IMPLEMENTING GUIDED READING STRATEGIES WITH KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Approved Content Designation for Teacher Leader Endorsement: Reading Teacher

Saint Xavier University

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

May 2012

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Abstract

In the action research project report, the teacher researchers found that many kindergarten and first-grade students did not have the reading readiness skills to be reading at their benchmark target. The purpose of the project was to improve the students overall reading ability. The dates of the project began on September 8 through December 20, 2011. There were 74 students and 74 parents that participated in this research study.

The teacher researchers noticed that the students lacked reading readiness skills that were necessary to meet grade level benchmarks. The teacher researchers used a parent survey, baseline assessments, and observational checklist to document evidence. The teacher researchers found from the parent survey that students who lacked interest in books and reading them demonstrated low reading readiness skills. The baseline assessment the students took showed an overall weakness in letter identification, initial sounds, medial sounds, and ending sounds. The observational checklist indicated difficulty with segmenting sounds, letter sound knowledge, inability to rhyme, decoding difficulties and reading miscues, poor comprehension, lack of interest in books, lack of print awareness skills, poor attentions spans, lack of response during whole group instruction, and off –task behaviors.

The teacher researchers used a variety of interventions to improve their students overall reading skills. These interventions included small guided reading groups, word work, phonemic awareness drills, and posters that gave visual clues on how to decode unknown words. In the guided reading groups the students were paired with other students at their same reading ability. Flashcards were used during word work that helped to gain letter and sound knowledge and identification. Phonemic awareness drills helped to promote students sound and decoding skills. The posters provided a quick and kid friendly visual clue to help read unknown words.

The students overall reading growth was the most notable result taken from the action research project. The teacher researchers saw marked growth in letter recognition and beginning sounds. In letter recognition the targeted students represented that 100% (n=21) of the students recognized all 10 of the letters tested. In beginning sounds 100% (n=21) the targeted students recognized all 3 beginning sounds. The teacher researchers concluded that the interventions used during this research project helped to promote reading readiness skills in most of the targeted students.

Chapter 1

Problem Statement and Context

General Statement of the Problem

The four teacher researchers of kindergarten and first grade elementary classrooms identified poor reading strategies in their students. Students were lacking in their processing, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency skills. This information came from parent surveys, baselines assessments, and teacher observation checklist.

Immediate Context of the Problem

This action research project involved two sites, A and B. Both Site A and Site B were elementary schools within unit districts. The two sites had very different demographic makeups, so the information will be described separately. The information within this section came from the respective Illinois Interactive Report Card (2010) for each site, unless otherwise noted.

Site A.

Site A was a public school located in northern Illinois. The school district lies within a rural community set between a middle school and high school surrounded by corn fields. It was located near a major interstate and a large automotive industry.

Of the 721 students at Site A, 65% (n=469) were Caucasian, with approximately one quarter being Hispanic, which was comparable to the district of 62% Caucasian and 30% Hispanic. Both the site and district had greater percentages for Caucasian and Hispanic than the state (53%, 21% respectively. The African American representation however is only at 2% for Site A and 2.5 for the district, compare to 20% for the state.

Table 1

Total Enrollment and Racial/Ethnic Background by Percentage

	Total	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Asian/ American	Native American	Multiracial
Site A	721	65.0	1.9	24.8	2.9	0.0	5.3
District	9,001	61.6	2.4	30.3	1.4	0.1	4.1
State	2,064,312	52.8	18.8	21.1	4.2	0.2	2.9

The Illinois Interactive Report Card (2010) stated that 8.5% (n=810) of the students in the district were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Site A's LEP were considerably higher at 15.7% (n=115). This percentage played an important role in Site A's curriculum, as the school housed the English Language Learner program at each grade level.

The percentage of students from low income status at Site A were 33.4% (n=238) which was lower than the district's at 43% (n=3,870). Site A's percentage consisted of 30% (n=216) of students were eligible for free lunch and 8% (n=22) qualified for reduced lunch. Students qualified for these services if the following applied: their families received public aid, lived in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, were supported in foster homes with public funds, and overall home income (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2010).

As shown in Table 2, there was little variance between Site A, district, and state when referencing truancy, mobility, and attendance.

Table 2

Socioeconomic Status, Truancy, Mobility and Attendance Rates by Percentage

	Truancy Rate	Mobility Rate	Attendance Rate
Site A	4.5	10.7	96.1
District	5.7	10.9	94.7
State	3.6	13.0	93.9

In the district, the majority (95%, n=504) of the teachers were Caucasian, followed by Hispanics at 3.8%, with African Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders below 1% each. Site A was similar to the district with the majority of the teachers being Caucasian (96%, n= 49), while the remaining were Hispanic (4%, n=2). The division of gender within the district was majority female (75.8%, n=404), similar to Site A's gender ratio with the majority being female teachers (94 %, n=48). Aggregate school data on experience was not available. Teachers in the district had an average of 12.2 years of experience, with 55.7% of them having their master's degree. This influenced the average teacher salary of $61,263. The average kindergarten classroom size at Site A was 21.4 students to one teacher, while the state average was 20.7 students.

Site A's kindergarten curriculum entailed a 90- minute reading block (45 minutes whole instruction, 45 minutes literacy centers/guided reading), 30 minutes of writing, a 30-minute intervention block, and 60 minutes of mathematics.

The Illinois Interactive Report Card, (2010), showed Site A's overall academic performance rate of 83.9%. This was above both the district's (76.8%) and the state's (76.4%) overall performance in reading, mathematics, and science scores. Site A also surpassed the

district's and state's scores when looking at the overall Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) performance scoring 84.7%, compared to the district's (81.9%) and the state's (80.9%). The two subgroups in Site A that failed to make 2010's adequate yearly progress in reading on the ISAT were the Hispanic population (Goal 77.5%, Scored 56.0%) and the economically disadvantaged (Goal 77.5%, Scored 59.2%) population.

Site A's administrative structure consisted of one principal and one assistant principal. There were two main-office secretaries, one nurse, and one head custodian. Site A also had the support of one staff developer/interventionist, one full-time reading teacher, one full-time TPI teacher, two full-time resource teachers, one psychologist, one social worker, and one part-time guidance counselor.

Site A was a two-storied building that held students from kindergarten to fifth grade. The school was known for their "pod-like" structure. Each grade was clustered next to one another and addressed as pods. This allowed teachers to communicate with one another and have students switch classrooms when needed. Site A also had a media center that was located directly in the middle of the first floor. Inside the media center was Site A's computer laboratory where students partook in technology related activities.

Local Context of the Problem

Although Sites A and B were located near each other, their populations were considerably different. Site A was a small rural community whereas Site B was a large urban city. Data in this section will reflect the differences between the two sites.

Site A.

Site A was an elementary school located in a rural community of 20,820 (AmericanTowns, 2008) residents in northern Illinois. The growth of Site A's community had

been predicted to reach approximately 26,409 by the next census (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The population consisted of 49.3% (n=10,263) males and 50.7% (n=10,557) females. Table 3 below shows the age distribution of the community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The highest age group percentage in community A was 35-54 years old (25.8%, n=5,370).

Table 3

Age Distribution of Site A

Ages	Number	Percent
9 years and under	3,534	17.0
10 years to 24	4,488	21.6
25 years to 34	3,267	15.7
35 years to 54	5,370	25.8
55 years and older	4,161	20.0

Table 4 shows the racial and ethnic diversity of the community. The vast majority of the residents (84.5%) were Caucasian with the other community members (15.5%) being of other races or ethnicities. All data was collected from Illinois Census, 2010.

Table 4

Racial/Ethnic Diversity of Site A

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Caucasian	16,063	77
Hispanic	4,179	20
African-American	217	1
Multi-Race	216	1
Asian-American	89	<1
American Indian/Alaska Native	43	<1
Other	10	<1
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	<1

The educational attainment of Site A's community was based on the aged population 25 years and older (n=12,713). Table 5 notes a considerable statistic in that 60% of the population had at least a high school diploma with some college education without a degree.

Table 5

Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Number	Percent
Less than 9th grade	1,290	10.1
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	1,934	15.2
High school graduate	4,995	39.3
Some college, no degree	2,597	20.4
Associates degree	784	6.2
Bachelor's degree	867	6.8
Graduate/ professional degree	246	1.9
Total	12,713	100

According to the 2000 census, Site A's community had a family median income of $42,529, while the median family income was $50,601. Families below poverty level located in Site A's community was 7.8% (n=1,666) of the population (AmericanTowns, 2008).
Site A's community contained 7,531 households with an occupancy of 2.73 people. An average family size consisted of 3.36 people. The unemployment rate for the community was 3.8% (n=582). The total number of employed aged 16 years and older was 64.5% (n=9,860). Manufacturing was the driving force of employment at 33.4% (n=3,292) with Site A's district being the second largest (13.1%; n=1,296) employer in the community. Table 6 includes all categories, percentages, and frequencies of industry in Site A's community (United States Census, 2000).

Table 6

Types of Industries

Types of Industries	Number	Percent
Manufacturing	3,292	33.4
Educational, health and social services	1,296	13.1
Retail trade	1,129	11.5
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations and food services	797	8.1
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	570	5.8
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	542	5.5
Construction	485	4.9
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, & waste management	483	4.9
Other services (except public administration)	402	4.1
Public administration	282	2.9
Wholesales trade	278	2.8
Information	180	1.8
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	124	1.3

According to Crime Rate Statistics (CLRSearch, 2009) Site A's community had a low crime rate when compared to state and national averages. Larceny was the highest crime reported, with property crime and burglary being the next highest crimes reported.

Site A's community was established as a township on March 3, 1836, having an area of only 290 square miles (Official website of Village A, n.d j Taken from The Historical

Encyclopedia of Illinois and Harley Haskin's transcription of the 1850 Federal Census of Site 's County, Illinois). The earliest settlers came from New York and New England. There were two hospitals in community A, both having closed by 1999. In 2009 due to large growth and demand for immediate medical care one of the hospitals reopened under the partnership of a nearby larger metropolitan area's hospital. There was an expansive history for such a small community that housed Site A's school. In 1967 a devastating F4 tornado hit the community at the end of the school day taking 24 lives, many of whom were children. The tornado did $22 million in damage in 1967, demolished over 100 homes, and injured over 300 people (Tornado Project Online, 2010). In 1969 a former high school graduate from Site A's local high school won the Miss America pageant and the first Miss America to go to Vietnam as part of a USO tour. (Official website of Village A, n.d).

There was a small business district in the downtown area of Community A. A large city park was located in the middle of the town and in 2010 there was a smaller recreational type park on the northern part of the community. They both had a variety of basketball courts, soccer fields, baseball diamonds, as well as picnic shelters. The community was currently investigating ways to fund a much needed expansion of its current jail. The police department that housed the jail was too small and overcrowding had become an issue.

Site A was in a unit district that consisted of seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. The early childhood center was dispersed into some of the elementary schools during that year. Site A is one of the seven elementary schools and feeds into its assigned middle and high school that neighbor its building. There was a boundary map of the county that dictated what areas fed into specific schools in the district. The philosophy (mission statement) for the district was addressed as "Student-Centered Excellence." This philosophy

centered on promoting students with a positive safe environment, meeting all of their needs, view learning as a life-long process, enhance their learning experiences and personal development, and to open communication (School District A Website, 2010).

Site A's district consisted of one superintendent, 12 principals, and 12 assistant principals. Their tax rate in 2007 was 3.96 per $100. In the last five years, Site A's district had proposed two referendums to the community with both being rejected. Site A had one computer laboratory with a COW (computer on wheels) unit that could be utilized throughout the school in all of the classrooms. First through fifth grade teachers could take their students to the laboratory for approximately 30 minutes one time a week. The laboratory was being utilized for a large part of the day for intervention work using several new programs that targeted reading strategies. There were 115 computers located throughout Site A; the majority being located in the classrooms with four computers inside every pod with the exception of kindergarten. Site A also was equipped with 15 SmartBoards. These were found in the first through fifth grade pods and in selected classrooms. Both researchers for this project had a SmartBoard in their classroom.

Site B.

According to the teacher researchers, Site B served students ranging from 3-8 years of age and offers a four- year elementary education, with a total enrollment of 577 students. Kindergarten average class size was 17.8. However, in first grade the average class size was 24.5, and in second grade, the average class size fell slightly to 23.5. The district student to teacher ratio was 18.5, compared to the state ratio of 18.2. When looking at the pupil-certified staff ratio for this district, the ratio was 13.2, compared to the state ratio of 13.3. There was a higher pupil-administrator ratio for this district which was recorded at 221.5 with a state ratio of

203.8. The operating expenditure for this district per pupil was $6,196 with the state's average operating expenditure per pupil being $6,483.

The school's ethnic background varied notably from the state's ethnic demographics. The majority (n=283; 49%) of the students in the school were of Hispanic ethnicity. However, the Caucasian and African-American ethnicities were of greater representation in the district (n=387; 67%) and the state (n=415; 72%), respectively than in the school. See Figure 1.

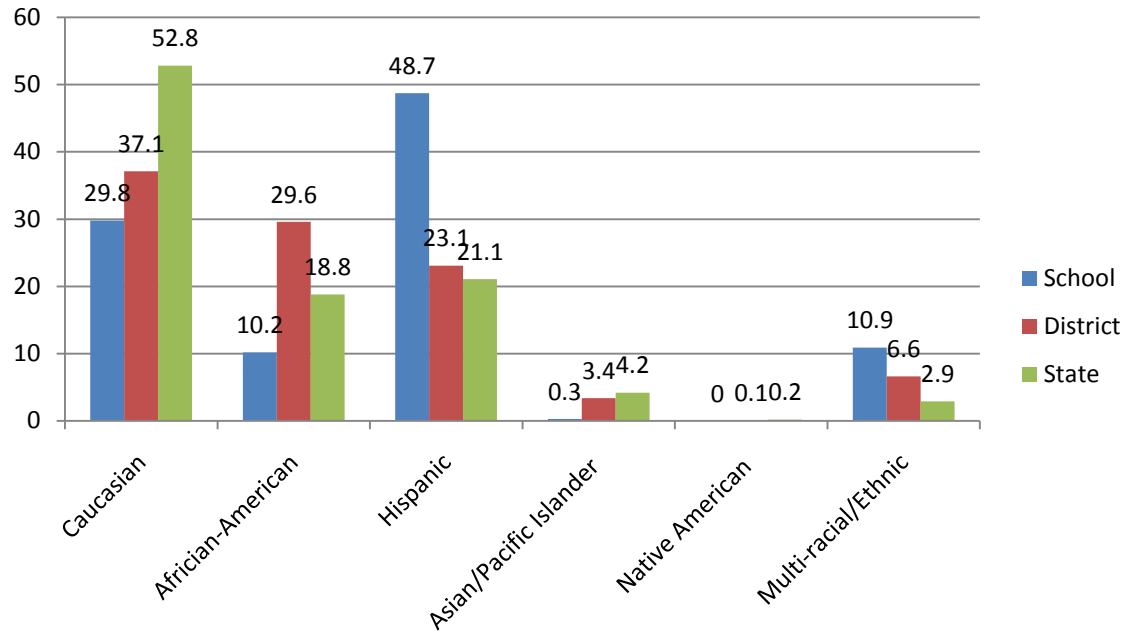


Figure 1. Racial/Ethnic Background of Students by Percentage

At Site B, 54% (n=312) of the students were male and 46% (n=265) of the students were females. According to the Site B Illinois Interactive Report Card, 93.4% of the students came from low income families. As a result of low income there were 538 students enrolled in this school who were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. Site B had 26.9% (n=156) of the students in the school as Limited-English proficient. "Limited-English proficient students were those students eligible for transitional bilingual programs" (p.1). Of the 577 students, 4.9% (n=289) were chronic truants. "Chronic truants were students who were absent from school

without valid cause for 18 or more of the last 180 school days" (p.1). The school mobility rate was 9.5%. "Mobility rate was based on the number of times students enroll in or leave a school during the school year" (p.1). The school attendance rate was reported in the Illinois Interactive Report Card as 92.1%, as compared to the state attendance rate of 93.9%.

Figure 2 depicts the state and district ethnic background of teachers. As for the district's 1,843 teachers, 87.9% (n=1622) were Caucasian, with very few other ethnicities. This number varies slightly from the state average of 85.2%. There was a marked difference in the number of African- American and Hispanic teachers in the district compared to that of the state.

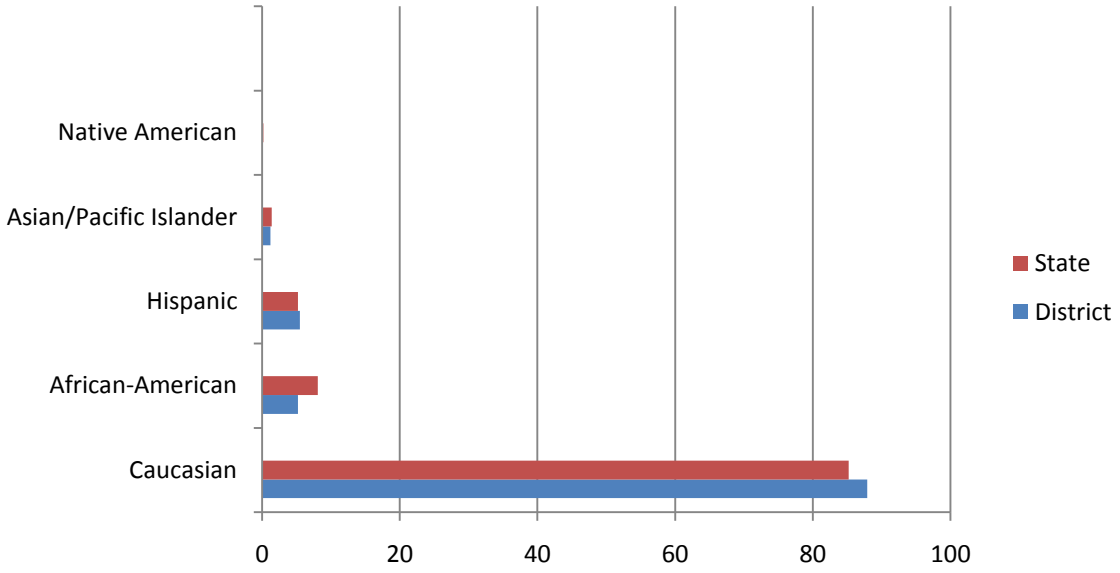


Figure 2. Racial/Ethnic Background of Teachers by Percentage

Males comprised 25.2% (n=461) of the teaching staff in the district and the females comprised 74.8% (n=1,382) of the teaching staff. This was remarkably close to the state average of 23% for male teachers and 77% for female teachers. In the district, 29.6% of the teachers held a bachelor's degree, while 70.4% of the teachers held a master's degree or above. These statistics showed that the district had a lower percentage of teachers holding a masters degree and above whereas the state's average was 57%. The average teaching experience was 15.4 years in the

district compared to the state average of 12.7 years. The district's average teaching salary was $66,771, which was slightly above the state salary average of $63,296. The district's average administrator salary was $85,695. This was much lower than the state average of $109,091. As indicated in the Illinois Interactive Report Card, (2010), parent contact was 97.3% within the school. "Parental contact includes parent teacher conferences, parental visits to school, school visits to home, telephone conversations, and written correspondence" (p.1).

Site B had a standards-based curriculum. The Pearson Reading and Language Arts curriculum was taught in a direct instruction approach which comprises 180 minutes of instructional time per day. There was both direct instruction and small group instruction during this reading block. The Everyday Math component of the curriculum was composed of 60 minutes of daily instruction. There was a 30 minute window of time per day set aside for either social studies or science instruction.

