Developing ELL Students' Fluency Through Direct Instruction and Repeated Readings using Reader's Theater

A Collaborative Action Research Study

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Approval

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to analyze the effect direct fluency instruction and repeated readings using readers theater on ELL students who live in poverty. Research shows the students who live in poverty and speak english as a second language need more support and direct instruction. However, researchers have found that direct instruction is not enough. Researchers suggest one of the best ways to promote fluency is to do repeated readings. Reader's Theater was suggested as a means of developing fluency through repeated readings. Researchers have found positive results from using Reader's Theater as it promotes engagement and purpose for the repeated readings. During the three week intervention six students participated in a thirty minute direct instruction fluency small group. In the small group students practiced their decoding skills with spelling patterns they were struggling reading, high frequency words they struggling reading and vocabulary development. They did repeated readings using reader's theater to promote engagement and provide purpose for the repeated readings. At the end of each week students performed their Reader's Theater for the class. Students were given pre- and post assessments to determine the validity of the intervention. The assessments include a DIBELS passage with comprehension questions and prosody rubric score, a high frequency words recognition assessment, a Basic Phonics Skills Assessment and a Reading survey that measured reading understanding and engagement. The results of the intervention were very positive and supported the research that has been done. Students made growth in all aspects of fluency: accuracy, automaticity and prosody. Students were more engaged and were able to practice and apply new skills more effectively.

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Chapter 1

The Problem

Fast food workers, mechanics, and doctors have a few things in common. One main commonality is each, and every one of these occupations requires its workers to read fluently. Whether it is reading a menu, a medical chart, or a manual to do the job correctly, it is a necessity to be literate. Another major common factor is that each and every one of these occupations is one that educators expect the future leaders we are teaching in classrooms to one day become. In classrooms across the world, educators are working hard to teach their students how to read fluently. When students have automaticity with their reading because the word-level is effortless, then the attention can be devoted to comprehension (Baker, Smolkowski, Katz, Fien, Seely, Kame'enui, & Beck, 2008). The problem, we as researchers have found, is students who are not fluent in reading by the third grade will have disadvantages and struggles with their education. The probability of educational struggles increases for students living in poverty and English Language Learners. Adler and Fisher (2001) convey this fact through their findings: "Average early reading performance for a school tends to decrease as the proportion of students eligible for free and reduced-cost lunch increases. Hence, the statistical expectation for reading performance in high-poverty schools is relatively low" (p. 616).

Therefore, it is essential that educators determine a meaningful implementation of reading fluency instruction in our classrooms, especially focusing on our English Language Learners (ELL) and students living in poverty.

California has over one million children living in poverty. According to the United States Census Bureau (2016), the state of California has a population estimate of 39,250,017 people. A

total of 23.3% of the 39,250,017 people living in California are under the age of 18, equaling

approximately 9,145,254 children living in California. 15.3% of California's population is living

in poverty, approximately 6,005,252 people. If the poverty percentage was applied to the number

of children in California, about 1,399,224 children are living in poverty (United States Census

Bureau, 2016). According to Nutrition Services through the California Department of Education,

in the 2015-2016 school year, 3,655,445 out of 6,227,268 K-12 students were classified as

receiving free or reduced price meals (FRPM). Calculated out 59% of K-12 students were FRPM

students (California Department of Education, 2016). California also has over one million

children who are English Language Learners. In the 2015-2016 school year, the ELL population

in California's public schools was 1,373,724 according to the California Department of

Education, which was 22.1% of public school students (California Department of Education,

2016).

Hernandez completed a study where he concluded 88 percent of dropout students

struggled with low reading skills in third grade. Hernandez also concluded having low reading

skills was a strong predictor of student dropouts (2011). Howell writes that remedial English and

mathematics courses are offered at 75% of the postsecondary institutions in the United States.

College students of minority and low socioeconomic status (SES) represent a greater proportion

of the remedial courses (Howell, 2011). The greater proportion means that our ELL and low

SES students are entering the postsecondary world already behind.

