IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND FLUENCY THROUGH THE USE OF
GUIDED READING

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ABSTRACT

This action research report describes a program to increase students' reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading. The targeted population consists of second and fourth grade students in a northwest suburban area of a large city located in the Midwest. The problems of low reading comprehension and fluency scores were documented through the use of district provided comprehension and fluency assessments and teacher surveys.

The literature showed multiple factors that contribute to the problem of low reading fluency and comprehension scores. These factors included individual students, school curriculum and classroom environment, teacher training, and family involvement. Literature review suggested the following solutions to improve reading comprehension and fluency: increasing family involvement, teaching thinking skills, creating flexible groups in the classroom, utilizing a meaningful reading curriculum, improving teacher education, and setting up a positive classroom environment. These researchers focused on the use of leveled texts, graphic organizers, and flexible groups during guided reading.

The analysis of student achievement data was determined by looking closely at district fluency and comprehension assessment scores as well as teacher surveys. The teacher researchers created lessons in which the students were working in reading centers and in small teacher-lead flexible guided reading groups. The students also completed activities that improved their reading comprehension and fluency. After completing the sixteen-week study the students were assessed using district provided comprehension and fluency assessments. In addition to these assessments, a rubric was used to evaluate each of the graphic organizers completed by the students.

Post intervention analysis of the district provided comprehension assessment, district provided fluency assessment, and rubric for the independent use of graphic organizers showed that both the second and fourth grade students at Sites A and B increased in the areas of reading comprehension and fluency. All in all the interventions of guided reading with leveled texts, flexible grouping, and graphic organizers yielded positive results for the second and fourth grade students at both Sites A and B.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Students in grades 2 and 4 perform below grade level expectancy on reading tasks that relate to comprehension and fluency. Evidence of this problem includes the following: district provided comprehension assessment scores, district provided fluency assessment scores, and a teacher survey on the issues of comprehension and fluency in the classroom.

Immediate Problem Context

This action research was conducted at two elementary school buildings. Both sites were located in middle class school districts within the northwest suburbs of a major Midwestern city. Conducting the research throughout this study at Site A were three teachers; one who teaches second and two who teach fourth grade. At Site B one second grade teacher conducted the research.

Site A

Site A is an elementary building within a district of 12 schools, nine are elementary and three are middle schools. Site A is a two story brick building which includes a main office, art room, music room, orchestra and band room, gymnasium, multipurpose room (cafeteria), technology lab, library, faculty lounge, conference room, and 24 classrooms. The classrooms are

equipped with one T.V., two computers, one telephone, one large chalkboard, four bulletin boards, and an assortment of shelves.

Site A opened its doors in September of 1969. In May of 1997 Site A was rededicated to its surrounding community after extensive renovations to many of its facilities, including its office, library, and faculty lounge. As a result of these renovations it received the *American School & University Architectural Award for Outstanding Buildings*.

The administrative staff at Site A includes one principal and one assistant to the principal who is also the Library Media Center (L.M.C.) director. Site A also receives the services of one part time psychologist, two social workers, a speech pathologist, and a part time occupational therapist. The certified staff at Site A includes two kindergarten teachers, one full time and one part time. There are three first grade teachers, three second grade teachers, four third grade teachers, four fourth grade teachers, three fifth grade teachers and one full time learning coach. Additionally, Site A employs two learning disabled (LD) resource teachers, one learning disabled resource aid, two self contained behavior disorder (BD) teachers, and two self contained behavior disorder aids. There are two part time music teachers, one part time band and orchestra teacher, one full time physical education teacher, one part time art teacher, and one full time technology teacher at Site A. The school also utilizes various parent volunteers that have been trained as reading specialists. These parents primarily work with first and second grade students.

Per the State School Report Card, there were 491 teachers within the district of Site A. The ethnicity of the district's teachers is as follows: 91.4% White, 0% Black, 7.3% Hispanic, 1.2% Asian/Pacific Islander and 0% Native American. The percentage of male and female teachers was 12.7% and 87.3% respectively. The average experience level of teachers within the district was 11.6 years and 49.1% of the teachers have earned post baccalaureate degrees. The

average teacher's salary for the school district is $64,048.00. Site A was managed by one female administrator. The average salary of administrators was $124,171.00. The salary of the superintendent was $228,571.00.

Site A is an elementary school serving 468 kindergarten through fifth grade students during the 2004-2005 school year as reported by the State School Report Card. The racial/ethic background (by percentage) were as follows: 92.7% White, 1.3% Black, 3.0% Hispanic, 2.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0% Native American, and 0.9% Multiracial/Ethnic. The report stated that 2.4% of the population was low income and 1.9% of the population had limited English proficiency. The daily attendance rate of the students at Site A was 95.4% and a mobility rate of 4.6%. The chronic truancy rate was 0.5%.

The total district population was 7,116 students as stated by the 2005 State School Report Card. Student population consists of 49.8% White, 2.5% Black, 40.7% Hispanic, 6.2% Asain/Pacific Islander, 0% Native American, and 0.9% Multiracial/Ethnic. Within the district 28.9% of the students come from low-income rate families. Additionally, 30.2% of the district's students had limited English proficiency. The daily attendance rate of the students at the district level is 95% and a mobility of 10.1%. The chronic truancy rate of the school district is 0.1%. The average class size for the district is 19.6% for kindergarten, 20.3% for first grade, and 18.9% for third grade.

The State School Report Card also gives instructional setting information. The average class size was 23.3% for kindergarten, 23.3% for first grade and 21.3% for third grade. The operating expenditures per pupil was $9,685.00.

Site B

Site B is an elementary school within a district of four schools, one school for young learners, two elementary schools and one junior high school. The school for young learners was added to the district prior to the 2005-2006 school year. The school will only service students in early childhood, pre-school, and kindergarten. Site B is a one-story brick building, which includes a main office, art room, music room, gymnasium, multipurpose room (cafeteria), computer lab, Library Resource Center (LRC), faculty lounge, conference room, community room, and 30 classrooms. Each classroom is equipped with one TV, one teacher computer, four student computers, one telephone, two large chalkboards, four bulletin boards, cabinet space, sink, water fountain, overhead projector, projection screen, wall maps, bay windows, two tables, student desks, and an assortment of built in shelves.

Site B has two different playground areas for its students. One of the areas includes two baseball diamonds, a large open field, and a soccer field. The second playground area has a quite sizable jungle gym consisting of many slides, monkey bars, and ladders. The area also offers two swing sets, two fields where the students enjoy playing football, and the bus turnaround where the students can play four square, hopscotch, and kickball.

Site B was originally built in 1952. The building was torn down and rebuilt in 1995. About five years later, the school had already outgrown its capacity. In order to solve this problem, the district ordered two mobile units to accommodate the growth of students in the district. However, this solution was only temporary. The long term solution was determined to be put into affect as of the 2005-2006 school year. That solution was to take back possession of an elementary school the district had been leasing to Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization. The elementary school was made into the early education learning center.

The administrative staff at Site B includes one principal and one assistant to the principal who is also the Literacy Support Specialist. Site A also receives the services from one psychologist, one social worker, two speech pathologists, and one part time occupational therapist that is shared among two schools in the district. The certified staff at Site B includes five first grade teachers, five second grade teachers, five third grade teachers, five fourth grade teachers, and four fifth grade teachers. Additionally, Site B employs three special education teachers, two are full time at the site and one is part time at Site B as well as another school in the district. The special education department also consists of three instructional assistants. There are many other classroom assistants and one-on-one assistants that help students with special needs be successful in general education settings. As far as special areas, Site B has two full time physical education teachers, one full time music teacher, one part time band/orchestra teacher, one full time art teacher, one computer media specialist, and one library resource specialist. Site B has one literacy support specialist as well as two literacy support instructional assistants. In addition to this support staff, there are two certified teachers that service the general education classrooms with additional literacy support.

Per the State School Report Card, there were 117 teachers within the district of Site B. The ethnicity of the district's teacher is as follows: 99.1% White, 0% Black, 0% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0% Native American. The percentage of male and female teachers was 12.7% and 87.3% respectively. The average experience level of teachers within the district was 11.3 years and 48.6% of the teachers have earned a post baccalaureate degree. The average teacher's salary for the school district is $51,969.00. Site B was managed by one female administrator. The average salary of administrators in the district was $132,908.00. The salary of the superintendent was $187,166.00 (Site B Report Card, 2005).

Site B was an elementary school serving 624 kindergarten through fifth grade students during the 2004-2005 school year as reported by the Illinois School Report Card. The racial/ethnic background of the students (by percentage) was as follows: 85.6% White, 1.0% Black, 4.6% Hispanic, 8.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.2% Native American, and 0% Multiracial/Ethnic. The report stated that 3.4% of the population was low income students and 4.0% of the population had limited English proficiency. The daily attendance rate of students at Site B was 96.1% and a mobility rate of 5.2%. The chronic truancy rate was 0.0%.

The total district population was 2,015 students as stated by the 2005 State School Report Card. The racial/ethnic background of the students (by percentage) was as follows: 87.4% White, 1.4% Black, 4.8% Hispanic, 6.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.1% Native American, and 0.1% Multiracial/Ethnic. Of the student population, 2.7% were classified as having limited English proficiency.

The State School Report also gives instructional setting information. The average class size was 19.2 kindergarten, 20.2 for first grade, and 24.5 for third grade. The operating expenditures per pupil was $9,058.00

Surrounding Community

Site A

Site A is located in a Midwestern state in a northwest suburb of a large metropolitan city. The community has many tree-lined neighborhoods. Most of the students who attend Site A live in single-family homes. Site A is also home to both large and small retailers centers.

According to the United States Census Bureau Site A's surrounding community was comprised of a total of 42,115 people. The male population accounts for 48.2% and the female population accounts for 51.8% of the total population. The median age for residents in Site A's

community is 37.7 years. Table 1 expresses the number of people in each age group in the

surrounding community of Site A.

Table 1: Number of people by age group (given in percentages).

5 Years and Under	18 Years -64 years	65 Years and Over
6.6	71.1	9.2

Table 2 describes the ethnic background of Site A's community.

Table 2: Ethnic background (given in percentages).

White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Other Races	Two or More Races	Hispanic
89.1	0.7	0.1	8.0	0.0	0.9	1.2	3.4

The median household income in 1999 was $81,324. In Site A 1.3% of the families are

living below the poverty level. The average household size the community surrounding Site A

was 2.74 people and the average family size was 3.14 people. As of 2000 89.5% of the families

living in the community owned their homes and 10.5% were renters. The average employment

rate for those 16 years or older was 73.4%.

The community of Site A, along with the district offer an educational program for third

and fifth graders called "Choices." This program is designed to educate the students about

various social issues and encourage them to make good life choices. The local police department

frequently sends over officers to aid in the education of common safety skills students need. The

community of Site A is fortunate to have a great partnership with the public library. Every

month the library sends a flyer to the students to let them know the library's upcoming events as

well as featured authors/books. At the end of the school year, representatives of the library come into the school to explain and kick off the summer reading program. Site A is located within a quarter mile of the middle and high school that it feeds into. The community surrounding Site A is fortunate to have two park districts that service the community with many recreational activities.

Site B

Site B is located in a Midwestern state 22 miles from a large city. The community has many tree-lined neighborhoods. Most of the students who attend Site B live in single-family homes. Site B is also home to both large and small retail center as well as a major shopping mall.

According to the United States Census, Site B's surrounding community was comprised of a total of 56,265 people. The male population accounts for 49.7% and the female population accounts for 50.3% of the total population. The median age of residents was 37.2 years. Table 3 expresses the number of people in each age group in the surrounding community of Site B.

Table 3: Number of people by age group (given in percentages).

5 Years and Under	18 Years – 64 Years	65 Years and Over
6.6	77.0	14.8

Table 4 describes the ethnic background of Site B's community.

Table 4: Ethnic background (given in percentages).

White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Other Races	Two or More Races	Hispanic
80.6	1.8	0.2	11.2	0.0	4.1	2.0	11.8

The median household income in 1999 was $57,165. In Site B 3.1% of the families are living below poverty level. The average household size in the community surrounding Site B was 2.6 people and the average family size was 3.14 people. As of 2000, 71.5% of the families owned their own homes and 28.5% of the families were renters. The average employment rate for people over 16 was 67.9%.

The community of Site B, along with the district, promotes character education through the "Character Counts" program. The district has teamed up with the police department to develop a program called, "Officer Friendly." The police department sends over officers to aid in the education of common safety skills students need. The public library was recently renovated in 2005. It is located centrally in the downtown area along with a Metra train station. The community surrounding Site B is fortunate to have two park districts that service the community with many recreational activities.

National Context of the Problem

Students lack motivation and perform below grade level expectancy on reading tasks that relate to comprehension and fluency. This is evidenced because

[d]espite recent national attention to the importance of teaching early reading skills, many children in America continue to struggle with reading. According to the most recent *National Assessment of Educational Progress*, 40% of U.S. fourth grade children read below a "basic level" and have "little or no mastery" of the knowledge of skills necessary to perform work at each grade level. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999, as cited in Asha, 2004, p. 421).

