifice, achievement, understanding, and useful work (Nicholls, 1989). Finally, the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire assessed efficacy, intrinsic motivation, cognitive strategy use, and self-regulation (MSLQ; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

Participation in this study was voluntary and solicited from grades six, seven, and eight in two Midwestern schools districts. The sample was comprised of 115 subjects; 36 LD students, 26 EBD students, and 53 non-learning disabled students.

Surveys were put together in one book and administered in a 35-40 minute session. Students who were considered ‘average achievers’ completed their surveys in either the regular education classroom or the library, where researchers explained the purpose of the questionnaires, confirmed that everyone was a willing participant, and read all directions out
loud. The same procedure occurred for students with disabilities, the only difference being the surveys were administered individually or in small groups where researchers read instructions and tests questions out loud.

While significant results were not found on either the Purposes of School scale, the Motivation Orientation scale did reveal statistically significant results. Students with LD felt estranged from school and academics more than students who were considered average achievers or students with EBD (Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998). Students with EBD reported high amounts of test anxiety as compared to LD and average achieving learners (Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998). Additionally, girls were found to identify with self-sacrifice, community spirit, and persistence while boys identified more in areas of alienation (Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998). Finally, researchers discovered more negative feelings about school and tendencies toward avoidance in students with LD that those of their EBD and average achieving counterparts.

The researchers stated that increased feelings of alienation, avoidance, and efficacy among students with LD may stem from the inclusion model, where peer comparisons influence and sometimes dominate self-perception (Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998). They suggest that EBD students have less anxiety in these categories because they are frequently receiving instruction in specialized education environments, such as a resource room or special education room, where students are more likely to be alone or where peers are at similar instructional levels. Fulk, Brigham, and Lohman (1998) also recommend transition and advocacy courses that begin in middle school to enhance the school experiences of students with LD.

Conclusion
Because older students with learning disabilities haven’t experienced consistent and sustained success, some have withdrawn or decided that they don’t have the capacity to complete academic tasks (Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998). In order to engage these students and facilitate a learning experience that fosters self-confidence, educators must provide explicit instruction that doesn’t assume students have the strategies necessary to process text (Monroe & Troia, 2006). These studies echo the need for explicit instruction when addressing the needs of students with reading disabilities (Allinder, Dunse, Brunken, & Obermiller-Krolikowski, 2001). Basic decoding is often overlooked in higher grade levels, assuming that learners have already acquired the skills necessary to access new material (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004). This research reminds educators that if schools hope to offer our children with reading disabilities a so-called level academic playing field, professionals must reject the notion that all students have internalized strategies to read fluently and for comprehension; rather, appropriate assessment and authentic professional observation must be employed in forming meaningful interventions that address the student’s individual strengths and weaknesses (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004). Educators must accommodate the strengths, weaknesses, and interests of our students by valuing their identity and building curriculum around it (Compton-Lilly, 2006). Research also suggests that external incentives may be effective in fueling the intrinsic motivation necessary for these learners to feel secure in taking academic risks (Miller & Hom, 1990). Extrinsic rewards may be effective in bridging learning gaps and re-capturing tentative students (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006).

In considering how we impart literacy strategies and acknowledging what’s meaningful to students, learners will generalize the complex tasks of reading or writing to the regular education classroom and ultimately, their lives (Morris & Gaffney, 2011). Chapter three details
a case study that considered this body of research in examining the effect of student-managed trackers and descriptive feedback in the continuing motivation of an eighth grade boy at the second grade reading level. The researcher based her intervention on the boys documented inability to persist during challenging academic tasks, and incorporated the tenants of explicit instruction and decoding as explored in the above articles in order to impart a sense of mastery and confidence in taking academic risks.
Chapter Three

Procedures for the Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the effects of extrinsic incentives on the continuing motivation of a middle-school student with a learning disability. This study focused on the use of consistent descriptive feedback and visual, student-managed trackers in order to increase vocabulary and comprehension using a short novel and educational word games. This chapter will discuss the sample of the study, the procedures for the study, and the data used to measure outcomes.

Sample

DQ was a twelve-year, eleven month old eighth grade student with a specific learning disability in an urban Wisconsin school district. He was referred to a university reading center in the summer of 2011 based on lagging decoding, fluency, comprehension, and expression levels. Based on oral student interviews and a written interest survey included in Appendix A of this document, the student’s primary interests included graphic novels (specifically, the Naruto series), movies, sports, and spending time with his mother or grandmother. In the past he’s enjoyed the Diary of a Wimpy Kid and Harry Potter series. He was incredibly polite and a pleasure to work with; DQ had a sharp sense of humor that complemented his ability to make easy and appropriate conversation. He related that he looked forward to attending college for a PhD and wanted to become a scientist. It is important to note that historically, DQ’s mother was an extremely involved advocate for her son, consistently enrolling him in supplemental literacy and math tutoring programs, as well as the Boys and Girls Club of America.

In gathering information about DQ’s academic and behavioral levels, the researcher examined his current IEP, a written questionnaire completed by his mother (see Appendix B), his
current reading center progress report, and oral interviews with his previous and current literacy tutors (see Appendix C). A common theme in these sources was DQ’s frustration when being asked to make corrections. For example, in a June 2011 phone interview with his previous literacy tutor, she stated that DQ “Shuts down in every aspect of reading and writing,” when challenged. She cited her extensive experience in urban mentoring but stated that his irritation with making corrections remained their biggest impediment towards making academic gains (see Appendix C). His mother echoed these sentiments in her questionnaire, stating that DQ “Would shut down when he didn’t know what to do,” (see Appendix B). DQ’s IEP states that he received specialized instruction for delays in receptive language two times per week for 30 minutes, as well as specialized instruction to remediate deficits in written expression, word decoding, and reading skills. IEP accommodations included repeated directions, frequent positive feedback, frequent comprehension checks, and reduced complexity for written assignments. This intervention was designed to address continuing motivation in the context of vocabulary and comprehension as well as to increase reading enjoyment through engaging activities that appealed to DQ’s interests.

In May of 2011, as reported by his literacy tutor’s exit assessment, DQ was able to read 101 words per minute correctly at the third grade level. His fluency rate decreased, however, at the second grade level, where he read 88 words per minute correctly. This tutor stated, “These inconsistencies might suggest that DQ’s motivation plays a significant role in performance.” Likewise, comprehension levels varied. In May of 2011, he scored frustration at the first grade narrative level, independent at the second grade expository level, and frustration at the third grade narrative level. Earlier in the semester he scored independent at the third and fourth grade narrative level. Again, the tutor suggested that “motivation and interest” might have contributed
to the diverse scores. After considering the student’s academic and social needs, a four-week intervention was designed. The next section will provide a detailed account of this intervention’s lesson plans and objectives.

**Procedures**

This intervention focused on fostering motivation in the context of vocabulary and comprehension with student-managed progress trackers and descriptive positive feedback. Because sources detailed the subject’s lack of motivation or willingness to accept correction, the researcher focused on engaging strategies that would encourage academic risk-taking while modeling essential literacy strategies.

Six 90-minute meetings between the researcher and DQ included a ten minute icebreaker and review of the last session’s topics. The following 45 minutes was dedicated to a read-aloud where the researcher would read for the first ten minutes and the student would continue for the remaining 35 minutes. This read-aloud included two-to-three oral comprehension checks. The following twenty minutes was reserved for completing journal prompts and charting new vocabulary. In the final twenty minutes, DQ and the researcher would play vocabulary games such as Word Football, Antonym Match, or Syllable Puzzles.

The subject chose his own novel, *The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Old* is an adolescent chapter book at the 3.0 level. During the first meeting, DQ mispronounced every sixth to eighth word, which put it at his instructional level. He expressed interest and enjoyment in reading the book, stating after the first chapter that he would like to finish it. The researcher would stop for comprehension checks two-to-three times per reading, asking the subject to summarize what he had read or how he would react in the given scenario. For every student response, the researcher would give immediate positive feedback. For example, the researcher would state that she
missed several details of the reading and thanked the subject for reviewing what had happened, thereby employing reciprocal teaching (Morris & Gaffney, 2011). Comprehension checks also occurred when there was a controversial or compelling conflict in the novel; the researcher would solicit what the subject would do in similar circumstances, restate what she heard the student say, and offer what she noticed about his response. After the reading, DQ would answer three consistent comprehension prompts in his journal (see Appendix D):

1. What is the main idea of this passage/chapter?
2. Describe one thing you liked about this passage.
3. Describe one thing you disliked about this passage.

This format was the same for each session.

