IMPROVING READING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH INCREASED MOTIVATION,

SPECIFIC SKILL ENHANCEMENT, AND PRACTICE TIME

FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & Pearson Achievement Solutions, Inc.

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

December, 2008

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ABSTRACT

The action research project report began when the teacher researchers determined that students at Sites A and B struggled with reading achievement. The purpose of the project was to improve students' reading achievement through increased motivation, specific skill instruction, and additional practice time. The project involved 26 students: 17 second-grade students, 4 first-grade students, 4 third-grade students, and 1 fifth-grade student. The project began January 21st, 2008 and ran through May 16th, 2008 with 12 weeks of intervention.

Students' low reading achievement was demonstrated by a lack in reading practice time, low motivation to read, limited access to appropriately leveled books, and low literacy skills appropriate to their grade level. The teacher researchers used a Student Attitude Survey, Teacher Questionnaire, Accelerated Reader scores, and data from the Measure of Academic Progress reports to document evidence of the problem. The Accelerated Reader scores and Measure of Academic Progress report tools showed that reading achievement was low compared to grade level peers. The Student Attitude Survey showed that motivation and interest in reading were areas in need of improvement. The Teacher Questionnaire showed that a teacher's years of experience correlated to confidence and ability in the area of reading instruction.

The teacher researchers chose Reading Parties, specific skill instruction, and self-to-text connections for intervention. The Reading Parties were a block of time once a week where students could read books at their level in a comfortable atmosphere. Specific skill instruction consisted of mini lessons on phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary that gave students the tools they needed to read books. The final intervention was teaching students how to make self-to-text connections. This enabled them to further comprehend and enjoy the books they were reading.

One of the most notable changes was the increase in number of students that chose reading as their preferred activity. Another notable change was that all students showed growth in the Accelerated Reader scores. Students approached reading and books in a different, more positive, manner after the interventions. The teacher researchers saw positive results in the data as well as in daily interactions with students. Students were more apt to pick up a book, enjoyed their silent reading time, applied skills to read more difficult books, and shared their readings with peers.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students at Sites A and B exhibited poor decoding skills, a lack of practice time, low motivation to read, inability to identify with authors and characters, and had limited access to books appropriate to their levels. The teacher researchers believed that, as a result, the students scored below grade level on state and local standardized tests. Potential future set backs such as disengagement from school, increased risk of dropping out, and academic struggles in all content areas prompted the teacher researchers to identify low reading achievement as a problem that needed to be addressed. To document evidence of the problem, the teacher researchers used a Teacher Questionnaire, Student Attitude Survey, data from the district-wide Measure of Academic Progress assessment, and reports from Accelerated Reader.

Immediate Context of the Problem

The following information came from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's 2007 reports unless otherwise noted. This action research project was conducted by two teacher researchers from two different elementary schools in the same district. English Language Learners (ELLs) from various grades participated at Site A. A second grade class participated at Site B.

Site A

Site A had a total student population of 686 students. There were 51% (n=350) female and 48.9% (n=336) male students.

Table 1

Ethnicity of Students by Percentage

Asian/ Pacific Islander	African American (not Hispanic)	Hispanic	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Caucasian (not Hispanic)
2.2	4.8	27.6	.6	64.9

The teacher researchers would like the reader to note that 27.6% (n=189) of the students were Hispanic. In addition, 19.5% (n=134) of the students were English Language Learners. Of the school's 686 students, 46.6% (n=320) were classified as low-income based on the percent eligible for free/reduced lunch. In the 2005-2006 school year, Site A had a 95.8% attendance rate and a 1.5% truancy rate. According to Realtor (n.d.), there was a 18.27% annual residential turnover in the targeted community contributing to the transient student population.

Of the 36 classroom teachers employed at Site A, 94.4% (n=34) were female and 5.6% were male (n=2) (Site A Homepage). All 36 of the classroom teachers were Caucasian. The district's average yearly teacher salary was $43,721. In the 2005-2006 school year, 44.4% (n=49.1) of the full-time educators had their master's degree or higher. On average, teachers in this district had 8.24 years of local experience and 10.8 years of total experience. The ratio of students to teachers at Site A was 12:1 (Greatschools, n.d.).

The academic program at Site A consisted of core subjects including language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Other subjects taught were art, physical education, guidance, and music. Services offered at Site A include: speech, physical therapy, occupational therapy, special education, ESL, and guidance counseling. The teacher researchers would like the reader to note that the state recommended 140 minutes of reading and language arts instruction

for first and second grades, 120 minutes for third and fourth grades, and 100 minutes for fifth

grade each day.

Table 2

Wisconsin's Minimum Allocated Instructional Time per Week

Grade level	1	2	3	4	5
Reading/ Language Arts	700	700	600	600	500
Mathematics	250	250	250	250	250
Social Studies	125	150	175	200	225
Science	100	100	150	150	175
Physical Education	150	150	150	150	150
Art	90	90	90	90	90
Music	75	75	75	75	75

The majority of students at Site A scored proficient or advanced in grades three, four, and

five, with 86.3% (n=65) of third graders, 75.3 % (n=93) of fourth graders, and 84.4% (n=76) of

fifth graders scoring at the proficient or advanced levels in reading on the Wisconsin Concepts

and Knowledge Exam. Teacher researchers would like the reader to note that as the grades

increase, so do the number of students scoring minimally.

Table 3

Student Scores by Percentage on the Reading Portion of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts

Exam in November 2006

Grade level	Minimal	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
3	0	13	39	43
4	2	22	36	37
5	3	12	40	41

This elementary school was one of four schools in the district: three were elementary schools and one was a middle school. Total enrollment for the district was 2,017. Site A educates 34% (n=686) of the students in the district. The administration for Site A consisted of a principal and an assistant principal. Students were also supported by a reading enrichment teacher, a technical support staff member, six aides, a Reading Enrichment and Development teacher, two secretaries, a part-time school nurse, a school psychologist, a kitchen staff, and a janitorial staff (Site A Homepage, 2007).

Site A had several programs that set it apart from elementary schools in other districts including: Student Achievement Guarantee in Education, a kindergarten program for four-year-olds (4K), Reading Enrichment and Development, and reading enrichment programming. Student Achievement Guarantee Education provided schools with $2,000 per student of state funding to maintain low class sizes, keep schools open after hours as community centers, and increase professional development for educators. As a result, teachers offered after school enrichment programs to turn schools into "lighted schoolhouses" (WEAC, n.d.).

Site A is a three-story brick building located in a residential neighborhood. The building once housed a middle school and an elementary school, but is now run as one elementary school. It has 36 classrooms, additional rooms for specialists, 2 special education rooms, 3 reading

recovery rooms, 2 speech rooms, a teacher work room, an office for the psychologist, a gymnasium, a multi-purpose room with a climbing wall, a cafeteria, a kitchen, 2 computer laboratories that have approximately 30 computers each, a newly constructed library with approximately 30 computers, a nurse's office, a faculty lounge, and a main office that includes a principal's office, an assistant principal's office, and a meeting room. Each classroom is equipped with a TV and VCR. Each grade level shares one DVD player. Site A is adjacent to a community park that students use as the playground.

Site B

Site B had a total student population of 351 students. There were 43.9% (n=154) female students and 56.1% (n=197) male students.

Table 4

Ethnicity of Students by Percentage

Asian/ Pacific Islander	African American (not Hispanic)	Hispanic	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Caucasian (not Hispanic)
.3	.6	6.8	.9	91.5

The teacher researchers would like the reader to note that the percentage of Caucasian students was 91.5%. In addition, the percentage of ELL students was .6%. Please note that not all students of Hispanic descent are ELLs. However, due to increasing enrollment and changes in demographics, Site B's population of ELL students will increase beginning in the 2007-2008 school year. Of the school's 351 students, 36.2% were classified as low income based on the percent eligible for free/reduced lunch. In the 2005-2006 school year, Site A had a 96.1% attendance rate and a 3.2% truancy rate. According to Realtor (n.d.), there was an 18.27% annual residential turnover in the targeted community.

Of the 20 classroom teachers employed at Site B, 80% (n=16) were female and 20% (n=4) were male (Site B Homepage). All of the 20 classroom teachers were Caucasian. The district's average yearly teacher salary was $43,721. In the 2005-2006 school year, 35.6% of the full-time educators had their master's degree or higher. On average, teachers in this district had 8.24 years of local experience and 10.8 years of total experience. The ratio of students to teachers at Site B was 14:1 (Greatschools.net).

The academic program at Site B consisted of core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Other subjects taught were art, physical education, guidance, and music. The teacher researchers would like the reader to note that the state recommended 140 minutes of reading and language arts instruction for first and second grades, 120 minutes for third and fourth grades, and 100 minutes for fifth grade each day.

Table 5

Wisconsin's Minimum Allocated Instructional Time per Week

Grade level	1	2	3	4	5
Reading/ Language Arts	700	700	600	600	500
Mathematics	250	250	250	250	250
Social Studies	125	150	175	200	225
Science	100	100	150	150	175
Physical Education	150	150	150	150	150
Art	90	90	90	90	90
Music	75	75	75	75	75

The majority of students at Site B scored proficient or advanced in grades three and four, with 76.2% (n=38) of third graders and 85.7 % (n=43) of fourth graders scoring at the proficient or advanced levels. The data for the fifth grade reading scores was not available on the website due to privacy reasons. Teacher researchers would like the reader to note that as the grades increase, so do the number of students scoring minimally.

Table 6

Student Scores by Percentage on the Reading Portion of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts

Exam in November 2006 at Site B

Grade level	Minimal	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
3	0	24	53	24
4	2	12	57	27
5	*	*	*	*

*See DPI website "Student Privacy" for definition of reasons data is not reported.

This elementary school was one of four schools in the district; three are elementary schools and one is a middle school. Total enrollment for the district was 2,017. Site B educated 17% (n=343) of the students in the district. The administration for Site B consisted of a principal. Students were also supported by a reading enrichment teacher, a technical support staff member, four aides, a Reading Enrichment and Development teacher, a secretary, a school nurse, a part-time school psychologist, a part-time social worker, and a janitorial staff (Site B Homepage, 2007).

Since Sites A and B are in the same school district, Site B also has several programs that set it apart from elementary schools in other districts. They are: Student Achievement Guarantee in Education, a 4K program, the Reading Enrichment and Development program, and reading enrichment programming.

Site B is a one-story brick building that currently has 19 classrooms, a special education room, a reading specialist room, a storage closet that is used as a speech room, a hallway used as the office for the psychologists, a gymnasium, a multi-purpose room that is currently used as a music, art, and 4K classroom, a computer laboratory that has approximately 30 computers, a library, a lobby that is used as a cafeteria, and a main office that includes a principal's office, nurse's office, and a faculty lounge. All classrooms are equipped with a TV, VCR, DVD player,

and approximately three computers. Site B has a Smart Board, and one projector per grade level. Site B's rural location provides room for a large sports field. In September of 2006, a referendum was passed that included the expansion of Site B to alleviate the overcrowding. As a result, 20 more classrooms will be added in addition to an expanded library and office, new kitchen, faculty lounge, computer laboratory, and playground.

<div align="center">Local Context of the Problem</div>

Sites A and B are two schools in the same district. Site B is located roughly two miles outside of the community. There was a markedly higher percentage of Caucasian students at Site B than at Site A, as seen in Tables 1 and 5. The passing of the September, 2006 referendum changed the student demographics at Site B to include more minority students, much like Site A. Site A is located in the targeted community. The teacher researchers used this targeted community for demographic information as the student demographics in Site B will be homogeneous to the demographics in Site A.

This small targeted community is located in the Midwest. In the 2000 U.S. Census, total population in this town was 7,148 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, *Fact sheet*). The population in the targeted community was on the rise, increasing 1.8% from 2000 to 2004 (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, n.d. *Economic profile*). The majority of the citizens were Caucasian with a noteworthy number of Hispanic members comprising of the "other/mixed" category seen in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Ethnicity of Targeted Community by Percentage (IDcide, 2007)

Caucasian	African American	Native American	Asian	Hawaiian	Other/Mixed
91	1	0	1	0	7

The median age of the citizens of the targeted community, 36.5, was slightly higher than the national average of 35.3. A small percentage of the population, 5.9, of the targeted community was under the age of five, while 77% (n=5,504) of the people were between the ages of 18 and 65. That makes 15 % (n=1,644) of the population above the age of 65 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, Fact sheet).

The teacher researchers would like the reader to note in Table 8 that nearly 17% of the town's population did not have a high school diploma, which was almost identical to the percentage of people who had a graduate or professional degree.

Table 8

Educational Attainment of Targeted Community by Percentage

Education Level Attained	%
Less than 9th grade	6.80
9th-12th grade, no diploma	10.00
High school graduate	31.30
Some college, no degree	20.50
Bachelor's degree	6.30
Graduate or professional degree	17.70

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, *DP-2 profile of selected social characteristics*)

The median household income in the targeted community in 1999 was $40,924. The median family income in 1999 was $54,543. The percentage of families below the poverty level is 4.7% with 7.2% of individuals in the targeted community being below poverty level. The average household size is 2.33 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, *Fact sheet*). Types of

employment in the county include: construction, education and health, financial activities, information, leisure and hospitality, manufacturing, natural resources, professional services, business and other services, public administration trade, transportation, and utilities. Manufacturing; leisure and hospitality; trade, transportation and utilities; and education and health employ the most amount of people (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, n.d. *Economic profile*). Unemployment in the area was low in 2000, with only 1.9% of citizens over the age of 16 being unemployed while 30.0% were not in the labor force (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, *DP-3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics*).

There were 13 violent crimes in the targeted community in 2004 with 3 forcible rapes and 10 aggravated assaults with no cases of robbery or murder. There were 237 property crimes in 2004: a motor vehicle theft, one case of arson, 24 burglaries, and 211 acts of larceny (IDcide, 2007).

The targeted community is on a 5,200 acre lake that was formed by two Michigan glaciers. The lake is the largest in the region. The area was first inhabited in 1,000 B.C. by the ancient Oneota Tribes of the lost Hopewell Culture. The area was later inhabited by the Potawatomi Tribe until 1836 when Chief Big Foot and remaining tribe members were relocated to Kansas by the U.S. government. The area's geography, natural drops in the White River, allowed for a successful milling industry which attracted settlers from surrounding areas. By 1840s the village contained two hotels, two general stores, three churches, and a distillery along with the mills, cabins and houses (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitor Bureau, n.d, *A brief history*). In the 1860s, a park became the site of a public school. This is the exact location of Site A. In 1871, a permanent

railway was built leading to the village, attracting physicians and lawyers to relocate to this area (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitor Bureau, n.d, *Historic targeted community*). Many wealthy Chicago families built mansions on the lake after the Civil War. After the Chicago Fire of 1871, many of these families moved to their summer homes (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitor Bureau, n.d, *A brief history*). At the turn of the century, targeted community's lake shore had all been developed into private homes, camps, resorts, public beaches, or state parks. The community started to see an increase in summer population around this same time. Many rich families vacationed here, positively affecting the area's economy. This effect is still very evident today (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitor Bureau, n.d, *Historic targeted community*). The teacher researchers experience the same influx of summer tourists today, nearly doubling the population of the area in the summer months.

The city continues to update and make improvements, helping to make it one of the midwest's top leisure and convention destinations (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitor Bureau, n.d, *Historic targeted community*). Recent improvements include additions of new residential sites and commercial buildings. The lake and natural geography make the targeted community a prime location for many recreational activities such as: swimming, biking, boat tours, boat rentals, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, golf, tennis, horseback riding, hot air balloon rides, parasailing, water skiing, camping, hiking, and picnicking (Targeted Community Area Chamber of Commerce & Targeted Community Area Convention & Visitor Bureau, n.d, *Activities*).

The Targeted Community Area School's Homepage (2007) states the district's mission statement as "Honoring the unique talents of all, WE, the [targeted community] Area Schools, families, and communities commit to providing EVERY student an excellent education that ensures the development of responsible, respectful citizens and inspires life-long learning." This mission statement holds true for both of the targeted community's school districts. The first district is made up of the high school, while the second district is comprised of three elementary schools and one newly constructed middle school.   There is one superintendent that oversees both districts. District two, which contains Site A and Site B, also has an administrator of instruction, an administrator of special education, four principals, and two assistant principals (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007).

On September 12, 2006 voters in the targeted community passed a referendum. The referendum allocated $12 million to improvements for the separate high school district and $7 million dollars for improvements in Site A and B's district, for the elementary and middle school(s). Improvements included adding 37,500 square feet, adding 20 new classrooms, and expanded library, space for music and art, and a full-service kitchen at Site B. According to the local Director of Business Services in the targeted community, the passing referendum would make tax rates in district two "$4.59 for every $1,000 of assessed valuation" (Seiser, 2006). The support of the community and passing referendum can be seen in the school's technology budget. Teacher researchers are happy to report that each teacher in district one and district two is given a lap top computer. Site A has two computer laboratories that have approximately 30 computers each and a newly constructed library with approximately 30 computers. Each classroom is equipped with a TV and VCR. Each grade level shares one DVD player. Site B has a computer laboratory with approximately 30 computers. All classrooms are equipped with a TV,

VCR, DVD player, and approximately three computers. Site B has one Smart Board for school-wide use and one projector per grade level.

<div align="center">National Context of the Problem</div>

The literature on reading achievement highlights the importance of developing literacy skills and motivating students to read. High reading achievement was found in classrooms where teachers explicitly teach and reteach skills and balance skill instruction with holistic reading and writing activities (Bogner, et al., as cited in Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007). According to Torppa, Tolvanen, Poikkeus, Eklund, Lerkkanen, Leskinen, et al. (2007) and Gersten, Baker, Haager, and Graves (2005), good readers scored better than average readers in phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and verbal IQ and skill-specific instruction increased student growth. Motivation also plays a large role in high reading achievement. Bunting (2007, p. 14) feels that, "Each day typically progresses in skill-jammed, test-locked, other directed formats that teachers have little room for experience satisfaction or for having constructive thoughts about their work." Students and teachers are under great pressure from the No Child Left Behind legislation, resulting in the absence of fun and purpose in reading. Struggling readers have low motivation to practice their reading, a key factor for improvement. It is human to avoid what is painful. Children who struggle to read avoid it, creating a vicious cycle (Powell-Brown, 2006).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Evidence of the Problem

In pre-documentation the teacher researchers wanted to determine if the students at Sites A and B were lacking practice time, had low motivation to read, had access to books, and had literacy skills appropriate to their grade level. The teacher researchers collected data from a Student Attitude Survey, Teacher Questionnaire, Accelerated Reader scores, and Measure of Academic Progress reports. Teacher Researcher A collected data from eleven students: four first graders, two second graders, four third graders, and one fifth grader. Teacher Researcher A also collected data from 14 teachers. Teacher researcher B collected data from 15 second-grade students and 17 teachers at Site B. The data was collected between the dates of January 21st, 2008 and February 1st, 2008.