Site B students were serviced by a total of 57 employees. The school was administered by a principal and an assistant principal. This site had a part-time nurse, school psychologist, and social worker on staff. There was also a full- time speech therapist on staff. The remaining staff, (n=51) was comprised of two secretaries, paraprofessionals, food service staff, maintenance workers, and custodians.

Site B had been the number one chosen elementary school in the district based on parental choice. This site offered both an early childhood program, as well as a bilingual program. Many of the students started in the early childhood program, and stayed at this site through second grade. At which time, many of the students at Site B transferred to the sister school, which was located about five city blocks away from Site B, where students completed grades third through fifth.

Site B was erected in 1952. There was an addition placed on the building in 1992. This addition included the following: a multi-media center, 10 classrooms, seven resource/intervention rooms, and a large storage area. As a result, Site B was composed of 24 classrooms and eight resource/intervention rooms. The basement of the site contained one of the biggest bookrooms in the district. There were five offices found throughout the building, as well as a gymnasium/cafeteria. Technology was a driving force in Site B's school improvement plan. There were five computers found within each classroom for student use. The building was recently equipped with wireless networking in all areas of the school. Every classroom teacher also had a laptop computer to help in enhancing their instruction. The district had adopted the SunGard computer technology to aid in the record keeping of attendance, grades, and parental contact within the district. Classrooms were also equipped with televisions, Elmo projectors, and an intercommunication system to communicate with the office. There were two playgrounds located at the back of the building. In addition, there were community baseball and softball fields located directly beyond the main playground.

Site B was located in the southwest corner within the city of Rockford. This Rockford community was a mid-sized city located on the banks of the Rock River. Site B was one-half mile from the Chicago Rockford International Airport. According to Fact Finder (2010), this research school community had a population of 157,280 (Figure 1). The median age of individuals living within the community of Site B was 34.4. Males make up 48.2% (n=75,494) and females are 51.8% (n=81,786) of the population. The research community was primarily (n=116,387) a Caucasian community, as seen in Figure 3.

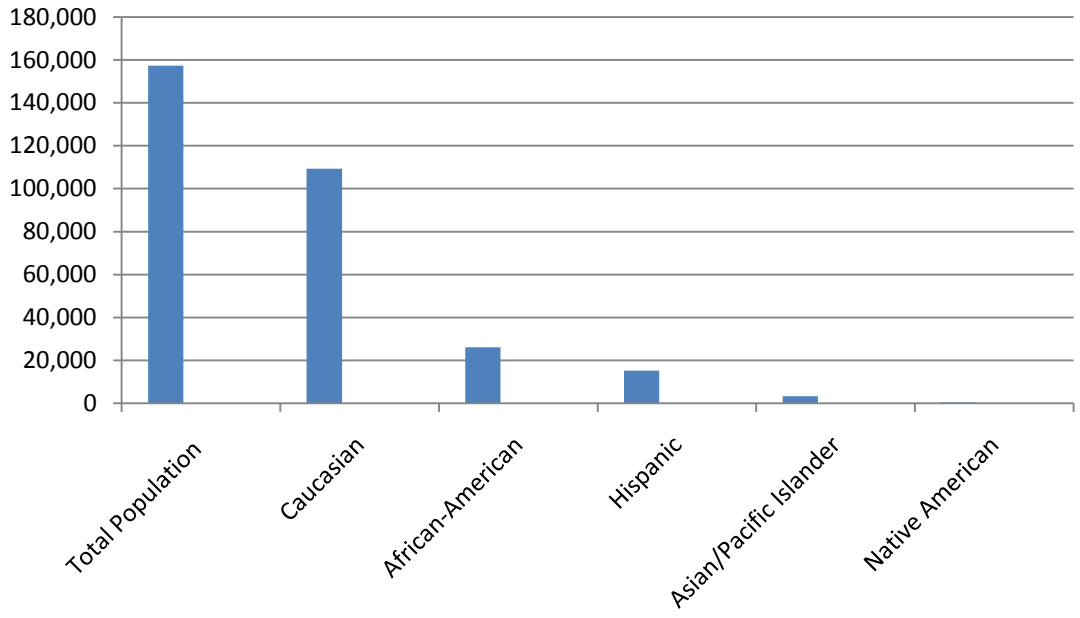


Figure 3. Ethnic Make-up of Site B Community (n=159,000)

Almost the entire community, 97.6%, had graduated from high school or higher (Fact Finder, 2010). Twenty percent of the Site B community had a bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income in the community was $37,667, while the median family income in the community was $45,465. The average household size in the community was 2.46; where as the average family size in the community was 3.09. In the community, 64.3% of the residents were in the labor force. While 64.3% of the community members are in the labor force, the unemployment rate was 14.8%.

The most common jobs currently employing community members are; physical therapist jobs, occupational therapist jobs, and office manager jobs. The majority of the work class was comprised of blue collar and managerial positions. (Simply Hired, 2010). The area crime rate in this community was relatively high with 12 murders accruing in 2010. There were also 732 aggravated assaults reported in the community, and this community had a theft rate of 7,895 within this same year's time. The crimes rate was listed in

Figure 4 below (City Rating, 2010).

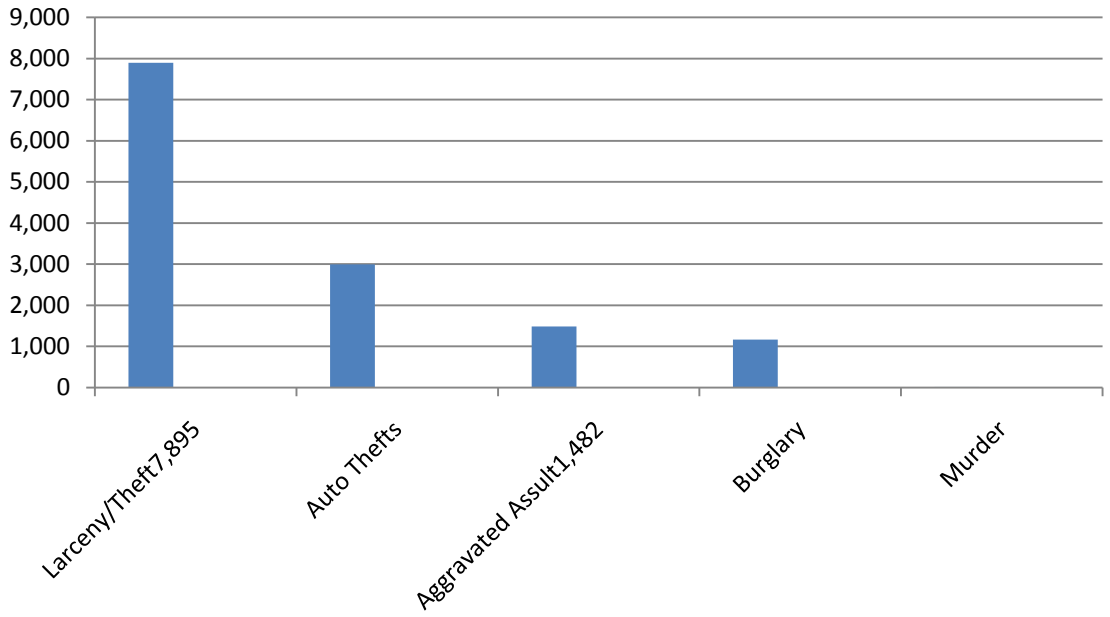


Figure 4. Crime Rates per 100,000 (n=12,500)

Site B's research community was located in the third largest city in Illinois. The city was located approximately 65 miles from the downtown Chicago. Site B's city was first founded in 1834. It was founded with the name of Midway as it was half way, between Galena and the city of Chicago. In 1837 the founders and several respected members of the community changed Midway's name to Rockford. The city developed into a thriving industrial area. Rockford Female Seminary was charted in 1847. This became Rockford College, which was recognized today as a top liberal arts institution. In 1852 Rockford was officially charted as a city, and the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad arrived. This spurred economic growth in the region. Shortly thereafter, the newly formed Water Power District was built which facilitated industry in the area. By the turn of the century Rockford was seen as a vital industry hub, and was a manufacturing center for machine tools, furniture, and agricultural equipment. Following World

War II, the industry in Rockford took a major hit. In addition, in the mid-80s Rockford had a record high unemployment rate throughout the community (Simply Hired, 2010).

Today, Rockford's economic base has evolved to include a large amount of professional and business services. This was in addition to the strong manufacturing sector that helps to benefit the local economy. Rockford was seen as a thriving commercial hub in the region as well as an entertainment center. This community had a wide variety of attractions. They include: the Rockford Ice Hogs hockey team, and the River Hawks baseball team. The Rockford community also offers a large variety of museums, parks and gardens, and family entertainment. There are also festivals to take part in throughout the year. There was a three day On the Water Front Festival over the Labor Day holiday weekend. Other sources of recreation include: five libraries, several park district facilities, including Magic Waters Water Park, and many scenic golf courses.

Site B was part of a district containing four high schools, and thirty-four elementary schools, which feed into four middle schools. These schools are equipped with many different types of technology resources. They had all recently installed wireless networking in all the schools. These schools had classroom computers as well as school computer laborites for students to use to assist in their studies. The district had adapted the SunGard computer technology to aid instructors in the record keeping of attendance, grades, and parental contact. In addition, many classrooms were equipped with either the advanced technologies of Elmo projectors or SMART boards. These technologies were in place to enhance student learning and engagement Student attendance was based on zoning and neighborhood schools. One superintendent and an administrative cabinet lead the district. Local property taxes account for 51% of the district's revenue which was translated into $169,147,096 (Illinois Interactive Report

Card, 2010a). Site B was very fortunate to have a 97.3% rate of parental contact found throughout the school building. The mission of Rockford Public Schools is…to serve the community by ensuring all of its diverse students develop the capabilities to contribute to society, succeed in the global economy and learn throughout their lives by creating dynamic integrated learning environments that respond to the needs and aspirations of the individual student in partnership with family and community. (City Public Schools: The Site, 2010). Site B, as part of the Rockford Public School District, states the following mission a multicultural center that exists to nurture the development of strong readers and writers, creating a successful base for lifelong learning by:

Utilizing our culturally diverse staff to generate an atmosphere of respect and appreciation for all cultures; Offering learning experiences technology, math and language arts which lead to academic and personal growth; Forming a partnership with home, school and the community in order to provide a global education for each child to achieve to their greatest potential (City Public Schools: The Site, 2010).

National Context of the Problem

Research conducted during the past two decades has produced extensive results demonstrating that children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up (Lentz, 1988, Neuman & Dickinson, 2001, Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, Torgesen,1998, & Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Students still have trouble learning to read even though educators know all the components that make up effective reading instruction (Lee et al., as cited in Begeny, Krouse, & Mitchell, 2009). Increasing demand for improved student performance in the context of significant time constraints places considerable stress on educators

and administrators to develop innovative strategies that promote literacy acquisition (Donat, 2006).

Reflection

Children come to school from differing backgrounds, including education and economics. When researching the two sites economical differences were found as Site A had a lower number of children receiving free or reduced lunch whereas Site B had a majority receiving free or reduced lunch. Based on teacher researchers past experience, children come to school with varying degrees of background knowledge in literacy development. Due to a child's lack of reading experiences prior to entering school; children often come to school lacking the reading readiness skills needed to create a strong reading foundation. This has a direct affect on a child's overall reading ability and achievement.

Though there was not anything specifically presented about the community to negatively affect the research problem, the community demographics do influence the school demographics, and therefore children come to school from differing backgrounds, including education and economics. The four teacher researchers continue to assert that the two sites economical differences were found as Site A had a lower number of children receiving free or reduced lunch whereas Site B had a majority receiving free or reduced lunch. Based on teacher researchers past experience, children come to school with varying degrees of background knowledge in literacy development.

Chapter 2

Problem Documentation

Evidence of the Problem

The purpose of pre-documentation was for the teacher researchers to determine the overall reading readiness of the participants. The teacher researchers collected data from a parent survey, observational check list, and baseline assessments. Teacher researchers from Sites A and B collected data from 62 parent surveys, observation check lists were used with 21 students, and all 73 students were given baseline assessments. All 73 participants came from kindergarten and first grade classrooms. The data was collected from September 8, 2011 through September 16, 2011.

Parent Survey.

The first tool used by the teacher researchers was the parent survey. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into the students reading habits at home. The survey contained five questions. Four of the questions required a yes or no response, with one question providing an opportunity to answer an open-ended response. The other question contained a likert scale of *every night, twice a week, once a week,* and *never.* The survey concluded with the option of additional comments regarding their children's reading habits. On September 8, 2011, the teacher researchers distributed the parent survey (n=73) to parents via the students' binder/folders. Parents were asked to return completed surveys to students' classrooms by September 16, 2011. From a total of 73 participants, 62 parents returned the completed surveys which resulted in a return rate of 85%. A copy of the parent survey can be found in Appendix A.

Question one of the parent survey asked parents (n=62) “Does your child know all of their letters and the sounds the letters make?” The results showed that (27%, n= 16) did not know their letters and sounds (Figure 5).

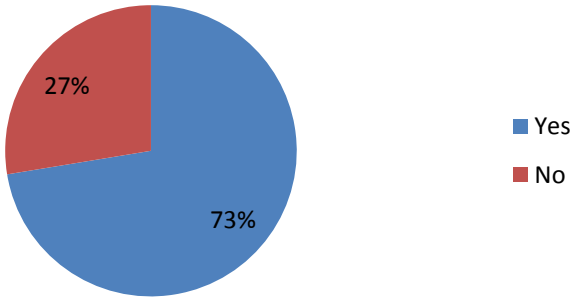


Figure 5. Parent survey results for question one (n=62)

The second question asked parents “Does your child know common sight words?” The results showed that (46%, n=26) did not know common sight words (Figure 6).

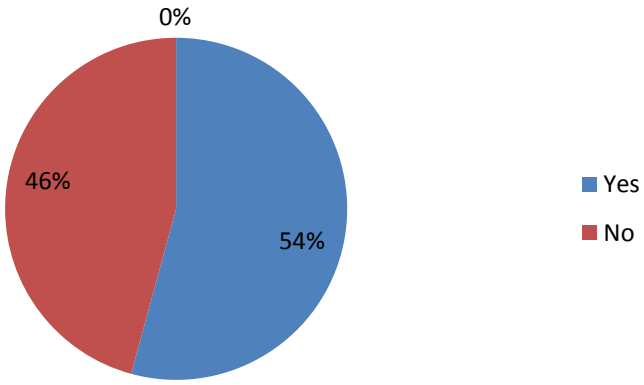


Figure 6. Parent survey results for question two (n=57)

The third question asked parents "How often do you read to your child at home?" Their choices included: *every night, twice a week, once a week,* or *never*. The results showed that (45%, n=25) read less than every night of the week (Figure 7).

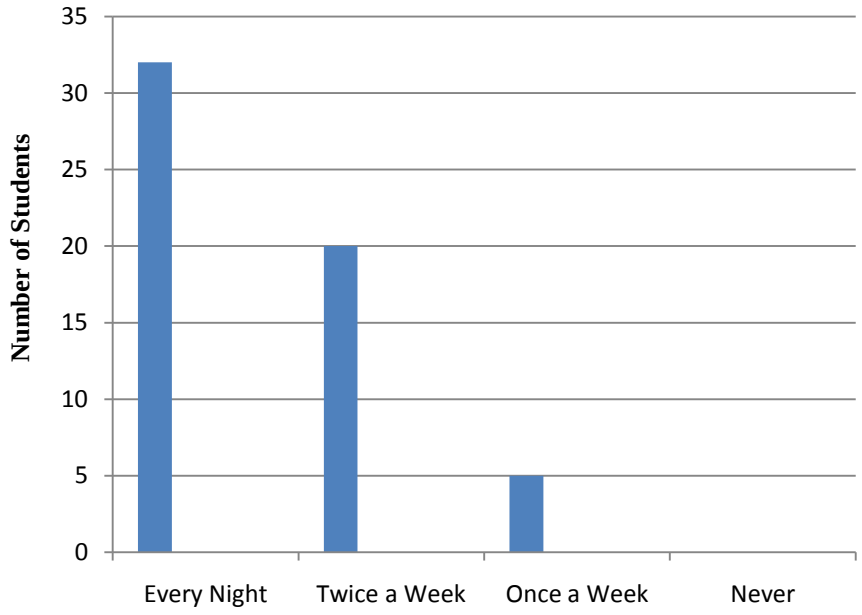


Figure 7. Parent survey responses for question three (n=56)

The fourth question asked parents "After reading a story, is your child able to answer basic comprehension questions?" The results showed that (12%, n=6) were unable to answer basic comprehension questions about the story they read (Figure 8). Seven of the parent responses were unusable.

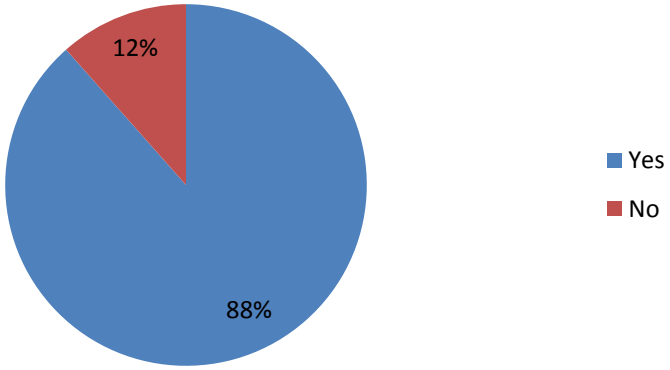


Figure 8. Parent survey results for question four (n=52)

The fifth question asked parents "Does your child show interest in books?" The results showed that (2%, n=1) did not show interest in books (Figure 9). The open-ended comments indicated: students like going to the library, being read to, choosing books themselves, and retelling a story.

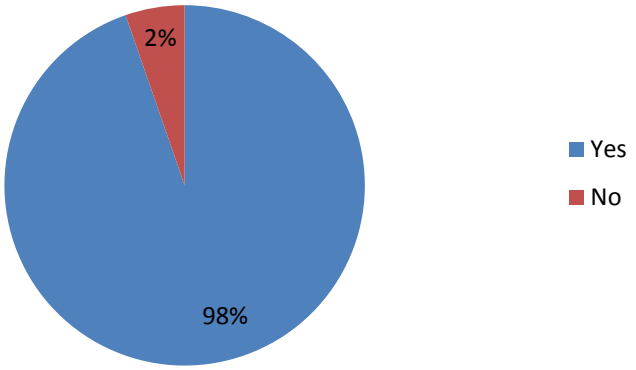


Figure 9. Parent survey results for question five (n=58)

Observational Checklist.

Another tool used by the teacher researchers was an observational checklist. The purpose of this instrument was to observe students' behaviors during whole group and small group instruction. The checklist contained 10 behaviors that students can show deficits, which can affect overall reading achievement. On September 16, 2011, the teacher researchers completed the checklists on the 21 targeted students who did not meet or exceed on the baseline assessments. A copy of the Observation Check List can be found in Appendix B.

The teacher researchers found deficits in the following areas: difficulty with segmenting and blending sounds (n = 21, 86%), letter and sound knowledge (n = 21, 81%), inability to rhyme (n = 21, 81%), difficulty decoding and miscues (n = 21, 95%), and a lack of print awareness skills (n = 21, 81%). The teacher researchers also noted the target students having trouble with attention span and showed many off-task behaviors (Figure 10).