New and unfamiliar words that DQ attempted to decode from the reading were collected on a displayed chart that the student managed (Morris & Gaffney, 2011). The student reproduced these words on labels to affix to the chart after spelling and reviewing their meanings to ensure mastery (see Appendix E). When the student struggled with a new word, the researcher would prompt him to break the word apart using his finger to cover different sounds or syllables. For the first few words of each session the researcher explicitly modeled this strategy but encouraged DQ to do the strategy independently for the remaining unfamiliar words (Monroe & Troia, 2006). The researcher consistently told the subject that she liked how he broke up words and noticed how when he broke a word apart and put all the sounds together, he was able to figure words out on his own. Another example of specific feedback offered included the researcher pointing out progress in recognizing suffixes: “I notice you always get that (ed) ending now. That suffix seemed hard for you at first, but now you nail it every time.”
Additionally, and based on interviews that revealed the subject’s tendency towards competition, the researcher incorporated word games into intervention sessions. One in particular, Antonym Match, had DQ pronouncing, defining, and pairing opposites. The student charted his progress with an antonym tower that recorded and displayed all mastered antonyms (Appendix F). There was also a section in his journal where DQ would record how many he got right each meeting. The subject was introduced to ten-to-fifteen words at a time, and then given the opportunity to find matches. After recording how many antonyms the student initially knew, the researcher and subject would work together to decode and define the remaining matches. The researcher again employed explicit instruction in recognizing and breaking apart words according to vowels, such as attacking resemble in three parts: re-sem-ble. The remaining matches were given repeatedly until the student was able to define and match all.

**Data**

This case study employed four pieces of data in order to measure academic gains and continuing motivation: a student journal (see Appendix D), a working researcher journal (see Appendix G), student progress charts (see Appendices E & F), and a lesson plan record that detailed attempts at decoding unfamiliar words (see Appendix H). Pre-intervention levels were facilitated by the university reading center and considered in developing this treatment. In order to ascertain initial levels, the university reading center administered several formal assessments. The Woodcock Johnson Reading Mastery Test revealed that DQ was at the 2.7 G.E. level in Word Identification, and 2.2 in phonics decoding. Professional observation notes that he struggles with suffixes such as (s) or (ed) and vowel sounds. This same assessment reveals a relative strength in vocabulary at the 4.7 level.
In this intervention, the subject answered three consistent comprehension questions in his journal after every reading, tracked new vocabulary and the number of antonyms mastered, and responded to three motivation-related multiple choice questions in his journal (see Appendix D). These questions included:

1. When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/ like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new)

2. When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work)

3. I’m (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn’t succeed on the first try.

The working thesis journal detailed the motivational levels and academic strengths and weaknesses of the subject as observed by the researcher (see Appendix D). The charts provided a visual “word wall” that documented mastered vocabulary (see Appendices E & F), and the lesson plan records tracked how many times the subject self-corrected, as well as attempts at sounding out new vocabulary (see Appendix H).

Summary

The guiding question of this study was whether or not extrinsic motivators would foster continued motivation for a student who historically 'shut downs' when facing challenging literacy tasks. The researcher employed student-managed trackers and offered positive descriptive feedback in order to cultivate a safe learning environment that encouraged academic-risk taking. The data collected included graphic charts that were managed by and accessible to the student, a lesson-record that documented student self-corrections, a student journal, and a
working researcher journal. This information measured motivation and growth in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. The following chapter analyzes this data.
Chapter Four

Results

This chapter summarizes data collected from the intervention detailed in chapter three, as well as a narrative of the subject’s daily interactions and analysis of the effectiveness of the intervention. DQ’s journey is revealed through quantitative evidence: a running record (see Appendix H), student-managed charts (see Appendices E & F), and informal assessment prompts, as well as qualitative evidence: a working researcher’s journal (see Appendix G). After the data is presented the results will be analyzed to determine the effectiveness of this study.

Pre-Assessments

In the spring of 2011, The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) placed DQ at the 2.7 level in decoding and word identification. The Word Attack portion of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (2001) placed DQ at the 2.2 grade level equivalent. Fluency assessments yielded varied results. DQ performed higher on the third grade assessment for fluency than the second grade assessment for fluency. DQ read 110 words per minute on the third grade test, but only 88 words per minute on the second grade test. Test administrators suggested that motivation might have played an important role in these outcomes, and noted that
DQ did not respond to punctuation prompts. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests—Word Comprehension (2001) placed DQ at the 4.7 grade equivalent level. In the Passage Comprehension portion of this test, DQ earned a standard score of 77. Figure One below illustrates these grade equivalent levels.

![Figure 1](image-url)

In the spring of 2011, DQ scored a 90% at the Independent Level word Identification on the Quantitative Reading Inventory (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). This assessment revealed that he struggled with suffixes, such as dropping the (s) and pronouncing ‘thing’ for ‘things’ or ‘though’ instead of ‘thought’. On the second grade word list DQ tested at the frustration level with 60%. See figure two below.
Comprehension results from the QRI varied; he scored frustration level on the second grade narrative passage with 62% and at the frustration level on the third grade narrative passage with a 25%, but achieved a 100% on the third grade expository level. Administrators again suggested that motivation or interest may have played a significant role in these outcomes.

In interviewing his previous tutor, the researcher learned that DQ struggled with composing short and very minimal sentences (see Appendix C). The tutor also observed that DQ rushed through writing, eager to finish and move on. When she would offer guidance or encourage him to keep going, his body language would become resistant and he would declare his work to be fine as is. She noted that his annoyance at being corrected became a huge theme throughout their time together, and stated that DQ’s biggest challenge was remaining motivated after making errors. She went on to discuss several instances where he would just stop participating after she’d try to correct him. The next section details the literacy intervention and details the quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered.

**The Intervention**
This intervention consisted of six 60-minute sessions that focused on building motivation in the areas of decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary. At the beginning of each session, the researcher would use ten minutes to establish rapport and trust. Thirty minutes were dedicated to reading aloud from a novel the student chose, where the participant and investigator focused on decoding and the willingness to self-correct miscues. Ten minutes were dedicated to focus on vocabulary building and the remaining ten minutes at the end of each session were used to let the child respond in a journal that utilized identical prompts each session. These prompts measured the student’s motivation in completing tasks that he found difficult. The next section will present quantitative findings in regards to decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation.

**Decoding**

The researcher tracked miscues and successfully decoded words from the novel (see Appendix H). On day one DQ corrected eight words after mispronouncing or not trying these words independently on the first try. On day two he decoded 15 words. He decoded 17 words on day three. On day four he decoded 18, and on day five DQ decoded nine words. Finally, during the last session DQ decoded 18 words. To preserve fluency and keep the child motivated the researcher did not prompt DQ to correct all mispronounced words. Figure three compares the number of miscues and decoded words per session.
Vocabulary

In addition to tracking miscues, the researcher also created a word chart that tracked new vocabulary words mastered. The chart was created around the theme of Naruto, this subject’s favorite graphic novel series, and entitled Team Seven Ninja Word Academy (see Appendix E). Each day, DQ could place the words he sounded out or broke apart and defined on the chart. Before sticking the words to the chart he would have to verbally prove he knew their meanings. On day one, DQ mastered three words. On day two he pronounced and defined nine words. On day three, he decoded and defined 16 words. On day four DQ placed 17 words, and day five yielded 10 words. On the final day DQ decoded and defined 11 words. Figure Four represents successfully decoded vocabulary words that were placed on the Ninja Academy Word Chart each day.
In addition to the vocabulary chart, DQ also managed a themed word-tower where he would place antonyms he mastered. (see Appendix F). DQ mastered these words by pairing antonym cards and verbally stating their meanings to the investigator. He was able to post a total of 29 antonyms with an average of 1.5 syllables. Figure five below illustrates the number of antonyms placed each day.

**Figure 5**
**Comprehension**

The researcher also collected information about her subject’s ability to extract the relevant ideas of the text. She would stop after each page to question him about the important events of the passage they read together. The working researcher’s journal explains how she’d conduct these comprehension checks as if DQ were the teacher (see Appendix G). The researcher would state that she didn’t remember or understand what was going on, and asked the subject to explain happened. DQ was able to recall the passage events and articulate them to the researcher 100% of the time. His student journal also reveals accurate oral comprehension and is detailed in figure six below (see Appendix C). The researcher included his spelling mistakes.