Student Attitude Survey

The purpose of the Student Attitude Survey was to determine length of time students read out of school, how they felt about reading, what type of material they liked to read, and the extent of his/her relationship with the teacher. The Student Survey was administered in the classrooms at Sites A and B. The eight questions were read aloud by Teacher Researcher A and B on January 21, 2008. Students recorded their own choices after hearing the questions. The first five questions were multiple choice where students checked the response. In questions six and seven, students selected all choices that applied. Question eight was a likert scale to determine student activity preference. Twelve of the 15 students at Site A consented to participation in the research. All 12 of consenting students completed the survey. One hundred percent (n=15) of the students at Site B completed the Student Attitude Survey. Question one of the survey determined

that the group consisted of 65% males (n=17) and 35% females (n=9). Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the Student Attitude Survey.

Question two of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "How do you feel about reading?" Results showed that 27% (n=7) of students surveyed dislike reading, by choosing options "I hate reading" or "reading is okay." These results can be found in Figure 1 below.

I hate reading! 19% (n=5)

Reading is okay. 8% (n=2)

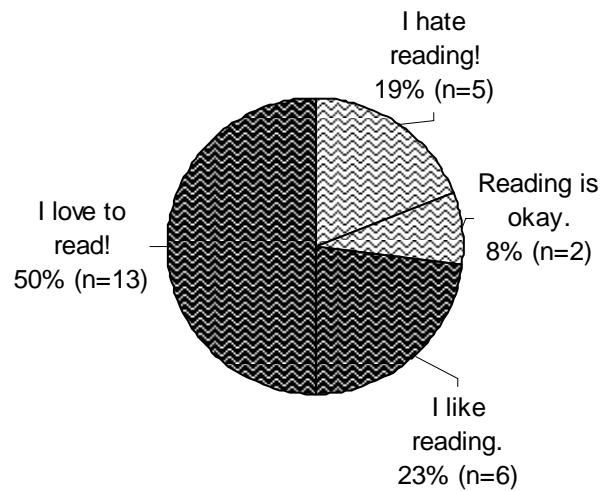I love to read! 50% (n=13)

I like reading. 23% (n=6)

Figure 1: *How do you Feel About Reading? (n=26)*

Question three of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "About how many minutes do you read each day <u>at home</u>?" Results showed that the majority, 65% (n=17), of students read 15 minutes or less each day at home. See Figure 2 below.
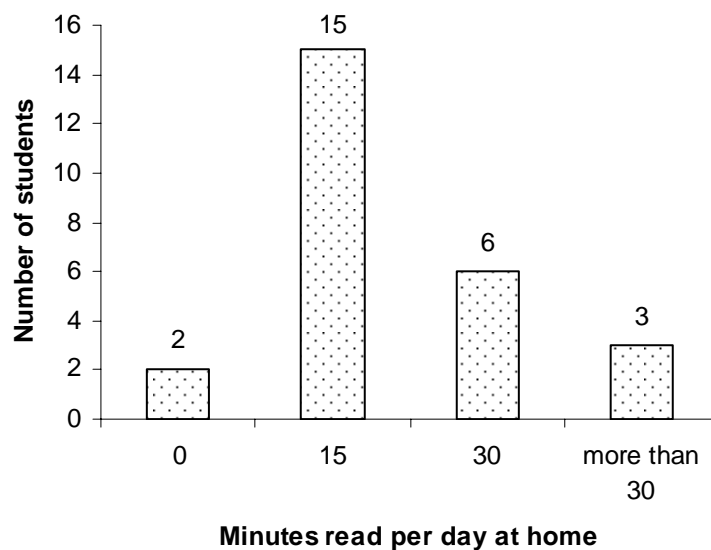

Figure 2: *About How Many Minutes do you Read Each Day at Home? (n=26)*

Question four of the Student Attitude Survey asked the students (n=26) "What kind of reader are you?" The teacher researchers would like readers to note that student confidence levels are high with 86% of students (n=26) considering themselves good or very good readers. See Figure 3 below.
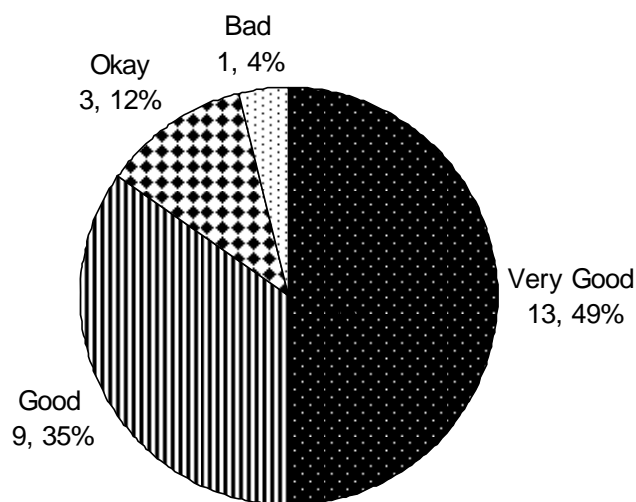

Figure 3: *What Kind of a Reader are you? (n=26)*

Question five of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "How well does your teacher know you?" Results showed that students feel connected to their teacher with 92% (n=24) of students reporting that their teacher knows him/her and the other students in the class well. See Figure 4 below.
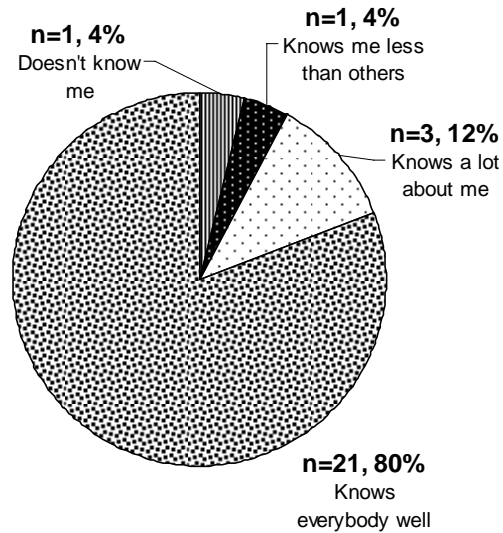
n=1, 4%
Doesn't know me

n=1, 4%
Knows me less than others

n=3, 12%
Knows a lot about me

n=21, 80%
Knows everybody well

Figure 4: *How Well Does Your Teacher Know you? (n=26)*

Question six of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "What kind of books or magazines do you like to read?" Question seven of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "What kind of books do you read at school?" The results showed that students like many different types of books. One hundred percent of students (n=26) liked to read picture books. Ninety-two percent of students (n=24) also reported liking to read non-fiction books. Results of the survey showed that there was a correlation between the books that students read and what they liked to read. Some discrepancies may result from misunderstanding of terminology used. Refer to Figure 5 below.
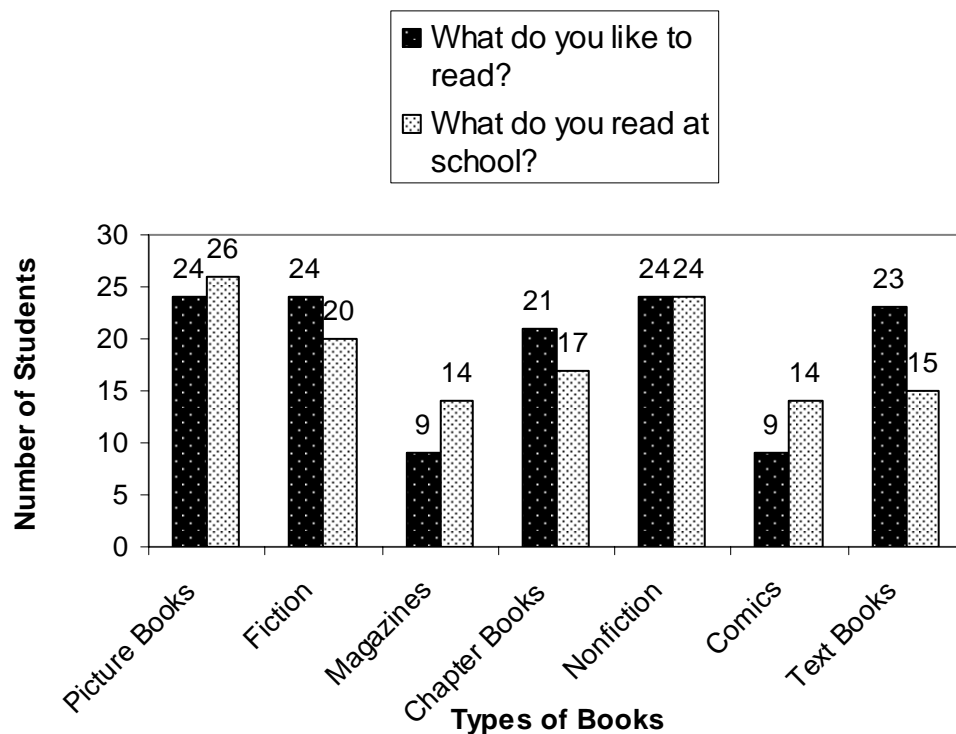

Figure 5: *Types of Books read by Students (n=26) at School*

Question 8 of the Student Attitude Survey asked students to rate activities from ones they "would really like to [do]" to activities that "I do not like to [do]." Their choices included: Go to sleep, clean your room, ride a bike, read a book, or watch television. Results showed that only seven students (27%) would make reading their first choice, while five students (19%) would make it their last choice. See Figures 6 below.
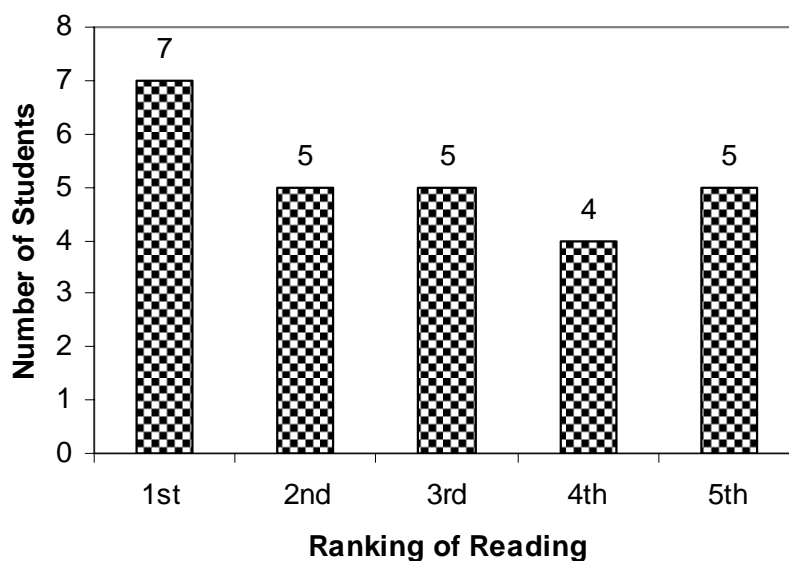

Figure 6: *Student Activity Ratings (n=26)*

Teacher Questionnaire

The purpose of the Teacher Questionnaire was to determine if low reading achievement was an issue in other classrooms at Site A and B. All classroom teachers at Site A (n=36) and Site B (n=20) received the Teacher Questionnaire via the in-school mail system on January 21st, 2008. Thirty-nine percent (n=14) of teachers at Site A and 85% (n=17) of teachers at Site B completed the survey. The Teacher Questionnaire consisted of five multiple choice questions. Please refer to Appendix B for a copy of the Teacher Questionnaire.

The first question of the Teacher Questionnaire asked teachers (n=31) "How comfortable do you feel teaching reading?" The data showed that 77% of teachers (n=24) felt comfortable or very effective in teaching reading. The teacher researchers would like the reader to note that all of the nine teachers that noted feeling very effective at teaching reading had taught for seven years or more. Many of these teachers (n=5) have been teaching for more than 15 years. Only a small percentage, 23% (n=7) felt uncomfortable at times. Teachers that indicated feeling uncomfortable at times often cited wanting more training or freedom with their curriculum to become more effective. See Figure 7 below.
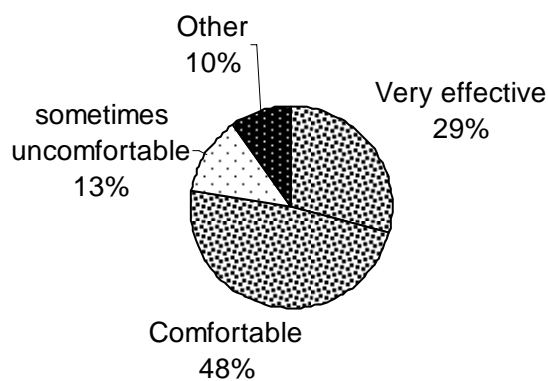
Figure 7: *How Comfortable do you Feel Teaching Reading? (n=31)*

Question two of the Teacher Questionnaire asked "On average how many minutes each week do kids in your classroom spend actually reading (in any content area/any material)?" The data showed that 81% (n=25) of teachers indicated that students in their classrooms read more than 150 minutes with 3% (n=1) indicating that students in his/her classroom read "at least 360 minutes each week." The teacher researchers would like the reader to note that the majority of students at Sites A and B are reading 30 minutes or more each day at school. See Figure 8 below.
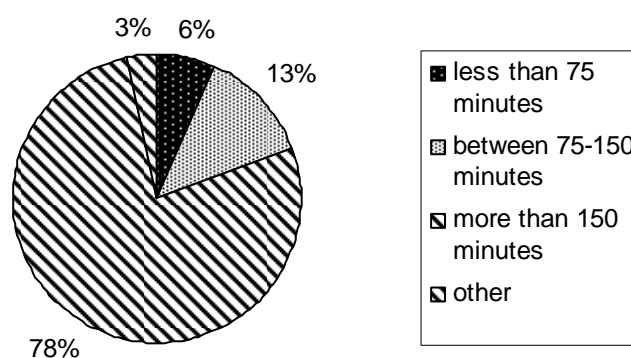

Figure 8: *How Many Minutes do Students Read in School Each Week? (n=31)*

Question three of the Teacher Questionnaire asked teachers (n=31) "How many minutes do you read outside of school?" The teacher researchers were looking to see what percentage of teachers read outside of the classroom. The results of the questionnaire showed that the minority, 23% (n=7) of teachers read less than 30 minutes each week outside of the classroom and that none of the teachers surveyed indicated not reading at all. See Figure 9 below.
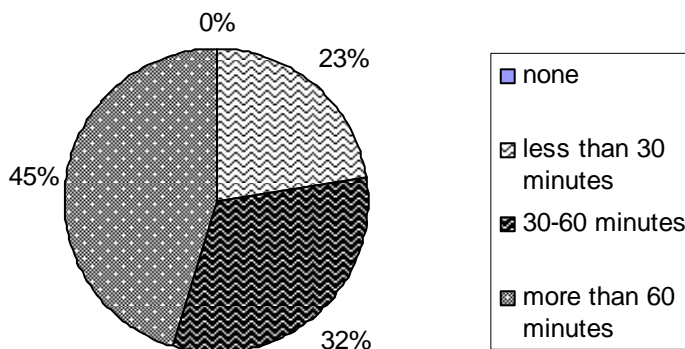
Figure 9: *Number of Minutes Teachers Read Outside of School (n=31)*

Question four of the Teacher Questionnaire asked teachers (n=31) "Are the students in your classroom this year motivated to read?" Results showed that none of the participating classrooms felt that they had to battle their class to get them to read. Only 16% (n=5) of classroom teachers felt that their classes dislike reading, dependent upon the material. See Figure 10 below.

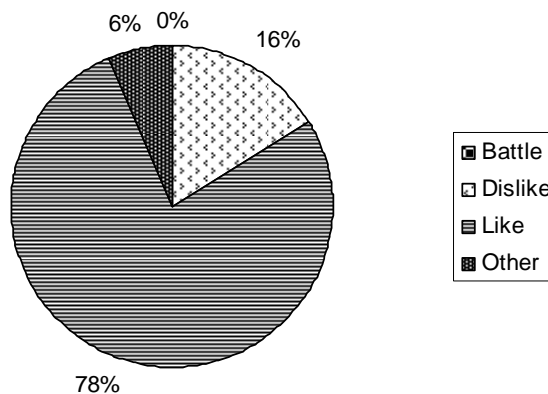Figure 10: *Student Motivation (n=31)*

Question 5 of the Teacher Questionnaire asked teachers (n=31) "How well do you feel

you know and understand the students in your classroom?" All surveys indicated that teachers

knew something about their students or knew them well. The data indicated that none of the

teachers felt that they did not know all of their students well enough to understand them. See

Figure 11 below.
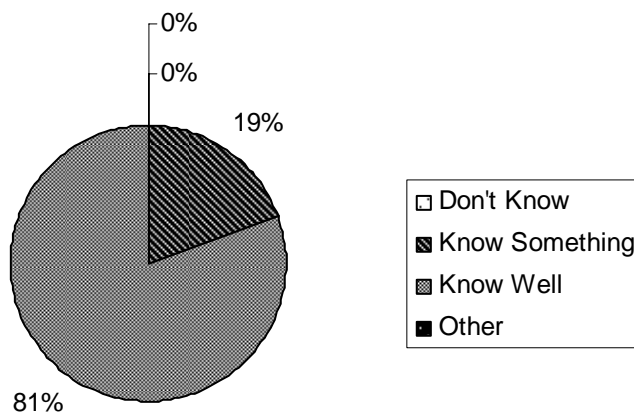
Figure 11: *Teacher-Student Relationship (n=31)*

Accelerated Reader Reports

The purpose of looking at the Accelerated Reader reports was to determine how students'

reading comprehension compared to a large group of their peers. All students in grades 2-5 take

the Star Reader test at Site A and B, as it is a district-wide assessment. One hundred percent of

the students (n=22), grades 2-5, took the Star Reader test within the testing window of January

14th-25th, 2008. The Star Reader test generated the Accelerated Reader report used in this study.