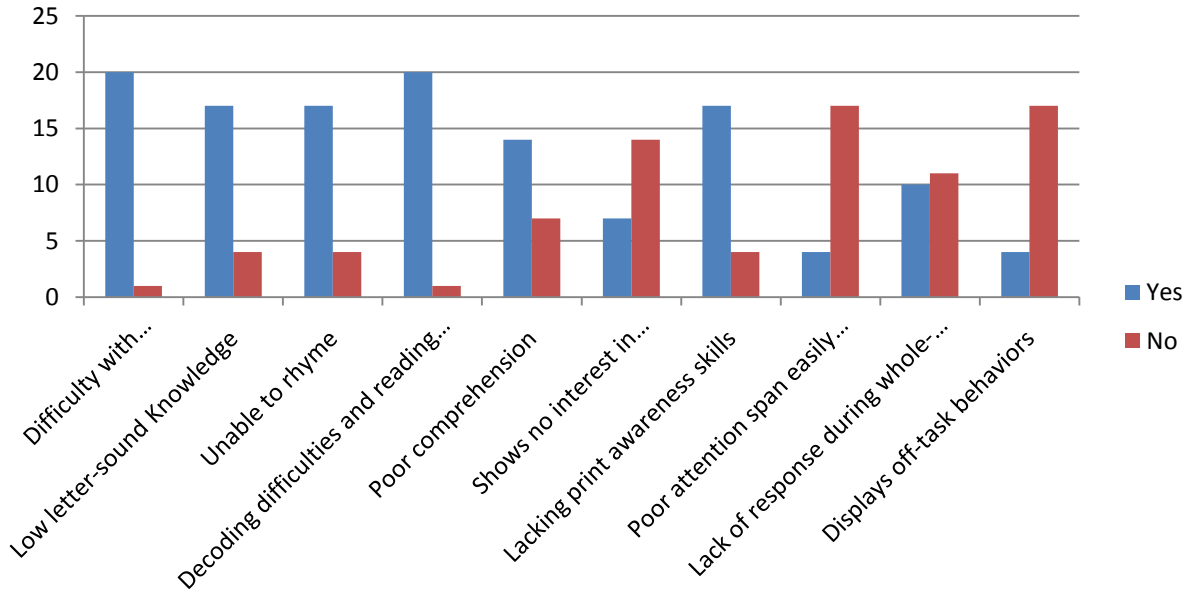


Figure 10. Observation checklist findings (n=21)

Baseline Assessments.

The final tool used by the teacher researchers was the baseline assessments. Both Site A and B used their districts' beginning of the baseline assessment that coincides with their reading curriculum. On September 8, 2011 the teacher researchers administered the baseline test to all kindergarten and first grade students (n=73). The results concluded that the greatest deficits were found in: letter recognition, beginning sounds, ending sounds, medial sounds, word recognition, and listening comprehension. A copy of the baseline assessments can be found in Appendix C.

The first component of the test focused on letter recognition. The results for Site A showed that (6 % n=3) students were below grade level (Figure 11).

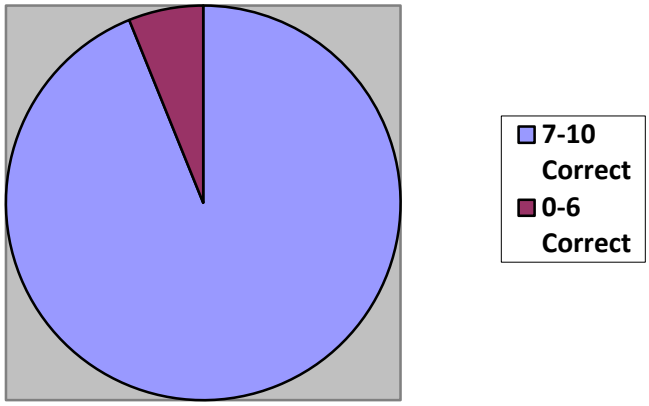


Figure 11. Site A's letter recognition results (n=49)

The results for Site B showed that (4% n=1) student was below grade level (Figure 12).

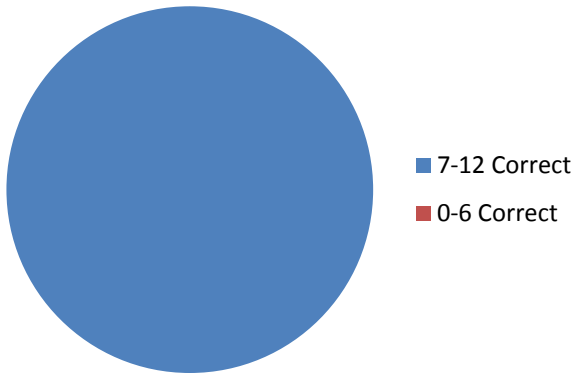


Figure 12. Site B's letter recognition results (n=24)

The second component of the test focused on beginning sounds. The results for Site A showed that (39%, n=19) of students performed below passing grade of 69% or below (Figure 13).

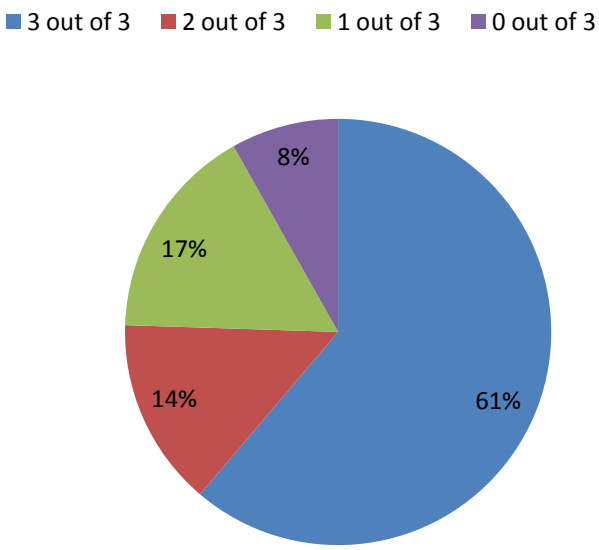
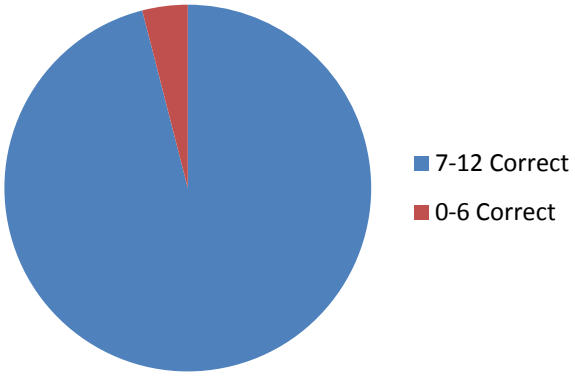


Figure 13. Site A's beginning sounds results (n=49)



The results for Site B showed that (4% n=1) student was below grade level (Figure 14).

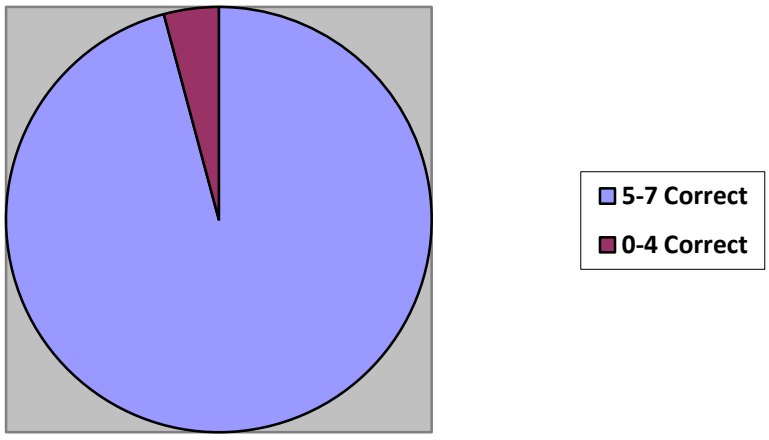


Figure 14. Site B's beginning sound results (n=24)

The third component of the test focused on ending sounds. The results for Site A showed that (57%, n=28) of students performed below passing grade of 69% or below (Figure 15). Please note that Site B's assessment did not have an ending sounds component.

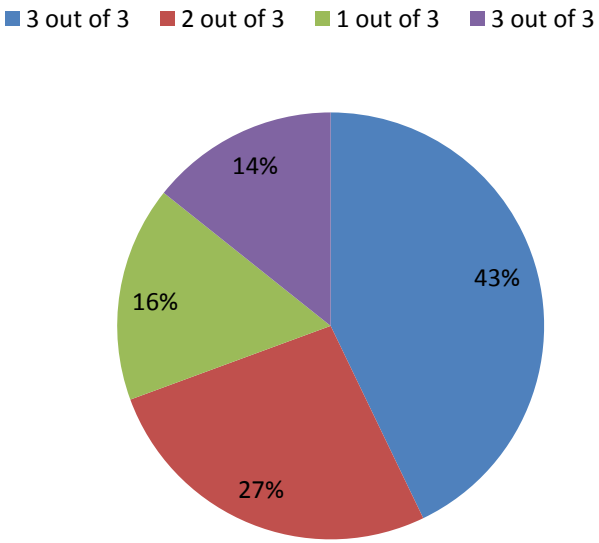


Figure 15. Site A's ending sounds results (n=49)

The fourth component of the test focused on middle sounds. The results for Site A showed that (76%, n=37) of students performed below passing grade of 50% or below. Please note that Site B's assessment did not have an ending sounds component.

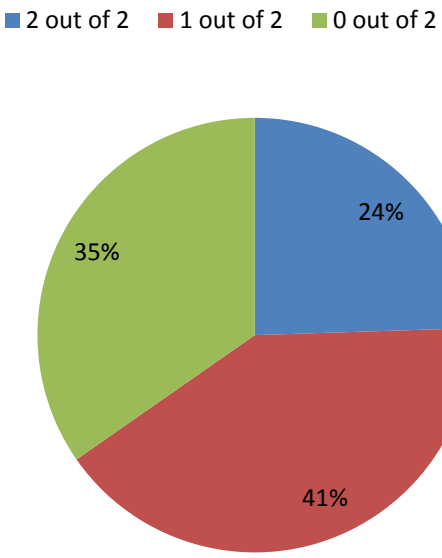


Figure 16. Site A's middle sounds results (n=49).

The results for Site B showed that (4% n=1) student was below grade level (Figure 17).

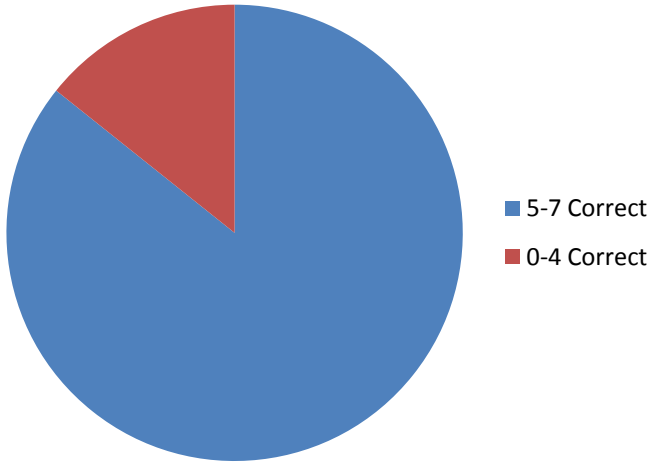


Figure 17. Site B's middle sound results (n=24)

The fifth component of the test focused on word recognition. Site A's assessment did not include a word recognition component. The results for Site B showed that (33%, n=8) of students performed below passing grade of 69% or below (Figure 18).

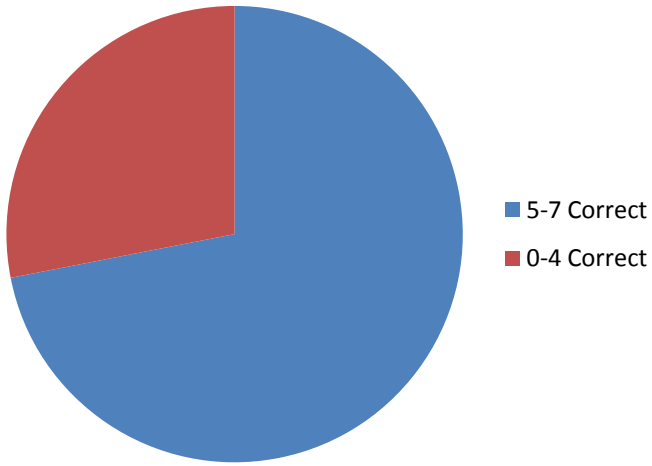


Figure 18. Site B's word recognition results (n-24)

Summary

After reviewing the data from the parent survey (figure 8), teacher researchers determined that parents noticed a lack of interest in reading books at home. From the baseline assessments (figure 9), it was determined that students were lacking in basic beginning reading skills. Additionally the observational check list (figure10) indicated that students were weak in sound knowledge, inability to rhyme, decoding difficulties, print awareness skills, off-task behavior, and poor attention span.

Reflection

We as the teacher researchers, feel that the deficits noted will have a huge impact on the students' ability to make adequate reading progress. As their teachers, we will take the data collected from the parent survey, baseline assessment, and observational checklist to determine which areas we will work on to help promote growth in reading. Without proper early intervention, students will continuously read below grade level and never catch up to their peers. The data collected will drive the intervention strategies that the teacher researchers will use during the research project. Problem areas will continue to be identified and interventions will be adjusted accordingly to meet the students' needs.

Probable Causes

It is estimated that one in three children experience difficulties in learning to read (Adams, 1990, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Many teachers are finding that close to 50% of their students are reading significantly below their grade level (Wilfong, 2008). These results show that elementary school children continue to lack reading proficiency (Prior, Sanson, & Smart, 1995, as cited in Patton, Crosby, Jolivette, & Houchins, 2010). Research conducted during the

past two decades has produced extensive results demonstrating that children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up (Lentz, 1988; Neuman & Dickinson, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Torgesen,1998; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Also, students who have early difficulties in their oral language are at risk for later reading problems (Teale & Gambrell, 2007, as cited in MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). This being said, if students are unable to read with expression, this will effect students' engagement and desire to read (Morrow & Asbury, 2003, as cited in Johnston, Rasinski, & Rikli, 2009). There are many reasons why students are struggling. Dysfluency is a common road block to effective reading and comprehension (Peebles, 2007), while lack of intensity and duration in reading interventions can also lead to poor results (O'Connor, 2000, Torgesen, 2000, as cited in O'Connor, Harty, & Fulmer, 2005).

Students still have trouble learning to read even though educators know all the components that make up effective reading instruction (Lee et al., as cited in Begeny, Krouse, & Mitchell, 2009).Over half of the United States' children are struggling to read and would benefit from reading interventions (Daane et al., as cited in Begeny, Krouse, & Mitchell, 2009). In the development of reading and writing skills, these at-risk kindergartners showed a deficit or lag in their oral language and emergent literacy skills (Adams, 1990, & Bradley & Bryant, 1983, as cited in MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). It became apparent that in both small-group and whole-group instruction those readers most in need of literacy practice were receiving the least (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Stanovich, 1986, as cited in Glasswell & Ford, 2010). Because of years of failure, passive readers have difficulty getting excited or rewarding themselves for positive strategies they use (Walker, 1996, as cited in Walker, 2005). Effective

instruction is very important for young readers to have if they are to prevent reading difficulties (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, as cited in Denton, Kethley, & Nimon, 2010).

Teacher's Role.

Increasing demand for improved student performance in the context of significant time constraints places considerable stress on educators and administrators to develop innovative strategies that promote literacy acquisition (Donat, 2006). After struggling with how to accommodate individual differences in whole group instruction, teachers are rediscovering the value of balancing whole group instruction with the use of small groups to differentiate instruction for all of their learners (Ford & Opitz, 2008). One challenge has been how to use small group instruction without returning to the problems that have caused so many to move away from the practice in the first place (Ford & Opitz, 2008). Even then, with the increased demands placed on teachers, it may not always be feasible to implement a supplemental reading program in addition to the core reading program (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). There are two problems that teachers tend to make when using guided reading in their classrooms. The first is dogmatism toward one right way of doing things no matter the context, learners, or texts. The other is a "hinterland effect" in which some see and label whatever they are currently doing as the new practice even though it is clearly not (Ford & Opitz, 2008). Also, it could be possible that it is hard for a young teacher not to conform to decades of established practice in "listening to readers" (Fisher, 2008).

Teacher control of task difficulty has been identified as a critical component of instructional scaffolding (Swanson & Hoskyn, 1998, Vaughn et al., 2000, as cited Coyne et al., 2009). Teachers need to fully understand the importance of balancing both demonstrating skills and strategies in their guided reading groups while providing scaffolded instruction. They both

serve important purposes and if teachers do not connect these they cannot be surprised that students may not transfer what is learned during guided reading to other parts of their school day (Ford & Opitz, 2008). That being said, it is critical that teachers attend to the vast range of differences that students bring to the classroom (Compton-Lilly, 2008).

Six years after the introduction of the NLS (National Literacy Strategy), the Ofsted Report *Reading for Purpose and Pleasure* (2004) indicated that many teachers were still finding it difficult to understand the theoretical underpinnings of guided reading (Fisher, 2008). Likewise, a preliminary investigation conducted in 2006 with second year Bachelors in Education student teachers revealed that all those who had seen some form of guided reading stated that it was just that: the children took turns to read aloud around the group. This left very little opportunity for meaningful dialogue, or the explicit teaching of inferential or evaluative comprehension strategies (Fisher, 2008).

When students receive a small amount of supervised reading time is also particularly harmful to struggling readers who desperately need practice in a situation where feedback is available (Morris, 2006). Although it seems simplistic and obvious, teachers of reading "teach" students do not become independent learners through maturation (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009). Perhaps the actual class time available for teachers to teach is far less than the allotted period. Consequently, teachers faced with limited time often felt pressed, at the very least, to expose children to a curriculum (Donat, 2006). For example, one study showed that in a typical first- or second-grade classroom, with only 90 minutes of reading instruction and a 1:22 teacher-student ratio, surprisingly little time is available for individual children to read aloud under the teacher's direct supervision (Morris, 2006). An exclusive concern about what happens at the reading table during 20 minutes of guided reading ignores the rest of the time in the day that

could provide access to high-quality instruction (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005, as cited in Glasswell & Ford, 2010). In traditional small groups, most of the instructional time for below-level readers was spent on skill instruction with very little reading of text. In whole-group instruction, those same readers spent most of their time with text that was too hard for them to read independently or even with support (Caldwell & Ford, 2002, as cited in Glasswell & Ford, 2010).

In like matter when teachers are working with classrooms of 20 to 30 students, it is impossible to select texts that will "fit them all." For some students the text will be so hard for them that they learn nothing positive from just "getting through it." While for others, the text will be so easy it will not stimulate or challenge them in their learning (Iaquinta, 2006). This can lead to struggling readers often get water-downed reading instruction and are less engaged with text (Allington, 2002; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 2004, as cited in Wilfong, 2008). Researchers have also found a negative relationship between the amount of time teachers spend reading aloud in kindergarten and children's decoding skills (Meyer, Wardrop, Stahl, & Linn, 1994, as cited in McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Also to note in each episode of reading examined, although some form of group reading was conducted, there was no opportunity for children to read silently or engage in collaborative discussion, little teaching of inferential comprehension and none of evaluative strategies (Fisher, 2008). Teachers need to make good decisions as they listen and respond to students attempting to read (Pennell & Founts, 1999, as cited in Schwartz, 2005). If not, teachers who do not engage their struggling readers are not giving them equal rights or classroom membership (Vlach, & Burcie, 2010). Education must resist labeling any student as struggling without knowing who they are as people and learners (Comber& Kamler, 2005; Kamler & Comber, 2005, as sited in Enriquez, Jones, & Clarke, 2010).