*Figure 6. Comprehension. This figure illustrates the subject’s ability to answer three content questions each day.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>The main idea of this passage</th>
<th>I liked it when________.</th>
<th>I didn’t like how________.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Daniel has entire youth (eternal youth) and power to changing people mind.</td>
<td>The farmer took him in as a family</td>
<td>people think he is differnt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>He’s having a hard time and trying to figure himself out.</td>
<td>He was not scardy to still (steal)</td>
<td>when he had to be in jail for 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>That he is moveing in with sally. (Researcher boxed he and replaced with contraction he’s).</td>
<td>That he got to meet Holly</td>
<td>Blank—student reported there wasn’t anything he didn’t like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>He told Molly about his feeling.</td>
<td>When he was open to tell Molly about him. (Researcher capitalized Molly and inserted period).</td>
<td>When they got whip for not complaining. (Researcher inserted suffix to make whipped and added period).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>to make Holly’s mom call michael (Student capitalized Holly on his own; researcher</td>
<td>when Michael was friendly to Daniel (student capitalized Daniel on his own;</td>
<td>when michael said “I hate this cake!” (Student added quotes on his own; researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One final piece of quantitative evidence collected in this journal was the student’s motivation. Every session would end with DQ completing three multiple choice questions that presented varied degrees of continued motivation (see Appendix C). Figure seven details the responses he circled. The three questions and multiple choice answers included:

- When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/ like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new).
- When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work).
- I’m (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn’t succeed on the first try.

Figure seven compares the number of positive responses from the subject (responses that indicated the child was willing to keep trying or was happy with his efforts), versus the number of negative responses (including quitting, feeling like the teacher was wrong, and getting angry). For all three prompts in every session, the student chose to view his progress and continued motivation in a positive light, totaling 18 positive responses to zero negative responses for each question (see Appendix C).
In studying the continued motivation amidst language deficits, the researcher found it necessary to collect qualitative research in addition to the aforementioned quantitative evidence. This investigator’s working journal explores DQ’s daily interactions with the material and the facilitator (Appendix G).

**Qualitative Data**

**Day 1.**

The subject and researcher were introduced; the researcher asked the subject about his interests and then allowed DQ to teach her about this interest. He responded with Naruto, a series of adolescent graphic novels about ninjas. The researcher also asked questions about the characters of Naruto, modeling how to accept correction from the student after she would
attempt to write the characters but spell them incorrectly. The researcher went on to explain how these sessions would look, established rapport with the student, and encouraged him to choose a book. DQ choose *The Boy Who Could Fly* (Simons, 2006) and the researcher and subject proceeded to read aloud for the following 30 minutes, stopping for comprehension checks and to correct mispronounced words. For the first four pages, the researcher read aloud to model fluency. DQ read the remaining five pages out loud. The researcher reported that DQ had a tendency to rush and pronounce words based on the first two letters. For example, he would say whistled for whipped, or peering for piercing. As DQ read, the researcher used her finger to visually break apart words. The researcher covered the suffix and had him pronounce the base word, then covered the base word for him to pronounce the suffix, then instructed him to blend the word parts out loud. DQ responded to this explicit segmenting with no hesitation and followed the instructions. The researcher informed DQ that she noticed how when he broke words apart he was really good at figuring them out. The researcher observed that DQ continued to rush and ‘guess’ at words throughout his reading aloud. The researcher would re-prompt with a sound cue while pointing to the word he mispronounced, repeating the visual segmentation with her finger. DQ would comply in re-visiting the words to practice blending word-parts. This entry also stressed the researcher’s tendency towards descriptive feedback—how she reinforced corrections by telling him how good he was at decoding when he broke words apart. Details within the researcher’s journal reveal a student who struggled with decoding and writing but was willing to self-correct much of the time. For example, this excerpt from day one of tutoring illustrates a child who was eager to learn and ready to read. On day one, this student never refused to correct himself or answer questions.
On this day the researcher introduced the antonyms tower. In the first session he posted fresh, stale, forgive and blame. He had difficulty pronouncing cowardly until the researcher covered the word parts with her fingers; he then matched it with brave. DQ wasn’t able to match cheap, cowardly, expensive, sharp, or blunt correctly on the first try. After the researcher prompted him, though, it was clear he knew the definitions of cheap and expensive and was able to pair them on his own. He did not post them today, however, because he did not decode them independently.

Day 2.

Within the first few moments of this session, the researcher reported that DQ began talking about how poor his hand writing was. She asked him why he thought that and stated that he couldn’t articulate an answer. He volunteered to write his name on the board; he did and offered that he was ‘really bad in cursive’. The researcher took the dry erase and asked if he wanted to see what it looked like in cursive; he said yes. She proceeded and DQ said he could never do that. The researcher detailed a conversation where she compared practice in playing video games to practice with writing. The student went on to practice his name three times in cursive. The researcher responded to each attempt by stating which letters were getting more legible.

The researcher discussed the student’s comfort level with the book they began reading and DQ stated that he liked it. She asked him about the novel and was impressed with his ability to engage in that conversation, as well as his overall demeanor. She stated that comprehension seemed to be a relative strength, but that DQ had significant struggles in decoding—specifically in guessing at words or leaving off word-endings, and in writing. The researcher stated that she would help him practice writing his sentences in his journal. She also recommended that after he
constructed a sentence he should read it aloud to be sure it made sense. The investigator then suggested they both write the same sentence up on the board to compare. After comparing them, DQ corrected his mistakes. The researcher reported that her purpose in these strategies was to encourage meta-cognition and self-correction. DQ posted brave, cowardly, sharp, blunt, cruel, and kind to the antonym tower today.

Day 3.

Though he shared about his trip to Mississippi and spoke about his home life; he also expressed frustration for the first time. The researcher introduced contractions, which seemed to stump DQ. She documented that it’s clear he understood a contraction is two words put together, but he couldn’t blend the sounds and pronounce the whole word. She reinforced what a difficult task those words were how close he was solving them. In this session, the researcher observed that he struggled in recognizing vowel sounds. At this time, DQ was working with another tutor on phonics and decoding strategies, but she hadn’t seen him apply any of those strategies, only a tendency to rush past words and correct at her prompt. She reported that he was happy to chart new vocabulary on a Naruto-themed chart that tracked the words he mastered. The researcher also wrote that she thought her advisor being there to observe may have affected DQ.

The researcher went on to say that comprehension continued to be the subject’s strongest subject. She offered feedback in telling DQ he was her “details man” and how she was always able to count on him to summarize what he read. DQ posted shrink, expand, create, and destroy to the antonyms tower today.

Day 4.

The researcher stated that this session seemed to go much better. DQ seemed at ease and more comfortable. His self-corrections increased and the researcher offered feedback on specific
endings, stating that she noticed he was really getting good at tacking on those -ed endings. The researcher reported that DQ enjoyed the choral reading immensely; she hypothesized that it seemed to slow him down and pay attention to words. In this session the subject posted capture, release, expensive, and cheap to the tower.

**Day 5.**

The researcher wrote that today DQ came into session dejected and reluctant to smile. She asked him if he was ok; he said he was but he didn’t want to talk about it. The researcher responded that it was okay to keep it to himself until he wanted to share and that she knew whatever was happening would get better. He said it would and they proceeded with the work. In the eyes of the researcher, this led to a notable breakthrough.

DQ came across contractions again and hesitated. He told the researcher that he didn’t like these and the researcher verbally confirmed that they were tricky. (I’ve) in particular gave him troubles. The researcher addressed this in his previous journal entry where he wrote a sentence that included the words: he did. She asked him if he knew how to change that into a contraction; he said he did and proceeded to write (he’d) correctly. The researcher concluded that he understood the concept, just had a hard time recognizing which two words were contributing to the contraction. She documented that many of his endings were incorrect; for example he deleted the (s) from a plural word.

In this session the researcher questioned whether or not the subject knew what a possessive apostrophe meant. She provided explicit examples using meaningful topics: DeQuan’s games and Angel’s chew toy. The researcher reported that he never refused to go back and correct mis-pronounced words. He posted rapid, slow, stiff, flexible, suspect, and trust to the tower today.
Day 6.

DQ was happy to hear that the researcher called his mother and requested two more make-up meetings. He responded positively. The researcher reported that DQ was also happy to work with antonyms again; they segmented the syllables but he still had trouble with the same words he didn’t get last time. On this day he posted triumph, defeat, dull, sharp, appear, and vanish. Towards the end of this session DQ asked if the researcher to play hangman, which she did.