As a teacher, a person whose life and passion is to teach our youth, accepting this statistic

is unacceptable. The problem is that many high-poverty and English language learner students

lack the reading skills they need to read to learn. Sending students out into the world without the

proper reading skills is not what educators aim for. A change needs to be made to reduce the current problem of having too many students dropping out or not being able to read at a collegiate level.

The purpose of this research was to determine if specific, direct fluency instruction with repeated readings and Reader's Theater could increase ELL and socially-economically disadvantaged students' oral reading fluency rate. Repeated readings and Reader's Theater are two different reading methods. Repeated reading is the rereading of a text over and over. Reader's Theater is the reading of a text in a play form, without props and costumes. The focus is on the text of the story and using one's voice to make the story come to life. The desired outcome of the intervention for this Capstone Project was an increase in student reading fluency to support comprehension.

Researchers A, B and C teach at different schools, in different districts, cities, and counties in California. Each of the schools has a high English language learner and high-poverty population. Each of the school sites has over 85% free and reduced meals and over 80% English language learner populations. In Kindergarten through third grade, children are learning to read and have not yet started reading to learn about other subjects; these years are the foundational reading years. Researchers A and B teach first grade, and Researcher C teaches second grade. A common problem among the three different researchers' classrooms is low reading skills among readers, specifically fluency. Therefore, the focus of this study is increasing the reading fluency of English Language Learners and students living in poverty.

Fluency is one of the core reading systems, as well as comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary. Fluency is influenced by sight word recognition, prosody,

decoding, context clues, and vocabulary. Students can help increase their fluency by practicing reading text at their instructional level daily at school and home. Parent participation is encouraged to help students build their fluency. Some students do not have support at home because the parents are unsure how to help their child build their reading skills. This is an additional problem that can be solved with teacher support.

For this research study on fluency, Researcher A, the Intervention Expert, conducted the intervention in her first-grade classroom. The first-grade students ages range from six to seven years old. Six students were part of the intervention, one boy, and five girls. All six students are English Language Learners. Researcher A's classroom is located in the Vista Unified School District in California. 100% of Researcher A's students have free-reduced lunch and are English language learners. A pre- and post-DIBELS DORF (DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency) passage were administered to determine the growth made in the student's fluency rate. The DIBELS DORF assessment is a one minute timed reading of a passage. The Intervention Expert administered the DORF assessment which determined the student's word count per minute (WCPM) simultaneously assessing the student's level of prosody using a rubric. After the administration of the reading passage, the student answered five comprehension questions on the passage. The Intervention Expert administered the Basic Phonics Skills Test (BPST), which assesses the student's knowledge of decoding and word recognition skills. Researchers B and C l analyzed the data that were collected from the intervention. The data included a pre- and post-survey questionnaire, reading passage, comprehension questions, prosody assessment, high-frequency word list, and Basic Phonics Skills Test.

The interventions used consisted of repeated readings of Reader's Theater passages and

small group direct instruction. The small group instruction was 30 minutes daily. The direct

instruction focused on phonics patterns the students were found to be deficient in, based on the

BPST results. The students read a text at their instructional level. The use of repeated readings

allowed the students to become familiar with the text and increase their automaticity. The

passages contained high-frequency and decodable words. Once students have worked with the

passage through sounding the unknown words out or direct instruction (for high-frequency

words) they were able to practice the automaticity of reading fluency.

The Reader's Theater focused on increasing the student's prosody of reading fluency.

Part of reading fluency is reading with expression, which is what prosody is. Reading a story

with other students in a play form helps students with prosody. The primary focus of the

Reader's Theater is the fluency of reading and not on acting out the parts in a full production.

Fluency was measured for the Reader's Theater by observation of the prosody of the reading

passage. The first time through the passage it was expected that the reading would be choppy and

would noticeably sound like it was read from a script, but by the end of the week, the goal was to

have the script sound as if the students were simply carrying on a conversation.