Unfortunately, in spite of clearly defined, evidence-based interventions for children who show early reading problems, few school systems are set up to provide adequate reading screenings and the well-trained staff to provide preventive interventions (Kamp et al., 2008). One explanation of why so many students lag in reading, especially in at-risk schools, is that general education teachers may lack sufficient knowledge or school personnel required to help the large number of students failing in whole class instruction (Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998, as cited in Kamp et al., 2008). Research corroborates that many teachers have difficulty modeling thinking aloud and therefore thinking aloud has not become a common practice (Duffy& Roehler, 1989; El-Dinary, Pressley, & Schuder, 1992, as cited in Walker, 2005). To add, fewer teachers seem to be attempting to read what is considered sophisticated stories and nonfiction books in preschool and kindergarten in favor of reading easier, predictable, and concept books (often in Big Book format), especially in classrooms with high percentages of at-risk children (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

Also to consider are higher expectations for the development of reading skills, in the context of increasing class sizes, challenges administrators and teachers to develop time management strategies that can optimize the ability to reach the needs of all students (Donat, 2003). The primary challenge for teachers is to adapt a new practice to specific settings without losing the critical elements of the new practice in making those accommodations (Ford & Opitz, 2008).

Furthermore teachers often find little benefit from high stakes tests when implementing reading instruction at the classroom level (Salinger, 2005, as cited in Schilling, Carlisle, & Scott, 2007). In addition little is known about how the gain in reading achievement in kindergarten is related to instructional or other school-related practices. One instructional practice, within-class

ability grouping was used to chart the children's reading growth during the year (McCoach, O'Connell, & Levitt, 2006). Fortunately there is hope; *No Child Left Behind* legislation is having a significant impact on schools. Its goal of closing the achievement gap has provided an important challenge for educators (Donat, 2006).

Ability Grouping.

Many teachers report demonstrations as the primary purpose of guided reading, using this opportunity for follow-up demonstrations that were given in large groups to this smaller group who needs additional attention. If teachers are using their small groups primarily as a time to repeat initial demonstrations to students and not connecting it to their overall classroom instruction, it surfaces as a concern about whether this is the most powerful way to use guided reading (Ford & Opitz, 2008).

Traditionally, only one kind of grouping that is based on ability has been used for classroom instruction. This instruction was focused on a systematic progression of skills coming from the basal text and measured by an end of unit test; and round robin reading where children take turns reading a page or a line (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Schluman & Payne, 2000, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Opponents of ability grouping have criticized it as being elitist and destructive to a classroom's community (Oakes, 1985, as cited in McCoach, et al., 2006). While others have cited ability grouping as inefficient, hindering learning, and distributing learning inequitably (Loveless, 1998, as cited in McCoach, et al., 2006). Ability grouping can be destructive to the community, as teachers can develop lower expectations for students in lower ability groups. Students in these lower ability groups may be denied appropriate opportunities to learn and advance academically (Lou et al., 1996, as cited in McCoach, et al., 2006). This can conclude

that many teachers feared that ability grouping could have adverse effects on students' self-concepts (Tieso, 2003, as cited in McCoach, et al., 2006).

Processing.

Students who demonstrate weak reading processes in the following areas: perception and attention, representation of knowledge, memory and learning, problem solving and reasoning, and language acquisition production, and comprehension are likely to be struggling readers (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004, as cited in Compton-Lilly, 2008). Plus students experiencing learning difficulties often have difficulties synthesizing new concepts and strategies (Gersten et al., 2001, cited in Coyne et al., 2009). This relates when students have difficulty shifting their processing strategies without direct support (Clay, 2001, as cited in Schwartz, 2005). A finding related to the challenge of learning the strategies was the students' initial difficulty in identifying and verbalizing the strategies they used as readers (Kropiewnicki, 2006). Performance on response time tasks contributed significantly to variance in word recognition and poor readers were slower in naming colors and objects; however rapid automatic naming (RAN) performance did not appear to contribute unique variance to reading tasks (Smith, Scott, Roberts, & Locke, 2008). With younger students full-length stories demanded too much cognitive attention, so shared and interactive techniques were needed (Mc Carrier, Fountas, & Pinnell, 1999, as cited in Gregory & Cahill, 2010). When readers encounter too many unknown words for which they cannot access the contextual and conceptual meanings, comprehension of the text is unlikely to occur (Becker, 1977; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990, as cited in Rupley & Nichols, 2005).

Comprehension.

The focus of comprehension strategies has been primarily targeted at the instruction of older students (Hoyt, 2005, & Stahl, 2004, as cited in Gregory & Cahill, 2010). Research has found poor student comprehension of reading material is a third contributing factor to comprehension failure (Kamp et al., 2008). Students experiencing learning difficulties, in contrast, are less apt to read strategically and monitor for comprehension (Vaughn et al, 2000) and they appear less likely to learn concepts and strategies that are presented in an implicit manner (Gersten et al., 2001, as cited in Coyne et al., 2009). From there, students who have difficulty reading do not automatically monitor their comprehension while they are reading (Wong & Jones, 1982, as cited in Gromley, Kubina, & Therrien, 2006). To gain comprehension, readers need to recognize words quickly to help them achieve fluency (Pumfrey & Elliott, 1990, as cited in Jasmine & Schiesl, 2009).

Older students are not the only ones affected, unfortunately, young children are not particularly familiar with the array of text structures that can be used in writing informational text. Moreover, it is common for students to listen to or read informational texts without clearly understanding the purpose of learning specific information (Coyne et al., 2009). Children are often not directly stated in the text (Paris & Paris, 2003; & Stein & Glenn, 1979 as cited in McGee & Schickedanz, 2007) and young children are relatively insensitive to problems and goals compared to characters and actions (Benson, 1997, & Stein & Glenn, as cited in McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Only a few teachers viewed facilitating response as a purpose during guided reading groups. Students cannot see the meaning-making beyond the word level if current conceptualizations of guided reading include few elements of response beyond the word level (Ford & Opitz, 2008).

One study noted from a participant: **“**My teacher [cooperating teacher in an elementary classroom] basically evaluated comprehension with worksheets and questions” (Kropiewnicki, 2006). Even learners who are successful at decoding struggle with comprehension when they encounter too many words for which they have limited or no meaning (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Without thinking the students passively read not expecting the text to make sense (Block& Isreal, 2004, as cited in Walker, 2005). For that reason there was a need for an approach that would accelerate the language arts progress of students and a schedule to allow teachers to implement it effectively (Donat, 2006). Knowing where to begin when instructing comprehension is difficult. It has been recommended to start at the beginning with activating schemas (Duke, 2001, & RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, as cited in Gregory & Cahill, 2010).

Phonological Awareness.

There is a strong link between weak phonological awareness and later reading disabilities (Lyytinen et al., 2004) O’Connor & Jenkins, 1999, Pennington & Lefly, 2001; can Alphen et al., 2004, as cited in Smith, Scott, Roberts, & Locke, 2008). Clearly, then these students are at risk for decoding difficulties if they have phonological deficits (Rose, 2006, as cited in Bower-Cane, et al., 2008). Students who exhibit long-term reading challenges consistently have below-average naming speed of letters, syllables, and words (Wolf, Miller, & Donnelly, 2000 as cited in Kamp et al., 2008). In general, instruction in the alphabetic principle without phonemic awareness is not as effective as instruction in both the alphabetic principle and phonemic awareness (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). Struggling readers have trouble decoding text, phonological awareness, dividing words into individual sounds, and they are unable to connect sounds to form words (Smith, Walker, & Yellin, 2004). Students need to be taught that words have both meaning and

sound (Stahl, Hester & Stahl, 1998, as cited in Smith, Walker, & Yellin, 2004). They will have trouble comprehending text if they are unable to decode unknown words properly (Huebner & Bush, 1970, as cited in Jasmine & Schiesl, 2009). Students who lack sight word recognition skills will continue to have future reading problems (Kourea, Cartledge, & Musti-Rao, 2007). In the same way, these students are at risk of reading comprehension problems if they have difficulties in non-phonological language skills (Rose, 2006, as cited in Bowyer-Cane, et al., 2008).

Decoding.

Reading difficulty is typically reflected in inaccurate and slow decoding of text, as well as inaccurate word recognition (Lyon, 1996, as cited in Bruce, Snodgrass, & Salzman, 1999). A deficit in phonological processing, especially in students with language-based disabilities, often is the major impediment impacting children's efforts to learn to read (Lyon, 1996, as cited in Bruce, et al, 1999). Therefore, students having difficulty reading, including those with dyslexia, are unable to rapidly apply phonological principles to segment sounds and, thus, to decode words (Bruce, et al, 1999). When students have trouble reading they must concentrate on each word using all of their cognitive resources to decode the text, there for students will have nothing left for comprehension (Adams, 2000, LaBerge & Samuels, 1974, as cited in Gromley, et al., 2006).

Vocabulary.

Poor vocabulary development in children's early years negatively affects their reading comprehension in later years (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hart & Rinsley,1995; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990, as cited in Joshi, 2005). Students with poor vocabulary knowledge read less and acquire fewer new words, while students with better vocabulary knowledge read more and improve their comprehension (Joshi, 2005). Given the increasing emphasis on decoding and

reading comprehension, the relative importance of vocabulary instruction has been diminished in recent years (Taylor, et al., 2009). According to Nagy (1988, as cited in Taylor, et al., 2009) traditional definition- and context-based approaches to teaching vocabulary are not especially effective for learning vocabulary or improving comprehension (Taylor et al., 2009). Subsequently, vocabulary development and the role it plays in reading skills acquisition have received much less attention that decoding and comprehension strategies (Joshi, 2005). The relative importance of explicit vocabulary has been eclipsed in recent years by reading comprehension and decoding (Taylor, Mraz, Nichols, Rickelman, & Wood, 2009).

Struggling readers often do not make gains in their reading comprehension because they have a limited reading vocabulary (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Research supports that struggling readers have lower-than-average vocabularies, which can often be attributable to language problems (Scarborough, 2001, as cited in Rupley & Nichols, 2005) and limited exposure to print, result in a lack of opportunity for them to "catch up" in their reading abilities (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Not having access to the meanings of words limits the readers' ability to make connections with their existing background knowledge, inhibits their capacity to make coherent inferences, and affects their ability to reason thoughtfully about the text (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 2002, as cited in Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Poor readers tend to read easier materials and fewer books than do good readers; consequently, poor readers' vocabularies grow at a slower pace (Joshi, 2005). There is a close relationship between vocabulary and comprehension; hence individuals with poor vocabulary have difficulty understanding written text (Joshi, 2005). Furthermore, studies suggest that merely reading books aloud is not sufficient for accelerating children's oral vocabulary development and listening comprehension (McGee & Schickedanz 2007).

Fluency.

In elementary grades, research shows if students have difficulty reading with expression this can affect their comprehension skills (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2006, as cited in Johnston, et al., 2009). Students who are non-fluent have a harder time comprehending what is read (Faver, 2008). Further, students must be able to read the words quickly and without effort, if students are stopping and sounding out words they are forgetting what they are reading (LaBerge, & Samuels, 1974, & Stahl & Kuhn, 2002, as cited in Deeney, 2010). For students to be fluent readers they must read words correctly and quickly, they must use all of the different parts that make up the reading process (Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001, as cited in Deeney, 2010). Research shows that students with fluency difficulties require intense, ongoing instruction with evidence-based activities (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2004, as cited in Peebles, 2007). Fluency problems stem not only from difficulty decoding isolated words, but also from difficulty chunking sentences into meaningful phrases regardless of proficient decoding skills (Therrien, 2004, as cited in Peebles, 2007). Another explanation of why so many students struggling in reading is the double-deficit hypothesis, in which naming speed and automaticity problems are common characteristics for students who are experiencing reading difficulties (Kamp et al., 2008) Fluency and word recognition are the two major issues for children who have problems with comprehension (Duke, Pressley, & Hilden, 2004, as cited in Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs, 2009). Students, who are struggling in reading, have greater difficulties in fluency than word recognition (Rasinski & Padak, 1998, as cited in Rasinski, et al., 2009). Children who are just learning to read may not understand what they are reading because of a lack of decoding and fluency skills (Oakhill & Yuill, 1996, as cited in Williams, Hall, & Lauer, 2004). Also, students who have trouble in the areas of fluency also have trouble in decoding text. (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974, as cited in

Patton, et al., 2010. The greatest area of concern in reading was the lack of reading fluency in elementary students (Rasinski, & Padak, 1998, as cited in Johnston, et al., 2009). Little attention was given to direct or indirect fluency instruction in many reading programs (Rasinski, Zutell, (1996), as cited in Rasinski, et al., 2009).

According to the National Research Council (NRC) (2002), one in five children is estimated to have difficulties learning to read in school; other researchers estimate that as many as 45% of our children are having difficulty learning to read (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 1999, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). The NRC report asserts that reading problems are more likely to occur among children who are poor, are minorities, attend urban schools, or arrive at school not speaking English (Snow et al. 1998, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Students in high poverty urban areas, when compared with more affluent peers, were not only at a greater risk for reading failure, but were also in greater need of early intervention (Forman & Moats, 2004; Washington, 2001, as cited in Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). Students experiencing learning difficulties often have difficulties synthesizing new concepts and strategies (Gersten et al., 2001, cited in Coyne et al., 2009). Furthermore, many students came to school with an adequate amount of social language but demonstrated a considerable lack of instructional language that served many purposes in the classroom (MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). These students were typically at risk because of environmental factors, such as poverty, cultural or linguistic diversity, educational expectation, and level of education of family members. Students with disabilities are also considered to be at risk for reading failure (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). Lastly, urban learners are exposed to a variety of societal risk factors which can impair their learning achievement in reading (Gottlieb et al., 1994, as cited in Kourea, et al., 2007).

Reading failure is most extensive among children of poverty, especially children of color in urban schools (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). The location of a school can often have an effect on the disadvantages a student may have educationally (Cartledge, 2002, as cited in Kourea, et al., 2007). Generally speaking, at-risk students are not coming to kindergarten with the skills and foundation in oral language necessary to be successful, literate learners (MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). There is a performance gap in literacy achievement for students in urban schools that come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and these high-needs communities typically have a higher proportion of at-risk students (Flood & Anders, 2005, as cited in MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). In stark contrast, children from higher social economic status families were exposed to approximately three times the amount of words than children from low social economic status families (Hart & Rinsely, 1995, as cited in Joshi, 2005).

Low reading achievement may lead to negative attitudes towards school, rebellious behavior, lack of motivation, and frustration (Buchanan & Wolf, 1986, De Bettencourt, Zigmond, & Thornton, 1989, Hoffman, Shelson, Minskoff, Sautter, Stiedle, Baker, Bailey, & Echols, 1987, as cited in Freeze, 2006). Struggling readers often lose faith in their ability to learn to read and their teachers who teach them (Loyon, 1995, as cited in Freeze, 2006). Consequently, these readers will avoid reading because it's too difficult and frustrating for them (Casey & Chamberlain, 2006, Griffith & Rasinski, 2004, as cited in Clementi, 2010).

Guided reading was designed as a return to small group reading instruction to address the overuse of whole group instruction during which many students were not reading texts at their instructional level. If adding guided reading does not lead to students spending more time with texts at their instructional level, then teachers need to reevaluate their guided reading program

(Ford & Opitz, 2008). It is important to get students to enjoy reading (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004, as cited in Clementi, 2010). However, if students are involved in actual reading tasks that limit success, the less likely they will be to enhance their learning (Rupley, et al., 2009). When children decide that there is no agency with respect to their learning , their learning is limited in terms of both personal experience and potential trajectory (Johnson, 2004, as cited in Vlach & Burcie, 2010). Struggling readers expect rejection and tend to elicit rejection from others (Johnson, 2004, as cited in Vlach & Burcie, 2010). Students may feel unmotivated and devalued because they are separate from the classroom for instruction in reading (Wolfensberger, 1998, 2000, as cited in Freeze, 2006). Lastly, school accreditation is dependent upon every child learning to read. Supplemental services and school choice are parental options if a school fails to meet certain *No Child Left Behind* benchmarks (Donat, 2006).

Chapter 3

The Solution Strategy

Review of the Literature

In this section the teacher researchers will identify different reading strategies from the literature that can be implemented in a guided reading program to promote reading success. These strategies include: planning and organization, running records, grouping arrangements, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, fluency, and tutoring.

Guided Reading.

Through the review of the literature teacher researchers have found many reading strategies that have been proven to help students improve their reading skills. As you will see there is an extensive amount of research on developing reading readiness skills in young readers. Some strategies are more researched than others, but all are proven effective to improve students' reading skills.

The goal of guided reading is for the student to develop a self extending system of reading that enables them to discover more about the process of reading while they are reading. As children develop these understandings they self-monitor, search for cues, discover new things about the text, check one source of information against another, confirm their reading, self correct, and solve new words using multiple sources of information (Iaquinta, 2006). Guided reading is a teaching approach used with all readers, struggling or independent. It has three fundamental purposes: meet the varying instructional needs of all the students in the classroom, to teach students to read increasingly difficult texts with understanding and fluency, and to construct meaning while using problem solving strategies to figure out unfamiliar words that deal with complex sentence structures.

Guided reading helps students to understand concepts or ideas not previously encountered in their learning (Iaquinta, 2006). Similarly, guided reading provides the necessary opportunity for teachers to teach explicitly reading strategies at the students' individual needs. It reinforces problem-solving, comprehension, and decoding, and it provides opportunities to establish good reading habits and strategies. The most critical element is the skillful teaching that helps young readers learn the effective strategies they need to become independent readers (Iaquinta, 2006).

Guided Reading has been proposed by many (Biddulph, 2000; Dowhower, 1999; Makgill, 1999; Mooney, 1995; Raban and Essex, 2002, as cited in Fisher, 2008) to be an opportunity for pupils to learn to comprehend at a higher level by beginning to go solo under instruction (Fisher, 2008). In addition, guided reading also reinforces problem-solving, comprehension, and decoding. And, it provides opportunities for establishing good reading habits and strategies (Iaquinta, 2006). Guided reading is an important "best practice" associated with today's balanced literacy instruction. It has quickly become one of the most important contemporary reading instructional practices in the U.S. (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Furthermore, guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, as cited in Bruce, et al, 1999) is a program supporting children's early reading based upon Reading Recovery (Clay, 1979, as cited in Bruce, et al, 1999) techniques and procedures (Bruce, et al., 1999).

Guided reading is an appropriate strategy for children who are moving toward fluency in the early years of their literacy development (Mooney, 1990, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Equally important, guided reading provides children with opportunities to develop as individual readers while participating in small groups (Bruce, et al, 1999). Guided reading provides the necessary opportunity for teachers to teach explicitly reading strategies at the students' individual needs.

Small-group instruction is effective because teaching is focused precisely on what the students need to learn next to move forward (Iaquinta, 2006). In conclusion, reading for meaning is the main goal of guided reading. Children need to be exposed to higher-level thinking activities (Renzulli, 1998, as cited in Ford & Opitz, 2008).

Planning and Organization.

Teachers that arrange literacy environments that promote opportunities for all students to be a part of the learning community can really benefit the lower achieving readers by providing both whole group and small group instruction (Vlach, & Burcie, 2010). In addition, best practices provide research-based strategies that can promote effective learning (Miller & Kohler, 1993, as cited in Kourea, et al., 2007). During guided reading teachers can work with texts and generating questions. First, teachers should begin the lesson by generating list of questions before, during and after the reading of the text. This can begin as an oral lesson to focus on the discussion by activating prior knowledge, making predictions, identifying details, determining the main idea, identifying clunks, sharing information and generating questions to locate new information. Eventually, the students can reach a stage where they record questions before, during and after reading texts in a journal or by posing questions for their peers to answer (Troegger, 2011).