First-grade students are also expected to take the test at some point during the year when his/her

classroom teacher feels they are capable of taking it independently. One of the four first-grade

students in this study (25%) had taken the Star Reader test as of January 25th, 2008 when the data

was collected for this study. The Star Reader test is administered by school aides or

administration that proctors the exam in the computer laboratories at Sites A and B. Each student

logs into a computer and takes an individualized reading quiz with multiple choice answers. The

test self-adapts depending on whether each response is correct or incorrect. Please refer to

Appendix C for a sample of this report.

The Accelerated Reader report data showed that 39% (n=9) of the 23 students that took

the test were reading below grade level. One student tested more than 4 years, 49-54 months,

behind grade level reading expectancy. See Figure 12 below.
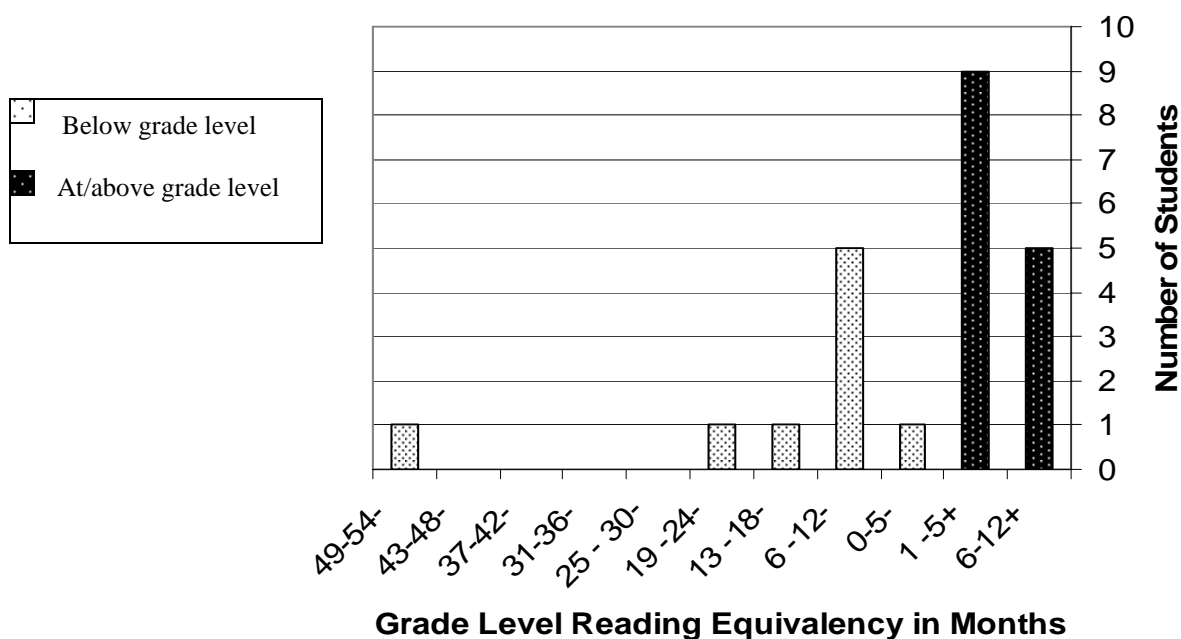
Figure 12: *Accelerated Reader Scores (n=23)*

Measure of Academic Progress

The purpose of the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test is to track growth of

individual student performance and compare it to norms in the school, district, and nation. Every

student in grades 2-5 at Site A and B took the MAP test in their respective computer labs

between January 14th and January 25th, 2008. The multiple choice test is comprised of

approximately 50 questions and was proctored by aides and administrators at Site A and B with

no time limit given.

 Eighty-five percent (n=22) of the 26 students in this survey took the MAP test, as four students

in this survey are in first grade. Please refer to Appendix D for a sample of the MAP report.

The MAP data showed that 54% (n=12) of the students scored at or below 50%, the

national average percentile. Refer to Figure 13 below.
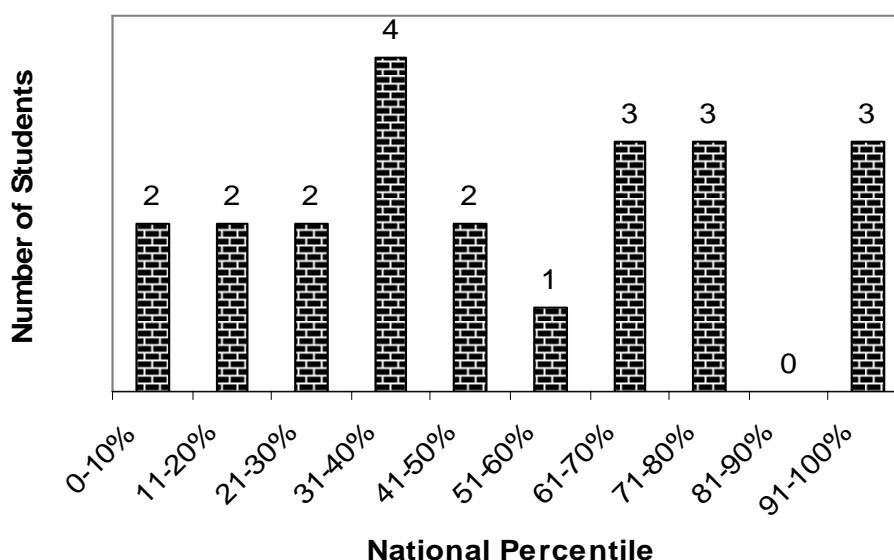
Figure 13: *Measure of Academic Progress Scores (n=22)*

Summary

In conclusion, the teacher researchers found that reading achievement is low for various

students in Classrooms A and B based on Accelerated Reader (Figure 12) and Measure of

Academic Progress data (Figure 13). The Student Attitude Survey conducted during pre-

documentation showed that motivation and interest in reading seem to be areas in need of

improvement (Figures 1, 2, 3, & 6). This is supported by the data showing that students seem to

consider themselves as good readers (Figure 3), though they do not spend large quantities of time

reading outside of school (Figure 2). The factor of teacher relationships seems to play an insignificant role in reading achievement in classrooms at Sites A and B (Figures 4 & 11). The teacher survey showed that years of experience as a teacher affect the teachers' confidence and ability in the area of reading instruction (Figure 7).

Reflection

The data showed that students in both our classes struggled with reading. The research showed that teacher-student relationships play a role in reading achievement and our pre-documentation data supported that this key piece of the literacy puzzle is already in place. The teacher surveys reminded us that the longer we teach the more skills we will acquire in reading instruction and the more effective we will become. Although certain students scored high in the national percentile, it was very eye-opening to see that students we perceived as struggling really did struggle compared to their peers across the country.

The data was important for the students because it helped us focus in on key areas in need of improvement. Data showed that students needed more motivation, skills, and time to read. This enabled us to implement interventions that directly target these areas. Making connections and providing books of interest targeted motivation. The mini lessons targeted skills. The Reading Parties targeted not only motivation, but also increased the time students spent reading.

The data confirmed much of what the research suggested. Students indicated that they did not like to read and did not spend time doing it outside of school. Teacher relationships were one area where the pre-documentation data was not supported by research. The research suggested that poor student-teacher relationships were often common among struggling readers. However, our data from both the Student Attitude Survey and the Teacher Questionnaire showed that the student-teacher relationships at Sites A and B were strong.

Probable Causes

The teacher researchers found that issues concerning poor reading achievement range from the national level down to the student level.

One of the causes of poor reading achievement on the national level was a byproduct of efforts to increase reading achievement in our country. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation is centered on students taking standardized tests to assess their Adequate Yearly Progress. The goal is for every student across the country to achieve a score of Advanced or Proficient on the test. With such emphasis on teaching for the standardized tests, teachers have found themselves losing creativity (Bunting, 2006). Bartholomew (2007) found that standardized tests also cause teachers to take fewer risks in their teaching. If students achieve poor test scores, teachers are directly blamed. Students with poor test-taking skills, special needs, or language barriers are consistently failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (Hawkins, 2007). Thus, educators in the US are having a hard time with the accountabilities under NCLB (Guskey, Smith, Smith, Crooks, and Flockton, 2006). Chrisman (2005) found, with more schools labeled as underperforming based on NCLB, consistent increases in student achievement were more difficult than ever before. The causes of poor reading achievement keep trickling down like drops of water from a broken pipe.

On the district level, problems in reading achievement result from a lack of teacher training and poor curriculum. Pre-service teachers need to leave college as highly qualified professionals (Bartholomew, 2007). While many teachers only take one reading instruction course in college, money continues to be spent preparing tutors (not teachers) in programs like America Reads (Weiss, 1999). According to Sloat, Beswick, and Willms (2007), reading is a complex process with a wide range of philosophies and curricula on how to teach it. The history

of education is filled with the ebb and flow of various best practices. While whole language was emphasized a dozen years ago, teaching reading through phonetic instruction has made resurgence. Teachers need skill-specific instruction in order to be effective teachers (Gertsen, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2005). Instruction and development need not stop upon graduation for teachers. They should seek professional development opportunities, as well as feedback from peers and principals (Friend & Pope, 2005). Development should not only be centered on curriculum, but also classroom management. According to Bartholomew (2007), 50% of teachers leave the profession because of poor student behavior.

In terms of curriculum, districts around the nation have been spending money on various supplemental programs in efforts to boost achievement. These programs have proven to either be ineffective or fleeting (Pinnell, 2006). Once these initiatives fail, teachers are discouraged (Pinnell, 2006). Other districts struggle with the dilemma of sacrificing science and social studies time to gain language arts time (Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, and Fingeret, 2007). Even more, there are still districts that lack a common reading program to assess student progress (Olson, 2007). Even if teachers are appropriately trained and districts have effective research-based curriculum, there are problems that lie in the schools themselves that lead to poor reading achievement.

Two issues that cause low reading achievement in schools are: poor school climate and a lack of educational support. The most important thing that fosters a positive school climate is that the students' needs are being met. With various schools across the country failing to provide students with hot meals, janitors, security, and textbooks, it is no wonder why certain students are not succeeding (Klem & Connell, 2004). Even when basic needs are being met, other support needs to be present in order to foster a positive climate. For instance, teachers need the support

of the administration (Blum, 2005). Educators from unsuccessful schools said that they met with principals when scheduled in place of a staff meeting. That is, the only time for educators and principals to meet was at staff meetings, during which one-on-one conversations are virtually impossible. When teachers met with each other, they focused on planning field trips, state tests, and special activities (Chrisman, 2005). According to the study *Where We Teach: The CUBE Survey of Urban School Climate*, there is a discrepancy between how students, teachers, and administrators view their schools' climates. While 35.1% of teachers say that students fight a lot, only 12% of administrators said the same (Stover, 2007). According to Blum (2005), school connectedness can be threatened by a lack of school safety, social isolation, and poor classroom management. In terms of classroom management, certain students can flourish if simple changes to various elements in classroom design are made (Hodgin & Wooliscroft, 1997). Also, in average-impact schools, class size was equally dispersed despite different students' needs, teachers had a poor attitude about standards, and extra support for struggling students was offered after they had fallen far behind (Perkins-Gough, 2006). However, with mobility rates rising across the country, it is no wonder that providing educational support for struggling students has been a challenge.

More and more, teachers are challenged with how to reach students who excel, learn at an average rate, and struggle to learn, all in one classroom. Mistakenly, fast, slow, and average readers are often presented with the same materials (Ediger, 2002). While differentiation is occurring more frequently, teachers say it can be overwhelming (Friend, et al., 2005). Even though special education services are set up to reach students with special needs, there is a portion of slow readers who have an IQ between 71 and 85, which does not qualify them for services (Ediger, 2002). Thus, teachers struggle in solitude trying to reach students within their

classroom (Manzo, 2007). Moreover, students who have learning disabilities or issues with behavior usually also struggle socially and have low self-esteem, which can also hinder their learning even further (Helm, 2007).

Teacher bias, poor teaching and a lack of teacher-student connection also play a role in student reading achievement. Aside from teaching, educators have to be concerned with other aspects in their classroom, such as social relationships. According to Blake, teachers fail to consider the social complexity of their classrooms (1998). Instead, teachers often take more interest and care in students who are high achievers rather than low achievers. To avoid this, various schools across the country have eliminated tracking (Stipek, 2006). Other biases lie in the sex and ethnic backgrounds of students. Perkins-Gough (2006) says that gender gaps remain in graduation rates, college attendance, learning disabled, and students with ADHD. While she says there is misguided concern about boys' academic performance, there still is a crisis for the achievement gap between black and Hispanic boys.

According to Gail D. Fosler, education does not automatically equal literacy (as cited in Schroeder, 2006). In other words, teachers can make conscious or unconscious mistakes in their teaching, which greatly affects student learning. For instance, by acting too quickly to correct a miscue when students are reading, teachers can interfere with students developing self-correcting behavior (Forbes, Poparad, & McBride, 2004). In addition, students will not grasp new concepts, and will forget information immediately after a test, if they are not engaged when learning (Coleman, 2005). When looking at two classrooms, one high-growth classroom and one low-growth classroom, Gersten, et al. noted that the low-growth classroom scored lower in areas of reading comprehension and fluency. Moreover, in the low-growth classrooms, they noted trouble with instruction (2005). Interestingly, even schools serving relatively advantaged students

produced a wide range of academic achievements (Pressley, et al., 2007). No matter where the school is, standardized testing and NCLB play a crucial role in educators' teaching. Stipek (2006) said, "When tests become high stakes, teachers naturally focus their attention on the knowledge and skills that tests measure—leaving less time to engage students in conversation about personal issues or make them feel valued and supported" (p. 46).

The relationship between teachers and their students plays an impact not only on reading achievement, but also their overall school success. Stipek explains that students who drop out of school often say that it was due to the belief that no one cared about them (2006). Disrespect in schools can result in unsuccessful academic careers (Elliot, 1996). School connectedness is especially important during the students' adolescent years (Blum, 2005). Unfortunately, while some students experience constant praise, others feel that they do not belong (Helm, 2007). According to Klem and Connell, forty to sixty percent of all urban, suburban, and rural high school students are chronically disengaged from school (as cited in Blum, 2005). Ironically, the more engaged students are in school, the higher they achieve on high-stakes tests. Thus, it is crucial that teachers take the time to create a supportive and positive relationship with the students (Stipek, 2006).

Finally, the reason for poor reading achievement even stems down to the students themselves. A lack motivation, language or socioeconomic barriers, and various repercussions as a result of poor reading achievement prevent students from achieving more. Many educators think that classroom management and motivation are the same things. They think that a tight, controlled environment leads to motivated students, and that a quiet classroom with busy students is a result of good teaching. However, this does not necessarily mean that the students are motivated and working hard. Sometimes children come to school motivated; most of the time

that is not the case (Bartholomew, 2007). According to Stover, 28.7% of urban teachers do not

believe students are motivated to learn, and 23.6% of them say most students at their schools will

not be successful (2007). However, a lack of motivation is not always the students' fault. One

teacher described her fifth grade classroom as having 39 students and only one set of books on

carts that were to be shared with four other classes (Stover, 2007). Other times, students have a

hard time reading because they can not relate to the characters in the books they read. One

student remarked, "Everything I read is about White [sic] people and boys…reading is so-oooo

boring" (as cited in Blake, 1998, p. 238). Still, other students would rather do other things than

read. According to Juel, in a survey of fourth graders, 40% of poor readers and 5% of good

readers would rather clean their room than read (as cited in LeFevre, Deidre, Moore, &

Wilkinson, 2003). In addition, technology is swiftly taking the place of reading for enjoyment.

Powell-Brown explains that the popularity of reading for entertainment has decreased as a result

of video games, instant messaging, DVDs, and other organized activities (2006). Moreover, in a

study done by House, students who indicated frequent use of a computer at home tended to

express lower levels of reading enjoyment (2007). Language barriers and socioeconomic status

also prevent students from achieving in reading.

Teachers are faced with increasing numbers of children with low entry level skills and

behaviors (Sloat, et al., 2007). Specifically, English Language Learners arrive at schools months,

if not years, behind in academic progress (Gerzon-Kessler, 2006). There can be huge gaps in

knowledge base between native and nonnative English speakers (Gertsen, 2005). Since students

are expected to learn to speak and read English at the same time, demonstrating Adequate Yearly

Progress, as mandated by state and federal policies, can be difficult for schools with large

populations of English Language Learners (Slavin & Cheung, 2004). According to Weiss, on a

federally-sponsored NAEP test of core subjects given in 1998, girls outperformed boys, and African Americans and Hispanics were about three grade levels behind their Caucasian peers (1999). While they are not the only factors, socioeconomic factors and wealth contribute to the determination of who will succeed in school (Helm, 2007). Reis and Fogarty (2006) explain that many students are unprepared for success in college or jobs, especially minority students and children living in poverty. According to ACT, 79% of black students, 67% of Latino students, and 33% of students from families with annual incomes of $30,000 were not prepared for college-level reading (Reis & Fogarty, 2006). For these reasons, the socioeconomically disadvantaged students and English Language Learners, among others, are two groups in particular need of a fair and equitable learning environment (Karns & Parker, 2007).