The research study intervention took place over a three-week period. Each week the small

group instruction focused on new high-frequency words, a new spelling pattern, and a new

Reader's Theater passage. Researchers A, B, and C hoped to see an increase in students' word

count per minute (WCPM) as well as an increase in their prosody of the reading passage. The

desired outcome was to see a growth in the WCPM because that is what is measured with the

DIBELS DORF. Even an increase in one more WCPM would be cause for celebration. Any

increase means that the students are increasing their chances of becoming fluent readers; students

who will not fall into the category of struggling readers after third grade. At the end of first grade, students should have a WCPM of 47. Ideally, after the intervention, the students should be closer to reading 47 WCPM. However, a ten percent increase would show that the implemented intervention truly helped the students.

Purpose of the Study

Educational research clearly illustrates the correlation between reading skills (ability to read and comprehend) and academic achievement (Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016; Ziegenfuss, Odhiambo, & Keyes, 2014; Jacobs, 2016; Perin, 2013). The ability to show competency in all subject areas is based on the capability to read and comprehend. It is tough for students to thrive in school if they are not able to read and interact with the grade-level text. Furthermore, research indicates that a majority of students who are not proficient readers by the end of the third-grade struggle for the rest of their academic career (Balkcom, 2014; Foster, 2007; Kieffer, 2012). Non-proficient readers will not only toil with literacy skills but also with content subjects as environmental supports change and task requirements and knowledge demands increase (Kieffer, 2012) at each grade level. The high school dropout rate for students who are still struggling with reading by the end of third grade is between four to six times greater depending on the level of deficiency in reading skills than their counterparts (Hernandez, 2011). This knowledge places monumental pressure on the primary grades to make sure all students are meeting grade level expectations in reading by the end of second grade.

The fact that the process of reading is so complex further complicates the method of teaching reading skills. To interpret written language in a meaningful way, three different systems in the brain must work together, along with possessing specific skills to create meaning

by being able to decipher abstract symbols (Sousa, 2011). In fact, Sousa (2011), an educator in

neuroscience, says this about the process of learning how to read, "... reading is probably the

most difficult task we ask the young brain to undertake" (p.192). For students who are English

Language Learners and/or socially-economically disadvantaged, the hurdles to become

proficient readers are even greater. These hurdles will be addressed in detail in the literature

review (Chapter 2). As such, the researchers of this study contemplated different interventions

that could counteract some of the hurdles these learners face when trying to become fluent

readers.

The process of reading in and of itself is very complicated. Early intervention for reading

difficulties is crucial for future student success.   This knowledge led the researchers of this study

to examine in greater depth what primary teachers can do to increase students' oral reading

fluency. Hendricks (2017) says this about action research studies: "Thus the process of action

research is, in and of itself, a process of reflection" (p15). At the outset of this study, the

researchers focused on traditional strategies to build oral reading fluency. That is to say, data

based on native English speakers. Upon reviewing the literature, the researchers of this study

reflected on their findings to combat any assumptions or ideological illusions. The findings of

the literature required that the researchers of this study reconsider what would be the most

effective strategies to implement in the study to benefit ELLs and students who are

socio-economically disadvantaged. Based on *reflexive inquiry,* the researchers of this study

added an additional vocabulary component to the direct fluency instruction to meet the particular

needs of ELLs.

The aim of this research was to determine if specific, direct fluency instruction done in

30-minute blocks five times a week along with repeated readings using Reader's Theater could increase ELLs and socially-economically disadvantaged students' oral reading fluency rate. Increasing the fluency of young readers is crucial as there is a direct correlation between fluency and comprehension. As a student's oral reading fluency becomes more automatic, more mental resources are left to attend to text comprehension (Geva & Farnia, 2012). This research further lends itself to the importance of early, targeted instruction to help ELLs and socially-economically disadvantaged students become proficient in their English literacy skills. The research questions that this paper addresses are:

1. Primary Question: What impact can using direct fluency instruction and repeated readings with Reader's Theater have on the fluency rate of first grade ELLs and students living in poverty?