The most important part of small group instruction begins in the planning. Thoughtful teaching in small groups is a lot different than sitting and listening to a group of students read. Choose a focus that the group needs, and then can plan accordingly. The following focus items are what an instructor can use to help make their planning and instruction the best it can be: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, or vocabulary (Diller, 2007).

In addition, to improve guided reading it is important to have a nice balance between narrative and informational texts. Different texts are written with different structures and exposing students to them puts them at a greater position to comprehend a variety of text both in and out of the classroom (Ford & Opitz, 2008). To enhance the impact of reading instruction, teacher's need a balanced, comprehensive approach that can address the individualized needs of children while accelerating achievement (Donat, 2006).

Likewise, during the small group instruction, students should not be doing round-robin reading. Students do not get enough practice during this technique and they are not developing reading comprehension. Instead, have them read aloud at their own pace, not chorally but independently of each other (Diller, 2007). Teachers model what ideal readers do by explicitly talking aloud as they read, making children aware that they are predicting, making an inference, or changing their ideas about what is happening in a story (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Next, once all of the reading groups had completed their activities the class comes back together whole group to share their new learning. This sharing time varies between group sharing and individual sharing. The new learning was celebrated and recorded in their journals (Troegger, 2011).

In addition, skillful teachers use their knowledge of literacy development and literacy processes to decide where to go next, independently of the commercial materials they use: when to intervene and when not to; when to draw children's attention to which features of text; and how to model and explain strategies in ways that children can make their own (Iaquinta, 2006).

Another powerful way to scaffold the learning at the reading table is to combine the use of instructional-level texts with more challenging texts (Glasswell & Ford, 2010). In addition teachers can be much more flexible with text levels than we previously have thought. When a reader engages in reading, and the text is challenging, teachers can support that reader in

developing their skills, strategies, and confidence in two main ways. The first way is to find another text that is the "right level" and one that the student can read more comfortably. By doing this, the learning has been scaffolded using the text (Glasswell & Ford, 2010).

Additionally, when planning instruction and text selection for small groups it is important to remember to not let the level of the text be the only thing that guides your planning. Teachers should be more concerned with organizing around areas of the student's needs (Glasswell & Ford, 2010). Flexible and creative scheduling for small group instruction led by a core group of teacher, access to curricula emphasizing explicit instruction , and use of data to monitor progress all increase implementation (Coyne et al., 2009). Furthermore, selecting and then introducing texts for a particular group of students who share similar developmental needs during instruction in small groups creates a context that supports learning (Fountas & Pinnel, 2001, as cited in Iaquinta, 2006). Teachers need to direct children's attention to using multiple sources of information in a skilled way: this can be done by giving children the opportunity to read many texts that offer just the right amount of challenge (not too hard and not too easy) (Iaquinta, 2006). Additionally, effective instruction teaches students to integrate and relate new information, concepts, and strategies **(**Coyne et al., 2009). The teacher, therefore, has to select reading assignments that are challenging but not frustrating (Joshi, 2005).

Likewise, teachers who are able to pay close attention to reading processing as well as a student's way of being can help to provide their students with rich learning experiences that help them value both reading and learning (Compton-Lilly, 2008). Teachers' modeling of higher-level thinking, asking thoughtful questions calling for analytic talk, prompting children to recall a story in some way within a reasonable time frame (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Another

important aspect to remember is to ask open-ended questions where children provided explanations rather than one or two-word responses (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

Running Records.

In addition, using previous running records, teachers can find patterns in the errors they observed and they can use this information to prepare to respond to the student (Clay, 2002, & Schwartz, 1997, as cited in Schwartz, 2005). Moreover, teachers who are able to connect with their student's lives are better able to assist their students in different literacy processes that students control (Compton, 2008). Teachers must not only be experts of reading, but must be socially and culturally aware of the rich differences among the different children in their classroom (Compton, 2008).

Furthermore, classroom based measures and planning need to be aligned with reading achievement to get a true picture of a student's progress (Salinger, 2005, as cited in Schilling, et al., 2007). A teacher's perceptions of preparedness and knowledge of subject area play an important role in improving students' outcomes (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). Schools with full-day kindergartens and those schools in which teachers reported greater frequency of use of ability groups tended to show greater than average gains in reading scores across the kindergarten year (McCoach, et al., 2006).

When creating a literacy balanced classroom, the key is to empower the children to frame questions themselves, and children need to be taught how to go "beyond the text" and offer evaluative responses might feel more able to take critical perspective (Fisher, 2008). In addition, direct/explicit instruction is the active communication and interaction between teacher and student (Rupley, et al., 2009). Additionally, review is most effective when it is sufficient, distributed, cumulative, and varied (Carnine, Dixon, & Kame'enui, 1994, as cited in Coyne et al.,

2009). Good teachers understand the importance of making content area materials relevant to readers (Ivey & Fisher, 2005, as cited in Taylor, et al., 2009). Finally, it is very important that teachers receive professional development. It improves their knowledge and is a contributing factor to the effectiveness of their reading instruction (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007).

Grouping.

In a truly balanced literacy program, how one teaches is as important as what one teaches. The success of a teachers' guided reading group is that there is an understanding of when to introduce new skills to their readers. Every guided reading lesson should be different because every group of readers has different needs and strengths (Iaquinta, 2006). Within-class ability grouping arrangements can be targeted to specific skills or content areas, thereby using differentiation to target individual needs at a micro level (McCoach, et al., 2006). In addition, guided reading requires the teacher to determine what the child already knows, what the child needs to learn and to design instruction accordingly (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005, as cited in Ford & Opitz, 2008).

Next, the groups should be organized so that they are more alike than they are different. Grouping students by levels and/or needs seems to capture the spirit of guided reading. It is very important that teachers see the difference between grouping by level and grouping by need (Ford & Opitz, 2008). During guided reading group, the teacher moves around listening in to each child read aloud. After the children finish the teacher should invite them to reread the text to build fluency and to practice any new vocabulary (Iaquinta, 2006).

However, grouping emergent readers looks different in the way that one groups students who are reading. Place emergent readers in to groups to work on the following: phonemic awareness, oral language development, letter naming, rhyming and other aspects of phonological

awareness, or concepts about print (Diller, 2007). In addition, ability grouping has beneficial effects for elementary school students of varying ability levels, depending on the features of the groups (Kulik, 1992; Slavin, 1987, as cited in McCoach, et al., 2006).

Ability grouping is a controversial instructional technique; but researchers suggest that the use of this in combination with differentiated curriculum and instruction can result in significant student gains in achievement (Kulik, 1992, as cited in McCoach, et al., 2006). Teachers who use within-class ability grouping are much more likely than their peers to tailor instruction to the ability level of the students in their group (Kulik; Lou et al., 1996, as cited in McCoach, et al., 2006). Differentiation ranges from activating background knowledge, to extending background knowledge, to provide information for students lacking in previous knowledge about a topic **(**Coyne et al., 2009).

Guided practice sessions should take place in small groups using a literature circle format (Daniels, 2002, as cited in Kropiewnicki, 2006) which are called book clubs (Kropiewnicki, 2006). As the teacher, one may choose to do several lessons on the particular focus strategy. Work with these strategies until there is improvement in these areas. Then switch the focus to another area that will help to improve the reading ability of children in that group as well (Diller, 2007).

Starting the second week of school, the teacher should begin taking anecdotal notes on individual students. Observe them during whole group instruction as well as while they are working independently. Use these notes to look for evidence of phonemic awareness, phonics understanding, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary development, and their reading levels to help decide how to group students for guided reading (Diller, 2007).

Additionally, students greatly benefit from whole-class and small-group instruction; students need lots of literacy opportunities to develop an effective processing system (Clay, 1991b, 2001, as in Schwartz, 2005). Teachers who change their groups regularly to accommodate the different learning paths of their readers had found that this is the key to successful dynamic grouping. Dynamic grouping allows students to support one another as readers and to feel part of a community of readers. (Iaquinta, 2006).

Also, when working with lower readers, keep an eye on word counts. This provides greater equity in instructional opportunities. Lower-leveled books are often less dense with their text and yet readers who are below grade level need more opportunities to read, not fewer (Glasswell & Ford, 2010). Once a group of students is reading at grade level, instead of trying to bump students up to the next level and go deeper and expand their reading of a variety of genres at that level. Also, work on writing at that level. Students who are great writers are usually great readers. Paying attention to what writers do helps students better comprehend and read more fluently and with more accurate decoding (Diller, 2007). In conclusion, the very term "guided" suggests a type of instruction that would be less about modeling and more about coaching. Guided reading groups should be less about the teacher showing children how to use a strategy and more about providing support to the child as they use this strategy (Ford & Opitz, 2008).

Comprehension.

Students who struggle with comprehension often learn to sit back and let the teacher do all the talking. Rather than waiting for these students to reply the teacher often tells the student the answer so these students learn if they just sit there quietly their teachers will do the work for them (Diller, 2007). Comprehension instruction looks different with young children. It is more active and much more visible. The result is the same as with older children, they are better able

to understand what they are reading when they are able to use these strategies (Gregory & Cahill, 2010).

In addition, successful reading comprehension can be categorized into two domains: inside-out components (phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency) and outside-in components (comprehending text once its been decoded) (Coyne et al., 2009). Interventions that help to promote linguistic comprehension skills can aid in the overall understanding of all material that is read (Bowyer-Cane, et al., 2008). Instruction that is focused on one type of text structure is an effective way to promote the understanding of an expository text (Dickson, 1999, as cited in Williams, et al., 2004). Additionally, good decoding and self-correction skills are important for children to have to understand what they are reading (Diller, 2007).

As word knowledge increases, so does reading comprehension (Anderson et al., 1998; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986, as cited in Coyne et al., 2009). Furthermore, students need to be able to think about what they have read and make connections themselves to their world and other texts (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996, as cited in Ford & Opitz, 2008). Additionally, knowledge of text organization is very important in a student's ability to recall the most important information within the text (Dickson et al. 1998, as cited in Williams, et al., 2004). Optimizing instructional opportunities during read-alouds improves comprehension (Coyne et al., 2009). Finally, Carver (1994) found that when students read books that are moderately challenging, they have a better opportunity to learn new words than when they read books that are easier for them (Carver, 1994, as cited in Joshi, 2005).

Comprehension Strategies.

Comprehension strategies are essential for promoting reading achievement. Instructional strategies such as concept wheels, semantic word maps, definitions, webbing,

semantic feature analyses, and teaching relationships among words are valuable tools that support the active processing of new vocabulary in reading (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Additionally, students who use the following four families of resources can engage in text at a more powerful level: code breaking, meaning breaking, text using, and text analyzing (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1999, as sited in Enriquez, et al., 2010).

When working on comprehension and clarifying information in texts working with non-fiction texts has proved beneficial. The main focus is to identify clunks in the students reading and clarify meaning (Troegger, 2011). Similarly, if a child is having trouble with monitoring their reading a teacher should ask them if what they have read makes sense. It is important to encourage them to go back and reread so that you understand what it is you read (Diller, 2007). Through brainstorming and visualization students are able to understand and represent their understandings (Gregory & Cahill, 2010). Making connections or getting children to use their schema also helps them get meaning from their reading. Teachers need to activate prior knowledge of the topic and what it reminds students of (Diller, 2007).

However, when asking questions is explicitly demonstrated during the reading of text, students quickly begin to ask questions. Through the use of questioning, students are able to form more and more thoughtful questions. This helps them to interact with the text in a meaningful way and to critically examine the story (Gregory & Cahill, 2010). Having students generate and answer questions during reading is a good comprehension strategy (National Institute, 2000, as cited in Gromley, et al., 2006).

Additionally, self- monitoring of comprehension and self- correction of errors can promote a greater understanding of the text (Snow et al. 1998, as cited in Denton, et al., 2010). While working on comprehension and visualization a sketch-to-sketch approach, this strategy

can help to develop visualizing strategies in students when reading texts to help them make sense of the text and the author's intention.

During the modeled reading lesson think-aloud strategies are modeled using 'clicks' and 'clunks'. When children are reading and they can read the words and understand what they are reading they click, click, click along but when a child comes to a word they do not know or understand they clunk and stop. The teacher then explains that when we are reading and we find a clunk, we need to refer to our strategies we have learned to solve the clunk (Troegger, 2011). The teachers need to use the think-aloud strategy and guided students to categorize their connections to the text. By doing this the students better understood ways in which to connect and make meaning with texts (Gregory & Cahill, 2010).Thinking aloud and strategy instruction has been used effectively for two decades to improve comprehension (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996; Duffy et al., 1987 Mason, 2004; Meichenbaum & Asarnow, 1979; Schunk & Rice, 1991, as sited in Walker, 2005). Also, the think-aloud technique used with the self- evaluation sheet promotes the comprehension process (Walker, 2005).

Another comprehension strategy that students can use is to look for words within other words that they already know. At first, students think of clunks as words they do not know. After several lessons they begin to identify words that they don't know the meaning of or did not quite make sense in the context of the text. By the end of the year, they can scan the text and looking for clunks and asking what those words meant. Students become proud as they are now "reading detectives" and get excited when they find a clunk in their text (Troegger, 2011).

Additionally, the teacher models these strategies for the children to use to fix their clunks during shared, guided, and independent reading (Troegger, 2011). Using this strategy students take ownership of their clunks and use the fix-up strategies to solve their own clunks. Also, the

clunks can be written on cards to make a clunk chart which can eventually be turned into a clunk wall if the teacher chooses (Troegger, 2011). The ‘wow’ moments that were noticed were how the students had developed more confidence in their approach towards working with texts. They took the time to scan the text looking for ‘clunks’ before they started reading, they were verbalizing the strategies they were using while they were reading the text and they were generating questions about the text after they read. The next step is to build on this new confidence and develop metacognition in their reading comprehension by encouraging the students to set goals before reading, monitor their goals during reading, and reflect on their goals after reading their texts (Troegger, 2011). The purpose of working together is to determine the main idea and identify details in the text. While constructing their maps the students moved information around and grouped it in a particular way. This also provided the opportunity to negotiate what information should be included, taken out, or extended upon. The maps can then be displayed in the classroom to provide a visual aide to assist the students when later writing about this newly learned information (Troegger, 2011).

Specific comprehension strategies, including repeated reading and summarizing information, improve comprehension outcomes (Fuchs, Fuchs & Burrish, 2000, as cited in Coyne, et al., 2009). In addition, when working on comprehension and clarifying information in texts it is great to work with non-fiction texts.

Graphic organizers are useful visual tools that support students in building both knowledge of concepts and an understanding of the relationship of these concepts to one another (Taylor, etal., 2009). The use of clue words, graphic organizers, and questioning skills can be used to help children focus in on key concepts in their reading (Williams, 1998, as cited in Williams, et al., 2004).

Likewise, monitoring and searching strategies are two types of strategies that develop over time (Clay, 1991b & Swartz, 1997, as cited in Schwartz, 2005). Making connection and visualizing were the easiest strategies for the students to perform and apply, while questioning and inferring, in particular, are difficult (Kropiewnicki, 2006). Finally, during interventions students should be provided with procedural prompts to cue question generation (Rosenshine, Meister, and Chapman, 1996 as cited in Gromley, et al., 2006).

Phonics.

There has been much debate over how to best teach reading. Most reading educators agree that all children need phonics in order to learn how to read (Diller, 2007). Whether measured at the end or beginning of kindergarten, phonological awareness, letter ID, and letter sound knowledge were the most predictive variables for later word identification, reading fluency, and passage comprehension (Smith, et al., 2008). Similarly, interventions using a combination of phonological practices are successful in the reading development of poor readers (Gillion, 2000, 2002, Hatcher, Hulme, & Ellis, 1994; Lovett, Warren-Chaplin, Ransby& Borden, 1990,& Iverson & Tunmer, 1993, as cited in Bowyer-Crane, et al., 2008). If phonics is a weakness with a group of students, there are many areas that you can do focus lesson on in small group. These include: initial letter sounds, final letter sounds, short vowel sounds, CVC patterns and blending sounds, long vowel sounds, vowels plus r patterns, funky chunks, reading long words, and applying letters and sounds in writing (Diller, 2007). Since phonemic awareness hinges on students' development of basic phonological awareness such as rhyming and syllable segmenting, there are many focus areas in this topic as well you can work on in small groups.

Phonemic Awareness.

The more students participate in the lessons, the more they will develop phonological and phonemic awareness. Possible phonological focuses include: rhyming, alliteration, sentence segmenting, syllable blending and segmenting, Possible phonemic focuses include: onset-rhyme segmenting and blending, sound matching, counting phonemes in a word, blending phonemes to make a word, isolating the beginning phoneme in a word, isolating the final phoneme in a word, isolating the medial phoneme in a word, segmenting phonemes in a word, and substituting one phoneme for another (Diller, 2007). Likewise, when looking at groups and what their focus "needs" may be one can look at several factors to make the decision. If one is noticing problems with segmenting sounds or blending sounds either orally or when writing and reading then the focus strategy should be phonemic awareness (Diller, 2007).

Letter knowledge distinguishes groups of reading disabilities and children's ability to read early in their school years (Pennington & Lefly, 2001, as cited in Smith, et al., 2008). Students who gain knowledge in the letters identification and decoding text are able to use their cognitive thinking skills more (SaLaBergemuels, 1974, as cited in Patton, et al., 2010). Similarly, teaching students to be able to remember letter, sounds, and word strategies, will help students to bring words together in a more meaningful way (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008, as cited in Deeney, 2010).

When accuracy in letter naming was paired with the speed at which children could read letters, the latter skill more strongly predicted later reading (Walsh, 1988, as cited in Smith, et al., 2008). In the same way, if students are having low letter-sound knowledge, decoding difficulties and reading miscues, or spelling difficulties and writing miscues phonics is the focus strategy you should plan your lesson around (Diller, 2007). Finally, to improve students

confidence, students spend time practicing their oral reading and not on decoding (Moran, 2006, as cited in Clementi, 2010).

Vocabulary.

Although teachers can teach some words directly, most new vocabulary will be learned indirectly. Some children come to school being read to every day and having a large oral vocabulary. In contrast, some children come to school with limited vocabularies and have not learned to pay attention to new words because they weren't exposed to rich vocabulary (Diller, 2007). Furthermore, the development of students' vocabulary knowledge further facilitates successful comprehension of a variety of texts (R.A. Thompson, 1999, as cited in Taylor, et al., 2009) which in turn increases their vocabulary knowledge (Taylor, et al., 2009).

Vocabulary knowledge is a vital component of reading comprehension (Anderson & Freebody, 1981, as cited in Taylor, et al., 2009). Likewise, developing a larger vocabulary is often a critical factor in improving reading comprehension (Joshi, 2005). Students with robust vocabularies, on the other hand, read more, comprehend better, and thus read more still, improving their vocabularies (Joshi, 2005).

Next, connections between previously learned vocabulary words and new words encountered in reading help students understand the relationships that form the connections for these words (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Consequently, knowing a word in its fullest sense goes beyond simply being able to define it or getting some basic meaning from context; instead, it means being able to discuss, elaborate, and demonstrate the meaning of the word in multiple contexts or technical connotations in which the word occurs (Rupley, Logan, & Nichols, 1999, as cited in Rupley & Nichols, 2005). As students expand their experimental and conceptual

backgrounds, they will also expand and refine their knowledge of word meanings (Taylor, et al., 2009).

Explicit instruction of vocabulary with continued support by the teacher is particularly important for struggling readers (Beimiller, 2003, as cited in Rupley & Nicholas, 2005). In conclusion, with this increase of the number of students with diverse backgrounds, it is more important than ever to focus on meaningful vocabulary instruction to bridge the gap between the real-life experiences of the child and the learning environment and demands of school (Rupley & Nicholas, 2005).