Conclusion

In six days of intervention, the subject was exposed to explicit decoding strategies, student-led trackers, and consistent, descriptive feedback. These strategies were imparted around a novel that the student chose, and extrinsic motivators incorporated the pop culture content this student was expert in. Throughout this study, a student who was reported to struggle with continued motivation after being corrected was willing to decode miscues whenever the investigator prompted him 100% of the time. Journal responses indicate a student that was satisfied in attempting new things and willing to continue tasks not yet mastered. Unfortunately, the subject’s mother had to cancel make-up sessions, but the tailored intervention revealed a student who would continue to challenge himself when tooled with explicit strategies and a voice in his own learning. The following chapter connects research from chapter two to the current action study, discusses the current study’s strengths and weaknesses, and provides recommendations specific to DQ.
Chapter Five

Conclusions

Chapter five synthesizes the peer-reviewed research from chapter two and the intervention results reported in chapter four. This chapter grants the investigator an opportunity to explore why some strategies were effective within the context of this intervention, as well as why some techniques didn’t produce significant results. In addition to considering past and action research, this study’s strengths and limitations will be discussed. To conclude this chapter, recommendations for the student in lieu of these results will be provided.

Connection to Research

Historical records and anecdotal information determined that DQ’s most significant barrier lay within the realm of continued motivation, and it is this element that informed the majority of the intervention. As the sessions proceeded, however, it became clear that the participant also exhibited severe decoding deficits. This action research, then, became an intervention that employed extrinsic motivation incentives surrounding the subject’s willingness to self-correct miscues using the process of syllabification. The intervention also employed extrinsic motivators in monitoring the subject’s comprehension and vocabulary levels.

Explicit strategies.

The majority of research that informed my current study explored the effects of explicit teaching and strategies on adolescents with reading disabilities. For example, Vaughn, et. al (2010) suggested that adolescents with reading deficits may benefit from explicit and customized interventions, as opposed to simultaneously and passively exposing them to many or all elements of literacy. These researchers enrolled 327 southwestern urban special education middle school students in a study that placed 115 participants in a tier one intervention, while the remaining
212 students were placed in a tier two intervention. While tier one students received literacy instruction within the scope of their regular classes, tier two students received explicit instruction on how to decode words according to syllables, how to improve fluency and comprehension, and finally, how to apply those strategies to interpreting narrative and expository texts. Tier two students only made significant gains in sight words, and investigators concluded that generalized literacy interventions might not be as effective as teaching explicit strategies specific to a child’s need and abilities (Vaughn, 2010). Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) expanded upon this theory in hypothesizing that focused, explicit instruction yields greater results than exposing students to broad literacy strategies. Though these researchers taught more than one aspect of literacy to a group of 9-14 year olds with urban backgrounds, they isolated each component and explicitly taught one strategy at a time. They found that the students who received this explicit instruction outperformed the control group, who received guided reading instruction only, in areas of fluency, decoding, and comprehension. This study suggested that older students who are significantly behind in reading can make significant progress in a relatively short amount of time when components of literacy are isolated and strategies taught explicitly (Manset-Williamson and Nelson, 2005).

The aforementioned research strongly influenced my literacy intervention. In order to raise DQ’s decoding abilities, explicit strategies would need to be taught, modeled, and reinforced. Based on prior research, I armed DQ with specific strategies to decode unfamiliar words and provided several opportunities to practice this technique. I refined the intervention based on the premise that the acquisition of these decoding tools would result in increased decoding achievement.
Allinder and Dunse, et. al (2001), confirmed the need for developing explicit interventions and expanded on it. These researchers decided that explicit strategies became even more powerful when facilitators based them on knowing your student and his or her particular deficits. They divided fifty suburban Midwest middle school subjects into two groups. The first received explicit prompts on a bookmark regarding learned reading strategies that were tailored to the individual students’ needs, while remaining participants were given bookmarks that merely provided generic encouragement. Statistically significant gains were made by the group receiving customized prompts. These researchers emphasized the necessity of individual strengths and weaknesses informing which explicit strategies are taught and scaffolded (Allinder, et. al, 2001).

Based on this research, I took a thorough inventory of DQ’s strengths and weaknesses as reported by various standardized tests, his IEP, and anecdotal information collected from previous tutors and parents. This information revealed deficits in continued motivation and several aspects of literacy, as this child was below grade level in areas of decoding and fluency. In considering prior research that lauded explicit instruction in specific areas of literacy, I determined that continued motivation and increased decoding skills would be the focus of this intervention, and delved into which strategies would enable decoding and sustain motivation.

**Decoding and syllabification.**

Like the previous researchers, Saez and Fuchs (2002) argued for explicit teaching. But they advocated for explicit decoding strategies as necessary in achieving fluency and thus, comprehension. In their study, which exposed 111 students to both expository and narrative passages, researchers asked participants comprehension questions. Overall, students performed much better on the narrative than expository text questions. Researchers hypothesized this was
due not only to students having more prior knowledge about narratives than expository text, but more challenges in decoding the unfamiliar vocabulary expository text presents (Saez & Fuchs, 2002). For this reason, Saez and Fuchs advocate specific and explicit decoding strategies.

My action research focused on the explicit decoding method used by Bhattacharya and Ehri (2004): syllabification. These researchers choose 60 participants from five urban middle and high schools in New York City to study the same 100 words. Subjects were divided into three groups, one that received whole group instruction, one that received explicit instruction in how to divide and blend words according to syllables, and one that received no instruction. Those receiving explicit instruction in how to divide words according to syllables and then blend those sounds outperformed everyone else in all tested areas. These findings suggest that interventions should incorporate the explicit instruction of dividing words into syllables and modeling how to blend them in order for lower level readers to raise academic levels (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004).

Based on the positive results of the above study, and in order to raise DQ’s decoding abilities, my intervention incorporated the explicit decoding strategy of syllabification. This process of breaking words into parts according to syllables made unfamiliar words accessible for DQ. We practiced blending and utilized this method of deciphering words every day. DQ was a willing participant who would employ syllabification with and without prompting. I recorded the number of words he mispronounced and the number of words he corrected using this method and provided an opportunity for him to track those words.

Motivation and interest.

Morris and Gaffney (2011) also found interventions that focused on one, clear aspect of literacy benefited a middle-school student with significant reading deficits. Results state that
this intensive focus increased the fluency level of its subject by one grade level over one year. The current study limited itself to one main aspect of literacy development as well; though other components were present they remained secondary to decoding. Also important were the motivational methods employed by these researchers. The results of this study show researchers that building an intervention that employs the reading of familiar, engaging material can be successful when the student is accessing content on his level and offered positive feedback (Morris & Gaffney, 2011). Not only did the authors explicitly teach and model reading strategies, they engaged the student in charting his own progress through the use of visual trackers (Morris and Gaffney, 2011). Based on this research, the current action study also employed consistent and descriptive feedback, as well as student-led progress trackers. For every attempt at decoding a word correctly, the current subject was able to place his word on a chart. Additional, antonyms that were paired correctly were also placed on a ‘word tower’ by the student. Similar to recommendations by Morris and Gaffney, the current researchers built student-managed charts that tracked progress and offered a competitive outlet that appealed to the specific needs of the child.

These researchers recognized the importance of building a curriculum that was meaningful to the child in order for him to practice basic literacy tasks, and the current action study was developed with this in mind. Compton-Lilly (2006) echoes this. Her case study determined that instruction must fit the needs and interests reluctant learners. An appreciation of the subject’s character and identity is necessary to making gains with students who face considerable academic deficits or who may have been marginalized due to socioeconomic factors (Compton-Lilly, 2006). Compton-Lilly (2006) saw significant improvement in a six-year-old African American first-grader who qualified for the intervention based on low-test scores and
delays in the regular education classroom. My action research was also devised around the subject’s identity. I created customized student-led charts that tracked vocabulary progress based on the theme of Naruto, DQ’s favorite character. I would also facilitate opportunities for the student to teach me about Naruto, thereby allowing him to be the expert who was giving me the opportunity to be corrected. Much like Compton-Lily’s, my case study utilized student and parent interviews. This became pivotal in engaging Compton-Lilly’s student as well as my own subject. Both Compton-Lily and I constructed an intervention where pop culture became the means by which these students acquired and generalized literacy strategies.

Ultimately, Compton-Lily argues that an intervention must be informed by the preferences of the child, and that the facilitator must be diligent in uncovering these authentic interests when faced with an unwilling reader/writer (Compton-Lily, 2006). In devising the current research study, I considered Lily’s research on identity and allowed DQ to choose the novel that would become the center of this intervention. I then utilized student-managed visual trackers surrounding the theme of Neruto, the child’s favorite fictional video game character (See Appendix F).