Additionally, student performance is affected by students' motivation with regard to class time devoted to reading. Students "withdraw quickly from any activity when they perceive that success is not possible" (Ford & Opitz, 2002, p.712). Students' ability to read fluently and comprehend what they read is directly effected by their motivation. If they do not believe they will be successful on an assigned task they will not try.

As Fawson states, the guided reading movement has come out of New Zealand and has taken hold in the United States. Many teachers believe that guided reading requires extra curriculum resources in order to meet the needs of every student in the classroom.

> Many teachers who are just beginning to implement guided reading often express frustration with the need to provide large numbers of leveled books in classrooms where they do not have ready access to the quantities and varieties of leveled titles needed. Often for these teachers, the only reading materials they have multiple copies of are a few trade books gathered into a classroom library and a district-adopted basal reader (2000, p. 1).

Guided reading in the classroom allows teachers to meet the individual needs of each student. As stated above in the article written by Asha, there are many students below grade level, at grade level, and above grade level all placed in one classroom. In order to meet the needs of all these students, a teacher must have access to a large number of multi-level texts to teach each student at his or her own instructional level.

"Guided Reading is an important 'best practice' associated with today's balanced literacy instruction. It allows teachers to address specific reading strategy needs of children in their classrooms" (Fawson, 2000, p. 6). But many teachers and districts are not equipped with an adequate amount of texts to meet the needs of every student. "In short, failing to recognize that

basal readers continue to be a major tool for the classroom reading instruction has greatly slowed the implementation of those best practices associated with guided reading" (Fawson, 2000, p. 4). In one of the studies mentioned in the article "But I only have a basal…" a second grade veteran teacher learned to use the basal until she was able to acquire enough leveled texts to implement guided reading. "Even within a single grade level basal there can be substantial variability in reading levels of the selections" (Fawson, 2000, pp. 1-2). According to Fawson, the first step is to determine the level of each story in the basal reader.

Teachers know that not all students will be successful when reading a selected book because the book they are reading is not at their appropriate reading level. "A key to supporting reading is the selection of books that are not too easy, yet not too hard, and that offer a variety of challenges to help readers become flexible problem-solvers." (Fountas & Pinnell,1999, p.10). According to Pinnell, many factors influence a students' ability to read fluently and comprehend what they have read. Some of the factors are length, layout, subject, structure, illustrations, vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation, and literary features of the selected book. Pinnell states that one of the first steps in helping students chose a book at their appropriate reading level is for a teacher to level the books within their classroom. A leveled book collection is a large set of books that are grouped by the previously listed characteristics according to levels of difficulty.

> Helping readers develop independent, effective strategies, involves engaging them
> in reading texts that offer just the right level of support and challenge as well as
> providing skillful teaching. When books are matched to readers, then teaching can
> be powerful because we are engaging the young reader in successful processing
> that builds the self-extending system, a network of understandings that work
> together to help the reader extend his or her skill. (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999, p. 9).

As stated above, in a majority of classrooms, teachers are searching for ways to reach all their students while teaching reading. In a Connecticut School District, part of the balanced literacy program included Reading Recovery instruction. In the first grade classroom discussed in the article, "An Important Aspect of Guided Reading: Books Galore!" Reading Recovery was primarily for the students who needed intensive intervention. The school district decided to look for a more efficient program that would be able to teach the struggling readers as well as the rest of the students. "Guided reading is an excellent way to provide reading instruction to Reading Recovery children as well as children who do not need intensive intervention" (LaMere & Lanning, 2000, p. 26).

The article also states some reasons why the district chose guided reading. One of the reasons is guided reading uses flexible small groups to help students become independent readers. Another reason is that the small group instruction makes it easier for the teacher to differentiate for the students in the class and to meet the needs of each student. A third reason is that the small group instruction gives all students the opportunity to participate actively in discussions.

Some districts find it difficult to start the process of creating a leveled book collection. However, as LaMere states, it does not have to be a difficult process. In this example, the district purchased books through a variety of ways including grant money, district purchases, and purchases through companies such as Scholastic and Troll. "They propose that teachers recycle selections from anthologies and add these to their collection of leveled texts" (LaMere & Lanning, 2000, p. 27). Once the books were purchased, the district then organized them by three factors: readability level, interest, and genre. While the district was purchasing books, it kept in mind that "[s]tudents are more likely to be motivated to read if they are reading books that

interest them" (LaMere & Lanning, 2000, p. 28). The last step in creating a leveled book collection is finding a way to organize and store books. This district put the sets of books in plastic bags to be stored in baskets labeled with the reading level of the books. Another tip given by the author was to put the books in alphabetical order within each basket.

According to this district guided reading was a large commitment, but worth the effort. "Children's reading improves as the teacher provides appropriate and focused instruction in a small group setting. As children become better readers, their thirst for reading more books begins to grow" (LaMere & Lanning, 2000, 28).

As this thirst for reading grows, the child is willing to be put in control of his or her own reading abilities and choices. In Mooney's article, "Guided Reading—The Reader in Control," it states that guided reading focuses on "extending the 'trying and exploring' part of a reader's role and concentrates on 'initiating and controlling' (Mooney, 1995, 54)." This differs from the more frequently used reading strategies within the classroom. For example, teacher-led whole group instruction, chorale reading, skill-based workbooks and unified district curriculum offer little room for choice. According to the author, the ideal way to implement guided reading is working with a small group of children while thinking, talking and reading a text that is at an appropriate level for the reader. The teacher's role should be one of support while helping the students comprehend what they read. It is essential that each reader has a copy of the same book and is in control of his or her reading. Students take ownership over their reading so it becomes meaningful for them. A teacher "can help the children establish the habit of not only working for meaning but of checking and reflecting as they read" (Mooney, 1995, 2).

In Ford's article, "Using Centers to Engage Children…" he also discusses the potential hurdles a teacher faces when implementing guided reading and gives suggestions as to how to

manage them. Most teachers are intimidated by guided reading due to the fact that teachers need

to relinquish control of student learning. Ford would argue that guided reading actually requires

more control over student learning compared to typical reading strategies. This is because the

teacher must plan appropriate, challenging, grade-level activities to engage the students while the

teacher is facilitating the guided reading process.

> The success of guided reading as an instructional process certainly depends on the
>
> implementation of a classroom structure that provides teacher with opportunities
>
> to effectively work with small groups of readers while keeping other readers
>
> independently engaged in meaningful literacy learning activities (Ford & Opitz,
>
> 2002, p. 711).

Another concern people have about guided reading is that the mandated curriculum will

be overlooked in order to implement the guided reading structure. Ford states, "designing

centers with the literacy curriculum in mind is an excellent way to ensure that children are

exposed to it" (p. 712). Guided reading should blend in with the current establish program,

classroom organization, behavior models, and structures already inherent in the classroom.

In conclusion, the previous articles speak to the issue of low motivation and low

performance in the classroom. "Converging evidence has recognized that children with reading

difficulties require instruction that is quantitatively and qualitatively superior to the instruction

received by children who are already facile with the reading code" (Choutka, Jitendra, Edwards,

Starosta, Sacks & Jacobson, 2004). Guided reading is a qualitative reading program that meets

the needs of all students, regardless of their ability.

The problem of low comprehension and fluency performance can be addressed through

the use of guided reading. The expectancy is that the fluency and comprehension scores of

students in grades 2-4 will be lower prior to the implementation of the guided reading program and increase as the intervention progresses.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of the lack of students' ability to comprehend what they read and to read at an appropriate rate, a teacher survey on comprehension and fluency was distributed. In addition, the researchers obtained and utilized two district provided assessments that assess reading comprehension and reading fluency.

The first instrument, a teacher survey (Appendix A), was utilized the second week of September to establish the teachers' perception/opinion of the problem. A total of 35 teachers were surveyed between Site A and Site B. The teacher survey allowed the teachers at Site A and B to reflect on their students' fluency and comprehension, through the use of a rating scale format where the teachers assign a number as a means of answering each question.

The second instrument to be used as a means of assessment was a district provided assessment, measuring fluency. The fluency assessment requires the student to sit one-on-one with the teacher and read aloud for one minute. As the student reads, the teacher follows along on her own example of the passage and marks any mistakes or miscues. After the minute is over the teacher totals the words read and subtracts for any mistakes made. This determines the child's fluency score.

The third assessment instrument used was a comprehension test. It is a paper and pencil test that the students took independently while being timed for three minutes. The students read a passage with multiple blanks in it and, by circling, chose the best word to fill in the blanks. After the three minutes were over the teacher collected the assessments and scored them. The previous two district provided assessments were given once before the intervention, once during the intervention, and once at the conclusion of the intervention.

Teacher Survey Results
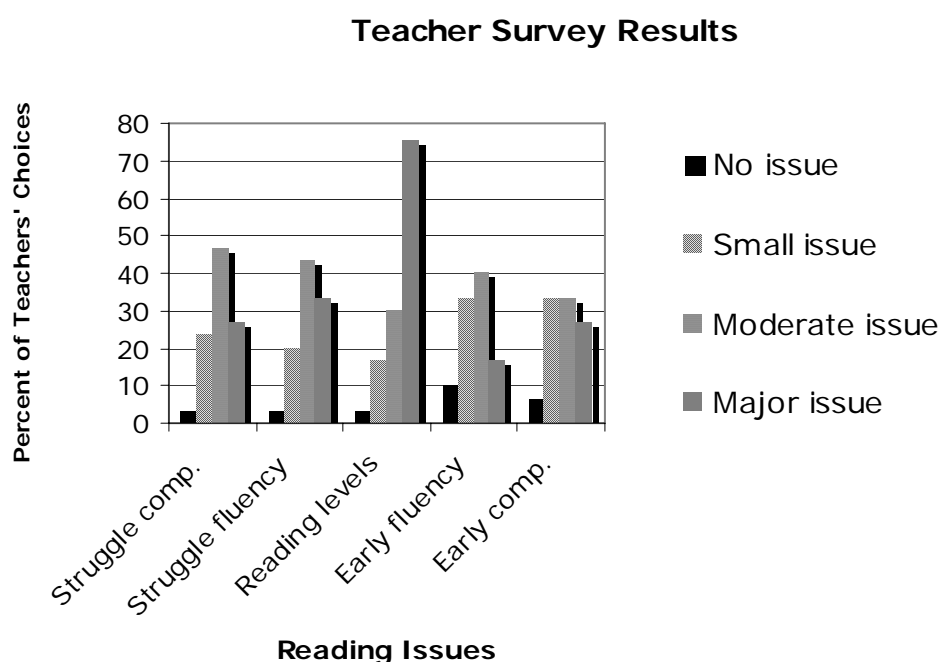
Figure 1. Summary of teacher perception of the problems in reading.

Figure 1 above shows the results of teachers' opinions regarding the problem of reading comprehension and fluency at Site A and Site B during mid-September of 2006. The teacher/researcher created instrument asked fellow teachers their opinions about student motivation and achievement regarding reading fluency and comprehension. A total of twenty-nine teachers participated in this survey.

In analyzing the teachers' responses to the surveys, researchers found that the maximum percents of responses were nearly all in the moderate category: "struggling with comprehension" at the 27% level, "struggling with fluency" 33%, "a variety of reading levels" 75%, "reaching fluency goals early in the school year" 17%, and "reaching comprehension goals early in the school year" 27%. Only being at "a variety of reading levels" showed a maximum in the major issue category at a level of 75%. All of these maximums were significant except "reaching comprehension goals early in the school year".

The researchers also found that the minimum percent of responses were all in the no issue category: "struggling with comprehension" 3%, "struggling with fluency" 3%, "a variety of reading levels" 3%, "reaching fluency goals early in the school year" 10%, and "reaching comprehension goals early in the school year" 7%. The minimums for "struggling with comprehension," "struggling with fluency," "reaching fluency goals early in the school year," and "reaching comprehension goals early in the school year" were all significant.

In analyzing the data across all categories of the teachers' responses to the reading issues, the maximum was at 75% for "a variety of reading levels". The minimum across the categories was tied at 3.33% for "struggling with comprehension", "struggling with fluency", and "a variety of reading levels". The mean for "struggling with comprehension," "struggling with fluency," "reaching fluency goals early in the school year," and "reaching comprehension goals early in the school year" was 25, but the mean for "a variety of reading levels" was 31.25. The standard deviation varied greatly among the categories. The maximum standard deviation was at 31.1 for "a variety of reading levels". The minimum standard deviation was at 12.6 for "reaching comprehension goals early in the school year". In conclusion the teacher survey revealed that students' reading at a variety of levels is a major educational issue.