Vocabulary Instruction.

Instruction that guides students to make associations and accommodations to their experiences and provides varied opportunities for students to practice and apply their word knowledge is a means for students to learn and retain new vocabulary (Goerss, Beck, & McKeown, 1999, as cited in Rupley & Nichols, 2005). These children need to be taught word-learning strategies so they can add to their vocabulary more rapidly. These are some ideas for how to teach kids to try to determine the meaning of a new word or phrase: use the picture, look at other words before and after the new word for clues for its meaning, substitute another word that makes sense there, ask someone its meaning, or use a dictionary or glossary (Diller, 2007). Likewise, a focused vocabulary lesson can be used to help children who have limited oral vocabularies and weak word knowledge (Diller, 2007).

One of the teachers' goals should be to encourage students to use as many of their receptive vocabulary words as possible, when speaking and writing (Joshi, 2005). Students can be engaged in learning new words and expanding their understanding of words through instruction that is based on active processing (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). Similarly, to help

students remember words and read text, research has shown that using word walls and word wall activities is an effective tool to help children learn to read (Hall & Cunningham, 1999, as cited in Jasmine & Schiesl, 2009). Additionally, using a word wall can help students learn high-frequency words (Diller, 2007).

Read-alouds called interactive or dialogic result in vocabulary (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000, as cited in McGee & Schieckedanz, 2007), comprehension strategies and story schema (Van den Broek, 2001), and concept development (Wasik & Bond, 2001, as cited in McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). A descriptive scene is read to the students by the teacher. The students were then asked to imagine what the scene looked like, what the characters looked like, and what events were taking place. They then visualized and drew these details in a sketch. The teacher then encourages the students to think of descriptive, visual words to describe the contents of their drawings. This helps to develop their vocabulary as well (Troegger, 2011).

Fluency.

In order to be a fluent reader, all of the components of instruction need to be offered to teachers and students (Allington, 2000, & Allington 1983, as cited in Johnston, et al., 2009). In addition, when students read the same text over and over again it can help to increase fluency and to improve comprehension (LaBerge, & Samuels, 1974, as cited in Patton, et al., 2010). Throughout this process, the central elements of accuracy, speed, and fluency increase and over time these skills become more automatic (Iaquinta, 2006). Likewise, students who recognize words and read with speed and accuracy will begin to read with fluency and build on their comprehension skills (Pumfrey & Elliott, 1990, as cited in Jasmine & Schiesl, 2009). However, inferring is a strategy of some complexity and requires young children to utilize all of the

comprehension strategies they have learned (Gregory & Cahill, 2010). Finally, researchers found that fluency is important beyond elementary school. (Johnston, et al., 2009).

Fluency Strategies.

With the implementation of the Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction, which includes repeated partner reading, researchers found students showed growth in all aspects of reading (Stahl & Heubach, 2005, as cited in Rasinski et al., 2009). Using repeated readings of a performance writings, students increased reading achievement and the students were interested about what they were reading (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004, as cited in Rasinski, et al., 2009). Similarly, fluency interventions have improved students reading abilities, two that have proved effective are repeated reading and passage previewing (Skinner et al. 1997 & Therrien, 2004, as cited in Bergeny, et al., 2009). Rereading can help build fluency and comprehension (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003, as cited in Deeney, 2010). Repeated reading is accepted as an effective technique for developing both fluency and comprehension for all students (Chard et al., 2002; NICHD, 2000; Therrien, 2004, as sited in Peebles, 2007). Likewise, students should engage in three types of repeated reading; read along, assisted repeated reading which students are paired and read together, and unassisted reading. (Meyer & Felton, 1999, as cited in Faver, 2008).

Programs such as the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) program, has been found to be useful in improving vocabulary (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Greaney, 1980, as cited in Joshi, 2005). Independent reading time provides students with the opportunity to practice their reading skills and fluency (Vlach & Burcie, 2010). Students who engage in silent reading gained more expressive oral reading which can then lead to better fluency and comprehension (Johnston, et al., 2009). Next, to acquire adequate fluency levels, students should be focused on

repeated readings (Meyer & Felton, 1999, as cited in Faver, 2008). Additionally, paired reading is another proven way to build reading fluency (Chard et al., 2002, as sited in Peebles, 2007).

Another intervention used to increase fluency is known as passage previewing, or modeling (Daly & Martens, 1994, & Skinner et al. 1997, as cited in Bergeny, et al., 2009). To help build fluency and confidence, in students reading, have your below level readers spend some of their time with texts they have chosen themselves and can read easily with minimal support (Glasswell & Ford, 2010). Furthermore, prompting helps the child to think about where they would pause if they were talking. Students can learn to read to the punctuation and stop (Diller, 2007). Further, reading with intonation and expression is necessary for understanding literature. Reading dialogue can be made easier by having the child think about who is speaking at that part of the story. Reading punctuation is important to note because it indicates to the child where they need to pause or stop and check for understanding (Diller, 2007). It is important for educators to regulate speed when there are exciting parts and pause to build anticipation (Diller, 2007). Finally, choppy and word-by-word reading can be helped as the child continues to build fluency skills (Diller, 2007).

Students can benefit from high-frequency word work. Practicing sight words will often help students achieve greater fluency. Knowing more words automatically contributes greatly to reading more fluently (Diller, 2007). Equally important, a word wall can help students to use what they know to help them to achieve reading fluency and comprehension (Callella, 2001, as cited in Jasmine & Schiesl, 2009).

Children can be taught to use their knowledge of onsets and rimes to decode words they do not know (Walton & Walton, 2001, as cited in Smith, et al., 2004). Additionally, rhythm walks are a multidimensional way for struggling readers to gain reading success (Pressley,

Gaskins, & Fingeret, 2006, as sited in Peebles, 2007). Movement conceptualizes the rhythmic nature of fluent, expressive reading and allows children to "feel" how fluent reading should sound, while enhancing the learning process by stimulating the neural pathways responsible for retention and cognition (Jensen, 2000, as sited in Peebles, 2007). Likewise, students who have difficulty reading will gain from instruction in rhyming which draws attention to onsets and rimes in words (Greaney, Tunme, & Chapman, 1997, O'Conner, 2000, as cited in Smith, et al., 2004). Finally, if taught a strategy, students can use rime analogies more often (I. W. Gaskins, Ehri, Cress, O'Hare, & Donnelly, 1996/1997, Hiebery, 1994, as cited in Smith et al., 2004).

Reading poetry gives students unlimited chances to practice with meaning, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Stanley, 2004, as cited in Faver, 2008). Similarly, the purpose of the Poetry Academy is to increase fluency, word recognition, and retelling skills of young readers (ERAS; McKenna & Kear, 1990, as cited in Wilfong, 2008). In addition, The Poetry Academy consists of: repeated readings, listening while reading, assisted reading, and modeling while reading (Moyer, 1982, as cited in Wilfong, 2008). The Poetry Academy helps readers create comfort and success toward reading (Wilfong, 2008).

Readers Theatre is an authentic venue for rereading the same text several times while motivating the most reluctant readers (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker1998/1999, as cited in Peebles, 2007). During Readers Theater students will increase their comprehension because they will reread a passage until they understand the text (Hollingsworth, Sherman & Zaugra, 2007, as cited in Clementi, 2010). Also, during Readers Theater students remain engaged and excited even if they are listening or speaking (Flynn 2004/2005 & Moran, 2006, as cited in Clementi, 2010).

Listening to a skilled reader read a passage can help students' reading fluency (Clarke-Stewart, 1998, & Kuhn, 2005, as cited in Bergeny, et al., 2009). Similarly, the most effective way to improve language in children is for them to engage in many conversations with language proficient adults, who are the most effective role models (Crevola & Vineis, 2004, as cited in MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). In addition, students who are interested in what they are reading can increase their volume and this will help to increase their fluency (Kuhn et al., 2006, as cited in Deeney, 2010).

Reading Strategies.

Early intervention is critical, and the window of opportunity closes quickly (McCain & Mustard, 1999, as cited in MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). Early reading skills can be taught to students as early as kindergarten and that explicit, systematic, and intensive instruction can improve the reading status of at-risk students (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). Also, an intervention program must be specific and focused, not just more of the same thing over a longer period of time (MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). Finally, teachers need to present sophisticated picture books that children infer characters' motivations and thoughts and connect them to actions (cause and effect) (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

The KELT program showed signs that it helped to provide English-language learners with extra support throughout kindergarten to remain on par with non-ESL students in the development of emergent-literacy skills (MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010). However, noticeably absent from the KELT program are worksheets, isolated "drill-and-practice" activities, and those such as "letter of the week," Instead hands-on, language-rich activities that allow for opportunities to talk, question, share opinions, seek out new information, listen, and think are

used. Student's scores on the assessments of these skills demonstrate the impact the experiences had on student achievement (MacDonald & Figueredo, 2010).

Reading Their Way, is a literacy acquisition program which combines curriculum exercises with time management strategies to optimize instructional time and increase academic learning time (Donat, 2006). First, RTW was able to enhance a teacher's ability to address the reading acquisition needs for those children who learn best through phonics instruction as well as those who learn best through the use of whole language strategies (Donat, 2006). Second, RTW combines the phonics and whole language approaches to offer a balanced approach that is implemented within a time management system that maximizes the opportunity of teachers to meet children's learning needs (Donat, 2006). Lastly, RTW implements the parallel block scheduling technique. Parallel block scheduling has increased instructional time, but more importantly it has increased academic learning time as well (Donat, 2006).

The COR framework provides a layered scaffold that builds on the previously learned comprehension strategies of prior lessons. Each lesson introduces a new level of cognition based on Bloom's Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Troegger, 2011). First, the COR framework allows students to be active researchers and supports the application of conscious thinking and metacognitive processes while reading and comprehending texts (Troegger, 2011). Next, using the COR lesson procedures students can build on prior knowledge during each of the six stages of the program which are based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Finally, each lesson incorporates a before, during and after reading phase where students can apply their newly learnt strategies (Troegger, 2011).

Most effective read-alouds are those in which children are actively involved asking and answering questions and making predictions rather than passively listening (Dickinson, 2001, as

cited in McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Repeated Interactive Read-Alouds are read-aloud which take place across three days of reading the same book. On the first day, the teacher takes a more action role by reading and making comments. On the second day, the children read and participate verbally by answering question. On the final day, children take a highly active role as they reconstruct the story with teacher guidance (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Furthermore, the Story Read Aloud Program provides a framework for directly teaching comprehension of complex narrative and information texts to first-graders in general education classrooms during read aloud time (Baker, Chard, & Edwards-Santoro, 2004, as cited in Coyne et al., 2009). In addition, explicit types of modeling used extensively in teaching cognitive strategies are talk-alouds and think alouds. Both of these involve teacher discussion and teacher-student interaction (Rupley, et al., 2009).

There are several reading intervention programs which teachers can implement. Project Read (Enfield, 1988, as cited in Bruce, et al., 1999) is a systematic, concept-based, multisensory approach to teaching phonemic awareness. It was developed to teach decoding and encoding skills in classroom contexts with at-risk and learning disabled students, primarily (Bruce, et al., 1999). Whereas, the RTI (response to intervention) model is a prevention tactic used to address students' risks in early grades before there is a later need for more interventions if problems are unaddressed (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006, as cited in Coyne et al., 2009). Finally, conspicuous strategies are explicit teaching of important reading strategies available to all, and will promote students' transfer and generalization which will result in flexible strategy application and constructing meaning from a variety of reading materials **(**Coyne et al., 2009).

Tutoring.

Tutoring model has five basic components: engaging reading materials that are carefully graded in difficulty, a sequenced word study or phonics curriculum, regularly scheduled tutoring sessions (at least two sessions per week), a committed group of noncertified tutors (paraprofessionals or community volunteers), and a knowledgeable reading teacher who provides ongoing supervision to the tutors (Morris, 2006). Similarly, over the past decade, several first-grade intervention programs including Reading Recovery (Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994, as cited in Morris, 2006) Success for All (Slaving et al., 1999, as cited in Morris, 2006) and Early Steps (Santa & Hoien, 1999, as cited in Morris, 2006) have demonstrated that one to one tutoring can significantly raise the achievement of at-risk beginning readers (Morris, 2006).

Likewise, as Wasik and Slavin (1990, 1993, as cited in Morris, 2006) have argued, one-to-one tutoring potentially can increase time on task, ensure instruction at the appropriate level, and afford timely reinforcement and corrective feedback during reading (Morris, 2006). Also, the tutors' task is to move the children efficiently through a graded set of contextual reading and word study materials—in other words, to teach them to read (Morris, 2006). However, a possible alternative is to use paraprofessionals or community volunteers to tutor at-risk readers (Morris, 2006). Research has presented evidence that noncertified reading tutors, when provided with appropriate supervision, can raise the achievement of at-risk primary-grade readers (Morris, 2006). Paraprofessionals can be taught to provide effective early reading intervention with the correct training (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007).

Likewise, peer tutoring can be used to increase a child's fluency and comprehension skills (Simmons et al., 1994, as cited in Kourea, et al., 2007). In addition, total class peer tutoring

can be used to promote the learning of reading skills for both minority and culturally diverse students (Kourea, et al., 2007). In conclusion, when parents and teachers work together using fast start and fluency development lessons, students are able to make great improvement in reading fluency and comprehension (Padak & Rasinski, 2005, Rasinski, 1995, Rasinski & Padak, 2004, as cited in Rasinski, et al., 2009)

Project Objective and Processing Statements

As a result of small group instruction in guided reading groups (processing, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, or fluency) during the period of September 19 through December 9, 2011, the students of Teacher researchers A, B, and C wanted to show growth in their reading ability. The teacher researchers accomplished the following tasks for the interventions:

- Lesson plan for targeted strategy.
- Leveled text books at students' ability levels.
- Reading Strategies bulletin board located in the guided reading area.

Project Action Plan

The following project action plan outlined the data collection and intervention strategies that were implemented to complete the action research project that focused on improving first grade and kindergarten students' overall reading ability. Topics were listed and categorized by when it was introduced and completed.

<u>Prior to Documentation</u>

(Week of August 29th, 2011 through September 7th, 2011)

- Produce copies of parental consent forms to be distributed to students' parents.

- Distribute parental consent forms that will explain action research project via students' binders/folders for parents to sign and return via students' binders/folders during the week of August 29th, 2011.
- Collect all returned consent forms during the weeks of August 29th, 2011 through September 7th, 2011.
- Send second notices to families who have not returned parental consent form by September 7th, 2011.
- Produce copies of baseline assessments and observational checklists.

Pre-Documentation

(Beginning September 8th, 2011 through September 16th, 2011)

- Distribute parent surveys that parents will answer questions based on their perception of their child's overall reading interests. The parent survey will be sent home via students' binders/folders on September 8th, 2011.
- During the 90-minute reading block, the teacher researchers will administer both one-on-one and small group baseline assessments.
- When baseline assessments are completed, the teacher researchers will then administer the observational checklist to those students who did not meet the standards from the baseline assessments. This will be done during the 90-minute reading block.
- Collect all parent surveys via students' binders/folders. All surveys will be collected anonymously and if teacher researchers notice any information on a survey, they will keep it confidential and add it with the other surveys that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the teacher researcher's classroom.

- Teacher researchers will review parent surveys, baseline assessments, and observational checklists to determine guided reading groups based on results.
- All data collections will be stored in a locked filing cabinet located in the teacher researcher's classroom.

Intervention Begins

(Weeks of September 19th, 2011 through December 9th, 2011)

Teacher researchers will implement guided reading strategies and techniques that will be incorporated during guided reading groups in the 90 minute reading block. These strategies will be based on the results of the baseline assessments. Based on the young age of the students, the focus areas will change based on students' individuals needs.

Week One through Week Six

(Weeks of September 19th, 2011 through October 28th, 2011)

Based on previous experiences, the teacher researchers are predicting that the following areas will be the areas of focus. They include: phonics/phonemic awareness, comprehension, and vocabulary. These areas are subject to change based on students' growth or regression.

Week Seven through Week Twelve

(Weeks of October 31st, 2011 through December 9th, 2011)

Based on previous experiences, the teacher researchers are predicting that the following areas will be the areas of focus. They include: comprehension, processing, and fluency. These areas are subject to change based on students' growth or regression.

Post -Documentation

(Week of December 12th, 2011 through December 20th)

- Teacher researchers will re-administer baseline assessments to determine students' growth.
- Teacher researchers will compare both pre and post assessments to determine future intervention strategies.

Methods of Assessment

The teacher researchers will re-administer the fall baseline assessments to determine if growth was made from the targeted students who did not meet baseline goals during pre-documentation. The purpose of re-administering the baseline assessments is to see if students made academic growth based on the interventions that were taught. Post data documentation will take place during the week of December 12 through December 20, 2011. These assessments will be compared to the results from the fall baseline assessments (Appendices C & D).

Chapter 4

Project Results

The teacher researchers identified weak letter recognition, sound identification, word identification, and basic reading skills. These weaknesses led to an overall lack of reading achievement in meeting grade level benchmarks. The teacher researchers implemented the following interventions during their guided reading groups: practicing letter identification and sounds, word building activities, phonemic awareness activities, and leveled readers to promote reading success. Fourteen kindergartners from Site A and seven first grade students from Site B for a total of twenty-one students participated in the study that began the week of August 29th, 2011 and ran through December 20th, 2011.

Historical Description of the Intervention

During the first two weeks of pre-documentation, we explained the details of the action research project to the students and parents via a letter sent home in the students take home folders. The explanatory letter and permission slips were distributed August 29th through September 16th, 2011, to give parental consent to conduct the research project. During these first two weeks the teacher researchers also sent home a parent survey, administered baseline assessments, and conducted an observational checklist on their students. The teacher researchers noticed that there was a connection between lack of interest in reading at home with the targeted students from the parent survey. We also noted from the observational checklist that these students were easily distracted, had a hard time focusing on the text, and lacked basic reading strategies. During administering the baseline assessment, teacher researchers from Site A had to stop midway through the assessment due to the students' frustration in complexity of the test. Teacher researcher from Site B was able to administer the baseline test over a two day period.

Based on the results of the baseline assessment and observational checklist, each teacher researcher from Site A and Site B identified seven students in their classrooms that fell below beginning of the year benchmark.

In the first week of intervention, September 19-23rd, 2011, Site A began focusing on letter identification and sound review with the targeted students. During small group instruction flashcards and pre-primer leveled readers were used with these students. Site B began to focus on vowel sounds, sight words, and developing comprehension skills with her students. All researchers noted the students were excited to work with the teacher in a small group setting. Sites A and B were informed that a reading teacher and interventionist would begin working with the targeted students in the following weeks. All three teacher researchers indicated that a negative aspect of having 21 targeted students was finding the time to meet with them on a daily basis.

In the second week of intervention, September 26-30th, 2011, Site A continued working on letter and sound identification. They began working on word wall words using flashcards and reinforcing writing them. Pre-primer books were used as well to introduce the basic reading strategies and basic book handling skills. Site B's focus strategy for the week was to look at the picture to determine unknown words. The researcher noted that her students were recognizing patterns in the books. Site B's researcher began sending home their weekly leveled books on a daily basis for practice. The only negative thing that Site A's researchers noted was their targeted students did not have a mastery of word wall words. Flashcards were sent home for reinforcement.

In the third week of intervention, October 3-7th, 2011, Site A continued to work towards mastering letter and sound identification and basic book holding skills. The researchers began to

introduce questioning techniques involving characters, setting, and plot. Looking at the picture for clues and getting mouth ready were reading strategies that were reinforced. Site B's focus strategy for the week was asking students to identify the first letter in unknown words, identifying it and the sound it makes. After being able to do this they could ask themselves what makes sense for the unknown word. Some negative aspects noted were not all targeted students were making the growth that their peers were making, and distractibility was still a reoccurring theme.