Once students are labeled or seen as poor readers, various repercussions come, which can play a role in preventing them from achieving in reading. First, poor readers can be outcast by other students (Ediger, 2002). Even the students who are capable of succeeding are often seen as nerds or dorks by their peers (Blum, 2005). When students think that they are poor readers, they have low self-esteem, they are unwilling to participate, and they are often recommended for attention deficit screening (Hodgin & Wooliscroft, 1997). Aside from these, low literacy often means overall academic underachievement and reduced occupational status. In addition, children who do not learn to read in the primary grades are likely never to read well (Sloat, et al., 2007). When children struggle, stopping frequently to decode can be boring and exhausting. Since it is human to avoid what is painful, children who struggle to read avoid doing it (Powell-Brown, 2006). Because of the increasing amount of text read in grades three and up, poor comprehenders, students that struggle to understand what they read, and poor readers are likely to have difficulties in several school subjects (Torppa, et al., 2007). Even if children do learn to

read early-on, the love for reading declines as children age (Powell-Brown, 2006). Low reading achievement affects many areas of reading. Children lacking in reading skills also fall behind in vocabulary (LeFevre, et al., 2003). They also have a low verbal IQ and poor verbal short-term memory. Slow decoders scored below good and average readers in the categories of phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and rapid naming (Torppa, et al., 2007). According to the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test, 38% of 4th graders were rated "below basic" in reading skills (Weiss, 1999). Moreover, Nagy, Anderson and Herman (1991) explain that the 90th percentile student reads about 200 times more text per year than 10th percentile students (as cited in LeFevre, et al., 2003).

Poor reading achievement has spread like an epidemic in our country. With problems stemming from the national level with NCLB, down to the student level with low motivation, language barriers and low socioeconomic status, and repercussions, the education system in the United States needs to put an emphasis on improving reading. There are other ways to do this besides making students take high-stakes tests. As Holliday (2005, p. 23) stated,

> The challenges in education have never been greater than today. Districts, schools, and teachers are expected to recognize and expertly control all the emotional, social, and cognitive variables that influence student learning. Increasingly, teachers are expected to fill the gaps caused by poor parenting, poverty, and learning disabilities. The task is monumental.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

The literature supported a variety of elements that affected reading achievement. Many of these elements could be controlled or manipulated by the classroom teacher to help a student achieve literacy success. These elements included: connections, assessment, motivation, teacher relationships, and highly qualified educators.

One element that enhanced literacy development was modeling and the encouragement of connections between students and passages. Children learned most effectively when actively engaged in, and making meaningful connections to, the literature (Sloat, et al., 2007). Teachers helped students make connections to new material by activating a student's prior knowledge about a topic (Coleman, 2005). Teachers looked for ways to engage students and to help students invest in themselves. Teachers enabled students to become invested in their own education by connecting learning to students' lives (Blum, 2005).

Simple changes to everyday teaching helped to foster student-to-text connections. Teachers outfitted their classroom with multicultural and bias-free books to ensure that children could identify with a story (Novick, 1999-2000). Students need to be taught how to make connections. Beginning this process with texts and authors whose ideological stances were familiar to the reader allowed students to draw upon their own experiences and make connections with a text (Cady, 2006; Powell-Brown, 2006). Students made their own interpretations of a text (Cady, 2006) in order to make a personal relationship with the text. Teachers looked at students' interests and strengths also facilitating the creation of a relationship between a child and the content (Holliday, 2005). As society changes, so do the demands of

student interest. One researcher found that effective teachers focused on the goal of developing

fluent readers who think deeply about the texts they read (Pinnell, 2006). Teachers incorporated

multimedia forms of reading to better prepare students for the concrete experiences they would

be exposed to in daily life (Cairney, 1997). These real-world applications helped give students a

purpose for reading.

Another element that promoted strong literacy was the effective administration of

assessments and application of the resulting data (Holliday, 2005). Test results provided accurate

data that teachers used in collaboration (Manzo, 2007). Teachers analyzed the data to enhance

teaching strategies and increase learning (Chrisman, 2005). Effective schools trained educators

in how to interpret data to improve overall instruction (Chrisman, 2005; Hawkins, 2007).

Researchers have found that ongoing assessments of students' reading abilities help to improve

test scores (Weiss, 1999). It is important that a variety of assessments are used to increase the

validity of the assessment. Friend and Pope (2005) felt that students should be presented with

more than one mode of assessment. A variety of assessments gave educators a clearer view of

students' current level and helped teachers determine the best path of instruction (Friend & Pope,

2005). Assessments allowed teachers to identify students with delayed reading development and

apply different intervention strategies (Weiss, 1999). Formal assessments are not the only type of

effective assessment. Pinnell (2006) found that effective teachers tailored their teaching in

response to students' reactions. This was an example of an effectively implemented informal

assessment.

Monitoring and analyzing data allowed teachers to look for behaviors and skills that

alerted teachers to potential problems and helped to drive instruction. Research identified many

different skill areas to watch for potential difficulties. According to Torppa, et al. (2007), there

were seven skills that are early predictors of reading success: receptive language skills, expressive language skills, inflectional morphology skills, memory, naming speed, letter knowledge, and phonological awareness skills. Good readers scored significantly better than average readers in phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and verbal IQ (Torppa, et al., 2007). Letter knowledge and phonological awareness were the best proximal predictors of future word recognition skills (Bishop & Snowling, 2004; Catts, et al., 2003, 2005; Leach, et al., 2003; Muter, Hulme, Snowling, & Stevenson, 2004; Nation & Nordbury, 2005; Oakhill, Cain, & Bryant, 2003; Phillips & Lonigan, 2005; Runmer & Hoover, 1992, as cited in Torppa, 2007). Looking at a child's skill areas gave teachers and researchers insights into what skills and strategies needed to be taught. One study found that there are five types of readers: poor readers (with poor word recognition and comprehension), slow decoders (poor word recognition and fluency, with average comprehension), poor comprehenders (average word recognition and low comprehension), average readers, and good readers (Torppa, et al., 2007). It was essential to identify these students during the primary years in order to prevent life-long reading difficulties. Students were ideally identified by the end of the first term of kindergarten in order to implement interventions by the second term (Sloat, 2007).

One way to screen for these skill areas and identify potential difficulties was through a continuous monitoring system such as: Early Years Evaluation-Teacher Assessment, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), World Reading Subset of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, or the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (Sloat, et al., 2007). These tools yielded data to help determine where an individual's strengths and weaknesses were. Applying a continuous assessment system will provide students with positive

early school experiences, as well as be more cost effective and efficient than later remedial

tutoring (Sloat, et al., 2007).

Student motivation was another element that was significantly related to academic

performance (House, 2007). Engaging students in each lesson helped to motivate them. Students

who were engaged in school achieved more and were better behaved, had higher grades, test

scores, and stayed in school longer (Klem & Connell, 2004). High quality instruction and

engaging activities that challenge students were key elements when planning lessons to target

reading skills (Gersten, et al., 2005). Interest and motivation were actually strong factors in

students' derivation of meaning from text (Pinnell, 2006). Motivation is a key piece of literacy

success because motivated students were more likely to read more often. Children with more

reading experiences tended to have better reading skills (Leach, et al., 2003; Leppanen, Aunola,

& Nurmi, 2005; Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager, 1991; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; as cited in

Torppa, et al., 2007). Students who read independently tended to earn higher reading

achievement scores (Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez, & Kennedy, 2003, as cited in House, 2007).

There are many ways to foster motivation within a classroom. Literature circles,

structured peer activities, paired summary, patterned partner reading, read alouds, and readers'

theater are learning strategies that help readers become engaged (Powell-Brown, 2006). Teachers

communicated high expectations with students and increased academic demands as time passed,

in order to set the bar high and motivate students (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Dolezal,

Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; Pressley, Dolezal, et al., 2003, as cited in Pressley, et al.,

2007). Effective teachers also reminded students to extract meaning from their reading and

provided books that excited students about reading (Pressley, et al., 2007). A teacher's actions

can speak louder than words. Teachers who showed a passion for reading and writing in turn

motivated elementary students (Powell-Brown, 2006). Reading to students during class, being a reading mentor, and giving students choices motivated middle and high school students to read (Powell-Brown, 2006). Incorporating technology was another strategy teachers used to help engage and motivate students. House (2007) found that the addition of computer activities has been shown to positively impact reading achievement and interest in literacy. This was done through the incorporation of LCD projectors, scanners to share text, scanning student writings, online dictionaries, books on CD, adjusting font size, or other special need accommodations (Franklin, 2005). Tape-assisted reading models were another technology source that helped students become more fluent readers (Schreiber, 1980, as cited in LeFevre, et al., 2003). This study found that tape-assisted reading improved students' levels of comprehension even when assessed after the intervention period (LeFevre, et al., 2003). Another way to motivate students to read was by providing students with inviting books and giving them the opportunity to read them (Novick, 1999-2000). Keeping student groups mixed, not grouped by ability level, increased self-esteem and motivation in students (Hodgin & Wooliscroft, 1997). This flexible grouping, based on more than just ability, even improved student achievement and interest in reading (Opitz, 1999, as cited in House, 2007). A study of both Hong Kong and American students found that students who used computers to look up information, sent emails, chose their own books, read silently at home or school, or discussed reading with other students were more likely to show interest in reading (House, 2007).

Students themselves can play a large role in motivation. Students were given choices, created long- and short-term goals, and created assessment tools as a class to give students more ownership in their education (Bartholomew, 2007). Coleman (2005) believed that creating learning goals and monitoring their progress could help students achieve their goals. Powell-

Brown (2006) stated the importance for students to understand that reading was necessary for classroom success and that reading for recreation would help them to be successful.

Several researchers pointed out that the students needed to have their physical needs met before they could begin to worry about academics. A safe environment was a necessary base when working to build student motivation. Hawkins (2007) and Pressley, et al. (2007) wrote about the importance of a safe and positive learning environment. Schools created a safe, trustworthy, and fair learning environment in order to provide the best possible environment for student success. This was established through rules, responsibility, and respect (Karns & Parker, 2007). Classroom routines were set in place in order for intrinsic motivation to occur within a classroom (Bartholomew, 2007). Effective classroom management was a way to create a safe environment. When a classroom was under control it left room to work on motivating activities (Bartholomew, 2007).

Simple physical changes to the physical classroom helped make students more comfortable and better prepared to learn. Hodgin & Wooliscroft (1997) suggested using the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model, which implements noise-created places where headphones can block out or provide music to help students concentrate. This model also considers lighting preferences, mobility, perception centers, and the choice of working alone or with a partner. The model also takes temperature into account and recommended teaching students to dress in a layer system to keep students physically comfortable in the classroom (Hodgin & Wooliscroft, 1997).

Another element helped motivate students to achieve well in school was a positive relationship with an instructor. According to Gerzon-Kessler (2006) there are five principles for boosting achievement: conveying a sense of urgency, develop personal bonds, foster a joy for

learning, raise the bar with high expectations, and cultivating social and emotional intelligence. A positive and respectful relationship between teacher and student helped people feel connected while encouraging student achievement (Blum, 2005). Pressley, et al. (2007) found that a positive social environment supported achievement. Helm (2007) believed that dedicated teachers had as much of an impact on a student's academic success as did wealth and socio-economic status. A caring teacher increased academic success and decreased behavior issues in the future (Helm, 2007). Students who felt connected enjoyed school, felt they belonged, felt education mattered, believed discipline was fair, and were involved in after-school activities (Blum, 2005). This positive teacher-student relationship was needed in lower-achieving students in order to get the student to comply to rules and invest in their own education (Stipek, 2006). A positive relationship benefited the teacher, as well as the student. Establishing a connection with students was a determining factor as to why some teachers failed when others just struggled (Holliday, 2005). Bunting (2006) believed teachers just need to find a way to get personal about teaching.

There were many steps teachers could take to foster a positive relationship with all of their students. To make this human connection, a teacher interacted with students in and out of the classroom, thus building students' confidence and knowledge (Holliday, 2005 & Gerzon-Kessler, 2006). Teachers also reflected on their instincts and mistakes, writing these down to form deeper relationships with their students (Bunting, 2006). Stipek (2007) felt that teachers needed to be cared for and respected by administrators and peers in order to pass the same respect on to their students. Effective teachers listened to their students, responded to their concerns, used positive emotions, demonstrated fairness, paid attention, and asked students about things outside of school (Stipek, 2006). Adolescents preferred a teacher who gave them choices,

was honest, and talked to them about issues outside of their school life (Stipek, 2006). Elliot (1996) stated that effective teachers treated middle school students as smart adolescents who could learn well. Teachers also fostered a positive relationship by labeling items in the classroom in different languages to help create a culturally responsive classroom (Novick, 1999-2000). Heights Elementary in Pittsburgh found that creating a family-like feeling at school helped to improve learning in their school environment (Karns & Parker, 2007). This was achieved by creating good first impressions, organized room environments, and teacher visibility (Karns & Parker, 2007). Other helpful characteristics included monthly goals set by students, providing outlines for each course, and actively engaged students (Karns & Parker, 2007). Teachers built relationships by smiling, a pat on the back, a joke, encouragement, celebration of a success, and by infusing enthusiasm into lessons (Gerzon-Kessler, 2006). Teachers also formed bonds through use of humor, sincerity, warmth, respect, and firmness (Gerzon-Kessler, 2006). Using appropriate curriculum and low student-teacher ratios can foster a calm atmosphere (Novick, 1999-2000). Perkins-Gough (2006) also believed that reducing class sizes allowed struggling students to gain more attention. Small class sizes were necessary to foster communication and contact between teachers and students (Stipek, 2006). Stipek (2006) also suggested looping, block scheduling, and advisory groups as avenues toward positive relationships with educators.

Teachers were not alone in their responsibility to create positive relationships. When class sizes got too large, support teachers became an additional resource to help connect with students in a small group setting. Pressley, et al. (2007) found that effective support teachers worked with struggling students as much as 90 minutes a day. This helped teachers create a better relationship with students. Presley, et al. also stated the importance of inclusion as a factor promoting achievement (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994; Carlberg & Kavale, 1980, as cited in

Pressley, et al., 2007). Collaboration with colleagues was another tactic that helped teachers to reach all middle school students. Collaboration helped to paint a clearer picture of the student and reduced anxiety by lessening the frequency of pull-outs by support teachers and fragmentations of daily lessons (Friend & Pope, 2005).

The final element that affected student achievement was highly qualified instructors. Many of the literature sources supported the importance of well-trained educators in the push for high academic achievement. In a 2004-2005 study, researchers from the Educational Trust found that an academic core and quality teachers were common traits among the four schools that showed the larger-than-expected gains (Perkins-Gough, 2006). Professional development was one avenue to creating well-trained and well-qualified teachers. Teaching training via professional development was important for improving reading achievement in students (Manzo, 2007 and Pinnell, 2006). Professional development in reading and writing instruction impacted student achievement (Consortium on Productivity in the Schools, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Evertson & Smithey, 1999; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; 2000; as cited in Pressley, et al., 2007). Professional development and observation helped develop highly qualified educators, but teacher attributes and attitudes also played a role in an educator's effectiveness. According to Pinnell (2006), the majority of instructional researchers showed that the teacher was the one factor that made a difference in a child's education. The quality of teacher even impacted reading achievement directly. A 1967 study showed that teacher quality mattered in promoting reading achievement (Bond & Dykstra, 1967, as cited in Pressley, et al., 2007). Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that standardized scores rose as much as 50 percentile points after students had effective teachers for several consecutive years (as cited in Helm, 2007).

Chrisman (2005) and Perkins-Gough (2006) noted the importance of professional development, especially in newly hired teachers. The training should be specific to the areas of weakness. Policymakers should ensure that teachers have training in multiple approaches to reading education (Weiss, 1999). Pinnell (2006) felt that school funds should be used to improve teacher knowledge, as knowledge will last longer than other resources.

Observation was another method used to educate instructors. Schools were responsible for providing effective teacher training programs as well as offering mentoring programs (Holliday, 2005) or team teaching strategies (Chrisman, 2005). Manthey (2006) felt that leaders within a school should enable teachers to observe mastery experiences in action. Manzo (2007) noted the success of districts using the Reading First model. Part of this program included professional development in reading instruction and consulting with a reading coach to meet with teachers and discuss assessment results and strategies (Manzo, 2007).

A highly qualified educator was not defined by a single characteristic. It was the many traits that combined to make a teacher effective. According to Holliday (2005), a successful teacher had four common characteristics: a passion for one's subject matter, thorough preparation, a belief that one's subject made a difference, and the desire to improve the lives of all students. Hoy and colleagues believed that collective efficacy, the perception that the teacher was making a positive impact on student achievement, was a bigger predictor of student success than students' socioeconomic status (as cited in Manthey, 2006). According to Manthey (2006) collective efficacy in a school would likely develop into a sense of personal efficacy in the students, overriding their odds to fail. The blend of characteristics necessary to create an effective educator varied slightly according to Woolfolk (2004), who stated excellent teachers demonstrated: love and respect to all children, insight into the potential of all children,

motivation, creativity, humor, and the ability to seize teachable moments (as cited in Helm, 2007). Friend and Pope (2005) also believed in the importance of believing in a student's potential and setting high expectations. Pressley, et al. (2007) believed that effective schools, those that implemented reflection and high expectations, were important in increasing achievement. Pressley, et al. (2007) also found common behaviors in effective teachers. These behaviors included: pursuit of professional development, participation in book clubs, reflection on practice with colleagues, staying informed about high-stakes assessments, and determination for success. Klem and Connell (2004) found that the following characteristics contributed to academic success: high standards for academic learning, meaningful and engaging pedagogy and curriculum, professional learning communities, and a personalized learning environment. Teachers needed to set goals for their students, as well as for themselves. Teachers needed to set challenging goals and give their best effort to overcome difficulties (Manthey, 2006).

While a teacher's attitude played an important role in effective reading achievement, one's instructional delivery and curriculum in the classroom also affected achievement. The literature often cited classroom strategies used by effective teachers. One tactic supported by researchers was the use of small group work and individualized instruction. Pressley, et al. (2007) found that effective teachers provided individualized instruction within their classrooms and primarily used small group instruction. Manzo (2007) also stated the importance of small group instruction in the primary grades. Friend and Pope (2005) found differentiation was an effective way to reach a wide range of students. Discussing literature in small, diverse groups was found to be a successful strategy used by one effective teacher (Pinnell, 2006). Not all small groups are equally as beneficial to students. When constructing small groups, it is important to

consider group dynamics. LeFevre, et al. (2003) found that heterogeneous groups may promote group dialogue and interaction that benefited lower-achieving students.