2. Secondary Question: What effect will Reader's Theater have on students' attitude about reading?

Definitions of Terms:

Accuracy: The percentage of words read correctly. Calculated by the number of correct words read divided by total words read (Hall, 2006).

Automaticity: a term used to describe when a skill applied without having to devote attention to the skill (Hall, 2006).

DIBELS: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. A screening instrument used to assess what reading skills are lacking (Hall, 2006).

English Language Learner (ELL): an ELL is defined as a person who was not born in the United States or whose native language is one other than English, or someone who comes from an

environment where a language other than English is the dominant language or someone who is

Alaska Native or American Indian in which their environment a language other than English has

made a considerable impact on her or his level of English language proficiency (Department of

Education, 2016).

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Please refer to the definition of English Language Learner.

The definitions are interchangeable. However, ELL takes out any negative connotation and is

now the preferred term.

Low Socioeconomic Status (SES): low status based on education, income, and occupation

Fluency: the ability for students to read a text with accuracy, automaticity, and prosody to

comprehend the text

Free or Reduced Price Meals (FRPM): Depending on the household income, some students

qualify for their breakfast and lunch prices to be reduced to an amount more affordable for them.

Some households qualify for their meals to be completely free. The households with free meals

are living in poverty.

Reader's Theater: using scripts to encourage repeated reading of a text to perform it for an

audience to convey the meaning of the passage. No props, costumes or sets are used in Reader's

Theater.

Poverty: In the United States, one is considered to be living in poverty if their income is less than

the median income (Petrilli & Wright, 2016).

Conclusion

In order to have students be college and career ready by the time they graduate from high

school, they must possess a high level of literacy skills. This starts with the five key components

of reading being developed in the early grades. This development of early literacy skills is of

paramount importance for ELLs and socially-economically disadvantaged students. As such,

this study was carried out to discern if direct fluency instruction and repeated readings had a

positive impact on ELLs' and socially-economically disadvantaged students' oral reading

fluency. Chapter 1 discussed the problem of students living in poverty and/or English Language

Learners who are falling behind academically. Chapter 2 will review the literature, specifically

the components that make-up fluency, English Language Learners and the struggles they face,

poverty, and the effect of poverty on student achievement.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In order to properly understand the context surrounding the topic of fluency, one must study the literature that pertains to fluency instruction, and intervention for ELLs, especially those who live in poverty. Fluency is more often than not considered the forgotten component to reading instruction (Hall, 2006). There are a few reasons why educators might feel this way. First of all, many educators neglect fluency because they treat it as a separate component of instruction and feel they do not have the time for it in the classroom throughout the day. (Rasinski, 2006). When fluency is taught as a separate entity from a reading program, the emphasis tends to be on speed rather than the primary purpose of reading, which is to gain meaning and understanding (Rasinski, 2006; Rasinski, 2012). It is no wonder that fluency is considered a forgot element of literacy instruction in the education field.

There are two groups of students who need extra support in their literacy development: students who are second language English learners and students who live in poverty. These students can have serious delays in literacy development. Between a lack of resources and lack of language development, these students have a significant achievement gap and it is the responsibility of the teachers to support them.

This review will analyze the research conducted on filling the gap for these students and how best to develop their fluency skills. In this review the following topics will be discussed: What is fluency and how is it measured? Why is fluency important for literacy development? What are possible interventions for improving fluency? English language learners and the impact that their language development can have on student achievement will be defined. The benefits

and barriers of fluency instruction for English language learners will be discussed. Then, poverty and the impact poverty has on student achievement will be explained. Finally, a connection between reading fluency and poverty will be made. These topics are essential for understanding the basis of this research study. The hope in conducting this research was to gain a better understanding of the concept of fluency as it pertains to ELLs who live in poverty and to develop an appropriate and effective intervention to help struggling readers.