2nd Grade Fluency

<90
90-99
>99
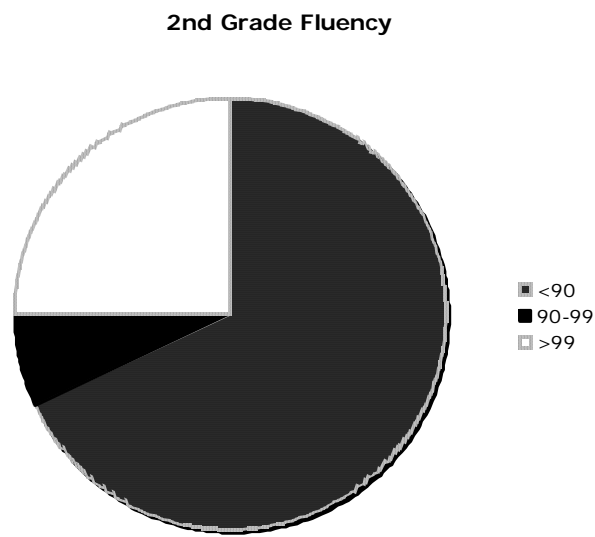
Figure 2. Results of September fluency assessment for second grade students.
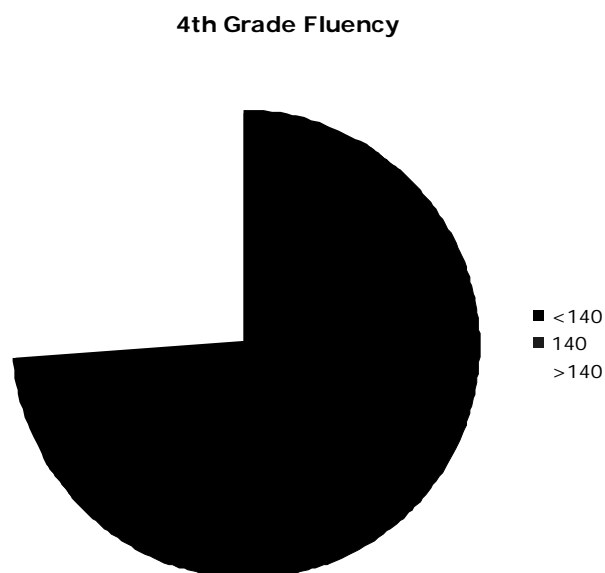
4th Grade Fluency

<140
140
>140

Figure 3. Results of September fluency assessment for fourth grade students.

Figures 2 and 3 above show the results of the fluency assessments that researchers used

to measure second and fourth grade students' reading fluency levels at the beginning of the

school year. There were 44 second graders and 42 fourth graders assessed at this time. This

district wide assessment was given at both Site A and Site B by teacher researchers.

In analyzing the second graders' September fluency scores as seen in Figure 2, the

maximum number of students scored below 90 words per minute, which was significant. The

minimum number of students scored between 90 and 99 words per minute. The mean for the

second graders' September fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 31.5. In

conclusion, the second grade fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students scored

below 90 words per minute.

In analyzing the fourth graders' September fluency scores as seen in Figure 3, the

maximum number of students scored below 140 words per minute, which was significant. The

minimum number of students scored 140 words per minute. The mean for the fourth graders'

September fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 37.4. In conclusion, the

fourth grade fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students scored below 140

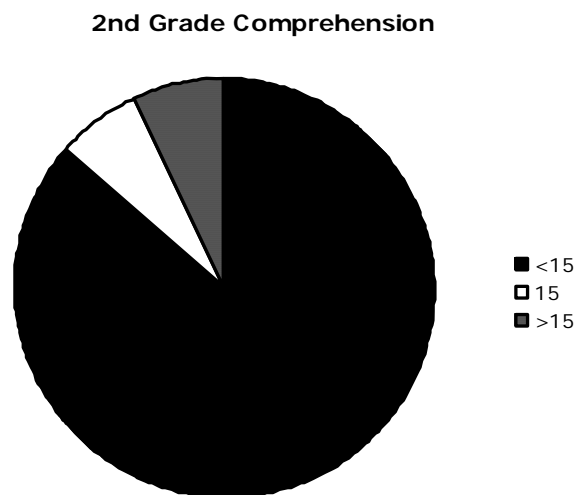words per minute.

2nd Grade Comprehension

Figure 4. Results of September comprehension assessment for second grade students.
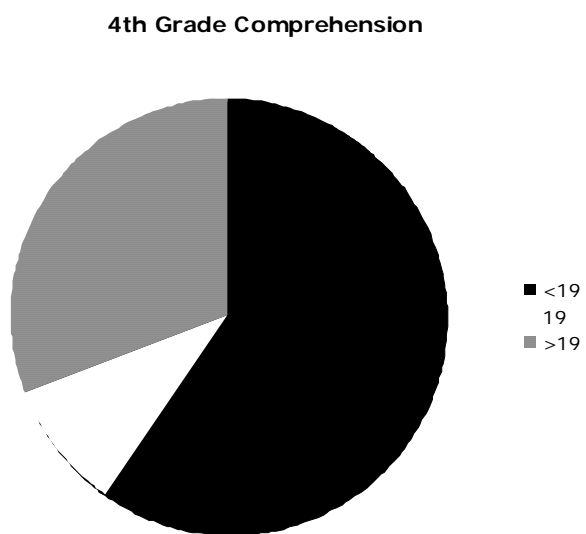
4th Grade Comprehension

Figure 5. Results of September comprehension assessment for fourth grade students.

Figures 4 and 5 above show the results of the comprehension assessments that researchers used to measure second and fourth grade students' reading comprehension levels at the beginning of the school year. There were 44 second graders and 42 fourth graders assessed at this time. This district wide assessment was given at both Site A and Site B by teacher researchers.

In analyzing the second graders' September comprehension scores as seen in Figure 4, the maximum number of students chose less than 15 words correctly, which was significant. The minimum number of students chose more than 15 words correctly. The mean for the second graders' September comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 45.9. In conclusion, the second grade comprehension assessment revealed that the majority of the students chose less than 15 words correctly.

In analyzing the fourth graders' September comprehension scores as seen in Figure 5, the maximum number of students chose less than 19 words correctly, which was significant. The minimum number of students chose 19 words correctly. The mean for the fourth graders' September comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 25.0. In conclusion, the fourth grade comprehension assessment revealed that the majority of the students chose less than 19 words correctly.

Analysis of the fluency and comprehension test scores as well as the results of the teacher survey show that at both Site A and Site B, there is a significant need for reading interventions.

<center>Probable Causes</center>

Reading comprehension and fluency speed are important indicators of a student's ability to read well.

Despite recent national attention to the importance of teaching early reading skills, many children in America continue to struggle with reading. According to the most recent *National Assessment of Educational Progress*, 40% of U.S. fourth grade children read below a 'basic level' and have 'little or no mastery of the knowledge of skills necessary to perform work at each grade level (Choutka, Jitendra, Edwards, Starosta, Sacks & Jacobson 2004, p. 421).

As a result of a study of literature on the topic of student reading this deficit has been determined to have many sources. Some sources of the problem are student based, some are school caused, some are teacher based, while others trace their origins to the student's family.

Students' attitude toward reading can be a large part of the problem when it comes to the deficit found in their ability to both comprehend what they read, as well as, read at an appropriate rate (Dean & Trent 2002). Often students approach reading with the mindset that they will fail and therefore the effort they put forth decreases. This lack of confidence in their abilities can lead to low self esteem and high anxiety toward the subject of reading (Dean & Trent, 2002) (Simplicio, 2003).

We have watched as students stumbled over words and agonized over the materials they were being asked to read. Their inability most assuredly negates any possibility of their understanding the materials they read. Many students, because of this, actually refuse to read out loud (Simplicio, 2003, p. 110).

On the other hand, students' attitudes toward reading do not always take the form of a negative attitude. Often children may believe their reading ability to be more advanced than it actually is. This causes them to choose books and reading materials that are far beyond the scope of their true ability (Ediger, 2000).

Student ability is another cause of the comprehension and fluency deficit. This takes on multiple forms. Because of a lack in their general reading ability students will often produce work that is of low or poor quality (Dean & Trent, 2002). They lack the ability to be able to work independently, in part because they simply do not know how to be independent (LaMere & Lanning, 2000), (Ford & Opitz, 2002). There are many instances of students who get a poor start early on in education and this affects their reading ability. It is very difficult for them to get caught back up again. "One of the most compelling findings from reading research is that children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up" (Choutka, Jitendra, Edwards, Starosta, Sacks & Jacobson, 2004, p. 421).

Being able to decode what one reads is a skill that is absolutely necessary when it comes to comprehension and fluency. Many students who have a comprehension and fluency deficit struggle to decode the written word. "Reading difficulty is typically reflected in inaccurate and slow decoding of text, as well as inaccurate word recognition" (Bruce, 1999, p. 3). Students are very often not armed with enough strategies to help them work through their decoding struggles (Marcell, 2005), (Bruce, 1999). This further inhibits their comprehension and fluency.

Reading ability is strongly tied to a student's ability to comprehend what he or she reads. Many students do not have strong comprehension skills (Anderson, O'Leary, Schuler & Wright, 2002), (Ediger, 2000), (Mooney, 1995). Student comprehension struggles can also be attributed to attentional difficulties; many students suffer from ADHD and thus have trouble completing tasks (Brabham & Villaume, 2001).

Schools cannot be left without blame when it comes to their students' comprehension and fluency struggles. The classroom itself can often be part of the problem. Large class sizes are not conducive to ensuring that all students get the attention that they so desperately require

(LaMere & Lanning, 2000). When class sizes are large, whole group activities tend to be the preferred method of instruction. This often does not afford the student much individualized attention (LaMere & Lanning, 2000, p. 3).

The actual physical space in a classroom can also prohibit meaningful reading instruction. If a classroom is too small and cramped the reading materials that are necessary for good differentiated instruction simply do not fit (LaMere & Lanning, 2000). "Each classroom teacher needs to have easy access to leveled books in a central location" (LaMere & Lanning, 2000, p. 27).

Funding is a large hurdle teachers must jump when trying to create and execute meaningful reading instruction and experiences in their classrooms (Fawson, 2000). There are often not enough leveled texts accessible to teachers to use with students who have needs up and down the continuum scale of reading comprehension and fluency (Brabham & Villaume, 2001), (LaMere & Lanning, 2000), (Fawson, 2000).

Teachers are required to use the school-instituted curriculum that in it may be ineffective (Smith, 2003). "In a monograph of 1984, Beck analyzed the results of her study of commercial reading programs. She concluded that basals, attempting to be everything to everybody, often set too many goals for lessons" (Smith, 2003, p. 3).

The teacher also plays a role in the lack of comprehension and fluency ability in his or her students. If guided reading is used without proper management, the benefits of the program can be completely lost (Brabham & Villaume, 2001), (Ford & Opitz, 2002). "Instruction away from the teacher needs to be as powerful as instruction with the teacher" (Ford & Opitz, 2002, p. 717). A proper guided reading program requires students to sometimes be away from the teacher and work independently or in small groups. If these times are not managed well, then students

will inevitably find other things to do (Guastello & Lenz, 2005). Teachers need to find work and meaningful centers for the students who are away from the teacher, so that their time away from the teacher is not wasted (Brabham & Villaume, 2001), (Guastello & Lenz, 2005).

Often teachers are left with an insufficient amount of materials to implement guided reading effectively (Fawson, 2000). Many classrooms are equipped with basal readers and given a mix-and-match curriculum to follow the stories. A guided reading program cannot be sustained with the basal as its only resource (Smith, 2003). Teachers often experience frustration over the lack of materials available to implement guided reading. "The only reading materials they have multiple copies of a few trade books gathered into a classroom library and a district adopted basal reader" (Fawson, 2000, p. 84).

Proper training is a must if a teacher is going to implement guided reading into his or her classroom (Kellenberger, Saunders & Wang, 1998). Many times teachers are poorly trained or not trained at all and therefore do not understand how to implement guided reading properly. The teacher tends to revert back to a teacher driven method of instruction during guided reading rather than allowing this time to be more student driven (Brabham & Villaume, 2001).

Assessment within a guided reading program is being used inconsistently, due to lack of training (Kellenberger, Saunders & Wang, 1998). Due to the amount of time students spend away from the teacher during guided reading it is more difficult for the teacher to get a sense of how well the students are doing academically when it comes to their reading skills (Ford & Opitz, 2002). When teachers are provided with assessment tools to use with a guided reading program they are being used inconsistently and infrequently (Anderson, O'Leary, Schuler & Wright, 2002).

The family climate and environment that students come from is yet another cause of the reading comprehension and fluency deficits found in the classroom. Many households are not places where conversation occurs that fosters student comprehension (Ketch, 2005). Parents are also uneducated as to how to help their students improve their reading abilities (Evans, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

There are a variety of solutions a teacher can utilize to address the problems of low reading fluency and comprehension scores. Possible solutions include increasing family/parent involvement, teaching thinking skills, creating flexible groups in the classroom, utilizing a meaningful reading curriculum, improving teacher education, and setting up a positive classroom environment. These potential solutions provide educators with strategies to be successful in teaching reading fluency and comprehension in the classroom.

The first possible solution is helping parents to increase involvement in their child's reading at home (Ford & Opitz, 2002). Children who are read to do better in school, have higher achievement test scores, have greater reading ability, have more self-esteem and confidence and will read more independently (Evans, 1999). Teachers can educate parents on how to foster positive reading experiences within the home (Evans, 1999). Evans states that if children visually see parents reading on their own, they will be more likely to pick up a book on their own. Evans also suggests that parents place books around wherever the child happens to be in order to encourage reading (Evans, 1999). Even in busy lives, reading should be placed at the top of any parent's list in order to instill good reading habits at a young age.