Another tactic found to affect reading achievement was the explicit teaching of skills. Skills modeled by an instructor and followed up by guided practice led to high reading and writing achievement (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; Pressley, Dolezal, et al., 2003, as cited in Pressley, 2007). This balance of holistic and skill instruction was utilized by effective teachers. It was found that the explicit teaching/reteaching of skills helped students achieve high in reading and writing (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; Pressley, Dolezal, et al., 2003, as cited in Pressley, 2007). Pressley, et al. (2007) found that effective teachers continuously taught vocabulary, word recognition skills in first and second grade, and high order comprehension skills. Sloat, et al. (2007) believed that literacy was a balance of instruction between fundamental skills and holistic activities. Many of the researchers supported the explicit teaching of reading skills. One research group reported that teaching specific skills, in this case word recognition skills, quickly improved students' reading comprehension (Torppa, et al., 2007). One strategy to help emergent readers with story recall was to connect dramatic play to stories and have students act out their favorite books (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Rowe, 1998; as cited in Novick, 1999-2000). One researcher found that effective teachers explicitly taught spelling, vocabulary, and word-solving skills, and made time to write text everyday (Pinnell, 2006). Pinnell (2006) also found that effective teachers taught comprehension and fluency skills throughout the day long across the content areas. Another study found that effective teachers consistently engaged the majority of students in a lesson and connected reading and writing to other content areas (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; Pressley, Dolezal, et al., 2003, as

cited in Pressley, 2007). The research supported explicitly teaching skills, but Weiss (1999) found that a balanced reading program incorporating the following blend of skills: word-analysis, comprehension, systematic spelling, and daily writing was found to improve test scores.

A third tactic found to affect reading achievement was the quantity of time spent on reading instruction or self-selected reading. One study found that elementary teachers who devoted large amounts of class time to academics tended to have high reading and writing achievement (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; Pressley, Dolezal, et al., 2003, as cited in Pressley, 2007). Olson (2007) also supported these findings when he reported using 90-minute blocks of literacy with an additional 30-60 minutes of intervention time was an effective intervention. Presley, et al. (2007) found that effective classrooms also provided time for independent reading. Reis and Fogarty (2006) also supported the benefits of self-selected reading. Teachers can struggle to find time to fit self-selected reading into an already busy schedule. Even if teachers added one or two minutes onto their silent reading time it would result in an additional 3-45 minutes after a few weeks (Reis & Fogarty, 2006).

Another strategy teachers used when helping emerging readers was to allow students to self-correct. Self-correction was a skill that should be explicitly taught and rewarded when the student demonstrated the skill (Forbes, et al., 2004). LeFevre, et al. (2003) also recommended teaching students cognitive and metacognitive strategies to improve comprehension to promote self-questioning and self-monitoring. Studies have found that high achievers indicated that they self-corrected more often than low achievers (Clay, 1991; McNaughton, 1998; Ng, 1979; Wood & Wood, 1999; as cited in Forbes, et al., 2004). Forbes, et al. (2004) stated that teachers who encouraged self-correction were teaching their students to be independent problem-solvers. This

ability to problem-solve and self-tutor may be one reason good readers improve by reading more (Stanovich, 1986, as cited in Forbes, et al., 2004). Self-correcting allowed teachers a glimpse of students' awareness of syntax, meaning and letter/sound correlation (Forbes, et al., 2004). Learning from their own mistakes gave children the power of self-instruction and acted as an intrinsic reward (Wood, 1998, as cited in Forbes, et al., 2004).

Curriculum choices took into account the demographics of the particular class. For example, when a majority of a class was non-native speakers, or English Language Learners (ELLs), the following skill areas were considered. Gertsen, et al. (2005) found that providing additional instruction in word analysis, phonemes and sounds, and practice reading and writing promoted reading outcomes for ELLs. Effective teachers explicitly taught vocabulary and infused vocabulary and language into other content areas to help ELLs grasp the nuances in word meaning (Gertsen, et al., 2005). Effective teachers also provided pictures or line drawings and incorporated writing and reading (Gertsen, et al., 2005). It has not been determined whether bilingual or English-only instruction was more effective, but research did support that the quality of the teacher, regardless of language, was more important than model of instruction (Christian & Genessee, 2001; Goldenberg, 1996; Secada, et al., 1998, as cited in Slavin & Cheung, 2004). Many of the classroom strategies that were effective for ELLs were also effective for native speakers. One group of researchers found that one-to-one tutoring and systematic phonic instruction were as effective for ELLs as they were for other students (Slavin & Cheung, 2004). Inclusion also meant that classroom teachers needed to take more responsibility for special-needs students. These strategies have been shown to narrow the achievement gap by implementing a balanced literacy program including: teacher read-alouds, self-selected reading, reading and writing practice, vocabulary instruction, extra time spent on English language arts, teacher

collaboration, high expectations, and small class sizes (Hawkins, 2007). Many of these same strategies have been recommended by other researchers for all students.

Teachers may know the importance of reading aloud to students in the classroom. Research has shown that it is not just reading to students, but how one reads to them that is important. Pressley, et al. (2007) found that effective teachers read aloud to their students with enthusiasm and included discussion of the story. Researchers from the University of San Diego looked at expert teachers and found that they did the following during read-alouds: chose books appropriate to student interests and developmental levels, previewed selections, established a purpose for the read-aloud, stopped to ask questions, used expression and fluency, and connected the read-alouds to reading and writing done at other times during the day (Blake, 1998). Pinnell (2006) also found that when teachers enjoyed reading with students, the students' achievement improved. Novick (1999-2000) believed that reading aloud to young children from longer, more advanced stories helped to build early literacy skills. Even children ages three to five were surprisingly able to listen to and remember long, complicated stories such as *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web* (Novick, 1999-2000).

The elements that affect reading achievement are numerous. While a teacher has little control over a student's breakfast choice, how many minutes they read outside of class, or a family tragedy, a teacher can make a difference in the achievement level of each student. This can be done by making connections to books, using assessments to drive instruction, motivating students, creating a relationship with each child, and by never ceasing to learn oneself.

The purpose of our project action plan is to give a detailed layout of an intervention implementation schedule. These interventions are designed to enhance the reading achievement of our students.

Project Objective and Processing Statements

As a result of increased student choice in reading materials, "Reading Parties," mini lessons, and teaching text-to-self connections during the period of January 21st through May 16th 2008, the students of Teacher Researchers A and B were to demonstrate greater enjoyment in reading and increased scores on the MAP assessment and the Accelerated Reader reports.

In order to increase each student's scores and enjoyment of reading the teacher researchers needed to:

- Offer after-school opportunities for students to read and have fun, Reading Parties

- Compile and teach mini lessons addressing skills areas where students demonstrate weaknesses

- Provide a wider variety of books and incorporate a variety of genres and authors when teaching

- Teach and model how to identify with a author, character, or story line

Project Action Plan

Teacher Researchers A and B implemented strategies from the research in their respective classrooms. The teacher researchers implemented Reading Parties where students could read a variety of materials at their levels and do so in a fun environment. They also taught specific skills to give students strategies to become stronger readers. The final strategy added to the intervention was to teach students how to make text-to-self connections to further motivate them to be engaged in their reading.

Prior to Intervention	- Prepare materials for Reading Party - acquire themed books at varied levels (from library, peers, etc.) - purchase/prepare for themed snack - Organize classroom library by level and/or topic - Send out consent forms to parents, administrators, and students (where applicable) - MAP test administered by classroom teachers(January 14th-February 1st)
Pre-Documentation Week 1 (January 21st -25th)	- Type and distribute permission slips for weekly Reading Party - Print out detailed MAP skill reports for each student - Identify skill weaknesses for each student - Distribute *Teacher Questionnaire* (January 21st) - Administer *Student Survey* (January 21st) - Print Accelerated Reader Reports (January 25th)
Pre-documentation Week 2 (January 28th – February 1st)	- Analyze Accelerated Reader Reports and MAP skill reports - Plan mini lessons to address above identified skills - Collect and analyze *Teacher Questionnaire* (January 28th)

Intervention: Week 3 (February 4-8) Week 4 (February 11-15) Week 5 (February 18-21*) Week 6 (February 25-29) Week 7 (March 3-7) Week 8 (March 10-14) Week 9 (March 17-20*) Week 10 (March 31-April 4) Week 11(April 7-11) Week 12 (April 14-18) Week 13 (April 21-25) *no school Friday	• Host Reading Party • Teach mini lesson on targeted skill (determined by test scores) • Provide reading time for self-selected reading • On the last day of each week, change books available to students (eg. new library books) • Incorporate text-to-self connections in classroom reading
Week 14 (April 28- May 2)	• MAP test administered by classroom teachers (April 28th-May 16th)
Post-Documentation: Week 15 (May 5- May 9)	• Print Accelerated Reader reports (May 5) • Administer and analyze *Student Survey* (May 5) • Print MAP reports (May 9)
Post-Documentation: Week 16 (May 12- May 16)	• Analyze Accelerated Reader reports (May 12th) • Analyze MAP reports

Methods of Assessment

Following the intervention strategies, the teacher researchers administered and analyzed a Student Survey in order to compare the students' pre- and post-attitudes toward reading. The Student Survey was administered pre-documentation on January 21st, 2008 and post-documentation on May 5, 2008 to the 15 second grade students at Site B and the 15 English Language Learners at Site A, within their respective classrooms, to measure any change in students' attitudes (Refer to Appendix A).

The teacher researchers also analyzed the Measure of Academic Progress reports to see if individual students' scores improved in the specific skill areas. The Measure of Academic Progress Report was administered to the 15 English Language Learners and the 15 second-grade students in the computer labs at Site A and Site B, respectively. The pre-documentation assessment was administered between January 14th and February 1st and then compared to the scores from post-documentation, administered between April 28th and May 16th, to note any change in progress (Refer to Appendix B).

In order to incorporate multiple assessments into the data analysis, the teacher researchers also compared the results of the Accelerated Reader progress reports from pre-documentation, as of January 25th, 2008, to the post-documentation progress reports, as of May 12th, 2008. The teacher researchers will compare the pre- and post-data for the 15 English Language Learners in Classroom A and the 15 second-grade students from Classroom B to denote any change (Refer to Appendix C).

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

The teacher researchers felt as though students at Sites A and B exhibited poor decoding

skills, a lack of practice time, low motivation to read, inability to identify with authors and

characters, and had limited access to books they were interested in and at their current reading

level. The teacher researchers implemented the following interventions: a weekly Reading Party,

specific skill instruction, practice making connections between text and self, and providing a

variety of high-interest books within a child's independent reading range. Fifteen second-grade

students from Site B, four first-grade students from Site A, two second-grade students from Site

A, four third-grade students from Site A, and one fifth-grade student from Site A participated in

the study that began January 21st, 2008 and ran until May 16th, 2008.

Historical Description of the Intervention

In the first week of pre-documentation, January 21st-25th, we had received a majority of

the permission slips back from students. It was frustrating that some students were very

irresponsible about forms and kept losing them. At Site A, I sent home two and after that I

figured that the parent or student was not interested or willing to participate. First, we distributed

the Teacher Questionnaire via mailbox to all classroom teachers at Sites A and B. We also

administered the Student Survey to students in our own classrooms. We read the questions aloud

to help students fully understand the questions being asked. After school hours, we printed out

detailed MAP skill reports for each of the students in order to help us identify skill weaknesses.

The list of skills was a little overwhelming. We know it will be challenging to take some of the

vague categories and plan appropriate lessons to fit. The final step this week was to print out

Accelerated Reader (AR) reports that gave us a current grade equivalency level to mark a starting point in achievement.

In the second week of pre-documentation, January 28th-February 1st, we analyzed the AR reports to determine what level of books we should pull for our first Reading Party next week. This system worked well because it gave us individual ranges of appropriate books for each student. We also analyzed the MAP skill reports. It was difficult for me, at Site A, to find a pattern in all of the diverse students and various print outs because the students came from many different classrooms and the data was organized by classroom. However, there were a few categories that many of the students scored low on, such as, "…explain why a specific effect occurred, rephrase the theme of a text, identify conflict and characters' feelings, or identify details in informational text." This gave us a place to start from. There was a little pressure to get the lessons organized and ready to go for the following week, but we got it done. This week we also reviewed the results of the Teacher Questionnaire. We were disappointed in the small percentage of teachers who responded. However, the feedback we did receive was insightful and detailed, and helped us establish the problem as existent outside of our classrooms as well.

In the first week of intervention, February 4th-8th, 2008, Site A began our Reading Party with the animal theme, a theme students seemed to enjoy. We introduced the routine to students and seemed to spark a motivation for reading. Students rated each book they read as "great," "okay," or "yuck" and posted slips with their name and the book title on a bulletin board. We distributed the passports and explained that each time they read a book and reported back to the teacher they would earn a stamp in their passport. A positive aspect of the Reading Party was that students were very excited about the prospect of earning stamps in their passports. At Site B, I asked for five volunteers at a time to stay in at lunch recess for the Reading Party. All students

were eager to participate and eager to read outside of the specific Reading Party block. Both librarians at Site A and B were helpful in selecting a variety of types and levels of books for the animal theme. One positive result of specific skill instruction was that it fit into what the second- and third-grade teams were initiating already. We incorporated the basal skills into our specific skill instruction, making it easier to plan skill activities and differentiate. The second-grade team at Site B divided students into groups based on skill mastery and taught the specific skills to these groups for 30 minutes each day. One negative aspect I found at Site A was sorting books by topic and not by reading level. This made it more difficult for kids to find a book and continue to read through the whole time period. Students would spend five to ten minutes reading the book and then return it because it was too hard or too easy. They did not use their time productively and were not enjoying the experience. Another negative was that school was cancelled one day due to inclement weather, resulting in shortened instruction time.

In the second week of intervention, February 11th-15th, at Site A I changed the way I organized books to sort them by general reading levels 1-4, with 1 being the easiest. This worked much better than the previous week and more students completed the book they chose. At Site B, I had the interesting opportunity to share our interventions with the other second-grade teachers in the district. The other teachers complimented our ideas and were interested in hearing about the results. At Site A, it was interesting that several of the struggling readers did not have tools for choosing a book at an appropriate level. I took some time to teach them skills like counting the number of missed words on a page and looking at the Accelerated Reading level on the back of the book. One negative aspect of this week's intervention was that the bitter cold weather kept students indoors for recess and so students at Site B were unable to have the party with all of the other kids and distractions in the room. Another negative at Site A was that the pressure to align

lessons with all of the other third-grade classrooms limited my ability to select skills pertinent to my students. Positive aspects of this week were that enthusiasm was still high among students with some students even taking books home to read. At Site A, I had an opportunity to attend Measure of Academic Progress training. I learned new ideas of how to incorporate skills into other lessons and how to look for a common strand of skills among a group of students, helping me to focus in on skills to teach.

In week three of our intervention, February 18th-21st, Site B changed to the ocean theme and Site A changed to book series. Students were enthusiastic about reading about a new theme. Students also were starting to fall into a rhythm during the book parties, which led to more time spent reading. One advantage to the book series theme was that it made the process of choosing a new book easier once students found a book they liked. The librarians also continued to help us select books and provided a wide range of titles for the students to read. One negative aspect of week three was that the server crashed at Site A and all of those students' AR scores were lost. They were unable to take any tests this week. Another negative was that at Site B we had two assemblies in four days and students were less focused. One interesting part of week three was the third-grade basal theme was "Traditions," which lent itself very easily to our goal of making connections to books.

In the fourth week of intervention, February 25th-29th, we found some positives. At Site B, the students were eager to stay in and read and miss the cold snowy recess. Students were enjoying reading with a friend during silent reading time. At Site A, I was pleasantly surprised at how many books I was able to compile on each of the different topics between the library, co-workers, and my own collection. Some negative aspects were that the AR data from the first three weeks was permanently lost with the server failure. We also found that struggling readers

needed one-on-one support to get through and comprehend books. One solution we found was to read one book in a small group to help several children at once.

In week five, March 3rd-7th, we switched themes to include books from certain series at Site B and poetry at Site A. Students were amazed at how many different series there were. Students took pride in their reading. At Site A, our AR tests became available again and students were motivated to start racking up points again. One positive that helped with the specific skill instruction was that I was able to co-plan lessons with a third-grade teacher at Site A. This allowed us to give students a wider variety of skills at their current level. One negative was that some students at Site A were originally turned off by the theme of poetry with the mindset that it was all full of hearts and flowers. At Site A, I had some difficulty matching specific skills to students' MAP performance. I found that I included the students' classroom performance into my judgment of what skills to work on with them. One interesting aspect of AR tests was that because the books all had to be reloaded onto the computers many of the book levels changed! This made it difficult for some students to reach their point goals because the level on the book did not match the value of the computerized test they took.

In week six, March 10th-14th, we continued the same themes as in week five. One positive effect was that the amount of reading students had done thus far was reflected in their AR points, showing a tremendous increase from the previous quarter. At Site A, I was also pleased to look at the ratings and see that only two books were rated as "yuck." So, despite initial mindsets, the students at Site A did enjoy their poetry books. One negative aspect of the Reading Party came to light this week with some of the stronger readers choosing to read books below their level in order to finish and collect a stamp. Another bump in the road came at Site A where many students were not returning books to the correctly leveled basket making it difficult for other

students to choose a book at their own level. One interesting aspect of reading with the first-graders one-on-one was that I could see first hand exactly what skills they applied in their reading and what skills were lacking. Given that information, I could tutor them or give them mini lessons on those specific skills.

In week seven, March 17th-20th, we switched themes. At Site B they went to science and at Site A we began the ocean theme. Positives for the week included that students at Site B were excited about reading books about topics they learned in science and could make the connections. Text-to-self connections were beginning to come more naturally for students and they began to find them without being prompted. Also, the third-grade basal series lent itself well to facilitating text-to-text connections helping the third-grade students take connection making to another level. Negatives of this week included that all students were a little distracted and squirrely with spring break approaching.

The week of March 21st-30th was our spring break so students were off of school. This was a good time for us to reflect on how our interventions were progressing so far. The students liked the change of genres. Next year it would be nice to change the themes to coordinate with basal, math, or science curriculum.

In week eight, March 31st-April 4th, we continued themes from week seven. Students at Site A were very interest in dolphins, our school mascot, and many of the other non-fiction books. Students continued to show interested in reading books about science despite the fact that they just returned from spring break. Negatives of this week at Site A included a close call with losing my service time for our first-grade Reading Parties after an Individualized Education Plan meeting. Thanks to flexible staff, I was able to continue them at another time. Another negative

was that spring break work wasn't returned by half of the students. It seems that just one week off of school had caused some students to mentally check out!