What is Fluency?

There is no definitive definition of fluency. The meaning is widely debated among experts in the field (Hall, 2006). However, one thing is highly agreed upon; fluency consists of three main elements which have some degree of importance: accuracy, automaticity, and prosody (Guerin & Murphy 2015; Hall, 2006; Hudson et.al 2005; Kuhn et.al. 2010; Rasinski, 2006). To understand fluency, it is important to understand the how researchers define the terms associated with fluency.

Accuracy

Fluent readers need to be able to read words accurately. Many researchers define accuracy as correctly decoding a word (Hall, 2006; Hudson et.al 2005; Rasinski, 2006; Kuhn et. al. 2010). Decoding is being able to blend sounds to form a word from its parts (Hudson et.al, 2005). To read accurately, students need to have a firm grasp of the letter and sound identification, be able to blend sounds together, and use context clues to determine the pronunciation and meaning of words (Hudson et.al, 2005). If a student does not read accurately, it will affect the student's comprehension of the passage and miss the author's intended meaning (Hudson et.al. 2005; Rasinski, 2006). Accuracy is one of the first steps to developing fluency

because when a reader does have accurate letter-sound recognition and become an accurate

decoder their lack of fluency becomes their next area of growth (Hudson et.al. 2005). To develop

a student's' accuracy, they need ample opportunities to interact with texts and word families

(Rasinski, Rupley, Paige & Nichols, 2016). Accuracy is the foundational aspect of fluency that

needs to be developed for a reader to become fluent and move into the other aspects of fluency,

which are automaticity and prosody. Accuracy is often measured by using a running record and

miscue analysis to determine student strengths and weaknesses in their literacy development

(Hudson et.al., 2005).

Automaticity

Researchers define automaticity as an immediate and effortless recognition of a word in a

sentence (Hall, 2006; Hudson et. al. 2005; Rasinski 2012; Rasinski et. al. 2016; Turner, 2012).

 Automatic word recognition can apply to decoding a word or reading sight words. Sight words

are words that come up most frequently in a text and usually do not follow conventional spelling

patterns. These are words that students should know without having to decode (Rasinski et.al.

2016). Students are considered to have automaticity when they can read a word with speed,

effortlessness, autonomy, and lack of consciousness. That means a fluent reader does not even

have to think about reading, it is just something that comes naturally and without effort (Kuhn

et.al, 2012). When a student has automaticity in word recognition, they are using less working

memory in their brain and they increase the ability for the brain to process the meaning of the

passage, thus improving comprehension (Turner, 2012). Students with poor automaticity read in

a very slow and laborious fashion and this makes comprehension nearly impossible (Mraz, M.,

Nichols, W., Caldwell, S., Sargent, S., Beisley, R., Rupley, W., 2013) Kuhn et. al. (2012) and

Rasinski et. al. (2016) state that without automaticity students would not be able to read the

passage in a meaningful way, thus making automaticity imperative for building comprehension.

To measure automaticity, a sight word recognition test or even a decodable word list assessment

would be appropriate. That way the instructor knows what word patterns students know and

which they are struggling with (Hudson et.al, 2005).

Prosody

Prosody is defined as reading with expression and intonation (Kuhn et.al. 2010),

appropriate pitch and stress (Guerin & Murphy, 2015), as well as appropriate phrasing while

reading (Rasinski et.al. 2016). Rasinski adds that prosody is a meaningful expression that

provides evidence of understanding while reading a text (2006). In essence, students who read

with prosody read like they do when they speak (Mraz et.al., 2013) When reading the prosodic

features, they signal questions, surprise, exclamation and other meanings beyond the words in

the text (Hudson et.al., 2005). Prosody is a critical part of reading fluency. When a fluent reader

reads with prosody, they can better grasp the intended meaning of the text. Students with poor

prosody inappropriately group words together and or use inappropriate expression while reading

and can confuse the author's intended meaning of the text (Hudson et. al., 2005). Rasinski states

that prosody is the gateway to comprehension (2006.) Hudson et. al. agrees by stating that

reading with prosody proves that the reader understands what they are reading (2005). Prosody is

a little harder to measure as a teacher. The best way to assess a student's prosody is through

observation and listening to a student's inflection, expression, and phrase boundaries (Hudson et.