Additional research confirmed that student engagement and motivation is often times the key to success in planning successful interventions. Unrau and Schlackman (2006) expand upon previous research in the fields of motivation and self-regulation by exploring incentives and their effects on reluctant student learners.

**Extrinsic incentives.**

Unrau and Schlackman (2006) discovered that boys are more likely to invest in learning when competition is involved. I used customized trackers that encouraged the subject to attain certain levels. I was also receptive to playing vocabulary games that engaged the student with...
no-fail scenarios. In offering extrinsic motivators such as winning or advancing on a visual tracker, Miller and Hom (1990) hypothesized that boys in particular would be more likely to prevail when encountering challenging or new material. These researchers concluded that a child who values whether he or not he succeeds in a task is distracted by external incentives, thereby negating a threat to ego because the potential reward is more meaningful Miller and Hom (1990). They gave 131 undergraduate college students the opportunity to answer 31 computerized questions, giving varied levels of feedback and rewards. Investigators found a significant relationship existed between offering rewards for accomplishing difficult tasks (Miller & Hom, 1990). When participants were offered incentives for attempting impossible questions, they persisted; those who were not motivated by rewards gave up in the face of extremely difficult questions. Given my anecdotal data about DQ’s history in being competitive and shutting down in the face of difficult academic task, I created a study that used two kinds of external incentives: student-led trackers that and descriptive positive feedback. My goal in doing this was to incorporate an element of competition (albeit against the subject’s own self) and encourage DQ to add as many words to the tracker as possible. The trackers also provided an external distraction to the fear of failing at syllabification, as Miller and Hom reported.

After considering the research discussed above, I devised a literacy intervention that incorporated decoding and motivational strategies appropriate for my student. The next section will provide an explanation of the results of my action research.

**Explanation of Results**

Based on the body of research presented in chapter two of this document, the strategies of syllabification and using extrinsic incentives that incorporate the subject’s identity are expected
to motivate and raise his academic decoding levels. The following section analyzes the results of the intervention data from chapter four.

**Decoding and syllabification.**

Chapter four discusses how many words DQ attempted to correct after stumbling upon or mispronouncing them on the first attempt. Figure three reveals a ratio of words read wrong to words corrected, and when considering these in percentages, the data does reveal an increase in words decoded over the six sessions. During the first session, DQ was willing to correct only 36% of mispronounced words. By the sixth session, that percentage had risen to 66%. Perhaps most important is the fact that he never refused to attempt corrections. In considering anecdotal information from previous tutors and inconsistent pre-test scores, DQ’s demonstrated persistence in correcting miscues suggest that arming the subject with a strategy that has been explicitly taught and reinforced increased decoding abilities.

**Motivation**

In this case study DQ, a child with reported high levels of frustration regarding difficult literacy tasks, exhibiting persistence in all facets of the intervention. This study reveals a child who was willing to participate in all sessions. The quantitative evidence in figure six relates high comprehension levels, showing a capacity to retell important events in the story. Additionally, the subject was able to discuss plot and thematic events critically. Creating student-led trackers that were themed according to his preferences encouraged high levels of trust which manifested in continued motivation in the face of new literacy strategies. As Miller and Hom (1990) suggested, the presence of these visuals may have also supplanted fear of failure. Figure three shows that there were several words DQ did not recognize. Figure three illustrates the subject’s willingness to self-correct and apply the strategy of syllabification to three words on day one,
nine words on day two, 16 words on day three, 17 words on day four, ten words on day five, and 11 words on day six. Results from this study seem to support that adolescents with intense ego value who avoid taking academic risks benefit from extrinsic motivators, such as competitive visual achievement trackers.

In addition to the evidence offered in figure three, the subject’s journal questions in figure seven relate a positive interactive experience with content. Figure seven illustrates the subject repeatedly choosing options that reflect a high level of engagement and continued motivation. Each day the subject chose a response that stated he either was happy in his attempt at a new and challenging task or that he was happy for trying and produced good work. In answering three metacognitive questions that encouraged him to reflect on his emotions during each session and while encountering challenging material, he answered 100% of the inquiries by choosing a positive response. The multiple choice options for answering these questions posed two options: a child who gives up in the face of difficulty and/or gets frustrated at whoever is facilitating the activity, or feelings that reflect pride in attempting something new, even if not correctly at the first attempt. This anecdotal evidence reports a child who never refused to try, and was willing to reflect on his reactions to challenging academic material. This journal opportunity for increased metacognition perhaps fostered an awareness that the attempt, not refusing to continue, is the appropriate choice when facing unfamiliar content. Figure seven reports that DQ remained very positive about his performance.

Though the quantitative and qualitative evidence from this study characterize DQ as a child with high levels of motivation who is willing to take academic risks, it is necessary to acknowledge shortcomings within this and any research study. The following section discusses
the strengths and limitations found within the present case study and considers those factors in presenting conclusions as well as suggesting recommendations to increase DQ’s reading levels.

**Strengths and Limitations**

The current action study contained strengths and limitations. A substantial strength of this intervention was the researcher’s ability to tailor the sessions to the need and interests of the subject. Because DQ demonstrated significant decoding deficits, and as a result of the anecdotal data that reported dwindling motivation to read and write, this investigator focused on those aspects of his literacy development. Additionally, the study population was a strength. Working with one student eliminated peer distraction and social comparisons. The participant never refused to work and was willing to decode unfamiliar vocabulary, and well as demonstrate comprehension and measure his feelings towards academic tasks. These findings should not, however, automatically be applied to general populations. Because the intervention was designed according to DQ’s specific capabilities and deficits, the intervention may not apply to other sixth grade students with reading disabilities. The most important limitations to this research was the lack of time the investigator had with her subject, as well as the lack of post test data to tell if the intervention positively affected his results. Because of schedule and transportation conflicts, and in spite of the researcher attempting to reschedule, he was unable to attend sessions seven and eight. Time permitting, I would have transitioned from extrinsic incentives towards an emphasize on intrinsic motivation. Given that extrinsic motivation doesn’t typically work for every child, and that skill mastery may be the most important factor in motivation, the focus of the current study on external motivators might also be considered a limitation.
Recommendations and Conclusions

Because this intervention was limited to six 60-minute sessions, I cannot fully state that the strategies in this action research increased DQ’s decoding and motivational levels. He was able to consistently take risks in applying new decoding strategies and never displayed his prior tendency to refuse to correct mistakes. It is reasonable, however, to consider that this progress may have been a result of these intervention strategies, which merits further discussion in regards to how students with similar deficits could benefit from explicit interventions that incorporate incentive and identity.

The Common Core Standards that are addressed in this action research include:

- Reading and Language Standards for 6-12, Grade 6, Reading Literature
  - RL.6.1. Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
  - RL.6.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choice on meaning and tone.
  - RL.6.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
  - L.6.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
o L.6.4. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word.

o L.6.4. Consult reference materials (e.g. dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.

o L.6.4. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g. by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

o RL.6.10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiency, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

In order for DQ to continue developing his literacy skills in the area of decoding and vocabulary, instruction should surround the abovementioned Common Core Standards. An intense and explicit focus on syllables, affixes, and vowel sounds and patterns will benefit DQ.

Professional observation and anecdotal information make evident the fact that DQ is able to pursue all elements of literacy development. He will often randomly guess at unfamiliar vocabulary or become reluctant to engage in academics that do not interest him. He has a tendency to look at the first letter of a word and guess what it is without studying the parts and particularly the word ending if he’s not explicitly prompted to employ modeled strategies. This researcher recommends that DQ receive interventions that explicitly teach decoding strategies and reinforce phonics within the context of this child’s preferences from a professional who
offers consistent descriptive feedback and supports learning with visual student-led mastery trackers.