Another solution for increasing student reading comprehension and fluency is the use of thinking skills. Thinking skills can be divided into two more specific categories: basic reading skills and higher-level skills.

Instruction that emphasizes explicit phonological awareness and alphabetic skills, a comprehensive scope and sequence, consistent intensity and systematic support is necessary to assist children who struggle with early reading (Choutka, Jitendra, Edwards, Starosta, Sacks & Jacobson, 2004). An example of a basic skill that should be taught in the early years is teaching letter to sound correspondence (Choutka, Jitendra, Edwards, Starosta, Sacks & Jacobson, 2004). Another example of a basic skill that can help students learn to read is breaking the text up into small chunks, called chunking (Simplicio, 2003). If students are taught these skills and reference them while reading, children will feel more successful and then, in turn, will perform better independently (LaMere & Lanning, 2000), (Smith, 2003), (Brabham & Villaume, 2001), (Guastello & Lenz, 2005).

Higher-level skills, the other category of thinking skills, are also important to teach once the students have acquired their basic reading skills. Some successful strategies to use when teaching reading comprehension are making connections, mental imagery, inferring, retelling, determining importance and self-monitoring (Ketch, 2005), (Brabham & Villaume, 2001). One additional strategy to increase students' reading comprehension is questioning. "When [teachers] pause for discussion during and after reading, [teachers can] prompt students to stay in the driver's seat and to reflect on what had happened in their heads during their reading" (Brabham & Villaume, 2001, p.262). Teachers should show children how to use resources within themselves and within the book (Box, 2002). By doing this, students will gain, maintain, and consider new meaning for themselves.

If children know how to apply and integrate the strategies of predicting, sampling and

confirming text, and can regain control when meaning is lost, then guided reading can

shift to making children aware of how they can use these competencies to cope with more

complex challenges in content and structure" (Mooney, 1995, p.55).

Utilizing these reading strategies in the classroom will help students become more independent,

confident readers.

Researchers stress the importance of flexible grouping in the classroom when

implementing guided reading; groups of four or less are highly encouraged (Guastello & Lenz,

2005). There are a variety of ways to group students within the classroom. "Sometimes we

create groups of students who are reading on similar instructional levels; sometimes we form

groups of students who will benefit from a particular strategy focus; and sometimes we group

students heterogeneously to provide extended opportunities for sharing similar interests,

collaborating and peer modeling" (Brabham & Villaume, 2001, p. 263). While flexible grouping

is an excellent solution, it can create some of it's own problems. One problem is that you have to

have enough books to be matched to each reader. The books should not be too easy and not too

hard, and each book should offer a variety of challenges to help readers become flexible

problem-solvers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Another problem is finding something for the

students to be doing while they are not directly working with the teacher. Creating meaningful

small group activities or centers to engage students while not in a guided reading group is one

possible solution to this problem (Ford & Opitz, 2002). Some examples of meaningful small

group activities are literature circles, book clubs, think/pair/share, cross-age conversations and

small group discussions (Ketch, 2005).

Utilizing a meaningful and relevant reading curriculum proves to be an additional solution to the problem (Kellenberger, Saunders & Wang, 1998). The first step is to identify guided reading levels within the current curriculum, such as basal readers or classroom library books (Fawson, 2000). Additionally, reading instruction should be relevant, at the appropriate instructional level, and it should stress both basic and higher-level thinking skills (Guastello & Lenz, 2005), (Ediger, 2000). In the classroom there should be multiple texts at various levels that are accessible to all the students, in addition teachers should utilize the basal reader as it is already leveled (Fawson, 2000), (Guastello & Lenz, 2005).

Another solution to the deficits we found in students' reading abilities is the use of various reading strategies within the guided reading curriculum. Children who are given various reading strategies often feel better about their reading ability and the products they produce (Ediger, 2003), (Dean & Trent, 2002). "Teachers should continually observe learner attitudes toward reading. Negative attitudes hinder optimal achievement in reading" (Ediger, 2000, p. 1).

In a guided reading program that is being used appropriately, assessments are a major piece of the puzzle and training teachers to use these assessments properly is a must. As Anderson states "They [guided reading assessments] can also be used to help children focus on specific aspects of stories they are reading. In doing so, students are able to organize their thoughts and ideas about what they have read and in turn have a better understanding of the story or information" (Anderson, O'Leary, Schuler & Wright, 2002, p. 30). Running records are an excellent way for teachers to keep track of how well students perform on assessments and monitor their growth. A guided reading program that runs smoothly is typically lead by a well trained and educated teacher (Kellenberger, Saunders & Wang, 1998), (Choutka, Jitendra, Edwards, Starosta, Sacks & Jacobson, 2004).

When a guided reading program has been installed into a classroom environment much attention must be paid to managing the classroom or the program will inevitably fail. Guastello discusses the need for classroom management and proposes a station system where expectations are clear (Guastello & Lenz, 2005). This involves four stations that are designed for meaningful reinforcement of the reading standards and keep all students occupied and involved during guided reading. The stations should be focused around reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This creates student accountability. "Guided reading provides children with opportunities to develop as individual readers while participating in small groups" (Bruce, 1999, p.3). It's a good idea for teacher's to implement guided reading into their classrooms because it gives the teacher a chance to provide quality reading instruction while the other students are engaged in meaningful reading tasks. Guided reading benefits all students as they become more independent and successful in the reading classroom.

<div align="center">Project Objectives and Processes</div>

As a result of the use of leveled texts in a guided reading curriculum, during the period of September 2006 to January 2007, the targeted second and fourth grade classes will increase their reading comprehension and fluency, as measured by the district provided comprehension assessment and the district provided fluency assessment. In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Professional literature on guided reading will be reviewed.

2. Guided reading lessons will be constructed.

3. A series of appropriate leveled texts will be gathered and accessible in the classroom.

4. The teacher will match students with appropriate texts based on ability level.

As a result of the use of graphic organizers in a guided reading curriculum, during the period of September 2006 to January 2007, the targeted second and fourth grade classes will increase their reading comprehension, as measured by a teacher-created rubric. In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. The teacher will decide what the graphic organizers/rubric will specifically assess.

2. The teacher will create graphic organizers that are appropriate at grade level taught.

3. Students will be taught how to appropriately use each of the given graphic organizers.

As a result of the use of flexible grouping in a guided reading curriculum, during the period of September 2006 to January 2007, the targeted second and fourth grade classes will increase their reading comprehension and fluency, as measured by the district provided comprehension assessment and the district provided fluency assessment. In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. The teacher will assess student reading comprehension and fluency abilities.

2. The teacher will decide how many flexible groups are needed.

3. The teacher will assess the classroom dynamic and which students are compatible to work together in which flexible group.

4. The teacher will be prepared for periodic assessments of student abilities in order to allow for movement between groups throughout the course of the curriculum.

Project Action Plan

After reflecting upon the project objectives and processes the teacher researchers have created the following project action plan. This plan describes in detail the steps of the research and the necessary tools to complete it. The action plan spans a time frame of 16 weeks and

addresses all of the requirements of the study. Table 5 describes the step by step procedure for

our action research study.

Table 5. Project Action Plan.

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time Frequency and Duration
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	None	Teachers review and collect professional literature on guided reading.	Journal articles	July 2006 2 day research planning meeting
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	None	Teachers review and collect professional literature on guided reading and meet to finalize details.	Journal articles, planners, class lists, guided reading materials	August 2006 2 day research planning meeting
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	None	None	Distribute teacher survey to all teachers.	Teacher survey	Week 1 (September 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	None	Students tested individual-ly and as a group by classroom teacher.	Diagnostic pre-testing for fluency and comprehen-sion	District provided fluency and comprehen-sion assessments	Week 1 (September 2006) total testing time approximately an hour and a half

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time Frequency and Duration
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	None	Review assessment results and create flexible groups.	Assessment scores and knowledge of students/ teacher observations	Week 2 (September 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in small groups and whole class learning how to use reading centers.	Model and practice guided reading centers in the classroom.	All center materials.	Week 3 (September 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in small groups and whole class learning how to use reading centers.	Model and practice guided reading centers in the classroom.	All center materials.	Week 4 (October 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in small groups and whole class learning how to use reading centers.	Model and practice guided reading centers in the classroom.	All center materials.	Week 5 (October 2006)

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time Frequency and Duration
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students learning how to use graphic organi-zers.	Model and practice using graphic organizers as a whole group.	Graphic organizers with correlating stories	Week 6 (October 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students learning how to use graphic organi-zers.	Model and practice using graphic organizers in small groups.	Graphic organizers with correlating stories	Week 7 (October 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Facilitate small group guided reading lessons and give help with graphic organizers if needed.	Leveled books and graphic organizers focusing on character development	Week 8 (November 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Facilitate small group guided reading lessons and give help with graphic organizers if needed.	Leveled books and graphic organizers focusing on character development	Week 9 (November 2006)

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time Frequency and Duration
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Assess graphic organizer on character development using the graphic organizer rubric	Graphic organizer rubric, students completed graphic organizers	Week 9 (November 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Facilitate small group guided reading lessons and give help with graphic organizers if needed.	Leveled books and graphic organizers focusing on problem/ solution	Week 10 (November 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students tested individual-ly and as a group by classroom teacher.	Reassess students for fluency and comprehen-sion.	District provided fluency and comprehen-sion assessments.	Week 11 (December 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	None	Review assessment results and create new flexible groups if needed.	Assessment scores and knowledge of students/ teacher observations	Week 11 (December 2006)

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time Frequency and Duration
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Facilitate small group guided reading lessons and give help with graphic organizers if needed.	Leveled books and graphic organizers focusing on problem/ solution	Week 12 (December 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Assess graphic organizer on problem/ solution using the graphic organizer rubric	Graphic organizer rubric, students completed graphic organizers	Week 12 (December 2006)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Facilitate small group guided reading lessons and give help with graphic organizers if needed.	Leveled books and graphic organizers focusing on story mapping/ sequencing	Week 13 (January 2007)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Facilitate small group guided reading lessons and give help with graphic organizers if needed.	Leveled books and graphic organizers focusing on story mapping/ sequencing	Week 14 (January 2007)

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time Frequency and Duration
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students in centers or with the teacher in guided reading groups.	Assess graphic organizer on story mapping/ sequencing using the graphic organizer rubric	Graphic organizer rubric, students completed graphic organizers	Week 14 (January 2007)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	None	"Tie up all loose ends."	Any materials not completed	Week 15 (January 2007)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	Students tested individual-ly and as a group by classroom teacher.	Diagnostic post-testing for fluency and comprehen-sion	District provided fluency and comprehen-sion assessments.	Week 15 (January 2007)
To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading	Use leveled texts, graphic organizers and flexible grouping in the reading classroom.	None	Compile all research data.	Assessment scores and knowledge of students/ teacher observations	Week 16 (January 2007)

Methods of Assessment

The following assessment tools will be given to approximately 50 second grade students

and 50 fourth grade students during a 16 week study: a) a district provided fluency assessment,

b) a district provided reading comprehension assessment, and c) a researcher created rubric for assessing graphic organizers completed by students.

The first instrument, a district provided fluency assessment will be utilized the 11th and 15th weeks to determine growth in the students' fluency ability. The one-minute fluency assessment is given by the teacher individually to each student. The number of errors while reading is subtracted from the total number of words read in order to arrive at the students' score. This assessment tool will be used to determine which leveled texts the students should be using in a guided reading curriculum as well as which flexible reading group the student should be placed in.

The second instrument, a district provided comprehension assessment will be administered in weeks 11 and 15 of the study. This is a three-minute assessment administered to the class as a whole. The students read a passage that contains missing words and their job is to choose the correct word to fill in the blanks. This assessment tool will be used to determine which leveled texts the students should be using in a guided reading curriculum as well as which flexible reading group the student should be placed in.

The final assessment tool, a researcher created rubric for assessing graphic organizers completed by students (Appendix B), will be administered in weeks 9, 12, and 14 of the study. This tool will be used to assess the students' ability to utilize the specific graphic organizer as well as their reading comprehension growth through their use of the specified graphic organizer.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading. Throughout the course of the research the students participated in guided reading lessons and literacy centers. Student improvement was measured through district provided fluency and comprehension assessments. The teachers at Sites A and B also completed a teacher survey that measured their perception of how well the students were able to read fluently and comprehend material read.

The teacher researchers began the research process by sending home parent permission slips to determine which students would be considered for the study. There were more willing parent participants at Site A than Site B. Early in the research study the teacher researchers began preparing a survey to distribute among the teachers at both Sites A and B.

During week two of the research study, the teacher researchers sent out the teacher survey they had created and began testing their students' fluency and comprehension. At both Sites A and B the teachers who received the survey were very willing to participate and returned

their surveys promptly. The fluency and comprehension testing took about a week and gave the teacher researchers at both Sites base line data. This collected data was then used to put the students into small guided reading groups of varying levels. At Site B the students went into groups easily with obvious divisions. However, at Site A the grouping was a little more difficult due to higher numbers of students in some groups but not others.