al., 2005). Hudson et. al. also suggests for teachers to make a checklist of prosodic features to

assess and support student developing their prosody and becoming fluent readers (2005).

Why Fluency is Important

Fluency instruction is a vital aspect of literacy development; however, many educators misunderstand what fluency is and they do not understand the importance of direct instruction of fluency skills (Rasinski, 2006). Fluency is important first and foremost because it is evidence of good reading skills (Hudson et. al., 2005). Good readers have accurate word recognition, appropriate decoding skills, and they can read words automatically without even thinking about it. Finally, good readers use expression and proper phrasing to make meaning and show their understanding of the text.

Another reason that fluency is important is that the research shows it is an indicator of good comprehension skills (Hudson et. al., 2005). When students are fluent readers, they are better able to comprehend what they are reading. Fluency is the bridge to comprehension (Hall, 2006; Rasinski, 2012). The reason fluent readers are better able to comprehend what they are reading is that they are spending less of their work memory energy on core competencies like decoding and word recognition and they can devote that energy to higher order thinking skills such as comprehension (Kuhn et. al, 2010). Students are also able to use this newly freed up space to make connections to background knowledge thus improving comprehension which is the ultimate goal of reading (Hall, 2006). Also when children read fluently and with meaning, it makes reading more enjoyable and children will have a new found enthusiasm for reading (Rasinski et.al. 2016) Ultimately, reading fluency is important because it moves children from learning to read to reading to learn.

Interventions for Improving Fluency

Researchers have explored many different methods of improving fluency in struggling students. This section of the review will discuss what the research suggests are the best and most common instructional practices. Some of the instructional strategies used to improve fluency include wide reading, deep reading, and repeated readings. Researchers also suggest a direct instruction of fluency skills and building accuracy and automaticity in students so they can move into building comprehension of a given passage. Reis, McCoach, Schreiber, Eckert and Gubbins, looked at direct instruction of fluency skills and realized it was not enough for a student to achieve the fluency level required to be successful readers (2007). Students need more than a direct reading instruction to improve fluency and comprehension. In their study, they used an enrichment program called Schoolwide Enrichment Model in Reading and saw many significant gains in all students in the study (2007). It is important to build these lower level skills because a student is then unable to develop comprehension (Hall, 2006). However, it seems as though direct instruction is not enough and a lack of reading comprehension is seen among students in the classroom.

The most common practice used by researchers for building fluency skills is repeated readings (Hall, 2006) Repeated readings is a strategy used to help students develop automaticity in decoding connected texts (Turner, 2012). Hall adds to the definition of repeated readings by stating that students reread a passage with support from the teacher until the desired fluency rate is achieved (2006). Mraz et.al. state that reading the same passage multiple times has shown significant growth in speed, accuracy, and comprehension (2013). Not only that, but these benefits can transfer to new texts (Mraz et,al., 2013). Hall suggests many different ways to

administer repeated readings, such as echo readings, choral readings, and silent readings or even performances (Hall, 2006). Begeny, Krouse, Ross and Mitchel suggest even more ways to increase fluency, such as passage previewing. In their study, they compared the effect of repeated readings and passage previewing as a way to improve fluency. They found that repeated readings were the most effective way to improve a student's fluency level (2009).