This action case study revealed that DQ would not benefit from a one-size-fits-all phonics or reading regiment without explicitly arming him with decoding techniques and encouraging him with the culture and identity references he finds relevant. It may take a significant amount of time for DQ to practice and internalize these strategies to the point of generalizing them across content. Teachers should be aware of DQ’s history with academic frustration and use external motivators to distract from the threat of diminishing his ego. While results of this study show that DQ is capable of working hard to increase his vocabulary levels with content that is meaningful to him, future teachers should continue one-on-one support that reinforces basic decoding skills to increase academic levels.
REFERENCES


Saenz, L., & Fuchs, L. S. (2002). Examining the reading difficulty of secondary students with


Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

1. What do you like to do in your spare time? **Play games.**
2. What kind of animal do you have for a pet? **None.**
3. What kind of books or magazines do you read for fun? **Adventure books.**
4. Who are your heroes? **My mom and grandmother.**
5. What sports are you interested in? **Swimming and football.**
6. How much TV do you watch each day? **Three to four hours.**
7. What kind of TV programs do you like to watch? **Simpsons, Family Guy.**
8. How much time do you listen to the radio each day? **30 to 45 minutes.**
9. How much time each day do you spend playing video games? **One to two hours.**
10. What do you like best about school? **Getting to know others and learning new things.**
11. Is there anything you don’t like about school? **The work can be hard at time and I don’t enjoy reading all that much.**
12. Do you use a computer at home? **Yes**
13. Is you had three wishes, what would you wish for? **A car, house, and own a college.**
Appendix B: Parent Questionnaire

1. Is there any additional pertinent family information that would help us serve your child?
   
   None.

2. Why is your child coming to the Literacy Center at this time? He struggles when reading.

3. How would you describe any challenges in learning your child exhibits? He would shut down if he didn’t understand or know what to do.
Appendix C: Previous Tutor Interview Notes

“I wasn’t a perfect fit. (She’s had tons of experience in Chicago) He missed a few sessions. His biggest impediment was shutting down after becoming frustrated. Has a very elevated view of himself; DQ wants to be president or an astronaut. When you try to correct him he gets pissed, not rude, though. He tells tall tales and exaggerates. He will shut down in every aspect of reading and writing. DQ has high comprehension levels and decent vocabulary…he made no real measurable gains with me from pre to post testing. His mom has his ear…she is very involved and he is very active in the Boys and Girls Club. He enjoys swimming and skateboarding. Most of the books we read weren’t interesting to DQ. Our biggest success was with the Little Bill series, which are picture books. He really enjoyed reading them aloud….Tried to read and expository text about MLK, DQ claimed he already knew all about him. He didn’t. Enjoyed flashcard game and is very competitive.”
Appendix D: Subject's Journal

DeQuan's Journal Date: 12-28-2011

My Reading.

Today, I read The Boy who would like forever.

It took us 21 minutes to read this.

The main idea of this chapter/book was:
Daniel has entire you and power to changing people mind.

I liked it when:

The farmer took him in as a family

I didn't like how:

people think he is different

My Vocabulary.

How many antonyms (opposites) did I get right? 4 pairs

How many sight words did I know in Word Football?
Pears = ear

These are some new words I learned today:

Cowardly

On the back of this page, I will show you how I can use these new words in complete sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. I will write sentences today:
My Thoughts.

In the space below, I will tell you about one challenging task I did today.

getting beat by a woman

Complete the following statements by circling the answer(s) that best describe(s) your feelings toward the challenging task you described above.

When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new).

When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work).

I'm (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn't succeed on the first try.
DeQuan’s Journal  Date:  4-20-11

My Reading.
Today, I read  

It took us 145 minutes to read this.

The main idea of this chapter/book was:

He’s having a hard time and trying to figure himself out.

I liked it when:
He was not scared anymore.

I didn’t like how:
when he had to be in jail for 7 years.

My Vocabulary.
How many antonyms (opposites) did I get right? _____

How many sight words did I know in Word Football? _____

These are some new words I learned today:
Convict, optimistic, voyage.

On the back of this page, I will show you how I can use these new words in complete sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. I will write _____ sentences today.

I am going on a voyage to Mississippi. I am optimistic that I will do good in high school.
My Thoughts.

In the space below, I will tell you about one challenging task I did today.

Putting the word together

Complete the following statements by circling the answer(s) that best describe(s) your feelings toward the challenging task you described above.

When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/ like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new).

When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work).

I'm (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn't succeed on the first try.
DeQuan’s Journal  

Date: 1-12-2011

My Reading.

Today, I read the Boy who would live forever.

It took us 35 minutes to read this.

The main idea of this chapter/book was: That he is moving in with Sally. He’s.

I liked it when: That he got to meet Holly.

I didn’t like how:

My Vocabulary.

How many antonyms (opposites) did I get right? (All)

How many sight words did I know in Word Football?

These are some new words I learned today:

Horizon, blunt

On the back of this page, I will show you how I can use these new words in complete sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. I will write ____ sentences today.
My Thoughts.

In the space below, I will tell you about one challenging task I did today.

was to say the contractions

Complete the following statements by circling the answer(s) that best describe(s) your feelings toward the challenging task you described above.

When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new).

When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work).

I’m (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn’t succeed on the first try.
DeQuan’s Journal  Date: 7/14/11

My Reading.
Today, I read *The Boy Who Would Live Forever*.
It took us 1 minutes to read this.
The main idea of this chapter/book was:

I liked it when:

*When he was open to tell Molly about him.*

I didn’t like how:

*When they got whip for not complaining.*

My Vocabulary.

How many antonyms (opposites) did I get right? _____

How many sight words did I know in Word Football? _____

These are some new words I learned today:

On the back of this page, I will show you how I can use these new words in complete sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. I will write _____ sentences today.
My Thoughts.
In the space below, I will tell you about one challenging task I did today.

Complete the following statements by circling the answer(s) that best describe(s) your feelings toward the challenging task you described above.

When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new).

When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work).

I’m (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn’t succeed on the first try.
DeQuan’s Journal  Date: 7/19/11

My Reading.

Today, I read The Boy who would live forever

It took us 2:45 to 3:25 minutes to read this.

The main idea of this chapter/book was:

to make Holly’s mom call Michael

I liked it when:

when Michael was friendly to Daniel

I didn’t like how:

when Michael said “I hate this cake!”

My Vocabulary.

How many antonyms (opposites) did I get right? __________

How many sight words did I know in Word Football? __________

These are some new words I learned today:

12 new words

On the back of this page, I will show you how I can use these new words in complete sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. I will write ______ sentences today.
My Thoughts.

In the space below, I will tell you about one challenging task I did today.

Complete the following statements by circling the answer(s) that best describe(s) your feelings toward the challenging task you described above.

When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/ like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new).

When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work).

I’m (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn’t succeed on the first try.
DeQuan’s Journal  Date: 7-11-2011

My Reading.
Today, I read The boy would live forever.
It took us 28:01 to 32:35 minutes to read this.
The main idea of this chapter/book was: Becoming a Human.

I liked it when:
When he stayed with Holly and did not leave her.

I didn’t like how:
When they saying do you what to come with us.

My Vocabulary.
How many antonyms (opposites) did I get right? ______
How many sight words did I know in Word Football? ______
These are some new words I learned today:

On the back of this page, I will show you how I can use these new words in complete sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. I will write ______ sentences today.
My Thoughts.

In the space below, I will tell you about one challenging task I did today.

Complete the following statements by circling the answer(s) that best describe(s) your feelings toward the challenging task you described above.

When I started this challenging task, I felt (angry/frustrated/frustrated, but willing to try/determined to do it my own way/ like the teacher was wrong/happy to be learning something new).

When I started this challenging task, I (got frustrated and quit/tried my best and need to keep practicing/tried my best and produced good work).

I'm (happy/angry) with myself for trying this new and difficult task, even if I didn’t succeed on the first try.
Appendix E: Working Researcher’s Journal

Day One 6-28-2011:

Agenda:
230-245: Icebreaker
330-345: Antonyms
345-400: Word Football and Journaling

Overall, D was a great kid. Given his previous tutor’s progress report and some answers from his mother’s survey I expected him to ‘shut down’ often, but he didn’t at all. I’m not sure if it was our honeymoon or what, but he was super willing to do or correct whatever I asked. I really stressed descriptive feedback and how he was good at breaking up words; I hypothesize that this detailed praise have been a factor in how willing he was to go back and do so. He picked out his own book and I feel like it’s at a good instructional level for him. He knows what’s going on in the story and can remember main ideas. Our goal will be to complete the book and maybe try to write an organized short essay at the end. I will read aloud for a bit in our next session before he does to model fluency and gauge oral comprehension. Plus, it’ll get us through the book quicker so we have time to do some fun, Blooms-friendly project with it at the end. In our first session, decoding seems to be his biggest issue, not motivation. Our rapport was such that he was willing to make corrections.