In the fourth and fifth week of intervention, October 10th -21st, 2011, Site A continued to reinforce letter and sound identification, now working on using those sounds when looking at words. They also continued to introduce the reading strategies for what to do when stuck on a word while reading. The students began to look at the picture for clues, and stretch their mouths to make the sounds for the words that were unknown. Site B's focus strategy was getting students to sound out unknown words, and ask them to make a guess while asking themselves does it make sense. In addition, the students began to reread these sentences to check for meaning. The negative aspects that were found during these two weeks were the students' inability to begin using these new strategies independently.

In the sixth week of intervention, October 24th -28th, 2011, both Site A and Site B administered district testing in their classrooms. Site A took this week to administer First Quarter assessments for the upcoming Parent Teacher Conferences. Site B had formal district testing on Running Records. This left little to no time to work on interventions with the targeted students. While completing these assessments the teacher researchers at both Site A and Site B have noticed growth in all of their targeted students.

In the seventh week of intervention, October 31st –November 4th, 2011, Site A continued to target the new strategies for unknown words. These included: looking at the picture for clues, getting lips ready to make the sound, and stretching all the sounds out to make the word. Sound review, reading pre-primers, and working on rhyming were also part of the intervention work this week. Site A has noticed how much help their struggling students are getting with the support of the reading teacher and interventionist. Site B had to administer the 300 Sight Word's Test this week to all of her students. This left no small group time to work with the targeted students. Twelve students met the benchmark goal; however 13 of Site B's students did not meet the Sight Word benchmark for this time of the year. Additionally, one student knew all 300 words.

In the eighth week of intervention, November 7th -10th, 2011, teacher researchers at Sites A and B continued to adjust their small groups based on student growth and continued needs. Students were really using the reading strategies that had been introduced during guided reading groups at both sites. Teacher Researcher at Site B was out of her building for two days due to staff development training.

In the ninth and tenth weeks of intervention, November 14th –December 9th, 2011, Sites A and B continued to work on getting students to independently use the reading strategies that have been taught to help them figure out unknown words. The students still wanted assistance from the teacher right away when coming to an unknown word. We continued to build independency while reading during the next few weeks. Comprehension strategies were also taught during these weeks that included: story elements, retelling strategies, organization and questioning.

The eleventh and twelfth weeks of the research project were spent completing post-documentation. The dates of this post-documentation were December 12th -21st, 2011. All teacher researchers re-administered their baseline assessment to the targeted students. Site A also administered quarterly assessments during this time. All targeted students made significant growth in all areas. Connections were being made and these students were beginning to use these new strategies during reading. Their overall word knowledge had grown and given them a bigger vocabulary to use when reading. The teacher researchers planned to continue to use the above strategies as the year progresses to promote reading growth and achievement.

Interventions.

The first intervention implemented was weekly lesson plans that targeted specific reading strategies. These included: processing, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency. These were implemented in small groups during the reading block. These strategies were needed to develop effective readers who can read and comprehend grade level passages. Each week plans were modified to meet the needs of the targeted students and to follow the natural progression in the reading process.

The second intervention focused on the use of leveled text books at the students' reading level. At the beginning of this research students were introduced to pre-primmer books then slowly progressed to repetitive pattern stories. The teacher researchers chose books based on the students' current reading ability. As the students advanced, teacher researchers moved students to a higher level of text to meet their needs.

The last intervention focused on the visual aids that were located in the guided reading area. These posters provided students with a visual reminder of reading strategies that they could use when coming to an unknown word. Additionally, these strategies were sent home for parents

to utilize while listening to their children read at home. This provided a home-school connection that parents could use to develop their child's reading ability.

Reflection.

I, Teacher Researcher A, felt that I gained a lot of useful information to use in my classroom. Not only did I realize that I could successfully implement research in my classroom, but could use this information for years to come. I was nervous about balancing the demands of being a mom, a teacher, and this research project. I now see that through careful planning and preparation I was able to balance all of these demands. It was rewarding to see that strategies I have used with my students in the past and in this research are effective and have positive results in my students reading growth. I look forward to watching my students continue to grow as the rest of the year progresses.

At the beginning of this project, I, Teacher Researcher B, felt nervous with the expectations I set forth for my targeted students. With seven of my students coming in with zero letters or sounds, I was apprehensive that this research project would be too much for them to handle. However, after intensive instruction and a small group setting, my students grew immensely and continue to do so as the year progresses. I also wanted to note that without the extra support from our reading teacher and interventionist, these students perhaps would not have made the growth that they did. I am proud to see that my students are blossoming into strong and confident readers and will continue to push themselves as they prepare for first grade. This research project will always play a role in my overall reading instruction.

I, Teacher Research C, learned a lot during this project. As a first grade teacher, I was amazed to see that many of my students had strong background knowledge in reading. This allowed me to focus my instruction more on developing their reading strategies to help them

become more fluent readers. One aspect that stuck out significantly to me was the strong correlation between the number of sight words a student knows and their overall reading ability. Additionally, it is extremely important that the reading skills that are taught at school are reinforced at home through daily reading activities. I feel that if there was a stronger connection between home and school, my students overall reading achievement would soar. I will continue to use the reading strategies referenced in this project to promote reading achievement in my students in the years to come. My hope is to then continue my students reading development so they become independent and fluent readers.

I, Teacher Researcher D, participated in this research project differently than my colleagues. I did not have a classroom to conduct this research but I have gained knowledge on how to implement important reading strategies in a future classroom to improve reading achievement. I have also gained knowledge to better assess students who are experiencing low reading achievement. After this research project, I am able to identify causes that effect students reading achievement and plan appropriate strategies that fit each students' needs. In addition, I participated with Teacher Researcher A in collecting and writing up the data for Immediate Context of the Problem and Local Context of the Problem. I also participated with Teacher Researchers A, B, and C in completing Probable Causes and Chapter 3.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The purpose of this research was for the teacher researchers to provide their students with reading strategies to enhance reading achievement. Areas that were focused on were processing, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency. The teacher researchers collected data from 14 kindergartners and 7 first grade students for a total of 21 students. Evidence came from re-administering the baseline assessments from the beginning of the year to

demonstrate growth in the tested areas. The post testing occurred during the weeks of December 12th -21st, 2011.

Baseline Assessments.

The baseline assessment was used to see if the students made any growth from the beginning of the research project to the end. Fourteen kindergarten students and seven first grade students completed the baseline assessment which included multiple choice questions. These questions focused on: letter recognition and beginning, middle, and ending sounds. Please refer to Appendices C & D where baseline assessments can be found.

site a: letter recognition.

The first component of the test focused on letter recognition. Figure19, showing post-documentation results, represents that 100% (n=14) of the students recognized all 10 of the letters. Pre-documentation of letter recognition (n=49) resulted in 3 students knowing 0 letters (Figure 20) compared to the 14 targeted students who knew all 10 letters for post documentation.

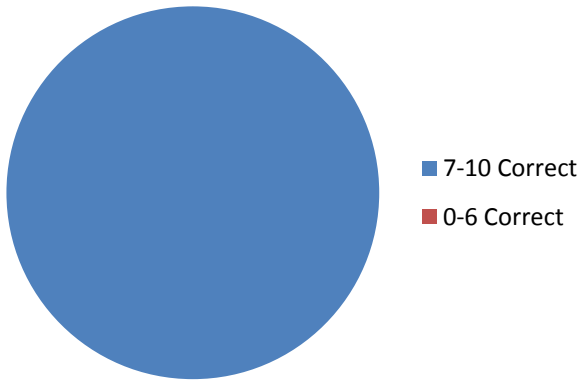


Figure 19. Site A's Post-Documentation: Letter Recognition Results (n=14)

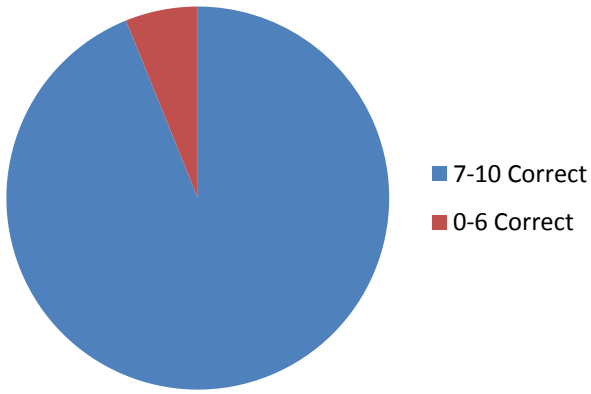


Figure 20. Site A's Pre-documentation: Letter Recognition Results (n=49)

site b: letter recognition.

Figure 21, from post-documentation indicates that 100% (n=7) of the students recognized all 12 letters compared to pre-documentation (Figure 22) showed that 1 of 49 students knew 0 of the 12 tested letters when they were initially tested.

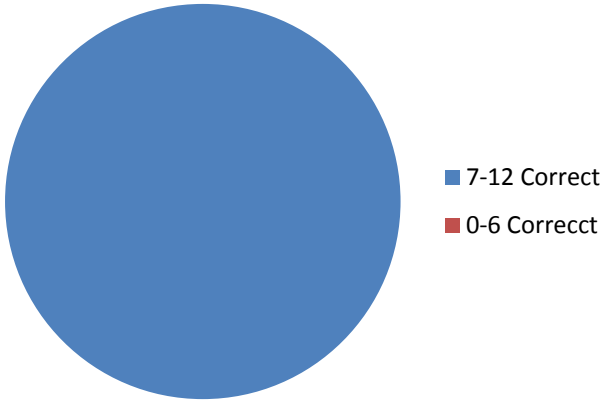


Figure 21. Site B's Post-Documentation: Letter Recognition Results (n=7)

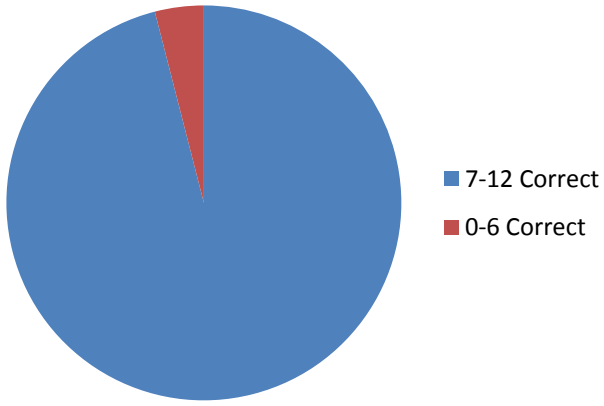


Figure 22. Site B's Pre-Documentation: Letter Recognition Results (n=25)

site a: beginning sounds.

The second component of the test focused on beginning sounds. Figure 23 shows post-documentation results whereby 100% (n=14) of the students recognized all three of the beginning sounds compared to pre-documentation where 19 of 49 (39%) performed below grade level (Figure 24) knowing two or fewer sounds.

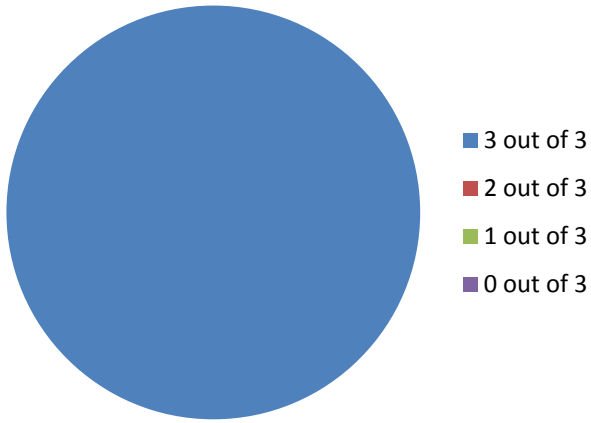


Figure 23. Site A's Post-Documentation: Beginning Sounds (n=14)

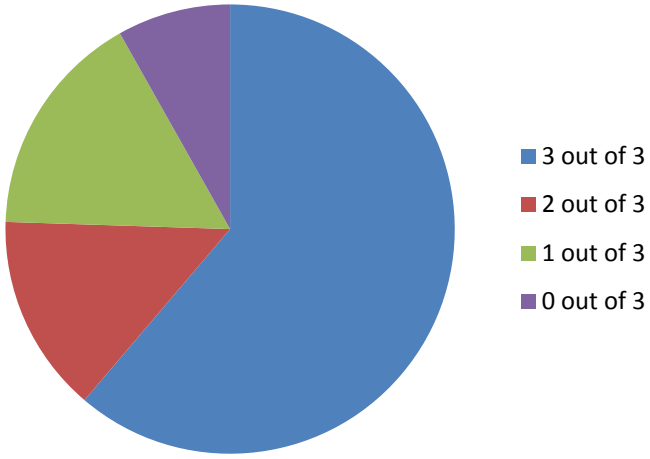


Figure 24. Site A's Pre-Documentation: Beginning Sounds (n=49)

site b: beginning sounds.

Figure 25 from post-documentation indicates that 100% (n=7) of the students recognized all seven beginning sounds. Teacher-researchers compared these results to pre-documentation (Figure 26) in which one student knew 4 or fewer beginning sounds.

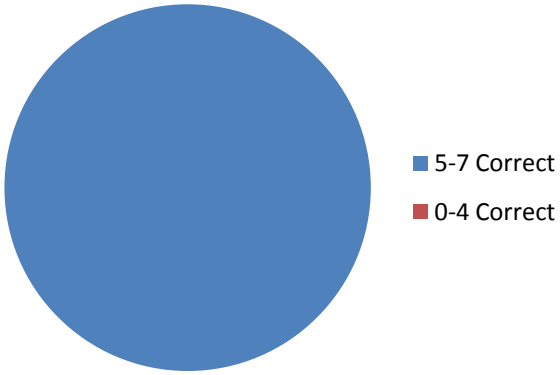


Figure 25. Site B's Post-Documentation: Beginning Sound Results (n=7)

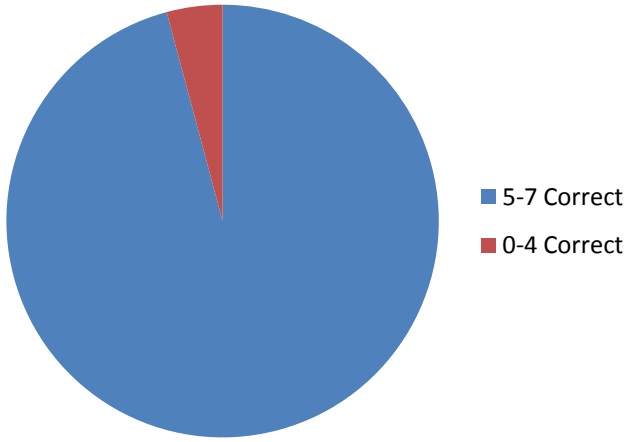


Figure 26. Site B's Pre-Documentation: Beginning Sound Results (n=24)

site a: ending sounds.

The third component of the text focused on ending sounds. Site B students did not test ending sounds. Figure 27 shows post-documentation results for Site A representing that 100% (n=14) of the students recognized all 3 of the ending sounds. These results are compared to pre-documentation in which 57% (n=28) of the 49 students performed below grade level, recognizing two or fewer ending sound (Figure 28).

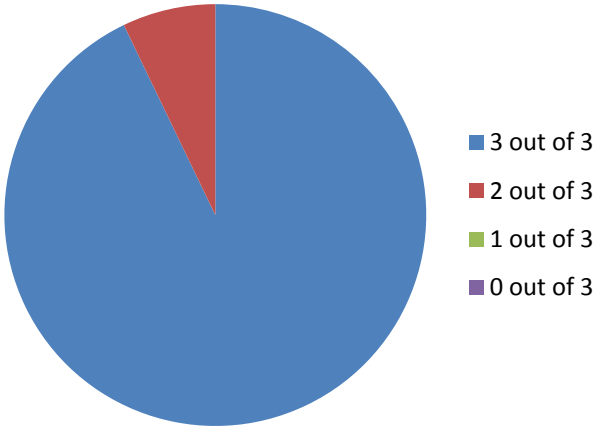


Figure 27. Site A's Post-Documentation: Ending Sounds Results (n=14)

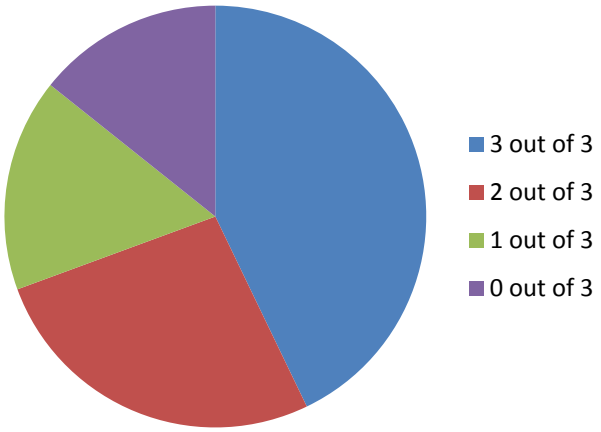


Figure 28. Site A's Pre-Documentation: Ending Sounds Results (n=49)

site a: middle sounds.

The fourth component of the test focused on middle sounds. Figure 29 shows post-documentation results with 96% (n=10) of the students recognizing both of the middle sounds.

These results are compared to Figure 30, which shows that 76% (n=37) of students were below grade level, knowing zero or one of the middle sounds.

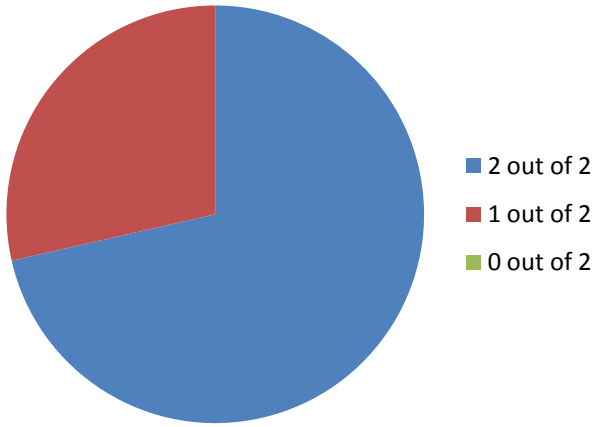


Figure 29. Site A's Post-Documentation: Middle Sound Results (n=14)

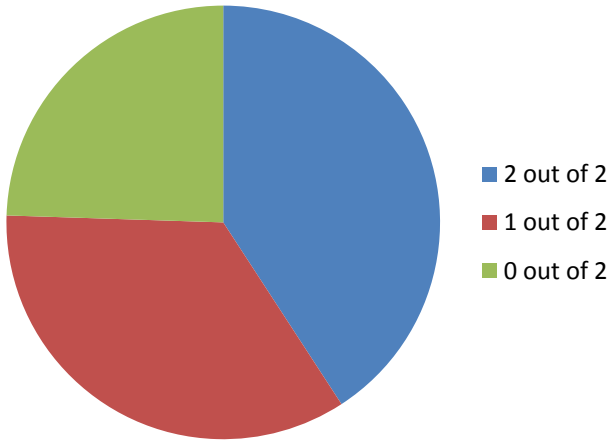


Figure 30. Site A's Pre-Documentation: Middle Sounds Results (n=49)

Summary.

The data confirmed that the teacher researcher's implementation of the different reading strategies improved the targeted students reading achievement. In each of the targeted areas on the baseline assessments the students showed a significant amount of growth. Students at both

sites grew in letter identification (figures 20 and 22), sound identification (figures 24 and 26), and overall word recognition. The teacher researchers were impressed with the growth made by their students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions.