Once all baseline data and surveys were completed and the students had been divided the teacher researchers began teaching the routines and expectations of participating in literacy centers. This included modeling the centers for the children and then giving them time to practice and experiment at the centers. At Site A in fourth grade the students enjoyed the freedom the centers provided them and relished the independence the centers gave them. At both Sites A and B in second grade the students also responded well to the center time due to the fact that they had experienced centers previously in first grade.

In week four, the students continued to have centers modeled to them both as a large group and in their small guided reading groups. The teacher researchers stressed the importance of following the previously specified expectations and led discussions on positive group interactions. The teacher researchers at Sites A and B expressed concern over having enough time to fit guided reading into their already busy academic schedules.

The following week, the students continued to work on their centers. These centers were modeled and practiced together as a class. The teacher researchers lead group discussions and gave good examples to students about the work they would be producing. The teacher researchers at Sites A and B both commented on student participation and enthusiasm when learning about these centers. At Site A in the fourth grade classrooms, the teacher researchers were a little concerned about individual behavior from a select few.

After teacher researchers taught and modeled all of the centers, the students were ready to learn how to use their graphic organizers. Teacher researchers showed the students how to complete a graphic organizer by reading a story and modeling a good example for them. Students helped the teacher researchers complete the graphic organizer by brainstorming their own ideas and sharing aloud. Teacher researchers from both Sites A and B commented on their students' great responses and participation.

During week seven, the teacher researchers introduced a new graphic organizer and continued to model and practice with their students in their classrooms. Students brainstormed ideas, shared background knowledge, and completed their graphic organizers together as a class. Teacher researchers at both Sites A and B commented on the difficulty of the new graphic organizer and expressed concerns about all students being able to complete graphic organizers independently. At Site B, the second grade teacher researcher felt it was beneficial for students to be exposed to these graphic organizers as a whole class rather than spending time in guided reading groups to model them.

Leveled guided reading groups began in the classrooms at both Site A and B the following week. Teacher researchers worked with one flexible guided reading group at a time using appropriate texts based on their instructional levels. After reading, the students independently completed a graphic organizer to demonstrate their knowledge of character development. While teacher researchers were meeting with flexible groups, other students in the classroom were engaged in various centers around the room. The teacher researchers at Site A commented on how working with small groups was a nice change compared to whole group instruction. Additionally, researchers felt the differentiation in the classroom was beneficial for

all students. At Site B, the teacher researcher enjoyed spending time with small groups and had meaningful conversations.

In week nine, students continued working in leveled guiding reading groups with the teacher researchers. Other students in the classroom were able to work cooperatively in their specific reading centers. Teacher researchers assessed graphic organizers using the rubric they created (Appendix B). At Site A, researchers noted that the students enjoyed the new flexible reading groups and did a quality job completing the graphic organizers. At Site B, the teacher researcher felt her students demonstrated a great understanding of character development.

The following week, students continued working in leveled guided reading groups with the teacher researchers. The students not working directly with the teacher researchers continued to successfully work in their centers. After reading, the students independently completed a graphic organizer to demonstrate their knowledge of the problem and solution in a story. At both Sites A and B, teacher researchers observed great improvements in students' reading abilities. These improvements were especially apparent in the struggling readers. At Site A, a fourth grade teacher researcher noted that students were showing more leadership qualities while working in centers by helping other students.

During week eleven, teacher researchers were ready to reassess students in the areas of reading fluency and comprehension. After data was collected, the teacher researchers analyzed the scores and regrouped some students. At both Sites A and B, teacher researchers observed improvements in all students. Fourth grade students at Site A expressed much excitement over their successes.

After assessing students, classrooms continued with their guided reading instruction and centers. Students completed graphic organizers based on the problem and solution of a story.

After, teacher researchers evaluated the graphic organizers using the rubric they created. Teacher researchers at both Site A and B agreed that students are able to better identify problems and solutions in stories as a result of practice with this graphic organizer. At Site B, the teacher researcher noted that time management was a struggle due to getting back into the routine after Thanksgiving break.

The following week, students continued working in leveled guided reading groups with the teacher researchers. The students not working directly with the teacher researchers continued to successfully work in their centers. After reading, the students independently completed a graphic organizer to demonstrate their knowledge of story mapping and sequencing. The second grade teachers at Sites A and B both agreed that story mapping and sequencing was the easiest graphic organizer for students to complete.

In week fourteen, classrooms at Site A and B continued with their guided reading instruction and centers. Students completed graphic organizers based on the story mapping and sequencing. After, teacher researchers evaluated the graphic organizers using the rubric they created (Appendix B). At Site A, fourth grade teacher researchers wrapped up their flexible guided reading groups and reflected on the experience with their students. Teacher researchers found that guided reading was a positive experience for most of their students.

The following week, teacher researchers administered the final reading comprehension and fluency assessments to their students. After collecting the data, the teacher researchers at both Sites A and B were pleased with the results. It appeared the majority of the students increased their reading fluency and comprehension scores. Teacher researchers were very excited to compare the new scores to the scores collected earlier in the year.

In week sixteen, teacher researchers compiled all of their research data and used assessment scores to study student growth. During the course of this action research project, teacher researchers stored all data and analysis in locked filing cabinets. After the research was completed, teacher researchers shredded all data and analysis they collected.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Students in grades 2 and 4 perform below grade level expectancy on reading tasks that relate to comprehension and fluency. Evidence of this problem include the following: district provided comprehension assessment scores, district provided fluency assessment scores, and teacher scored graphic organizer assessments. The fluency and comprehension assessments can be found in Appendix A and the rubric used to score student completed graphic organizers can be found in Appendix B. The intervention used to address these student deficits in fluency and comprehension was the implementation of a guided reading program.
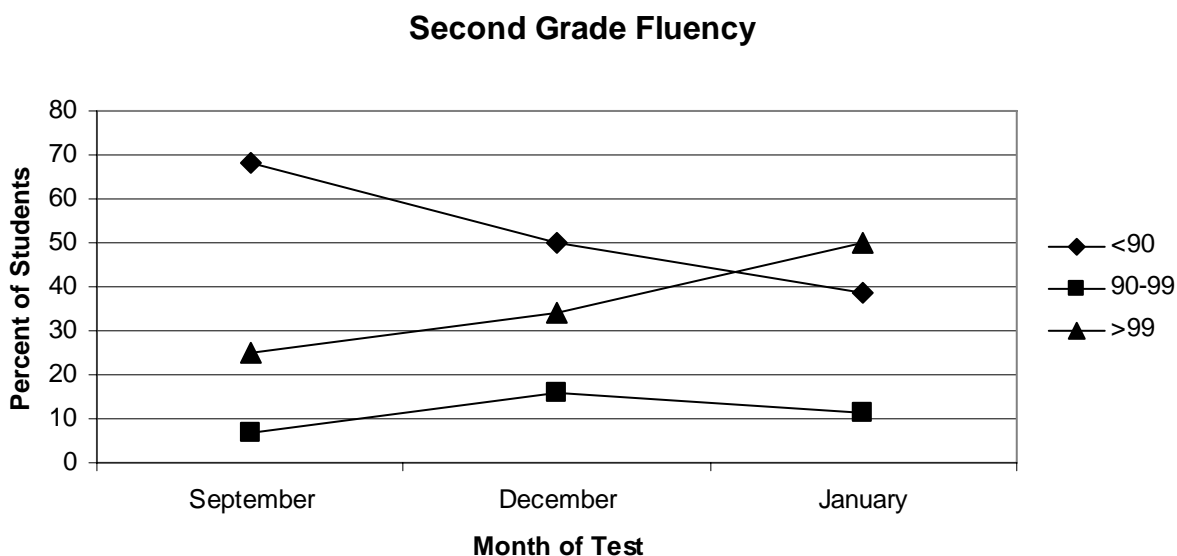
Second Grade Fluency

Figure 6. Results of second grade fluency assessments.
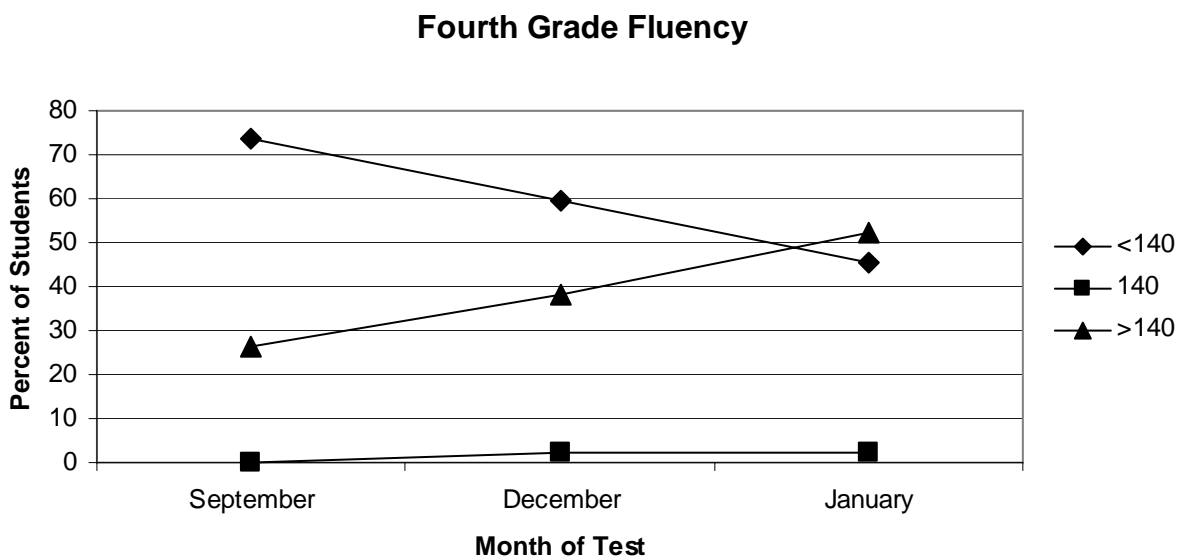
Fourth Grade Fluency

Figure 7. Results of fourth grade fluency assessments.

Figures 6 and 7 above show the results of the fluency assessments that researchers used to measure second and fourth grade students' reading fluency levels throughout the execution of the interventions. There were 44 second graders at Sites A and B and 42 fourth graders at Site A assessed at this time. This district wide assessment was given at both Site A and Site B by teacher researchers.

In analyzing the second graders' September fluency scores as seen in Figure 6 the maximum percent of students, 68.2%, scored below 90 words per minute which was significant. The minimum percent of students, 6.8%, scored between 90 and 99 words per minute. The mean for the second graders September fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 31.5. In conclusion the second grade September fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students scored below 90 words per minute.

In analyzing the second graders' December fluency scores as seen in Figure 6 the maximum percent of students, 50%, scored below 90 words per minute which was not

significant. The minimum percent of students, 15.9%, scored between 90 and 99 words per minute. The mean for the second graders December fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 17.1. In conclusion the second grade December fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students still scored below 90 words per minute.

In analyzing the second graders' January fluency scores as seen in Figure 6 the maximum percent of students, 38.6%, scored above 99 words per minute which was not significant. The minimum percent of students, 11.4%, scored between 90 and 99 words per minute. The mean for the second graders January fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 19.9. The second grade January fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students scored above 99 words per minute or above and met or exceeded the target. In conclusion, by examining the highest level of achievement, scoring 99 words per minute or above, the second grade students showed a positive growth of 25%.

In analyzing the fourth graders' September fluency scores as seen in Figure 7 the maximum percent of students, 73.8%, scored below 140 words per minute which was significant. The minimum percent of students, 0%, scored exactly 140 words per minute. The mean for the fourth graders September fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 37.4. In conclusion the fourth grade September fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students scored below 140 words per minute.

In analyzing the fourth graders' December fluency scores as seen in Figure 7 the maximum percent of students, 59.5%, scored below 140 words per minute which was not significant. The minimum percent of students, 2.4%, scored exactly 140 words per minute. The mean for the fourth graders December fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was

28.9. In conclusion the fourth grade December fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students still scored below 140 words per minute.