Decoding: D had a tendency to rush and pronounce words as he thought they should be rather than what they really were. For example, he would say whistled for whipped, or peering for piercing. Some were quite off—a huge indicator that he really isn’t decoding according to word parts, just grasping for words he already had in his head. I started to break words up with my finger by covering the suffix and having him pronounce just the base, then covering the base for him to pronounce just the suffix, then instructed him to put them together. This helped a lot. After a while, I told him I noticed that when he broke words apart he was really good at figuring them out, trying to reinforce this process. As time went on he seemed to rush more and continued to ‘guess’ at words more. I would follow along and re-prompt with a sound cue while pointing to the word he mispronounced and he’d go back and get it right. He needs incredibly explicit instruction in phonics and how to break up words. He seemed to not even know, in some instances, what sounds a simple word blend made. I spoke to his phonics tutor after our session, and he informed that they would be focusing on this in their time together. For our sight words game, he got except, straight, bottom, and rather wrong. I will re-introduce these next session.

Fluency: D likes to read fast and tackles unfamiliar words by guessing at them. He was very willing to go back and fix those words whenever I cued him to make corrections, which surprised me given previous concern about his inability to accept guidance or be corrected. Professional observation puts him at pronouncing every one out of every six to eight words incorrectly. Not sure that he has the skills to self-regulate, given he glazes over words he doesn’t know by guessing and just moves on.
Comprehension: I told D I was a little slow and needed to recap. Explained that often I couldn’t comprehend what I was reading and would have to go back and reread, so could he please explain what was happening? That way it seems like me needing help, not me evaluating his comprehension. Overall he was pretty in the ball bark, bringing up the most recent thing he read to answer my comp questions. Which made sense, cuz I would typically stop when we had just read some new, pivotal information.

New Vocab: Talked about words as we encountered them, like sight words (I used the video game analogy of how he automatically just knew which buttons to push he’d practiced so much), burrow, cowardly, and the homophone pair. He brought up how he couldn’t stop thinking about eating pears. I asked him if he knew the word for words that sounded the same but had different meanings, and he did. We tried to spell the word by sounding it out. He wrote homphyne. I started him over and emphasized the homO. Then I told him I was real impressed that he got the ph and didn’t say f. Then I emphasized the second O and he finished right with the ne. I’m trying to stress that certain letters make certain sounds when I walk him through a word like that.

In our antonyms game, he had trouble pronouncing cowardly until I covered word parts with my fingers….then he put them together on this own. He wasn’t able to match cheap, cowardly, expensive, sharp, or blunt correctly on the first try. After I asked him, though, it was clear he knew the definitions of cheap and expensive. Blunt was most difficult so we went over that orally.

Writing: See journal. Will take misspelled words, break them up into physical parts for him to rearrange and spell correctly. For example, he spelled eternal youth ‘entire you’. I will break up those words in a puzzle for him to see the different word parts. Then I will give him a spelling test. After this spelling test whatever he gets write I will put on our chart.

**Day Two 6-30-11:**

Today was interesting because D immediately started in on how poor his writing was. I asked him why he thought so, but he couldn’t seem to articulate an answer. He volunteered to write his name on the board. He did. He then offered that he was ’really’ bad in cursive. I took the dry erase and asked if he wanted to see what it looked like in cursive; he said yes. Then D said he could never do that. I was all, dude stop you’ll never be able to do what you say you can’t do. I couldn’t write in cursive, either, back in the day, etc, but I learned. And I can’t play video games, but whatdya think would happen if I practiced everyday for a month? I’d get better! Etc. I didn’t want to press this but it’s clear he’d benefit from explicit instruction in writing strategies. We talked some more about his comfort level with the book; he likes it. We talked about the elements of story…he’s sharp about it…volunteered things like setting, plot, characters, etc. I asked him if he ever learned about theme and we started talking about the theme of our book and what the word identity means. We talked about the possibility of constructing an essay about our book on my laptop; he seemed excited to use my computer. I asked if I could read aloud for a bit and then hand off to him; he said sure. Really congenial, super polite, says excuse me, wants to share his snack, opened up about his fam. Incredibly pleasant kid to be around.

Agenda
230-245 I read aloud
245-320 D reads to me
320-340 Journal comp questions. We talk about the words he had difficulty with during the last meeting in antonyms and football, talk about some of the new words he encountered today.

340-400 Journal sentences and antonyms. All antonyms correct this time. We were a little more chatty this time around, discussing his upcoming trip to Mississippi. Linked some new vocab (voyage from book) to it. Reminded him to bring me his Neruto books to share!

Decoding: See running record.

Writing: His lack of confidence with writing was really revealed today. Two strategies today: before you turn your writing in, reread out loud to make sure it makes sense. Based on last weeks journal, D has a tendency to omit words. I also asked him a comp question, then acted really pleased with his answer and told him to write it. I said I’d write the same sentence on the board and then we’d compare. My purpose in both those things was to get him in self-correction mode. Like, before I have someone else look at this, I’d better re-read to make sure it makes sense. He did this and caught his own mistakes. New words today: convict, optimistic, and voyage.

Comprehension still sharp. This seems to be a relative strength; at one point he was even pointing out details I had missed.

New vocab: convict, optimistic, voyage. Wrote complete sentences using all. Based on my first two sessions, I will be visually tracking D’s ability to self-correct. The goal is for him to automatically know when he’s mispronounced a word and that he has to go back and break them up, as well as to read his sentences to himself out loud after writing them. In effort to make him self-correct more often, I will reward the attempt to go back and break up words and re-read sentences, not necessarily if he does it perfectly. I’m still thinking about the details, but this will begin next session.

**Day Three 7-12-2011:**

Agenda:
10 Icebreaker
40 Shared Read Aloud
10 Chart Tracker
20 Antonyms
10 Journal

Today DeQuan told me about his trip to Mississippi. We also were observed by Heather, my advisor. Reading seemed strained; not sure if being watched had an impact on D but I know I was self-conscious, which probably rubbed off on him. He seemed to struggle more...perhaps wanting to read faster for the audience which made him make more mistakes? Some important developments today: vowels, contractions, and expressed frustration. D did really well in our antonyms game; got them all. Seemed to enjoy charting his new words even though he looked sideways at my Naruto themed stuff.

Vowels. It’s clear that D’s biggest issue is with recognizing vowel sounds. I know that his tutor is working with him on phonics and strategies, but I don’t see him applying these methods yet. I’m not even sure if he’s trying to recognize these letters; rather, relying on his vast vocabulary to continue to guess what words are. Heather (advisor/observer) pointed this out immediately after our session, stating how most all of
his mistakes were with these vowel sounds. I will begin to gather information on letter recognition to incorporate into our sessions.  

Contractions. It’s clear he understands that a contraction is two words put together, but he seems to then struggle with how to blend the sounds and pronounce. I kinda played up how pesky these words were and after encountering five or six he told me he didn’t like them. I tried to reinforce how he was close, and that he knew most of them, it’s just that there were a few we’d need to continue to work on. Frustration. I wonder if a new person observing myself and D is rough on a kid with ego issues. I mean, he seemed to read a little faster and I had to intervene often to correct. At one point I asked him how the ‘e’ sounded in the middle of the word and he indignantly responded “I don’t know” in a tone I hadn’t heard before. He tried and kept going after I immediately told him as not to shut him down, but I wonder if our honeymoon is over and that’s how his shut downs have started in the past. Comprehension continues to be amazing; I constantly tell him how he’s my details man and he’s always able to summarize what we’ve (he’s) read. He still is picking up details I don’t. When I read, his attention seems to wander but it’s evidently not because he’s always able to tell me what just happened. 

**Day Four 7/14/2011:**

Agenda:
- 10 Icebreaker
- 40 Shared Read Aloud
- 10 Chart Tracker
- 20 Antonyms
- 10 Journal

Today seemed to go much better with someone observing. DQ seemed at ease and more comfortable. His self corrections increased and I pinpointed endings to offer feedback on, stating that I noticed he was really getting good at tacking on those ed endings. The most significant thing that happened today was that DQ playfully encouraged me to alternate read with him. At first he would just wanna take breaks for a snack and we’d alternate paragraphs. I picked up on his playful mood and asked if we could read together out loud at the same time. He seemed to enjoy it and I noticed that this really caused him to slow down and pay attention to words; a lot of the time I think he wants to read fast and it causes him to skip words. But reading at a pace made him focus. Also and equally intriguing was when he suggested we read every other alternate word. This too made him focus incredibly hard on each and every word in the sentence to try and keep up; I’m not sure if he felt competitive and wanted to keep a quick pace or what but he didn’t take any words for granted and said every word in the sentence as opposed to skipping over some to read how he thinks the sentence should go. The downfall to this is I have to really pay attention, too, to participate, so I can’t record miscues. His accuracy def went up though, I’m sure partly because he was saying fifty percent of the words, but more importantly he wasn’t skipping words and he’d still allow me to cue mis-pronounced words with my finger that he’d retry and usually get right on the first attempt! Another limitation to this is comprehension; fluency is obviously lost when we’re doing alternate words. I will definitely have to monitor this.
We both seem really excited about this new ‘strategy’ he developed and I will try it with him again next time, marking in the book which words he gets wrong so I can track better.