The main question that many educators have with using repeated readings in the classroom is what types of texts they should use. Some researchers suggest using connected texts. Connected texts are different reading materials with many of the same words in the book (Turner 2012). In his study on increasing word recognition using the repeated reading approach through fluency-oriented reading strategies which include connected text, he was able to see significant gains for all students using repeated readings of connected texts (2012). Kuhn et. al. explains that when students are exposed to a substantial amount of connected text, their automaticity increases and they can then focus their attention on the harder and more important skill of comprehension (2010). However, Rasinski suggests the best texts to use are ones that students can perform such as poems, songs, Reader's Theater and chants (2006). Rasinski explains his preference by stating that repeated readings should be meaningful and purposeful and the best way to do that is to allow students to perform their readings (2006). Repeated readings also increase the students' engagement and will increase the students' prosody which will prove a student's understanding of the text they are reading (Rasinski, 2012).

Reader's Theater is one suggested way to use repeated readings in the classroom. Reader's Theater is the performance of written scripts that require multiple reads to deliver the message of the script to an audience (Chase & Rasinski, 2009). In Reader's Theater there are no

props, costumes, or settings, so readers must use their prosodic features in their voice to deliver the meaning of the script being read (Chase & Rasinski, 2009). Since students have to use their voice to convey meaning during Reader's Theater, they are developing their prosodic features. When students can read with expression, it is usually an indicator of good comprehension (Chase & Rasinski, 2009). Using reader's theater will not only help students construct meaning out of the text, but also keep students motivated to keep reading (Mraz et.al., 2013). When readers are struggling they need the motivation to keep trying so they can improve fluency (Mraz et. al., 2013). By using Reader's Theater, poems, or chants struggling students are more motivated and are thus more successful in improving their literacy skills (Mraz et.al., 2013)

Rasinski, does however, caution the use of repeated readings if the administrator is unclear on the focus. The focus should be creating meaning and not speed. If fluency instruction focuses on prosody students can develop their expressive oral language and create the meaning of the passage. He states that the main goal of repeated readings should be improving comprehension and making meaning (2012). In a study conducted by Gerin and Murphy, they used repeated readings as a way to increase fluency. They focused on measuring the different aspects of fluency, accuracy, automatic and prosody. The performed pre- test and post-tests on each aspect of fluency and found significant gains in all aspects of fluency by using repeated readings (2015).

Overall, educators need to build fluency and students need a lot of exposure to connected text. They need to have purposeful and meaningful experiences with different types of texts such as poems, chants, and Reader's Theater. When students are given numerous opportunities to practice their reading and develop their skills, their fluency will increase, and they can then

devote their energy on building comprehension and making meaning of a text. Many researchers used direct instruction of fluency skills that include accuracy and automaticity but forgot about prosody. It is shown through studies that direct instruction by itself is not enough. However, if you add another component such as Reader's Theater is which can focus more on prosody to build comprehension, then it is possible to have a more substantial impact on fluency then just direct instruction alone.

English Language Learners

The current landscape in America's public schools provides a unique opportunity but also a challenge to provide a quality education to the linguistically and culturally diverse student population that speaks English as a second language (Muyskens, Betts, Lua & Marston, 2009). The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) states that in 2013-14 the number of English Language Learners in public schools was 9.3%. This equates to about 5 million EL students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Colorado, Washington, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia are the top ten states (listed in descending order) with the highest percent of ELLs in public education (Migration Policy Institute). The United States Census Bureau (2015) reveals that there are more than 350 different languages spoken in homes in the United States. Soto, Hooker, and Batalova (2015) state that the top three languages spoken by ELLs are Spanish 71%, Chinese (includes Cantonese and Mandarin) 4%, and Vietnamese 3%. In the future, the projected number of English Language Learners will continue to increase. One projected number of ELLs is that by the year 2030 40% of school-age children will be English language learners (Thomas & Collier, 2002 as cited in Russakoff & Foundation for Child, 2011).