In analyzing the fourth graders' January fluency scores as seen in Figure 7 the maximum percent of students, 45.2%, scored above 140 words per minute which was not significant. The minimum percent of students, 2.4%, scored exactly 140 words per minute. The mean for the fourth graders January fluency scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 27.0. The fourth grade January fluency assessment revealed that the majority of the students scored above 140 words per minute and met or exceeded the target. In conclusion, by examining the highest level of achievement, scoring 140 words per minute or above, the fourth grade students showed a positive growth of 26.2%.
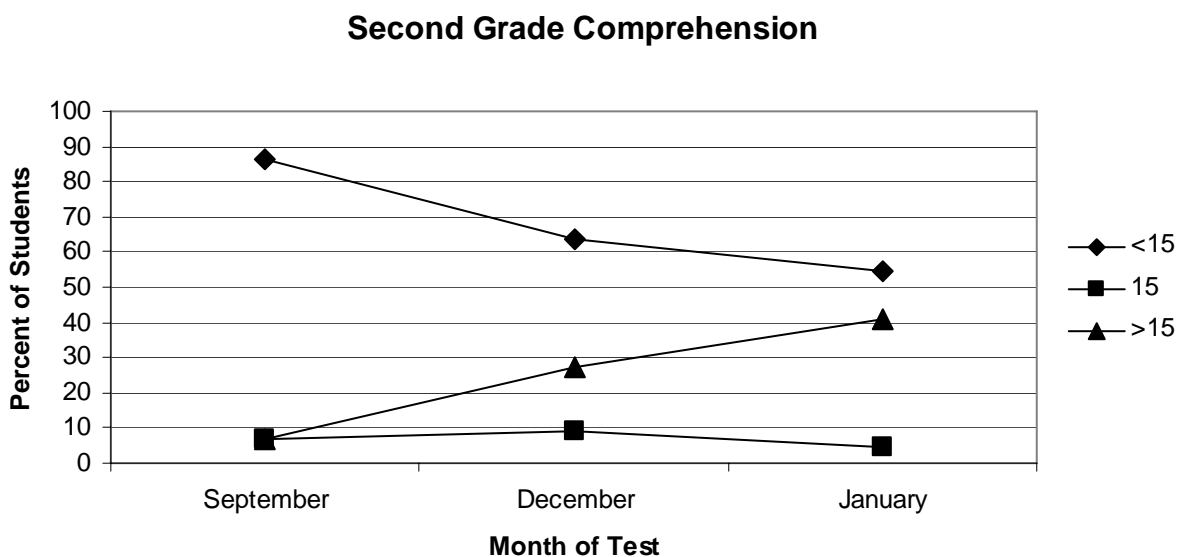
Second Grade Comprehension

Figure 8. Results of second grade comprehension assessments.

Fourth Grade Comprehension
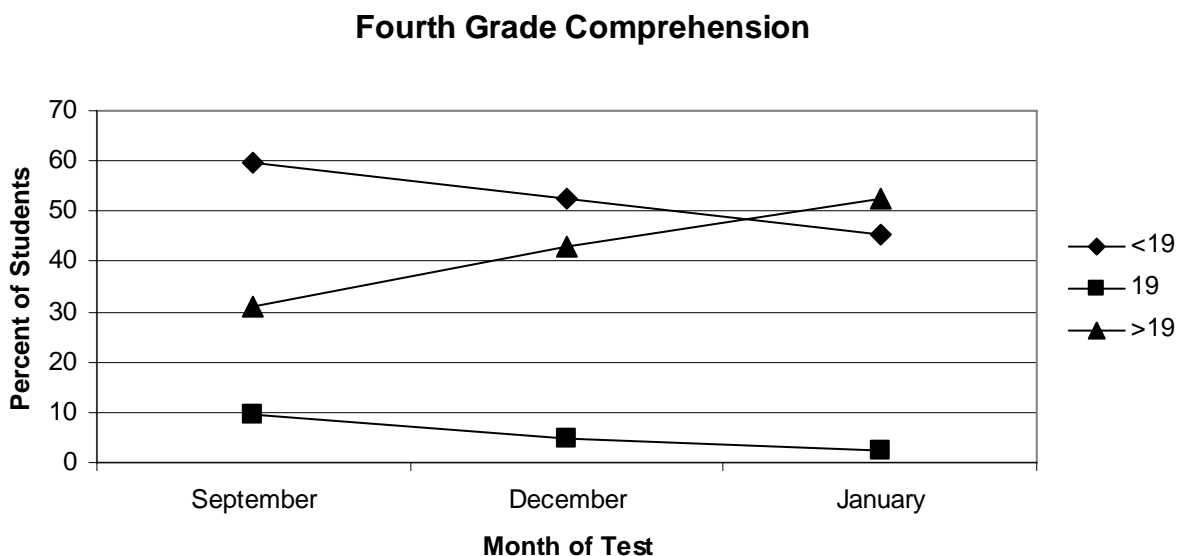
Figure 9. Results of fourth grade comprehension assessments.

Figures 8 and 9 above show the results of the comprehension assessments that researchers used to measure second and fourth grade students' reading comprehension levels throughout the execution of the interventions. There were 44 second graders at Sites A and B and 42 fourth graders at Site A assessed at this time. This district wide assessment was given at both Site A and Site B by teacher researchers.

In analyzing the second graders' September comprehension scores as seen in Figure 8 the maximum percent of students, 86.4%, chose less than 15 words correctly, which was significant. The minimum percent of students, 6.8%, chose more than 15 words correctly. The mean for the second graders September comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 45.9. In conclusion the second grade September comprehension assessment revealed that the majority of the students chose less than 15 words correctly.

In analyzing the second graders' December comprehension scores as seen in Figure 8 the maximum percent of students, 63.6%, chose less than 15 words correctly, which was significant.

The minimum percent of students, 9.1%, chose exactly 15 words correctly. The mean for the second graders December comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 27.8. In conclusion the second grade December comprehension assessment revealed that the majority of the students chose less than 15 words correctly.

In analyzing the second graders' January comprehension scores as seen in Figure 8 the maximum percent of students, 54.5%, chose less than 15 words correctly, which was not significant. The minimum percent of students, 4.5%, chose exactly 15 words correctly. The mean for the second graders January comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 25.8. The second grade January comprehension assessment revealed that the majority of the students chose less than 15 words correctly. In conclusion, by examining the highest level of achievement, choosing 15 words or greater correctly, the second grade students showed a positive growth of 34.1%.

In analyzing the fourth graders' September comprehension scores as seen in Figure 9 the maximum percent of students, 59.5%, chose less than 19 words correctly, which was significant. The minimum percent of students, 9.5%, chose exactly 19 words correctly. The mean for the fourth graders September comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard deviation was 25.1. In conclusion the fourth grade September comprehension assessment revealed that the majority of the students chose less than 15 words correctly.

In analyzing the fourth graders' December comprehension scores as seen in Figure 9 the maximum percent of students, 52.4%, chose less than 19 words correctly, which was not significant. The minimum percent of students, 4.8%, chose exactly 19 words correctly. The mean for the fourth graders December comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard

deviation was 25.2. In conclusion the fourth grade December comprehension assessment

revealed that the majority of the students chose less than 15 words correctly.

In analyzing the fourth graders' January comprehension scores as seen in Figure 9 the

maximum percent of students, 52.4%, chose more than 19 words correctly, which was not

significant. The minimum percent of students, 2.4%, chose exactly 19 words correctly. The

mean for the second graders January comprehension scores was 33.3, while the standard

deviation was 27.0. The fourth grade January comprehension assessment revealed that the

majority of the students chose more than 19 words correctly and met or exceeded the target. In

conclusion, by examining the highest level of achievement, choosing 19 words or greater

correctly, the fourth grade students showed a positive growth of 21.4%.

Second Grade Achievement in Graphic Organizer Usage
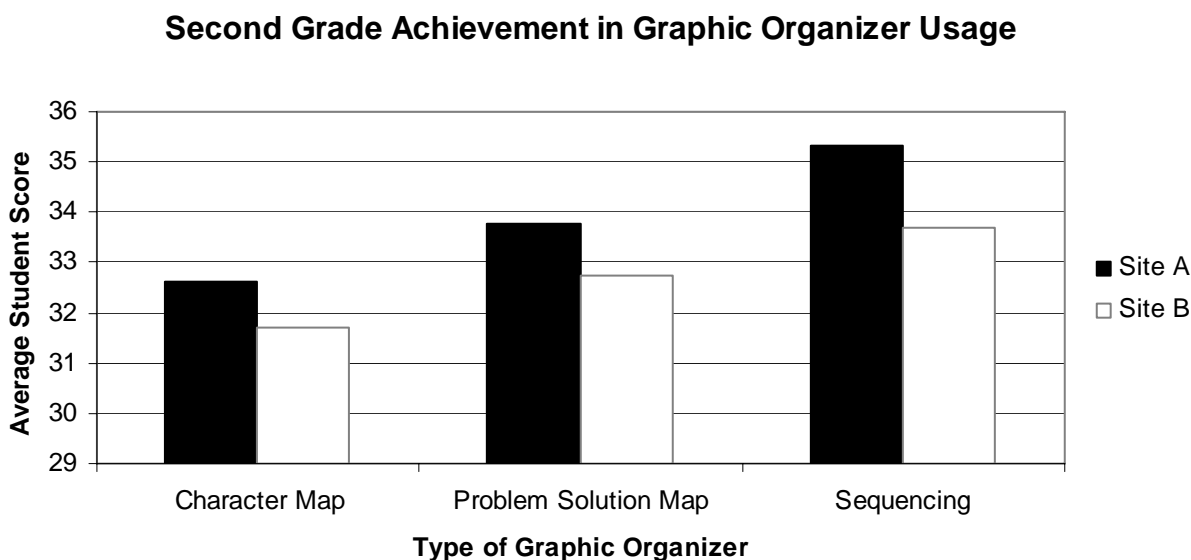
Figure 10. Results of second grade graphic organizer assessments.

Fourth Grade Achievement in Graphic Organizer Usage
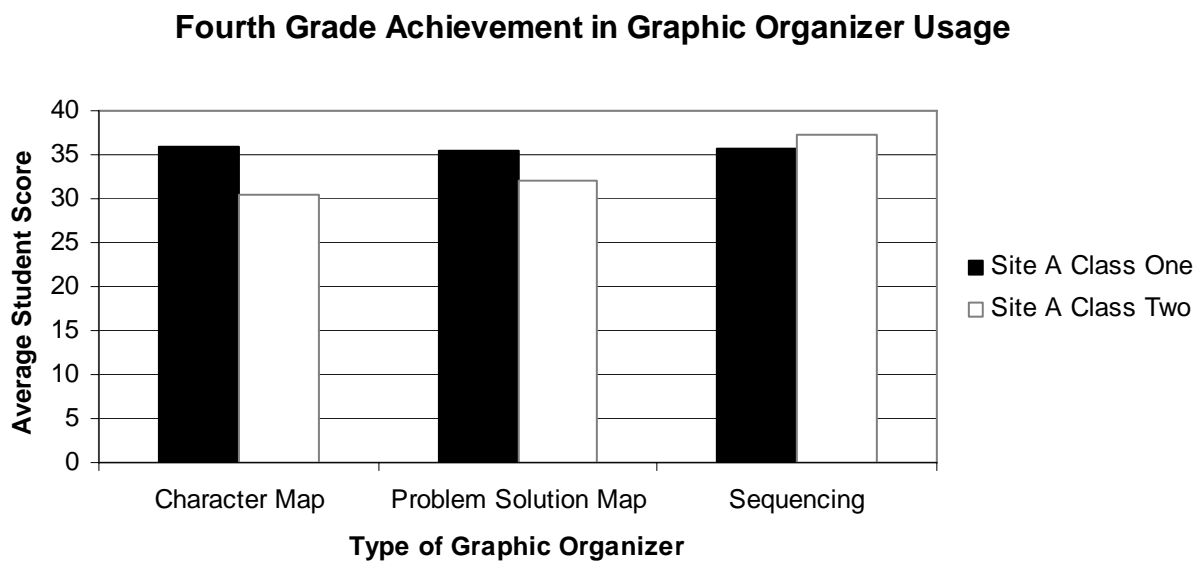
Figure 11. Results of fourth grade graphic organizer assessments.

Figures 10 and 11 above show the results of the graphic organizer assessments that researchers used to measure second and fourth grade students' reading comprehension levels at the conclusion of the interventions. There were 44 second graders at Sites A and B and 42 fourth graders at Site A. These graphic organizers were given to the students by the teacher researchers at both Sites A and B and were scored using the rubric found in Appendix B.

In analyzing the second grade students' graphic organizer scores as seen in Figure 10 the maximum percent of students, 34.5%, scored best on the sequencing graphic organizer, which was not significant. The minimum percent of students, 31.7%, scored lowest on the character map graphic organizer, which was not significant. The mean for the second graders' graphic organizers scores are as follows: 32.2% on the character map, 33.3% on the problem and solution map, and 34.5% on the sequencing map. In conclusion, the graphic organizer assessment revealed that the second graders performed best on the sequencing graphic organizer.

In analyzing the second grade students' graphic organizer scores as seen in Figure 10 by Site the maximum percent of students at Site A, 35.3%, scored best on the sequencing graphic organizer, which was significant. The maximum percent of students at Site B, 33.7%, scored best on the sequencing graphic organizer, which was not significant. The minimum percent of students at Site A, 32.6%, scored lowest on the character map graphic organizer, which was not significant. The minimum percent of students at Site B, 31.7%, scored lowest on the character map graphic organizer, which was significant. The mean for the second graders' graphic organizers scores at Site A and Site B are as follows: 32.2% on the character map, 33.3% on the problem and solution map, and 34.5% on the sequencing map. In conclusion, the graphic organizer assessment revealed that the second graders at Site A and B performed best on the sequencing graphic organizer and were the least successful on the character map graphic organizer.