**Day Five: 7-19-2011**

Agenda
- 10 Icebreaker
- 40 Shared Read Aloud
- 10 Chart Tracker
- 20 Antonyms
- 10 Journal

Today DQ came into session dejected and reluctant to smile. I asked him if he was ok and told him he looked frustrated. He said he was but he didn’t want to talk about it. I told him that was okay and that I hoped whatever was happening would turn out ok. He said it would and we proceeded with the work. It was kinda neat because after some small talk and getting into the read aloud he seemed much better. When I told him I was noticing a mood change he said “I’m not frustrated anymore I’m happy.” I asked him why and he said “because I’m reading.” Awesome. This means he a) really likes to read or b) wants me to think he really likes to read (intrinsic verses extrinsic). While reading, we came across contractions and he reminded me that he didn’t like them. I confirmed that they were tricky. (I’ve) in particular gave him troubles. I addressed this in his previous journal entry where he wrote a sentence that include the words: he did. I asked him if he knew how to change that into a contraction; he said he did and proceeded to write (he’d) correctly. So, he gets the concept, just has a hard time recognizing which two words are contributing to the contraction.

DQ also signaled that he wanted to do the alternate reading again after I read a couple of pages and then he read a couple of pages then we decided to read in sync together. Again, I notice that when this happens his accuracy increases and he is able to keep pace with me. I marked the words in the book that he had to make a second attempt at correcting after I cued with my finger; mostly his endings were off like he deleted the (s) from a plural word. Also a few words that were unfamiliar and we’d have to sound out. He also pointed out that he doesn’t know what a possessive apostrophe means. I taught him using some examples he can relate to: DeQuan’s games and Angel’s chew toy. I will review this and contractions with him next session in his journal.

To date, he still has not shut down and seems to enjoy our sessions. He did request to play the football game again, but we ran out of time.

**Day Six: 7-21-2011**

Agenda
- 10 Icebreaker
- 40 Shared Read Aloud
- 10 Chart Tracker
- 20 Antonyms
- 10 Journal

Dequan happy to hear that I called his mother and requested two more make-up meetings. I suggested we do something fun for our last time together like reading Naruto which he really seemed to like. Read aloud went well…I started and he picked up after about 5 minutes and indicated that he wanted to switch back and forth again between paragraphs. After a while I suggested choral reading together, which he didn’t
really seem to like but agreed. We did that and then alternated paragraphs, but his favorite thing to do was still reading every other word. I think there may be some merit to it given his tendency to guess at words and sentences based on what he might think comes next; this alternate word reading causes him to really focus and appreciate each individual word in the sentence. He was also happy to work with antonyms where we again broke them down into syllables, but he still had trouble with the words he didn’t get last time. Orally, he seems to be doing well with pronouncing and defining the words on our chart as that has sort of become the center piece of our sessions. We finished with about five minutes left and he suggested we play hangman. I actually thought this might be another way to get him to appreciate the individual letters in words so I agreed but said they needed to be words from the chart. We took turns being the guesser and the writer; I really stressed the breakup and syllabification of words as we figured them out by modeling and wondering out loud.
### Appendix F: Team Seven Ninja Word Academy Student Tracker

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Dequan,

The Nine-Tailed Demon Word-

Fox is seated

Within you. Use

decode and

Master those words.

Your Jutsu to

De-
Appendix G: Antonym Tower
Your mission is to make this tower taller.

Sensei Kakashi

Hatake would like you to build it using antonyms.

You must prove to the Hokage that you know the meaning of each.
**Appendix H: Running Record**

Naruto!

6-28-11 DAY 1

1) stumbling
2) statt-ken
3) dur(s) ing

4) scrutinized covered ed suffix the got it

5) cluttered) ‘let’s take ending off.’

6) wriggled= wiggled

7) self-corrected riding

8) frightened

9) squinted

10) he got hesitated(?)

11) nothing = nothing

12) s.c whipped = (whistled) whom prompt

13) trailed

14) wiped

‘I ask comp? he gets it.

15) steam > i covered endings he got it.

16) crusty

Good w’s - enunciation!

17) “I’m writing that you’re good @ recognizing when a ? is being asked.”
18) cobbler
   he asks, "What's a cobbler?"

19) eternal!
   "What does lad mean again?" "A young boy."

20) Eventually
   burro - kid, game and define.

21) Rearrange - sc
   "Oh, I like the way you corrected
   I notice you do really well when you
   break words up."

22) youth
   Powers
   - read people's minds

Is there a way we can put these
2 ideas together in one
summary sentence? He does
me: "I like it. Write it."
Day 2

He goes into this rant about his terrible writing. He shows me

1. proceeding
2. o-cassially-
3. glanced
4. phone-ed
5. community
6. where became there
7. there = were
8. end
9. could
10. broke up divorced with my help put it together by himself
11. com-far-hing
12. recruits became rescue
13. when
14. got observation.
15. as the, he keeps meaning s, e starred for started
16. twiched became twisting
17. a, for and
18. stunted = studied
19. got exciting!
20. started sounding out sentences, I like that you went back to couldn’t
Motivation and Syllabification Intervention

Why do I put 's.o.' in a table? To find patterns in sounds and syllables. Here are some examples:

1. **s.c. = did**
2. **s.o. = optimis**
3. **s.c. = cost**
4. **s.b.**
5. **s.c. = for** (to he said)
6. **at**
7. **and**
8. **orphan**
9. **one**
10. **scher = on**
11. **s.c. = slipped**
12. **s.t.-ner-ness = eternity**
13. **s. for the**
14. **squashed**
15. **her for his**
16. **singly**
17. **through for though**
18. **s.o. = begging**
19. **s.l.**
20. **s.d. = twelved**
21. **s.c. = hardly**
22. **got Sydney come!**
23. **conditions**
24. **convict!**
DAY 2

25 Now for hours
26 Starved
27 he'd?
28 Voyage - "Mississippi & Ferris"
   TALKS ABOUT WRITING THINGS AGAIN
   I'm gonna write while you write
   that statement... then let's
   compare. GOOD
DAY 14B

OBSERVED!

12-11-11

10 Intro

50 Read aloud (him, then me)

10 Word chart for sc's

10 Antonyms game

10 Chart antonyms

10 Word puzzle

10 Journal

Footwork if time

1. sc. grade

2. he's - big pos

3. fence

4. sc. creaking

5. shelf

6. sc. given

7. sc. summary

8. sc. Buster

9. sc. cargo

10. sc. grade six

11. sc. lining

12. chime

13. straight

14. though
15  couldn’t!
16  sc. sitting
17  sc. padding
18  sc. eyelashes
19  sc. leather
20  sc. shift
21  uncomfortably
22  sc. because
23  but miserable!
24  sc. garden
DAY $4$

24 knew resemble
25 demented
26 frightened

S. C. turred
chord

shops

G. C. pondered
G. C. wondered
G. O. intersection
G. O. freqved
G. F. felt

G. C. only
29 concentrated
blushed
30 imagined
G. C. spook
31 began
G. C. did not
32 ll vu
G. O. did not

G. C. anyone

G. C. further

IN

G. S.

staying

G. S. 
swinging

20

Wife

21

22

23

protectively

fridge
Motivation and Syllabification Intervention

- Said nothing was challenging, so I will have to give him something more challenging.

1. Get fridge
2. C. C. smile for smiling
3. C. C. bath - brought
4. C. C. and chair
5. Crinkled
6. Guinea
7. Clipped
8. Distant
9. C. C. tightly
10. Coughed and got (ed) ending
11. C. C. slice
12. Resistance
13. C. O. doctoring
14. Altogether
15. Pile through
16. Stroke
17. Vague
18. C. C. She for she's!
19. Fault
20. You've
1/21/2011 DAY 4

1. sc. dreamt 24 exhale
gué
2. threads 25 got a giving!
3. quilt 26 abruptly
4. sc. from
5. apricot
6. sc. sky
7. directing
8. pearly
9. sc. thoughts
10. sc. minds
11. sc. separated
12. scientific
13. expedition
14. sc. something
15. sc. corner
16. sc. garden
17. sc. oversized
18. sc. listless
19. sc. cant
20. low pitched
21. lofty
22. sc. expression
23. sc. pleasure