After analyzing both the pre-post documentation from this research project, the Teacher researchers have concluded that the reading strategies that were implemented throughout the project were extremely successful. We, the teacher researchers, feel that the strategies were beneficial at increasing our students' overall reading achievement. Through the use of guided reading, small instruction groups, students were provided ample support and time to utilize these new strategies.

Recommendations.

Based upon the results, the teacher researchers agreed that all of the different reading strategies that were implemented throughout the research project will continue to be used throughout the remainder of the year and for years to come. The teacher researchers also agreed that guided reading is essential to the development and growth of young readers. One modification that would possibly need to be taken into consideration would be if the reading teacher or interventionist were no longer available to provide extra services to our lower achieving students. If this were to occur, the teacher researchers would have to modify their lessons and adjust the amount of time that they devote to these students. To a future teacher researcher, we would suggest that they implement the guided reading form of instruction into their classroom and realize the immense benefits guided reading has on a student's overall reading development and in turn their overall educational experience.

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APPENDICES




Parent Survey

Directions: Please take a moment to fill out this parent survey by circling the response that best fits your child. Also, please provide written responses for questions #3 and #5. Please do NOT put your name on the survey.

1. Does your child know all of their letters and the sounds the letters make?

   Yes or No

2. Does your child know common sight words?

   Yes or No

3. How often do you read to your child at home? (please circle what applies)

   Every night
   Twice a week
   Once a week
   Never

4. After reading a story, is your child able to answer basic comprehension questions such as: where did the story takes place, the characters, the sequence of the story, and what was the problem in the story and how was it solved?

   Yes or No

5. Does your child show interest in books?

   Yes or No

If so, how _____

_____

Comments:_____

_____

Observation Checklist:

Student Name: _____

• Difficulty with segmenting/blending sounds.	Yes	No
• Low letter-sound knowledge.	Yes	No
• Unable to rhyme.	Yes	No
• Decoding difficulties and reading miscues.	Yes	No
• Poor comprehension.	Yes	No
• Shows no interest in books/reading.	Yes	No
• Lacking print awareness skills. (left to right tracking with return sweep, pausing at punctuation)	Yes	No
• Poor attention span easily distracted.	Yes	No
• Lack of response during whole-group lessons/does not participate.	Yes	No
• Displays off-task behaviors.	Yes	No

Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name _____ Date _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

Summary of Performance

Subtest	Child's Score (Circle the number correct.)	Comments
Rapid Word Naming	0 1 2 3 4 5	
Rapid Letter Naming (Uppercase Letters)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26	
Rapid Letter Naming (Lowercase Letters)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26	
Beginning Phonics	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Letter Recognition	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Letter/Sound Associations: Beginning Sounds	0 1 2 3	
Letter/Sound Associations: Ending Sounds	0 1 2 3	
Letter/Sound Associations: Middle Sounds	0 1 2	
High-Frequency Words	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Reading Decodable Words	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Following Directions	0 1 2 3	
Listening Comprehension	0 1 2 3	
Total Score	**/111**	

Major Strengths: _____

Major Weaknesses: _____

Were accommodations made for this child? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Types of accommodations: _____

_____

Name _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

Letter Recognition

 **Sample**	a ○	d ○	i ○
	C ○	P ○	S ○
	n ○	r ○	t ○
	N ○	I ○	C ○
	p ○	m ○	d ○

Name _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

	R	A	D
	○	○	○
	m	s	r
	○	○	○
	T	N	P
	○	○	○
	c	d	i
	○	○	○
	A	M	R
	○	○	○
	d	s	i
	○	○	○

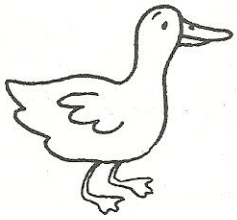
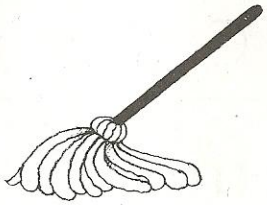
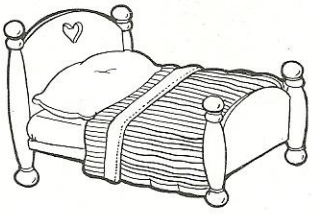
Name _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

Letter/Sound Associations: Beginning Sounds

Sample

m

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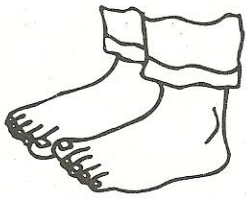

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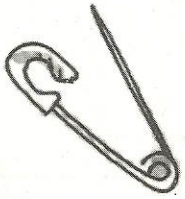
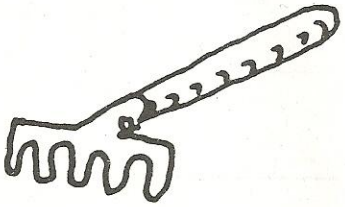
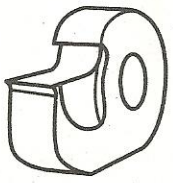
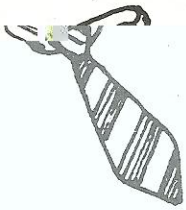
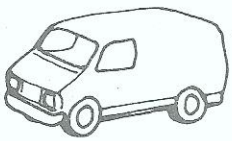
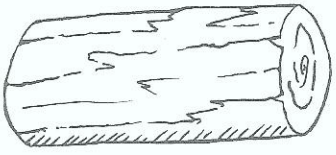




t

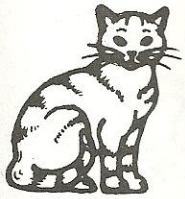
Name _____

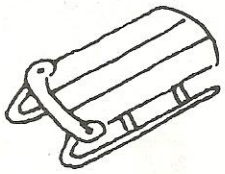
Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

Letter/Sound Associations: Ending Sounds

Sample

t





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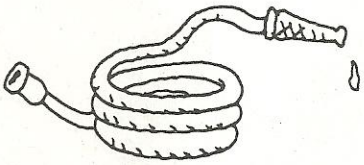

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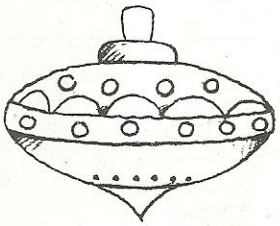

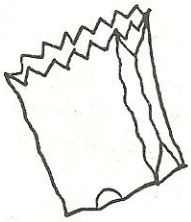

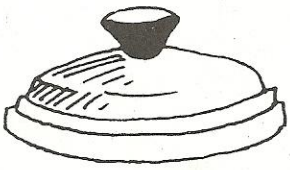

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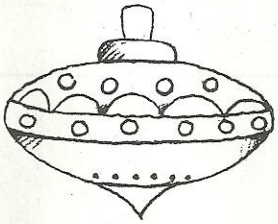


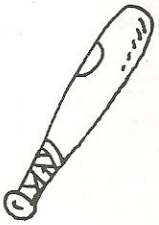
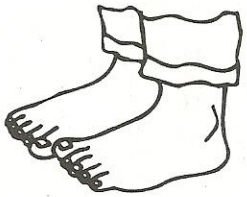
Name _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

Letter/Sound Associations: Middle Sounds

Sample

a

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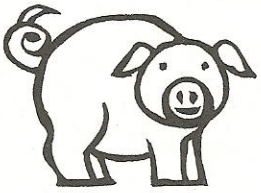
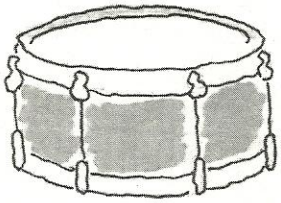


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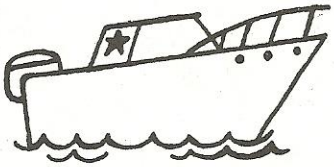
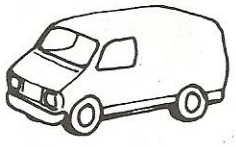




○ ○ ○

Name _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

High-Frequency Words

Sample

I	to	the
○	○	○

my	a	he
○	○	○

come	here	like
○	○	○

go	my	I
○	○	○

a	he	come
○	○	○

Name _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

	here ○	go ○	my ○
	he ○	like ○	the ○
	the ○	to ○	come ○
	a ○	go ○	he ○
	my ○	here ○	to ○
	he ○	like ○	the ○

Name _____

Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

Reading Decodable Words

Sample

mat	tap	can
○	○	○

cap	pan	man
○	○	○

tan	ran	nap
○	○	○

cat	map	rat
○	○	○

sat	map	pan
○	○	○

Name _____

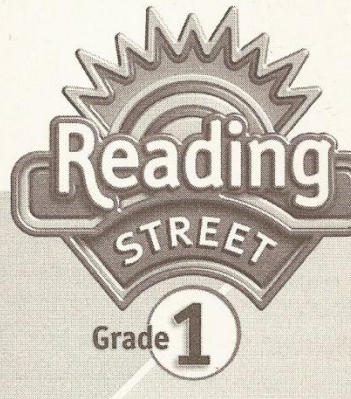
Benchmark Assessment
Early-in-Year

	tap ○	ran ○	cat ○
	pan ○	tan ○	cap ○
	map ○	rap ○	man ○
	rat ○	nap ○	pat ○
	tan ○	pan ○	can ○
	nap ○	ran ○	mat ○

NAME _____ DATE _____

Scott Foresman

Baseline Group Test



PEARSON

Glenview, Illinois
Boston, Massachusetts
Chandler, Arizona
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey

ISBN-13: 978-0-328-48522-2

LETTER RECOGNITION

★	B	T	A	X
1.	L	H	P	Q
2.	E	I	F	S
3.	K	R	C	Z
4.	X	U	Y	V
5.	N	M	W	E
6.	D	G	O	P

7.	p	b	d	c
8.	y	m	v	n
9.	g	j	q	l
10.	z	s	c	k
11.	h	e	f	r
12.	i	u	a	o

PHONICS – INITIAL CONSONANTS

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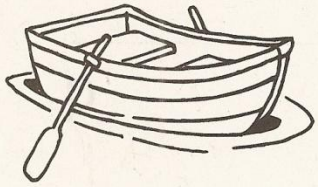
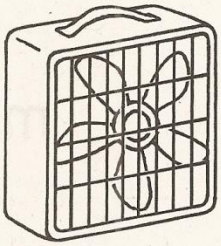
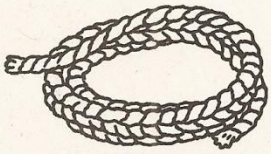
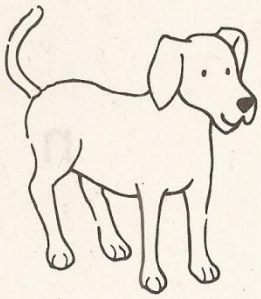
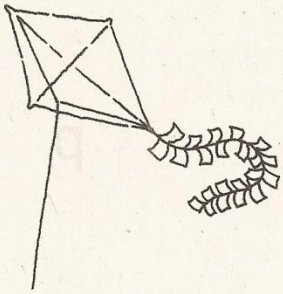
1.		d	b	p
2.		v	h	f
3.		r	p	b

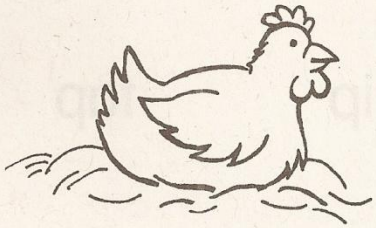
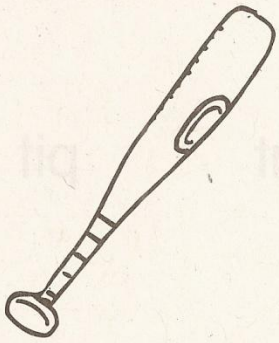
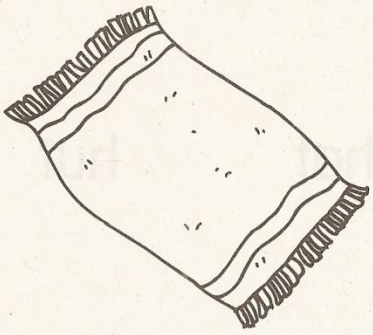
4.  t d b

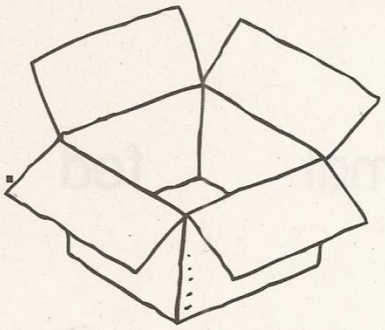
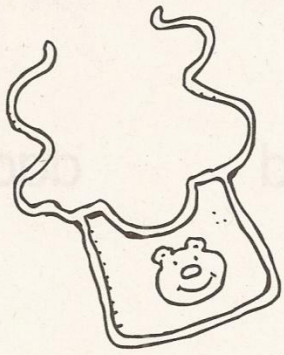
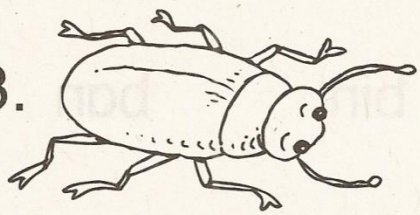
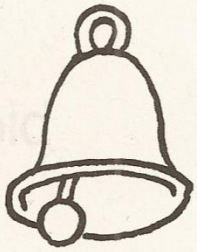
5.  k g q

6.  n v m

7.  j t d

VOWEL SOUNDS

★		pin	mat	fed
8.		dud	did	dad
9.		bun	bin	ban
10.		bad	bed	bid

11. 	top	tip	tap
12. 	pot	pat	pit
13. 	hot	hat	hut
14. 	leg	lug	lag

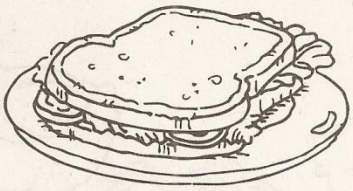
WORD RECOGNITION

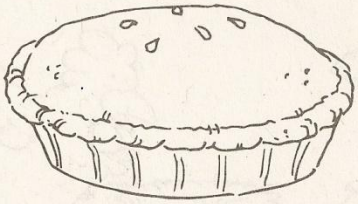
★	cab	cap	cat
1.	what	that	than
2.	said	sat	saw
3.	yes	yet	you

4.	hen	her	here
5.	pick	park	pat
6.	lot	look	late
7.	ride	ring	rug

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

★





1.

2.

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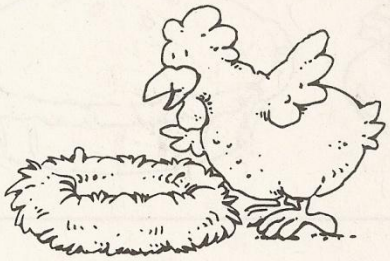
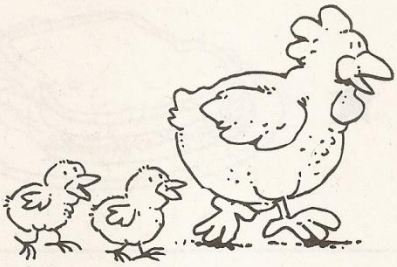
5.





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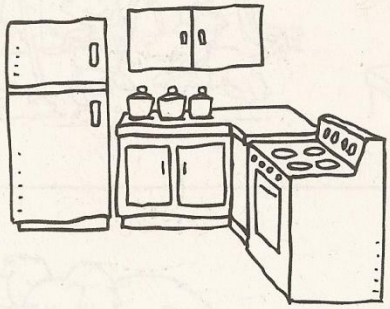

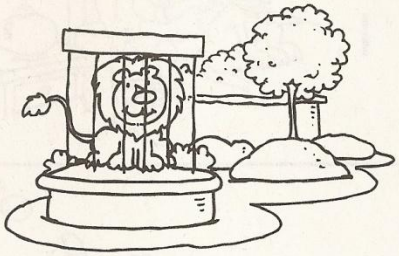

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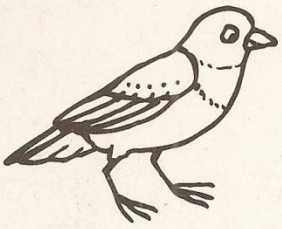

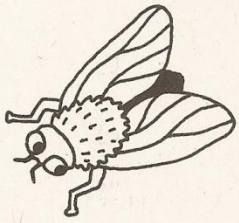

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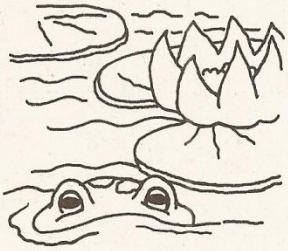

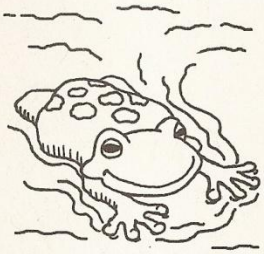

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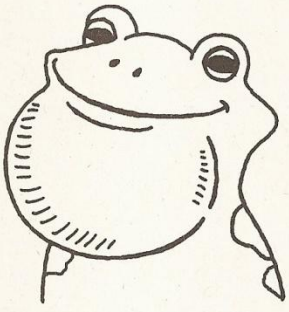

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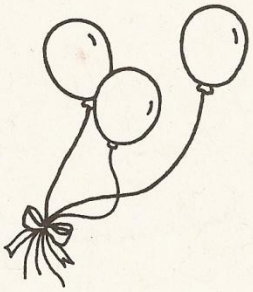

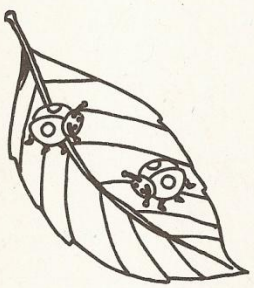

Name _____ Date _____

PHONEMIC AWARENESS – INITIAL AND FINAL SOUNDS

★

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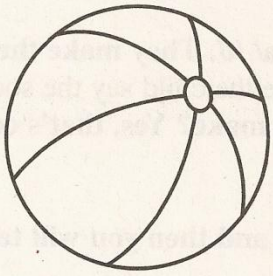

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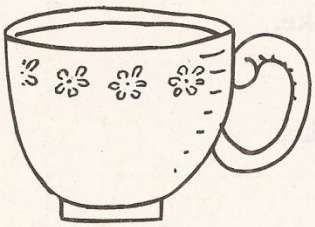

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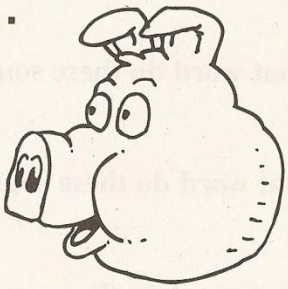

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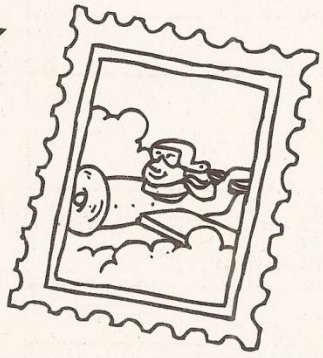

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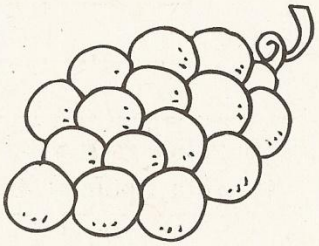

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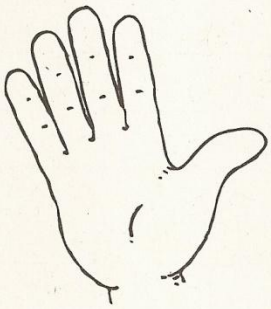

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