In analyzing the fourth grade students' graphic organizer scores as seen in Figure 11 the maximum percent of students, 37.2%, scored best on the sequencing graphic organizer, which was not significant. The minimum percent of students, 30.4%, scored lowest on the character map graphic organizer, which was not significant. The mean for the fourth graders' graphic organizers scores are as follows: 33.1% on the character map, 33.8% on the problem and solution map, and 36.5% on the sequencing map. In conclusion, the graphic organizer assessment revealed that the fourth graders performed best on the sequencing graphic organizer.

In analyzing the fourth grade students' graphic organizer scores as seen in Figure 11 by Site the maximum percent of students at Site A, 35.9%, scored best on the sequencing graphic organizer, which was not significant. The maximum percent of students at Site B, 37.2%, scored best on the sequencing graphic organizer, which was significant. The minimum percent of

students at Site A, 35.4%, scored lowest on the character map graphic organizer, which was significant. The minimum percent of students at Site B, 30.4%, scored lowest on the character map graphic organizer, which was not significant. The mean for the fourth graders' graphic organizers scores at Site A and Site B are as follows: 33.1% on the character map, 33.8% on the problem and solution map, and 36.5% on the sequencing map. In conclusion, the graphic organizer assessment revealed that the fourth graders at Site A and B performed best on the sequencing graphic organizer and were the least successful on the character map graphic organizer.

<div style="text-align:center">Conclusions and Recommendations</div>

Students in grades 2 and 4 perform below grade level expectancy on reading tasks that relate to comprehension and fluency. Evidence of this problem includes the following: district provided comprehension assessment scores, district provided fluency assessment scores, and a teacher survey on the issues of comprehension and fluency in the classroom. Teacher researchers used the intervention of guided reading in their classrooms to improve reading comprehension and fluency.

The researchers concluded that the guided reading intervention using leveled texts was highly successful in addressing the problem of reading comprehension and fluency in grades 2 and 4. There was an increase in students' reading fluency and comprehension throughout the course of the intervention.

The teacher researchers concluded that the intervention in which the students completed three different graphic organizers was partially successful. These graphic organizers were scored by the teacher using the teacher-created rubric and proved that the students' comprehension of the selections they read was adequate. Overall, the students excelled on the character and

sequencing map; the problem solution map was more difficult for the students to complete independently. This was due to the fact that the problem solution map required students to use their ability to infer.

The teacher researchers concluded that the intervention of utilizing flexible grouping during guided reading was partially successful in addressing the problem of low scores in reading comprehension and fluency. The teacher researchers used a district provided reading comprehension and fluency assessment to determine whether or not the flexible groups had an impact on these areas of learning. This intervention was positive for students who have developed the necessary social skills to work in collaborative groups; it was more difficult for those who lacked these skills.

To those teachers who may wish to utilize the interventions in this research project, the researchers offer these recommendations. First, the intervention of guided reading using leveled texts is highly recommended. The students' confidence increased due to receiving reading materials that were assigned according to their ability. Throughout the course of the intervention, students read from a variety of titles and this peaked their interest.

Secondly, the researchers recommend using the intervention of graphic organizers with the following adjustments. Teacher researchers feel students should receive more whole group instruction on how to use and interact with the graphic organizers before having to complete them individually. Students would benefit from completing a graphic organizer using a selection that is slightly below their reading ability level in order to simplify the process and allow them to experience success. It is also important that the teacher specifically takes time to review the skills necessary to complete the problem solution map as it was particularly troublesome for some students.

Finally, the researchers recommend using the intervention of flexible grouping with the following adjustments. Researchers feel students would benefit from increased instruction on how to work cooperatively in groups without conflict. Additionally, teacher researchers recommend switching group participants periodically throughout guided reading so students are given the opportunity to work with different classmates. Students who are found to have a lack of social skills should be provided the opportunity to develop these skills with specific lessons that focus on and teach social skills.

<div align="center">Reflections</div>

<u>Site A, Second Grade</u>

As we began the action research process, the task ahead seemed daunting and at times unachievable. However, as we continued the process, we began to see how all of the components would fit together; we also realized that we would be receiving a lot of support and guidance from our teachers along the way. This support and guidance helped to ease our anxiety and make the process more enjoyable for our group.

The first few steps in the action research process seemed somewhat easy, yet they had to be taken very seriously since these steps set the tone for the rest of the project. I believe that the very first step, which was to pick a research group, was the most crucial. If our group did not work well together, it would have made everything else more difficult. I, however, was fortunate by having a wonderful team that worked so well together. The four of us were not only hard workers, but also dedicated teachers who wanted the best for our students and would have done whatever was necessary to help our students achieve their goals. We have worked so well together throughout this process. During the process, each of us offered our strengths to the group and encouraged each other to do our best.

Although, we were able to come up with a list of problems within our schools, it was actually difficult to pick just one for our project. We narrowed it down, when we decided to focus on a problem within reading. Since reading was a subject that we all taught, it was of interest to us.

By completing this process, I believe that both my students and myself made many important gains. As a professional, I learned how to identify a problem, select and carry out interventions, record data, create assessment tools, and then analyze the results in order to report results. Although, I don't think I would do this entire action research project process over again by myself, I would use parts of the process to better my teaching. For example, I could create interventions and assessments to try and fix a problem that arises in my classroom or school. My students gained because the process helped them to become better readers. The students were able to read texts at their own level, which helped to increase their fluency rates. The students then completed graphic organizers, which helped to better their comprehension skills.

Overall, the two most interesting components of this process were seeing how my group worked together in order to complete this research project and seeing how professional I have become by going through process. The most challenging aspect of the project was staying focused on each of the small tasks that we were assigned and not getting lost in the final completed project. In the end, I am glad that I went through this professional journey and, at the same time, I am glad to see it come to an end.

Site A, Fourth Grade, Classroom One

The most interesting part of this research process for me was learning how much goes into a paper of this magnitude. I had no idea exactly how much time and effort was required to

complete an action research project and all of its components. I was amazed at the detail and exacting standards that are required when it comes to completing a proper research study.

The most challenging part of the action research project was adjusting to all of the technicalities that must be attended to when completing the research, collecting the data, and then writing up the results. I had to learn how to communicate in a way that was a bit foreign to me and less free-flowing that I had expected. I went into this under the assumption that I would do some research and then write about it. And, at the most basic level, I suppose that is what I did but there was just so much more to it than that.

My students have definitely benefited from this research process I have embarked upon. Their comprehension and fluency scores have shown much improvement, and they have enjoyed the differentiated experience that guided reading has provided them. They were provided with the opportunity to work in groups and interact on a regular basis which also allowed for them to make social gains.

Using guided reading in my classroom is something I will continue to do with a few small adjustments before beginning guided reading. I would most definitely do a few more lessons with my students about how to work constructively in a group. I would also like to learn how well guided reading would continue to work over a long period of time; would the students tire of the process or would they become masters and continue to make progress?

One thing that I believe I will continue to do because of my experiences in this action research process is examine my students and their strengths and weaknesses and then use this analysis to help me address any problems that may exist. I now know how to fully examine a problem and its possible causes and then use relevant research to decide on a proper intervention and finally execute the intervention.

Finally, one of the ways that I have been impacted the most is my own sense of professionalism and leadership. I have found myself taking on more of a leadership role in my school and with my colleagues. I no longer look at myself as a rookie or novice; I have taken more ownership of my abilities and found myself with a huge gain in my confidence. This has been an unexpected gift and a wonderful benefit to the action research process.

Site A, Fourth Grade, Class Two

Throughout this entire action research experience, I feel I have learned many things. For one, I learned much about the whole research process, what it entails and all the organization and hard work it requires. I also learned a great deal about myself as a teacher, a student and a member of an important cooperative group.

In my opinion, the most interesting component of this process was to see my students' growth over the course of the sixteen weeks. In my classroom, I worked hard to implement guided reading groups, teach my students about using graphic organizers, and to assess them afterwards. It was nice to see all of my hard work benefit my students at the conclusion of the project. My students showed great growth in the areas of reading fluency and comprehension.

There were many challenging aspects during the course of this project. In the beginning it was difficult to narrow our ideas down to one topic that we wanted to study. However, after we made our decision to look at guided reading in our classrooms, we were confident we made the right choice. This action research project benefited the students in many ways. For one, my students were able to work with me in small groups and get the attention that's necessary to improve their comprehension skills. Additionally, I was able to assess my students at the beginning and really monitor their progress throughout the sixteen weeks. If it were not for this

action research project, I am not sure I would analyze their scores so closely and use the interventions on such an intense level.

Outside my classroom, other teachers in my building were curious about what I was doing with my students. It was important for me to talk about my project with them and to get some feedback on what they thought would be successful. Also, parents were very supportive through this entire process, as they understood the importance of the reading fluency and comprehension skills their children would be learning. The parents frequently asked me questions about the project and even commented on the improvements they were seeing in their children. I felt it was a real success!

To be honest, I'm not sure I will use all of our interventions in the succeeding school years. I think guided reading is important in the classroom and it truly does benefit the children. However, for a class of independent readers in fourth grade, I felt they became bored with it. Implementing guided reading programs in the classroom seem to fit well in the primary grades where the students are just beginning to learn to read. On the other hand, if next year's class lacks some important reading skills and needs that small group teacher attention, I may very well use my interventions over again.

I felt the action research process as a whole was a little confusing at times. I think it's important that teachers examine the problems in their classrooms and deal with them accordingly. I would definitely use some parts of the process like identifying the problem and thinking about possible interventions. However, all of the data analyzing and usage of various graphs seems to be a bit much when you are dealing with a specific problem in your classroom. Going through the entire action research process requires such a time commitment that I would shy away from using it to solve various problems in my classroom.

I gained many insights while we were in the process of addressing significant problems in our schools. One thing I thought was important was the quality of the interventions teachers were implementing. The quantity of interventions didn't matter so much as the quality of them. Teacher researchers can use a number of interventions but if they are not meaningful, it will be hard to assess the changes. It was also important to implement the interventions for a significant amount of time. It's difficult to see growth if the interventions are not taking place on a regular basis and for a significant amount of time.

In conclusion, this experience really helped me gain an appreciation for people that conduct research for a living, as it is not an easy process. I feel my teaching has improved because of this project and I was able to pay closer attention to my students' needs. While working in our small research group, I learned a lot about myself as student and it helped me understand what situations I work best in. I feel I am most successful when I have a specific task to complete and I have the time to sit down and do it. All of our group members worked hard by doing our parts and that is the key to a successful cooperative group. Everyone was able to contribute in their own way. For a graduate student just beginning to think about a research topic, I would say good luck and study something you're passionate about. That is the only way to go!

Site B

As a teacher, during the course of this guided reading intervention, I found the most interesting component to be meeting with second grade students in guided reading groups at the students' instructional levels. I feel that guided reading is one of the best ways to differentiate reading in the classroom. I originally saw reading in the classroom to be "one size fits all" when instruction was primarily done as a whole entire class. In most classrooms, the majority of students fall in the average range; however, there are a few students who struggle because the

reading level is too difficult for them, while other students become bored due to the fact that they are not being challenged. Guided reading helps solve the problem of a wide range of ability levels in a given classroom.

I found the rich conversations that took place in these groups of four to five students to be very meaningful to the students and me. Being able to share comments, questions, and insights in small groups, students felt more comfortable. The group was able to have more in depth and personal conversations with me as the teacher and with their fellow classmates.

Due to the fact that the guided reading intervention was such a success, I will continue to use guided reading in the classroom because of the benefits I have seen with the students during this sixteen week intervention. I am extremely proud to have seen my students grow with their fluency, comprehension, and confidence with the reading process as a result of guided reading instruction being tailored to individual student's instructional level.

I learned better ways to help students achieve in reading during this sixteen week intervention, and I have also had time to reflect and learn many things about myself. During the course of this entire graduate program, I have been reminded that I am able to succeed at anything I put my mind to. Even when times are rough and time is limited, I still find time to succeed and make my dreams come true. I give my all when I complete a task, and I do not want to stop unless the project possesses my high standards. I feel extremely proud of how my group's intervention went, and I feel proud that all of us worked extremely well together to reach a common goal.

As a teacher, I strive to help my students be as successful as they can. One of my goals as a teacher is to have my students continue to use the skills I have taught them once they leave my classroom, and also apply them to new situations so they are continually lifelong learners.

Due to the fact that I am meeting each student's individual needs by differentiation with strategies including guided reading, I am giving each child the skills he or she needs to be successful as a lifelong learner.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Teacher Survey
Created by: Kari Gabl, Julie Long, Jessica Roemer, Kristi Kaiser

Copyrighted materials not included.

District Provided Fluency Assessment for Second Grade
<u>Dad and Rob</u>
School District
With Permission from Edformation, Inc. ©2002

District Provided Fluency Assessment for Fourth Grade
<u>Sled Dogs</u>
School District
With Permission from Edformation, Inc. ©2002

District Provided Comprehension Assessment for Second Grade
<u>In the Bike Shop</u>
School District
With Permission from Edformation, Inc. ©2001

District Provided Comprehension Assessment for Fourth Grade
<u>One Morning</u>
School District
With Permission from Edformation, Inc. ©2001

Teacher Survey

Directions: In order to complete our course work in our graduate program we are asking that you please complete the survey below and return to Kristi Kaiser by September 18th. Completing this survey is voluntary and there is no penalty attached to not completing it or reward offered for completing it. Please circle the number that corresponds to how you feel about these statements being instructional issues.