In week nine, April 7th-11th, Site B continued science books due to shortened weeks around spring break. At Site B, the other second grade teachers and I began administering weekly skill tests based on the specific skills that were taught each week. Students scored well on these quizzes, suggesting that they were learning the specific skill. Another positive in the area of specific skill instruction was that the third grade teacher and I, at Site A, began a skill center rotation for 45 minutes once a week. We would choose a specific skill and create three different centers that would reinforce that skill using different modes of instruction. This helped students because the same skill was introduced in three different learning styles.

During week 10, April 14th-18th, students at Site B began the poetry theme and Site A began the fairy tale theme. Students' original thoughts on poetry changed when they found that poems could be funny and not merely rhymes. In social studies, students began a unit on immigration. It was easy for students to make many connections due to their families' first-hand experience with immigration. Thus, they were highly motivated to read and learn more. Students have been less inclined to stay inside to read with the weather getting nicer outside. I made a deal with them that if they read and took a test on one book they could go outside. This deal seemed to work out well for me and the students at Site B. At Site A, one interesting side effect of the book selection system we set up in the first-grade classroom was that students gradually and naturally worked their way up the levels. When they ran out of choices at their current level it was time to move up.

In week 11, April 21st-25th, we felt good about the routines we had set up. Students were comfortable making connections and reading independently. One interesting thing I found during

the fairy tale theme was that many of the third graders brought books back without finishing them. I think this was because many of these books had more text per page and students were eager to get a book finished. Many of the students were reading shorter and easier books. This is not bad, but they were not challenging themselves.

During week 12, April 28th-May 2nd, we switched themes. Site B read about fairy tales and Site A read science books. Students were interested in the fairy tales, especially different versions of the same tale. Students also had an hour to read with their fifth-grade buddies. This allowed some of the students to finish as many as five AR tests. Third-grade students enjoyed the book parties so much that they elected to continue them through the end of the year even though this was our last week of intervention. Students at Site B took the MAP test this week so they needed to stretch at recess. Students were not required to stay in to read this week at Site B.

During the first week of post-documentation, May 5th-9th, we printed AR reports, administered the Student Surveys and printed the spring MAP reports. However, at Site A students had completed the MAP test during this week, but the testing window was still open for make-up tests. This meant that the reports would not be available for Site A until next week. So, we looked at the Student Survey data to get a feel for students' feelings toward reading at the close of our intervention.

During the second week of post-documentation, May 12th-16th, we analyzed the AR reports and noted the change from pre-documentation to post-documentation in a notebook to make analysis easier. The testing window at Site A closed this week so I printed my students' scores. We then recorded the MAP scores to compare them to pre-documentation, as well as looked at the students' change compared to the national percentile.

Reflection

Looking back at the 12 weeks of intervention we noticed the following patterns. First, student motivation began strong and faded in April as the nice weather and end of the school year approached. Another pattern we found was that there were many titles and varieties of books available for each theme. Also, through all of the various themes very few books were rated "yuck." Those books that qualified were often because they were too easy. As the weeks went by, implementing the intervention became easier. It became second nature and not necessarily something part of a project. We were glad that the book selection process went as we had expected; there were always plenty of titles and various levels and interests within a theme. We are fortunate to have such a well-stocked library and helpful librarians. We were surprised by the high ratings that students gave books they read. We also did not expect such a drastic drop in motivation at the end of the year. It was easier for us to implement specific skill instruction because we did not expect such support. We were surprised by how well it tied into existing curriculum and the support from fellow teachers.

Interventions: Reading Party

For our first intervention, we held Reading Parties where students were provided time to read texts based on their interests and reading levels. In addition, books from different genres were provided. Every two weeks, the genre of books changed. We consulted with the school librarian to obtain books that varied in level, subject, and length. At Site A, I created different twists to meet the needs of different students and service models. The big idea was to expose students to different genres of books to help them connect with some they like, to get them to read books at their level, and basically just spend more quality time reading. I would collect books on a theme such as: animals, poetry, science, fairy tales, oceans, and books in a series. I

would select books from the library at levels ranging from 0.9-4.0 and sort them into baskets labeled "level 1," "level 2," level 3," "level 4," and "Spanish" books. Students were able to spread out throughout the room to read and could read independently or with a buddy. I did this to promote a low stress and comfortable atmosphere to read in. The first of the different twists was for the four first-grade students. They have a 30-minute block of time in their classroom already set aside with leveled books available. In this case I would work one-on-one with one student each day of the week, except for Tuesdays as they were at a special at that time. I helped them find books at their level, read them, and discuss them, and then they orally rated the book as "great," "okay," or "yuck." I made these adaptations to fit into an inclusion model at the school, as all of these students qualified for English as a Second Language services as well as were on watch or identified for other special need services. This system also gave these struggling readers some one-on-one attention. The four third-grade students also already had a thirty-minute block of the day spent on independent reading so I used the intervention on the entire class (n=16). In this case, I created a Reading Party cart. I put the baskets onto a cart and had students put their rating cards (great, okay, or yuck) into envelopes on the cart. See Appendix E for the rating cards. The subjects of the research just needed some guidance selecting books, motivation to finish them, and a push to read for understanding. The last version of the Reading Party I did with two second graders and a struggling fifth-grade student. They also read books off of the cart but created a graph of great, okay, and yuck books on a bulletin board in the classroom. This allowed them to quickly look for the title of a book another student thought was great. We also incorporated the use of reading passports where students would conference with me after finishing a book, and then they would earn a stamp in their passport. This helped hold students accountable to understand what they were reading and motivated them

to stick with and finish a book. See Appendix F for a copy of the passport. At Site B, I held Reading Parties during the students' lunch because that was the most relevant time compared to after school. It was initially discussed that we would have the Reading Parties after school. However, due to obligations we had, we decided to fit them into the school day. Since I had 15 students in my class, I held the parties three days a week, with five students at a time. First, they would eat lunch in the classroom. Then, they would read books pertaining to the genre of books present in the classroom that week. They would read the book twice. If it was an AR book, the students would take a computerized comprehension test. If it was not an AR book, I would ask them questions about the book to test their comprehension. If the students passed the quiz, they added a sticker to their passport for the appropriate genre. Reading for enjoyment was stressed at the Reading Parties. The students were urged to sit wherever they wanted as long as they were not distracted. I walked around the room to read with the students and to check for understanding. Since some students were reading longer books than others, it was not stressed that they had to take a quiz or finish reading the book they were working on. Instead, it was communicated that it was most important that the students spent the time reading. Several students found that they would rather read a book from their book box than one from the chosen genre. I allowed this since the purpose of the Reading Party was not for them to read a specific genre.

This intervention included the use of book boxes to provide students with books that suited their interests and reading levels. At Site B, the students each had a book box with his/her name on it. I printed out a list of the books the students had already read and taken a test. Then, I placed the books into the respective boxes if it was at the student's reading level, if he/she hadn't already taken a test on it, and if it was something in which they were interested. Instead of

having students exchange their boxes every few weeks, I had them take a book out of their box if they read and took a test on it. Then, at the end of the week, I would print out another list of the tests that had been taken in order to give those books to other students. After the students became familiar and comfortable with their book boxes, I found that they were exchanging and borrowing books from other students by themselves. I would hear, "Can I borrow Amelia Bedelia from you? I'll put it back when I'm done." I was impressed with the independence students developed over the course of the 12 weeks in regards to the book boxes.

Intervention: Specific Skill Instruction

Another intervention we implemented was specific skill instruction. This intervention was designed to help fill in the decoding and comprehension gaps that made reading a struggle and unpleasant for students. At Site A, I again differentiated this instruction to meet the needs of each student, grade level, and service model. In first grade, my focus was on reading strategy skills. I sat with students one-on-one as they read a story in their reading level range for the first time. As they read, I listened to the strategies they used to decode new words and offered prompts to help them. For example if they read the sentence *The dog was big.* as *He dog was big.* I would stop and ask "Did that make sense?" or "Let's use the beginning sound to get our mouth ready." Both during and after they read I would stop and talk about or ask questions about the book to check for understanding. This instruction reviewed skills they had learned in their classroom as well as introduced catchy chants to help them remember decoding. For example when students would struggle over a word like *neat* I would give them a chant like "Take a scaredy cat E and a scaredy cat A, put them together and what do they say? EEEEE!" See Appendix G for a copy of the phonic chants. The skill instruction I did with the four third-grade students was a mixture of phonics review, proofreading, vocabulary, sentence grammar, and

meaning from context. In order to make the skills more meaningful and help students make

connections I chose skills that accompanied the current story the class read in their basal reading

book. I would use workbook exercises as informal assessments and then go into more depth

where needed. For example if students were unfamiliar with vocabulary after seeing it in context

we would play vocabulary charades, illustrate each word, or do a different activity to help them.

The last adaptation I made to the specific skill instruction was for a group of students including

two second-grade students and a fifth-grade student. The second-grade students had strong

phonic skills. So, I worked on phonics with the fifth-grade student at a separate time, focusing on

one or two letter pairs a week. Then I used phonics chants, phonics games, books with phonics

patterns, and applying this in her writing. When I had all three students together we focused on

reading strategies, comprehension, and fluency. We developed poetry folders and filled them

with nursery rhymes, songs, and poems that students took home and practiced to help develop

fluency and phrasing. I used a book called Comprehension Quickies to help students read for

understanding. Each week students would read a short passage on their own and highlight words

or phrases they did not fully understand. I would individually help them use context clues or base

words to make sense out of the highlighted parts. Then, as a group, we would orally answer the

questions, which were a mix of answers directly from the text and some higher order thinking

questions. Students then had the opportunity to take it home and write out the answers for extra

credit. See Appendix H for a sample of a Comprehension Quickie. At Site B specific skill

instruction was implemented four days a week for 30 minutes a day. The skills taught were based

on the curriculum, but also tied to the MAP test results from pre-documentation. One student

from my class took part in a small-group class with students that were significantly lower in

skills. The rest stayed in my classroom. Three students from another classroom joined us for this

time period. Lessons involved whole group instruction and independent practice on skills like synonyms, punctuation, writing sentences, contractions, and quotation marks. Mid-way through the 12 weeks of intervention, the second-grade team decided to give weekly tests on the skills being taught instead of monthly theme skills tests. The students' scores on the weekly tests gave a more accurate representation of their comprehension of the skills.

Intervention: Self-to-Text Connections

The third intervention that was implemented was the self-to-text connections. The research suggested that students are unmotivated to read books that they can not identify with. This intervention was designed to help students connect with their readings to increase motivation. At the first-grade level, I incorporated this into their one-on-one reading. For the second- and fifth-grade students, we incorporated this into the comprehension passages and Reading Parties. We asked students questions such as, "What would you do if you were Turtle (character from the book)?", "How would you feel if the whole town made you a Valentine?", or "Have you ever been to a pet store?" These guiding questions helped the students connect with the characters, situations, and settings in the story they were reading. In third grade we reinforced connections by asking similar questions that pertained to the basal stories we read together. Sometimes, I would have the third-grade students take it a step farther and write about their ideas. We also made text-to-text connections. The basal stories were organized around a common theme, lending itself to this purpose. See Appendix I for a sample of text-to-text connections.

Reflection

This research project has taught me, Teacher Researcher A, several things. I found that the same symptoms do not always need the same treatment. All students at Site A were classified

as struggling readers, but each intervention that I tried took on unique characteristics to meet each student's needs, grade level curricular goals, and time and service constraints. I also learned that I have more creative freedom within my position than I originally thought. Despite the goals being set, the stories being picked out, working in another teacher's classroom, and maintaining pacing, there is still a lot of wiggle room that allows for differentiation and your own personality to shine through. I was afraid that I would not be able to implement some of our interventions with all of the restrictions of the school day. Instead, I found that many of my cooperating teachers embraced the new ideas and strategies and we were both able to adjust our teaching styles to make the interventions work. This project has also taught me some things about myself and my own role as a teacher. You read the poems, t-shirts, and coffee mugs that tell you what a difference you make in students' lives. I had seen this in isolated cases where students have turned to me for help outside of academics, but I thought that was the extent of my impact. However, I was not really convinced until looking in depth at individual students and their attitudes. I was able to read with students one-on-one and see their growth and change in attitudes toward books. This was reinforced by some of the students' surveys where students changed from thinking reading was okay to loving to read! The coolest part was this all happened within the school day meeting the same benchmarks with a slight twist of emphasis on how and why we read. I fell into the teaching major as an undeclared junior. This project helped me focus on teaching each child not each subject, convinced me that I can be an effective teacher, and showed me that deep down I was meant to be a teacher.

Implementing this project and these interventions in my classroom has helped me grow as a teacher and as a person. At first I, Teacher Researcher B, felt nervous about being able to complete all that was required of me as a teacher, student, basketball coach, and second-grade

teammate all at once. I now realize that it helped me stay focused and organized, just as having many things on my plate at once always has in my life. It gave me confidence not only in myself as a teacher, but also as a person. It made me realize that teaching is not just about helping kids learn, but also reaching students in their own unique way that makes the most sense to them. I found myself not only implementing interventions as prescribed in this project, but also I continued to try new strategies that I was learning in my other classes week by week. I was eager to share about the project with my family and friends even if they might not fully understand everything that was going on in the classroom. I took pride in the fact that the other teachers in my grade level, school, and district wanted to learn more about the project and how the students were progressing as a result of the interventions. Moreover, being able to celebrate students' success with my principal was a great feeling. Comparing and contrasting the positives and negatives with my research partner has been eye opening as well. Although we had the same outcome and ideas in mind, the fact that we both put our own twists to the interventions was fantastic. It goes to show there are many different ways to be an effective teacher. There are specific things that I intend to implement in my classroom next year, and others that I will alter to make the best fit for my students. In addition, I am already thinking about the possibility of conducting a new action research project on a different topic. I feel like I have grown more in the past weeks than I have at any other time in my professional career as a result of completing this project.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The teacher researchers determined that the students at Sites A and B were lacking

practice time, had low motivation to read, had access to books, and had literacy skills appropriate

to their grade level based on results from a Student Attitude Survey, Teacher Questionnaire,

Accelerated Reader scores, and data from the Measure of Academic Progress reports

administered in pre-documentation. Teacher Researcher A collected data from eleven students,

four first-grade students, two second-grade students, four third-grade students, and one fifth-

grade student. Teacher Researcher A also collected data from 14 teachers. Teacher Researcher B

collected data from 15 second-grade students and 17 teachers at Site B. The data was collected

between the dates of January 21st, 2008 and February 1st, 2008.

<u>Student Attitude Survey</u>

During post-documentation the teacher researchers administered the Student Attitude

Survey. Question one of the survey determined that the group consisted of 65% males (n=17)

and 35% females (n=9). Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the Student Attitude Survey.

This did not change from the pre-documentation survey.

Question two of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "How do you feel about Reading?" Results showed that 73% (n=19) of students said that they loved to read or liked to read. Figure 1 shows the results from pre-documentation compared to Figure 14, showing post-documentation results.
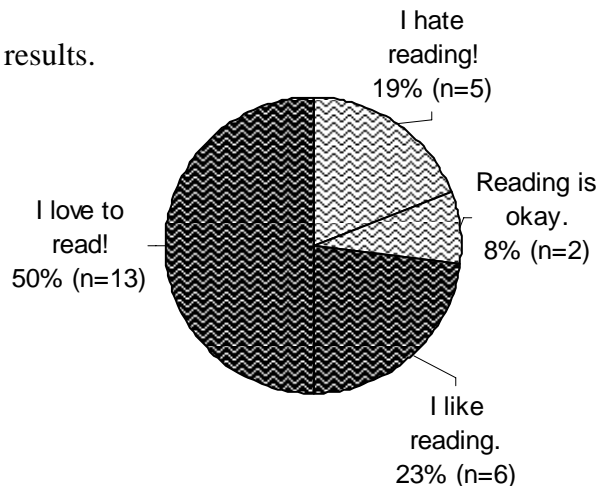

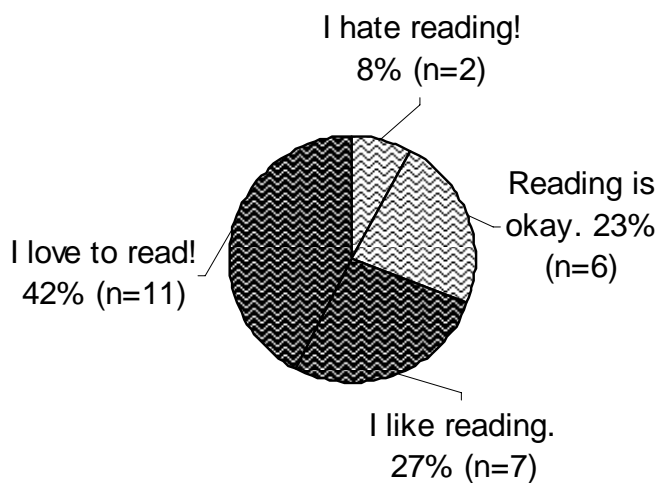Figure 1: *Pre-documentation: How do you Feel About Reading?*
(n=26)

Figure 14: *Post-documentation: How do you Feel About Reading? (n=26)*

The number of students that chose *I like reading* or *I love to read* went down from 19 students (73%) in pre-documentation to 18 students (n=69%). Despite that, the number of students that chose *I hate reading* went down from 5 (n=19%) to 2 (n=8%).