1. My students struggle with comprehension while reading independently.

1	2	3	4
Major Instructional Issue			Not an Instructional Issue

2. My students struggle with fluency while reading independently.

1	2	3	4
Major Instructional Issue			Not an Instructional Issue

3. Students are at a variety of reading levels.

1	2	3	4
Major Instructional Issue			Not an Instructional Issue

4. Students reach their fluency goals early on in the school year.

1	2	3	4
Major Instructional Issue			Not an Instructional Issue

5. Students reach their comprehension goals early on in the school year.

1	2	3	4
Major Instructional Issue			Not an Instructional Issue

APPENDIX B

Graphic Organizer Rubric

Created By: Kari Gabl, Kristi Kaiser, Julie Long, and Jessica Roemer

Graphic Organizer Rubric

Name _____   Date _____

	1	2	3	4
Overall Neatness	Handwriting is sloppy or unreadable and words are scattered	Handwriting is mostly sloppy and some words are scattered	Handwriting is somewhat neat but some words are scattered	Handwriting is very neat and words stay in organized rows
Completeness	Less than half of the organizer is complete	Roughly half of the organizer is complete	More than half of the organizer is complete	All parts of graphic organizer are complete
Amount of assistance needed	Required many interactions with teacher	Required a few interactions with teacher	Required 1 interaction with teacher	Completed task independently
Accurate information from the story	More than 4 mistakes found	3 to 4 mistakes found	1 to 2 mistakes found	All information is correct

Total Points = _____

APPENDIX C

Lesson Plans

Guided Reading Lesson Plans
Second Grade

<u>Week One</u>

I. Objective
    a. Assess students in comprehension and fluency in order to determine flexible
        guided reading groups.

II. Length: Allow 1 hour and thirty minutes.

III. Materials
    a. Second Grade Fluency Assessment
    b. Second Grade Comprehension Assessment
    c. Teacher Recording Sheet
    d. Timer
    e. Pencil

IV. Procedure
    a. Fluency Assessment
        i. Take students one at a time. Students are asked to read aloud orally for
            one minute while teacher listens for and records errors.
        ii. Teacher scores assessments.
        iii. Teacher uses scores to determine flexible guided reading groups.
    b. Comprehension Assessment
        i. This is administered whole group. Students are given three minutes.
            Students read the passage and they circle the correct word that fits best in
            the sentence.
        ii. The teacher scores assessments.
        iii. Teacher uses scores to determine flexible guided reading groups.

<u>Weeks Three-Five</u>

I. Objective
    a. Teacher models and explains each center and gives students time to experiment.

II. Length: Allow five minutes to explain and then about 20 minutes to explore.

III. Materials
    a. Literacy-based centers
        i. Comprehension Center

        ii. Making Connections Center
       iii. Story Reading Center
       iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher spends five minutes explaining each center to class.
    b. Teacher breaks class into small groups and gives them time to explore each center.

Week Six

I.   Objective
    a. To model and practice the use of graphic organizers.

II.   Length: Allow thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
    a. Graphic organizers
    b. Overhead
    c. Transparency of graphic organizers

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher models each graphic organizer in a whole group setting using a person, character, or any story that all students already know.
    b. Teacher fills out a graphic organizer on the overhead or dry erase board while students fill it out on their own papers.

Week Seven

I.   Objective
    a. To model and practice the use of graphic organizers.

II.   Length: Allow thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
    a. Text to read aloud
    b. Graphic organizers

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher will read a story and students will complete graphic organizers in small groups.

Week Eight

I. Objective
   a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II. Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

III. Materials
   a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
   b. Character Development graphic organizer
   c. Literacy-based centers
        i. Comprehension Center
       ii. Making Connections Center
      iii. Story Reading Center
       iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV. Procedure
   a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to character development through the use of a graphic organizer.
   b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
   c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

Week Nine

I. Objective
   a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II. Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

III. Materials
   a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
   b. Character Development graphic organizer
   c. Literacy-based centers
        i. Comprehension Center
       ii. Making Connections Center
      iii. Story Reading Center
       iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to character development through the use of a graphic organizer.
    b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
    c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.
    d. Teacher collects and grades graphic organizer according to rubric.

Week Ten

I.   Objective
    a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

III.   Materials
    a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
    b. Problem Solution graphic organizer
    c. Literacy-based centers
       i. Comprehension Center
      ii. Making Connections Center
     iii. Story Reading Center
     iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to the problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
    b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
    c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

Week Eleven

I.   Objective
    a. Assess students in comprehension and fluency in order to show growth and to determine flexible guided reading groups.

II.   Length: Allow one hour and thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
    a. Second Grade Fluency Assessment
    b. Second Grade Comprehension Assessment
    c. Teacher Recording Sheet
    d. Timer
    e. Pencil

IV.   Procedure
    a. Fluency Assessment
        i. Take students one at a time. Students are asked to read aloud orally for one minute while teacher listens for and records errors.
        ii. Teacher scores assessments.
        iii. Teacher uses scores to determine make changes to flexible guided reading groups if need be.
    b. Comprehension Assessment
        i. This is administered whole group. Students are given three minutes. Students read the passage and they circle the correct word that fits best in the sentence.
        ii. The teacher scores assessments.
        iii. Teacher uses scores to determine make changes to flexible guided reading groups if need be.

Week Twelve

I.   Objective
    a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II.   Materials
    a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
    b. Problem Solution graphic organizer
    c. Literacy-based centers
        i. Comprehension Center
        ii. Making Connections Center
        iii. Story Reading Center
        iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

III.   Procedure
    a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
    b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.

    c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

    d. Teacher collects and grades graphic organizer according to rubric.

Week Thirteen

I.   Objective
    a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

III.   Materials
    a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
    b. Story Mapping/Sequencing graphic organizer
    c. Literacy-based centers
        i.   Comprehension Center
       ii. Making Connections Center
     iii. Story Reading Center
     iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
    b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
    c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

Week Fourteen

I.   Objective
    a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

III.   Materials
    a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
    b. Story Mapping/Sequencing graphic organizer
    c. Literacy-based centers

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
    b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
    c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.
    d. Teacher collects and grades graphic organizer according to rubric.

Week Fifteen

I.   Objective
    a. Assess students in comprehension and fluency to show growth.

II.   Length: Allow an hour and thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
    a. Second Grade Fluency Assessment
    b. Second Grade Comprehension Assessment
    c. Teacher Recording Sheet
    d. Timer
    e. Pencil

IV.   Procedure
    a. Fluency Assessment
        i. Take students one at a time. Students are asked to read aloud orally for one minute while teacher listens for and records errors.
        ii. Teacher scores assessments.
    b. Comprehension Assessment
        i. This is administered whole group. Students are given three minutes. Students read the passage and they circle the correct word that fits best in the sentence.
        ii. The teacher scores assessments.

Guided Reading Lesson Plans
Fourth Grade

<u>Week One</u>

I.   Objective
        a. Assess students in comprehension and fluency in order to determine flexible
            guided reading groups.

II.   Length: Allow 1 hour and thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
        a. Fourth Grade Fluency Assessment
        b. Fourth Grade Comprehension Assessment
        c. Teacher Recording Sheet
        d. Timer
        e. Pencil

IV.   Procedure
        a. Fluency Assessment
            i.   Take students one at a time. Students are asked to read aloud orally for
                 one minute while teacher listens for and records errors.
            ii. Teacher scores assessments.
            iii. Teacher uses scores to determine flexible guided reading groups.
        b. Comprehension Assessment
            i.   This is administered whole group. Students are given three minutes.
                 Students read the passage and they circle the correct word that fits best in
                 the sentence.
            ii. The teacher scores assessments.
            iii. Teacher uses scores to determine flexible guided reading groups.

<u>Weeks Three-Five</u>

I.   Objective
        a. Teacher models and explains each center and gives students time to experiment.

II.   Length: Allow five minutes to explain and then about 20 minutes to explore.

III.   Materials
        a. Literacy-based centers
            i.   Comprehension Center
            ii. Making Connections Center

        iii. Story Reading Center
        iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher spends five minutes explaining each center to class.
    b. Teacher breaks class into small groups and gives them time to explore each center.

Week Six

I.   Objective
    a. To model and practice the use of graphic organizers.

II.   Length: Allow thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
    a. Graphic organizers
    b. Overhead
    c. Transparency of graphic organizers

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher models each graphic organizer in a whole group setting using a person, character, or a story that all students know.
    b. Teacher fills out a graphic organizer on the overhead or dry erase board while students fill it out on their own papers.

Week Seven

I.   Objective
    a. To model and practice the use of graphic organizers.

II.   Length: Allow thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
    a. Text to read aloud
    b. Graphic organizers

IV.   Procedure
    a. Teacher will read a story and students will complete graphic organizers in small groups.

<u>Week Eight</u>

    I.   Objective
         a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

    II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

    III.   Materials
         a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
         b. Character Development graphic organizer
         c. Literacy-based centers
             i. Comprehension Center
            ii. Making Connections Center
          iii. Story Reading Center
          iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

    IV.   Procedure
         a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to character development through the use of a graphic organizer.
         b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
         c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

<u>Week Nine</u>

    I.   Objective
         a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

    II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

    III.   Materials
         a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
         b. Character Development graphic organizer
         c. Literacy-based centers
             i. Comprehension Center
            ii. Making Connections Center
          iii. Story Reading Center
          iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
      a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to character development through the use of a graphic organizer.
      b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
      c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.
      d. Teacher collects and grades graphic organizer according to rubric.

Week Ten

I.   Objective
      a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

III.   Materials
      a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
      b. Problem Solution graphic organizer
      c. Literacy-based centers
            i. Comprehension Center
           ii. Making Connections Center
         iii. Story Reading Center
         iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
      a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
      b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
      c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

Week Eleven

I.   Objective
      a. Assess students in comprehension and fluency in order to show growth and to determine flexible guided reading groups.

II.   Length: Allow one hour and thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
    a. Fourth Grade Fluency Assessment
    b. Fourth Grade Comprehension Assessment
    c. Teacher Recording Sheet
    d. Timer
    e. Pencil

IV.   Procedure
    a. Fluency Assessment
        i. Take students one at a time. Students are asked to read aloud orally for one minute while teacher listens for and records errors.
        ii. Teacher scores assessments.
        iii. Teacher uses scores to determine make changes to flexible guided reading groups if need be.
    b. Comprehension Assessment
        i. This is administered whole group. Students are given three minutes. Students read the passage and they circle the correct word that fits best in the sentence.
        ii. The teacher scores assessments.
        iii. Teacher uses scores to determine make changes to flexible guided reading groups if need be.

Week Twelve

I.   Objective
    a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

II.   Materials
    a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
    b. Problem Solution graphic organizer
    c. Literacy-based centers
        i. Comprehension Center
        ii. Making Connections Center
        iii. Story Reading Center
        iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

III.   Procedure
    a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
    b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
    c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

d. Teacher collects and grades graphic organizer according to rubric.

Week Thirteen

    I.   Objective
        a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

    II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

    III.   Materials
        a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
        b. Story Mapping/Sequencing graphic organizer
        c. Literacy-based centers
             i. Comprehension Center
           ii. Making Connections Center
         iii. Story Reading Center
         iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

    IV.   Procedure
        a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
        b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
        c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.

Week Fourteen

    I.   Objective
        a. To increase reading comprehension and fluency through the use of guided reading.

    II.   Length: Allow fifteen minutes per guided reading group session.

    III.   Materials
        a. Multiple copies of five different reading texts at various levels
        b. Story Mapping/Sequencing graphic organizer
        c. Literacy-based centers
             i. Comprehension Center
           ii. Making Connections Center
         iii. Story Reading Center
         iv. Teacher Discussion with Graphic Organizer Center

IV.   Procedure
        a. Teacher meets with students in small flexible groups. Teacher meets with one guided reading group at a time. Teacher facilitates a discussion of the story as it relates to problem-solution through the use of a graphic organizer.
        b. Teacher rotates among guided reading groups.
        c. When students are not in a guided reading group with the teacher, they are interacting in literacy-based centers.
        d. Teacher collects and grades graphic organizer according to rubric.

Week Fifteen

I.   Objective
        a. Assess students in comprehension and fluency to show growth.

II.   Length: Allow an hour and thirty minutes.

III.   Materials
        a. Fourth Grade Fluency Assessment
        b. Fourth Grade Comprehension Assessment
        c. Teacher Recording Sheet
        d. Timer
        e. Pencil

IV.   Procedure
        a. Fluency Assessment
            i.   Take students one at a time. Students are asked to read aloud orally for one minute while teacher listens for and records errors.
            ii. Teacher scores assessments.
        b. Comprehension Assessment
            i.   This is administered whole group. Students are given three minutes. Students read the passage and they circle the correct word that fits best in the sentence.
            ii. The teacher scores assessments.

APPENDIX D

Revised Lesson Plans