Question three of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "About how many minutes do you read each day <u>at home</u>?" Results from the post-documentation showed that nine students (35%) read for 30 minutes or more at home.
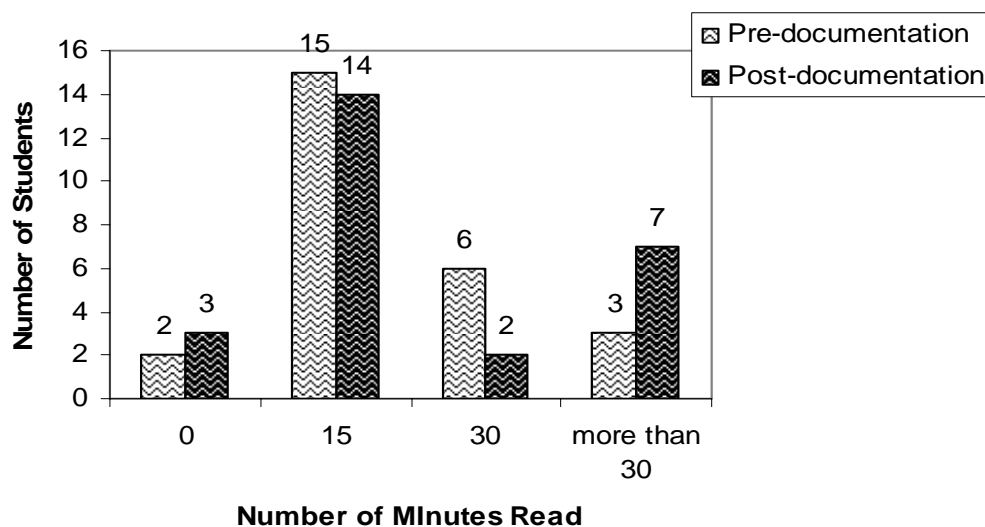

Figure 15: *Minutes Read at Home*

The number of students reading 30 minutes or more at home remained constant at 9 (35%) from pre- to post-documentation. However, the number of students reading more than 30 minutes a day rose from 3 students (12%) in pre-documentation to 7 students (27%) in post-documentation.

Question four of the Student Attitude Survey asked the students (n=26) "What kind of reader are you?" The results from post-documentation showed that 77% of students (n=20) considered themselves to be *good* or *very good* readers while only 4% of students (n=1) considered him/herself to be a bad reader.
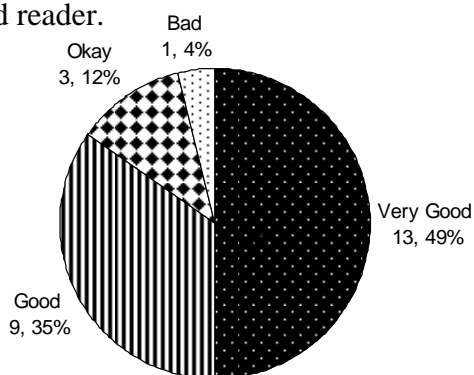

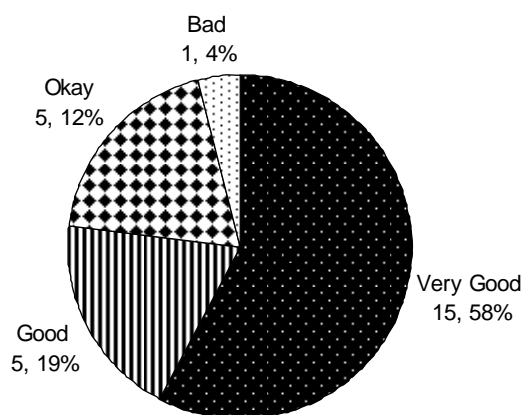Figure 3: *What Kind of Reader are you? Pre-documentation (n=26)*

Figure 16: *What kind of Reader are you? Post-documentation (n=26)*

The Teacher Researchers would like the reader to note that the number of students considering themselves *very good* rose from 13 students (50%) in pre-documentation, Figure 3, to 15 students (58%) in post-documentation, Figure 16.

Question five of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "How well does your teacher know you?" The post-documentation data shows that only two students (8%) felt their teacher did not know them well by selecting that their teacher *doesn't know me* or *knows me less than others.*
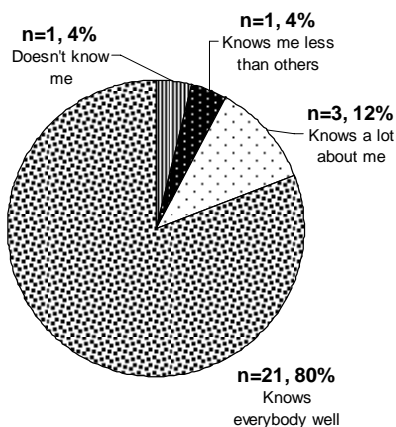
n=1, 4%
Doesn't know me

n=1, 4%
Knows me less than others

n=3, 12%
Knows a lot about me

n=21, 80%
Knows everybody well

Figure 4: *How well Does Your Teacher Know you? Pre-documentation (n=26)*

Doesn't know me
n=1, 4%

Knows me less than others
n=1, 4%

Knows a lot about me
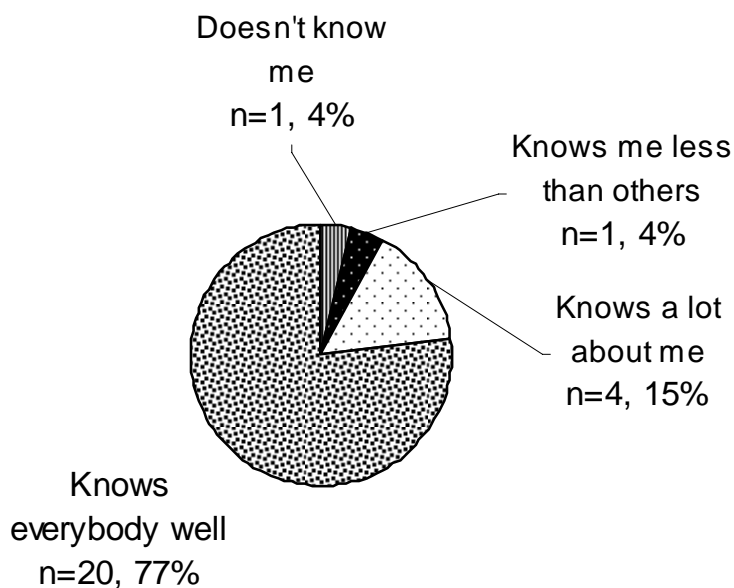n=4, 15%

Knows everybody well
n=20, 77%

Figure 17: *How well Does Your Teacher Know you? Post-documentation (n=26)*

The data showed that the number of students that felt their teacher knew them/everybody well remained constant at 24 students (92%) from pre- to post-documentation. Figure 4 shows pre-documentation results while Figure 17 shows post-documentation results.

Question six of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "What kind of books or magazines do you like to read?" Question seven of the Student Attitude Survey asked students (n=26) "What kind of books do you read at school?" That post-documentation data showed that students' tastes and reading preferences are varied with a slight preference toward picture books of which 19 students (73%) liked to read. The summary of the results are shown in Figure 18 below.
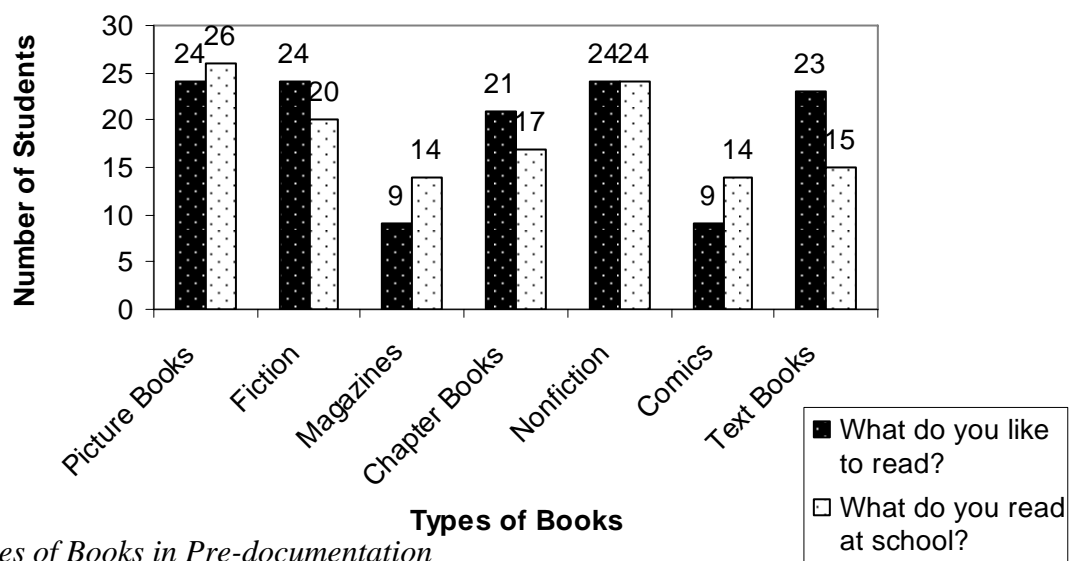
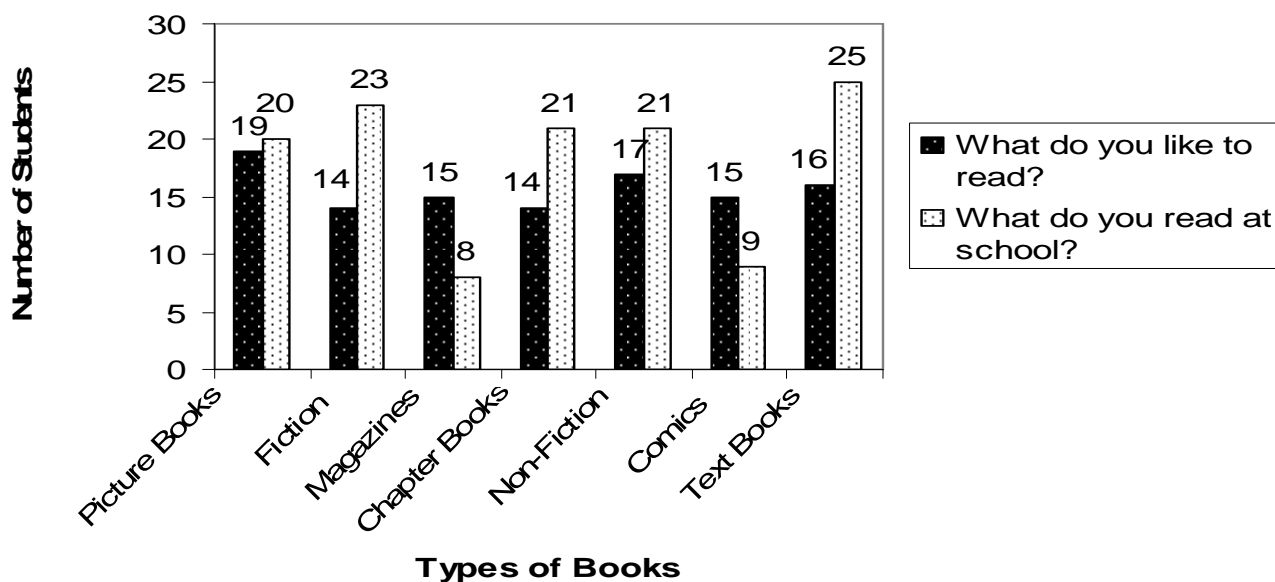Figure 5: *Types of Books in Pre-documentation*

Figure 18: *Types of Books in Post-Documentation*

The data from pre- and post-documentation showed that after the interventions students' reading preferences were more evenly spread across the different book genres. For example, in pre-documentation there are as many as 24 students who liked to read picture books and as little as 9 students who liked to read magazines. However, in post-documentation the levels were more spread out with a maximum of 19 students liking picture books and a minimum of 14 students liking fiction.

Question number eight of the Student Attitude Survey asked students to rank the following activities from first (most preferred) to fifth (least preferred). The activities included: watching tv, riding a bike, sleeping, cleaning your room, reading a book. The post-documentation data showed that 50% of students (n=13) chose reading as their first or second choice over watching tv, riding a bike, going to sleep, or cleaning their room. Figure 19 below shows a summary of these results.
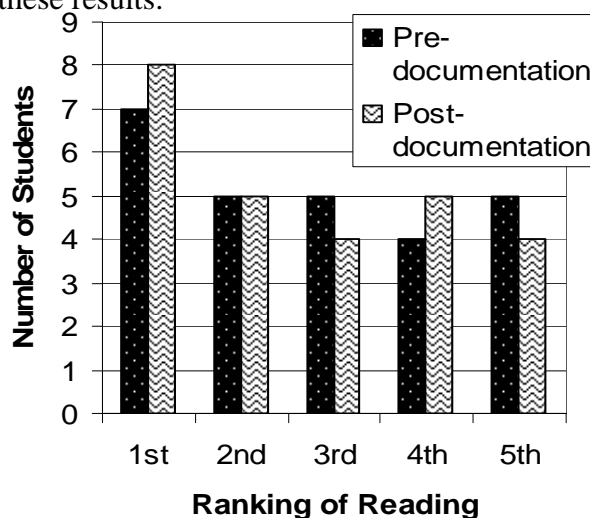

Figure 19: *Student Activity Rankings*

The number of students choosing reading as their first activity of choice rose from seven students (27%) in pre-documentation to eight students (31%) in post-documentation. Also, the number of students ranking reading as their fifth and last choice fell from five students (19%) in

pre-documentation to four students (15%) in post-documentation. This showed researchers that students were beginning to enjoy reading as a past time.

Accelerated Reader Reports

The figure below shows that four students (n=15%) are now more than one grade level above in their Accelerated Reader score. Researchers would like the reader to note that in pre-documentation only 23 of the 26 students had a score on the Accelerated Reader Report. During the time of the intervention, the three struggling readers made enough progress that they too entered the program and took the test. Their data is reflected in the post-documentation data. The percentage scores take into account the difference. The summary of these findings can be found in Figure 20 below.
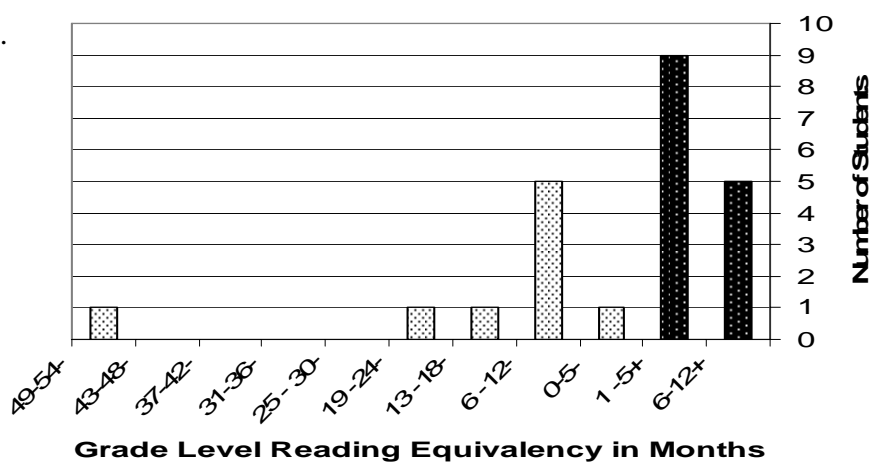

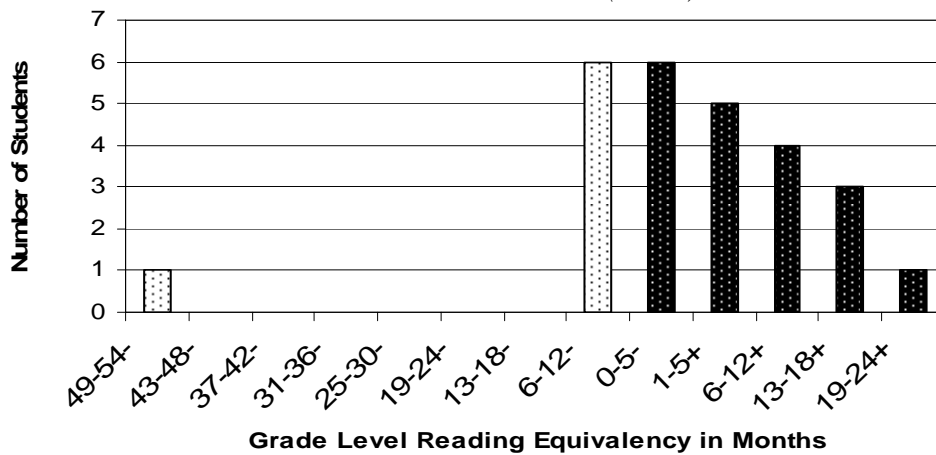Figure 12: *Accelerated Reader Scores in Pre-documentation (n=23)*

Figure 20: *Accelerated Reader Scores in Post-documentation (n=26)*

Accelerated Reader Reports showed that all student scores improved, not just those significantly behind, growing to more than one year above grade level. Researchers noted that the number of students more than one year behind fell from three (n=13%) in pre-documentation to one student (n= 4%) in post-documentation. In pre-documentation 15 students (n=65%) were slightly below, 5 months or less, or above grade level on the Star Reader test. This number rose to 19 students (n=73%) in post-documentation.

Measure of Academic Progress

The MAP test is only given to students in grades 2-5, hence the first grade students (n=4) do not have data reflected in this figure. Also, there was an error in administering the MAP test to the fifth-grade student at Site A and the score was not recorded, resulting in n=21 instead of n=26. The post-documentation, shown in the figure below as Spring 2008 scores, of the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test showed that these students are still struggling in comparison to the national percentile. The teacher researchers would like the reader to note that comparing struggling students to the national percentile does not show their individual growth. See Figure 21 below for individual growth.
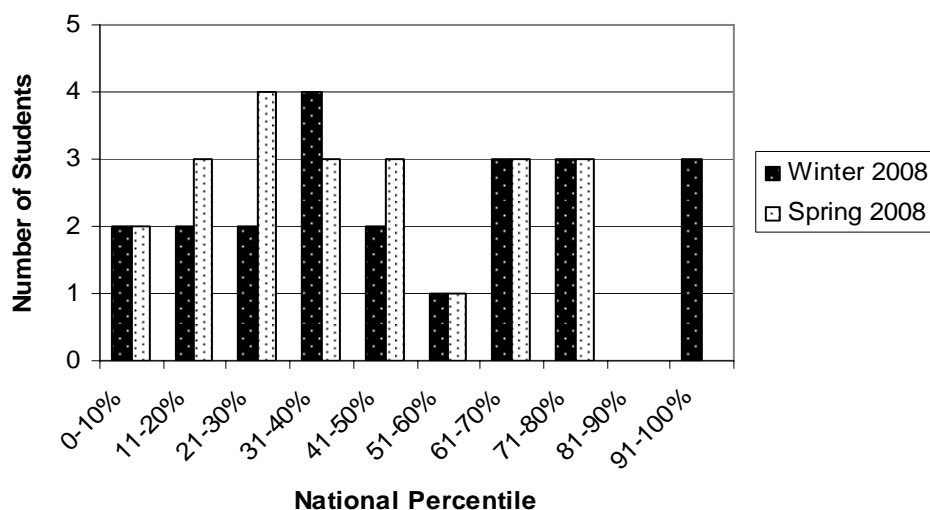

Figure 21: *Measure of Academic Progress Scores*

The teacher researchers also noted that in pre-documentation (Winter 2008) 10 of the students (n=45%) met or exceeded 51% in the national percentile. This number dropped to 7 of the students (n=32%) in post-documentation (Spring 2008). Figure 22 below shows the growth of each student based on national percentile.
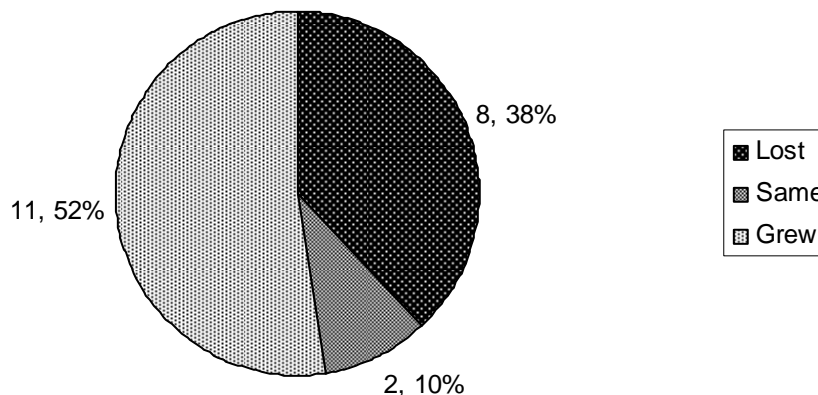
Figure 22: *Individual MAP Score Growth*

Eleven of the individual student scores (n=52%) gained points (grew) from pre-documentation (Winter 2008) to post-documentation (Spring 2008).

Reflection

The data showed contradicting results. Overall, we saw positive growth in AR levels (Figures 12 & 20) and the students' activity ratings (Figure 19). The other tools we used to measure success showed us mixed results with minimal changes in post-documentation or growth limited to certain student percentages. However, we feel that a difference was made in many of our students' lives. For example, data showed an increase in students that love to read (Figures 1 & 14) and those that read more than 30 minutes each day (Figure 15). We saw a difference in the way our students approached reading and books. Instead of moaning and paging through the book during independent reading time they looked forward to the chance to read a book and asked to take books home to finish. We saw students get excited to read and talk about

books with their friends. Looking at the AR scores (Figures 12 & 20) really helped us to see that each individual student did grow. As teachers, we noticed a shift in focus and motivation as summer drew near. Students began preferring recess to staying in for the Reading Parties. They were less able to focus in class the last three weeks of intervention. This could be one of many factors that affected students' scores and attitudes at the end of the year.

<div align="center">Conclusions and Recommendations</div>

Looking back at the pre- and post analysis of our data we found some notable changes in behavior. The first change we saw was a drop in the number of students that chose *I like reading* or *I love to read* from 19 students in pre-documentation to 18 students (Figures 1 & 14). Although the change is small, it was disheartening. We hoped that more students would like or love to read. We feel that the date of the survey, being so close to the end of the year, may have played a role in the drop. The second change in behavior was seen in the number of minutes students read at home. The number of students that read 30 minutes or more at home remained constant from pre- to post-documentation (Figure 15). However, the number of students reading more than 30 minutes a day rose from 3 students in pre-documentation to 7 students in post-documentation (Figure 15). This led us to think that while the intervention did not get more students to read at home it did motivate those that already read at home to read more. The third change we would like you to note is that the number of students considering themselves very good readers rose in post-documentation (Figures 3 & 16). We feel this has ties to the positive experience students had reading and understanding books during the Reading Parties. There was no change in the results regarding the student-teacher connection. Student Survey results showed that students felt a strong bond with their teacher even before the intervention (Figures 4 & 17). The next change we noted was that students' book preferences changed (Figures 5 & 18). The

Reading Parties exposed students to different types of books. We feel that this led to greater diversity in book choice. The results of Student Survey question eight, where students ranked activities, contradicted the results from question two, where students indicated their feeling toward reading (Figures 1, 14, & 19). Question eight showed an increase in students that chose reading as their preferred activity and a decrease in reading being their least favorite activity (Figure 19). Since students had higher self confidence in reading and positive experiences with reading throughout the intervention they developed a preference to reading. The Accelerated Reader reports indicated that all students' reading levels showed growth (Figures 12 & 20). Students whose reading levels were significantly below grade level made notable gains compared to their peers. We feel that the specific skill instruction played a large role in this improvement, providing students the tools they needed decode and comprehend the books. The Measure of Academic Progress assessment showed that only 52% (n=11) of the students in this study improved from pre- to post-documentation (Figures 21 & 22). This really surprised us because it did not match the growth we were seeing in the classroom. We must keep in mind that this is just a snapshot of their learning and we should not rely solely on it. Looking back at the entire intervention process, we feel our interventions positively affected many of the students. We not only see this in the data but also in our daily interactions with the students. We saw students who were more apt to pick up a book, enjoyed their silent reading time, applied skills to read more difficult books, and shared their reading with their peers.

After looking at all of the data we would recommend these interventions to other teachers as well as continue to use them in our own classrooms. As reflective practitioners we would make a few changes. First, we would like to better align the Reading Party themes with existing curriculum to help students further connect to their readings. Another change we would like to

make is to implement some incentives to get those students that read less than 15 minutes a day to start reading at home. Perhaps we could even set up a check out system to get more high interest books in their hands. It would be interesting to try these interventions again during the first semester of school to see if the approaching summer vacation was a factor. We feel that student attitudes and MAP scores would better reflect their true achievement when students are more focused in the middle of the academic year. Another change would be to avoid hosting Reading Parties during recess to avoid motivation and focus conflicts. Instead we could hold these parties during class time or as an after school activity. Lastly, at the beginning of the intervention I, Teacher Researcher A, was creating a lot of the specific skill lessons from scratch. As the semester went on I learned to use other teachers and existing resources which made more effective lessons and less work for me. Another change that would make specific skill instruction more effective would be to communicate with upper grade teachers to determine skills that will be needed by our students in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Attitude Survey

Directions: Please put an **X** by the choice that is true about you. Please return this paper to your teacher when finished.

1. Are you a boy or a girl?
  _____ Boy
  _____ Girl

2. How do you feel about reading?
  _____ I hate reading!
  _____ Reading is okay.
  _____ I like reading.
  _____ I love to read!

3. About how many minutes do you read each day <u>at home</u>?
  _____ 0 minutes (I don't read at all at home)
  _____ about 15 minutes
  _____ about 30 minutes
  _____ more than 30 minutes

4. What kind of a reader are you?
  _____ Bad
  _____ Okay
  _____ Good
  _____ Very Good

5. How well does your teacher know you? My teacher:
  _____ does not know me at all
  _____ know me less than the other kids in class
  _____ knows a lot about me
  _____ know everybody in class well

6. What kind of books or magazines do you like to read?
___ picture books   ___ chapter books   ___ text books
___ fiction   ___ nonfiction
___ magazines   ___ comics

___ other _____

7. What kind of books do you read at school?
___ picture books   ___ chapter books   ___ text books
___ fiction   ___ nonfiction
___ magazines   ___ comics

___ other _____

8. Write the activities in order starting with the one you would most like to do. The last activity is the one you would not like to do.

clean your room	watch tv	ride a bike
go to sleep	read a book	

I really like to   _____

_____

_____

_____

I do not like to   _____

Created by the Teacher Researchers

Appendix B
Teacher Questionnaire

<u>Directions:</u> Please check the choice that best answers each question. Feel free to add comments.

1. How comfortable do you feel teaching reading?
       _____ I sometimes feel uncomfortable teaching reading.
       _____ I am comfortable teaching reading.
       _____ I feel that I am a very effective reading teacher.
       _____ Other _____

2. On average, how many minutes each week do kids in your classroom spend actually reading (in any content area/any material)?
       _____ less than 75 minutes (averages less than 15 minutes a day)
       _____ between 75-150 minutes (15-30 minutes a day)
       _____ more than 150 minutes (30 minutes or more each day)
       _____ Other _____

3. How many minutes are <u>you</u> able to read (outside of school) each week?
       _____ None
       _____ less than 30 minutes
       _____ 30-60 minutes
       _____ more than 60 minutes

4. Are the students in your classroom this year motivated to read?
       _____ Getting them to read is always a battle.
       _____ They often dislike reading, it depends on the material.
       _____ In general, my students seem to like reading.
       _____ Other _____

(please turn over)

5. How well do you feel you know and understand the students in your classroom?

_____ I don't know all of my students well enough to
    understand them all.

_____ I know something about every student and have a
    connection with some.

_____ I feel I connect with all of my students well.

_____ Other _____

<u>Directions:</u> **Please complete the following questions:**

What grade level do you teach? _____

How many years have you been teaching? _____

Other comments or questions:

**Please return to Katie Lamon's or Britt Jensen's mailbox when finished
to aid in their research project.**

Thank you!

Appendix C
Sample Accelerated Reader Report

Class : Third Grade

Student Name	Teacher	ZPD
		2.8-3.9
		3.2-5.0
		3.6-5.6
		2.3-3.3
		2.4-3.4
		1.8-2.8
		2.4-3.4
		2.7-3.8
		3.2-5.1
		2.4-3.4
		2.5-3.5
		2.0-3.0
		2.9-4.3
		2.8-3.9
		3.1-4.7
		2.2-3.2

Number of Students : 16

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the reading level range recommended by School Renaissance Institute, Inc. for optimal growth in reading without frustration. The ranges are approximate. Success at any level depends on the student's interest, prior knowledge, and other factors. Teachers should use their professional judgment to adjust the level of books read to match the needs of individual students.

Appendix D
Measure of Academic Progress Class Report

NWEA
Northwest Evaluation Association
Partnering to Help all Kids Learn

Class Report - Reading - Winter 2008

District:
School:
Teacher:
Class: 1014000434   LanguageArts 8

Small Group Display: No

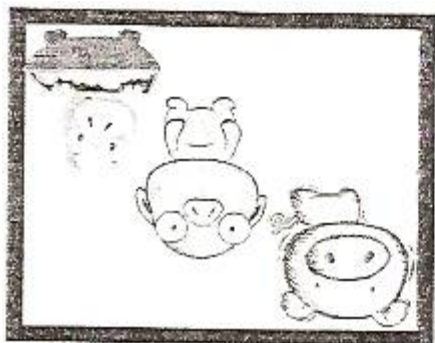| Student ID	Student Name	Grd	Test Type	Test Date	Term	Student Achievement Scores					
						RIT	Std Err	RIT Rng	%ile	%ile Rng	Lexile Rng
10316006		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	178	3.3	175-181	14	11-19	113-263
101407404		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	180	3.3	177-183	16	12-21	136-286
101013407		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	183	3.3	180-185	21	15-28	190-340
101415504		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	188	3.3	185-191	30	23-37	260-430
101014406		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	189	3.3	186-192	33	26-43	280-430
101407104		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	191	3.4	188-194	37	28-45	311-461
101406203		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	192	3.4	189-196	40	30-46	319-480
101405504		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	193	3.5	190-196	43	35-53	348-498
101404504		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	195	3.3	192-198	48	40-59	382-532
101414204		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	195	3.4	193-199	51	43-62	417-567
101011005		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	209	3.4	197-203	62	51-71	434-584
101412904		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	204	3.4	201-207	73	62-81	497-647
101017906		3	S/G	Jan 22	W 08	207	3.4	204-210	81	73-88	564-714
Totals For: Reading								204-210	81	73-88	628-778

Totals For: Reading
Students with valid scores: 13
Mean RIT: 192.0
Median RIT: 192
Std Dev: 8.7

Tests shown in gray font are excluded from summary statistics. Either the test occurred outside the testing window for a term, had an invalid score, or was repeat test for a student within a term. Summary statistics for groups with less than 10 students are generally suppressed because they are not statistically reliable.

Appendix E
Reading Party Rating Cards

Title:	Title:
_____ _____ Reader: _____	_____ _____ Reader: _____
Title:	**Title:**
_____ _____ Reader: _____	_____ _____ Reader: _____
Title:	**Title:**
_____ _____ Reader: _____	_____ _____ Reader: _____
Title:	**Title:**
_____ _____ Reader: _____	_____ _____ Reader: _____

Created by the Teacher Researchers

Appendix F
Reading Party Passport

Fairy Tales

Poetry

Reading
Passport
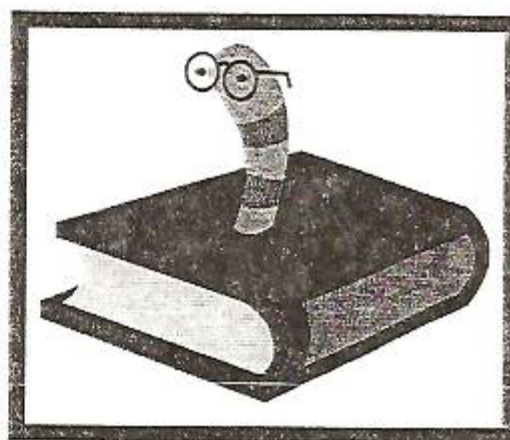
Name: _____

Animals

Science

Ocean

Series

Created by the Teacher Researchers

Appendix G
Phonic Chants

Sh - Say "S -h, sh,sh,sh,. S-h, sh,sh,s." (Put your finger to your lips and make the sh sound as you say the sh sound three times.)

Ch - (It's time to do the chicken cha cha dance!) Say, "C-h, ch,ch,ch. C-h, ch,ch,ch." Flap your arms like chicken wings.

Th - Say, "T-h, th, th, th. T-h, th, th, th."

Ow - Make the letters o and w with your fingers. Hit them together and say, "O-w, ow. Going down, going down, d-o-w-n down." (pretend to slide you arms down the slide as you say d-o-w-n.)

Ou - Make the letters o and u with your fingers. Hit them together and say, "o-u, ou. O-u-t, o-u-t get out of here you bumble bee."

Oo (book) - say, "O - O - ooo" like you are picking up something heavy.

Oo (boot) - say "O - O, ooooooo." Make the letter o on each hand. Pull you hands apart as you chant the oo sound.

Ing - Say, "I-n-g, ing, ing,ing. I-n-g, ing, ing, ing." (Jump up and down three times as you chant "ing, ing, ing".

All - Say, "A-l-l, a-l-l, all, all, all". March three times as you say, "a-l-l, a-l-l".

Ar - Say, "Car, car, c-a-r, you stick your hand in a jar of stars. A-r, ar, ar, ar".

Or - (Prentend you are a seal.) Say, "O-r, or, or, or. O-r, or, or, or. I want more fish! I want more fish!" (Put your handsin the air and clap three times as you say, "or, or, or". Then point to yourself and chant, "I want more fish!)

Oa - Say, "O said to a, Oh, I love you (grab your heart) and a said absolutely nothing. So when you see oa what do you say? OOOOOO". (Make the long strong sound and show your muscles because this is the long strong sound of a.

Igh - Say, "i-g-h, igh, igh, I-I-I." (Gently pull your eyes out of the side of your head three times.)

Ea - Say, "You take a scaredy cat e and a scaredy cat a. You put them together and what do they say? EEEEEEE!!!!!!". (Pretend like you are so scared when you say, "EEEEEE!!!".

Ee - Say, "When you see the double e, you say EE!, EE!. It's a bumble bee party! EE! EE! It's a bumble bee party!"

Ay - Say, "Some letters ay, a,a,a...hey do you want to play? Swish, score, hooray! But don't forget this. Some letters ay, a,a,a at the end of a word and don't you forget it.

Ai - Say, "A said to I...Get out of my way. I'm saying a today." So when you see ai what do you say? You say AAAAA".

Eigh - Say, "eigh a-a. Eigh a-a ".

Ir, ur, er - Say "I-r RRRRRRR (rev your motorcycle) and ur RRRRRR (rev your motorcycle) in the middle of the word, but it's e-r   RRRRRRR at the end of a word."

Tion - Say, "T-i-o-n, shun, shun, shun. T-i-o-n, shun, shun, shun." Clap above your head each time you say shun, shun, shun.

Sion - Say, "S-i-o-n, shun, shun, shun. S-i-o-n, shun, shun, shun." Clap down by your ankles each time you say shun, shun, shun.

Ph - Say, "When you see p-h, you don't say p-h you say f-f-f-."

Kn - Say, "When you see k-n, you don't say k-n you say n-n-n." When you say n-n-n, you knock lightly tow times on you head and once on you knee.

Ed - Say, "When you see ed at the end of a root word, you say d, t. You also say ed."

Found at: http://www.edu-core.org/byow/folders/esorgen/subpages.asp?id=25&parent_id=25

Appendix H

Comprehension Quickie

Name _____

The Landmark

Paris is known for its Eiffel (I-full) Tower. The
iron tower is a famous city landmark. It was first
built for the 1889 World's Fair in Paris. The tower
stands 984 feet high. People come from all over
to see it.

1. Where is the Eiffel Tower?

   _____

2. What is the tower made of?

   _____

3. Why was it built?

   _____

4. What year was this fair?

   _____

5. How high is the tower?

   _____

6. When people think of the Eiffel Tower, they also think of Paris. This is because the
   tower is a famous _____ of the city.

7. Write a sentence telling what the story was about.

   _____

   _____

Appendix I
Text-to-Text Connections

Name _____

The High Point

The high point of a story is the point at which the story's events are most interesting and exciting. Complete the chart below to compare the high points of *Radio Rescue* and *Cliff Hanger*.

	Radio Rescue	Cliff Hanger
What was the high point in the story?		
What kind of danger did someone in the story face?		
What did this part of the story make you wonder about?		
When did you know that the danger was over?		

Taken from Houghton Mifflin's 3rd Grade Basal Series
Theme 1: Off to Adventure!