English Proficiency Levels

The Proficiency Level Descriptors for English Language Learners in the State of California are Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging (formerly beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced). ELLs in the Emerging level have limited receptive and productive English skills. Second Language Learners in the Expanding proficiency level have moved past phrases and simple sentences to being able to engage using newly acquired English vocabulary. They also use English to maneuver through more cognitively demanding situations. ELLs in the Bridging level can communicate effectively and appropriately in social and academic situations and are refining their English language capabilities in a wide range of circumstances (Common Core State Standards California, 2012). Educators have the duty to help ELLs move through these proficiency levels and to become fluent English proficient. However, this is a daunting task as research shows that it takes on average five to seven years to become proficient in a second language (proficiency refers to the domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

Further complicating this undertaking is the urgency to reclassify ELLs as fluent English speakers before they enter middle school. The dropout rate increases for ELLs who are not fluent English proficient as early as middle school. Furthermore, poor job opportunities and high poverty rates are other consequences of subpar literacy achievement for English Language Learners (Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015). In the school year 2012-2013, the overall graduation rate was 81 percent, whereas only 61 percent of non-English speakers graduated (Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016). ELLs in middle school not only have the demands of learning literacy skills in English but they now have the demands to learn content material while at the same time

experiencing social, emotional, and biological changes that occur during adolescence

(Ziegenfuss, Odhiambo, & Keyes, 2014). This places an enormous responsibility on elementary

teachers to develop literacy skills as early as possible for all students but in particular English

Language Learners.

ELLs' Struggle

Research shows that there is an academic achievement gap between ELLs and their

English as a first language peers which can be seen from Pre-kindergarten all the way through

the college level (Gibson, 2016). Young children who are not native English speakers, face a

formidable task of trying to master literacy skills in English while at the same time continuing to

develop a sound foundation in the native tongue (Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016).   These

early learners, pre-kindergarten through third grade, are known as *dual language learners*, as

they are learning two languages simultaneously (Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016).   Many

studies point to the importance of being a proficient reader by the third grade as not to have

long-term academic difficulties. Sousa (2011) declares that one of the most arduous tasks that

the young brain can take on is learning how to read. In fact, it takes the development of distinct

skills and three different neural systems that work in harmony to produce meaningful language

from obscure symbols (Sousa, 2011).

The National Reading Panel and Reading First have identified five critical components of

reading, which are phonological/phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle/ phonics, vocabulary,

fluency, and text comprehension. Sousa (2011) defines these five critical components of

reading: phonemic awareness is the reader's ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes

before they can interact with written text. Alphabetic principle refers to the understanding that

spoken words can be represented by symbols (letters). Additionally, students learn vocabulary

through direct instruction and everyday life experiences in both spoken and written form. The

ability to read with accuracy, speed, and prosody is the fluency component of reading.   Finally,

text comprehension is the ability to construct meaning from the text by being able to make

inferences, self-monitoring to ensure text makes sense and developing the ability to quickly

disregard unconnected meanings of words based on context. English Language Learners need

additional support to master all these skills as being a fluent reader is the fundamental framework

needed to be successful academically.

Benefits of Fluency Instruction for ELLs

Undoubtedly, the goal of reading is comprehension. Many studies show how oral

reading fluency can assist with comprehension. Geva and Farnia (2012) point to research done

by Wolf and Katzir-Cohen (2001) in which, they make the correlation between word fluency and

text fluency and comprehension; when "…word decoding becomes effortless and fast, more

attentional resources can be allocated to higher level reading skills, including text reading

fluency and text comprehension" (p.1821). In other words, when students use all their cognitive

resources to decode words very little mental resources are left to construct meaning. As such,

developing oral reading fluency is important as it helps students read words in the text more

easily and quickly which leaves more cognitive abilities to construct meaning. (Grasparil &

Hernandez, 2015). This is known as *automaticity theory*.

Barriers

Grasparil and Hernandez (2015) assert that for English Language Learners, who struggle

with oral reading fluency, placing too much emphasis (instructional time) on words per minute is

ineffective. Rather for ELLs more direct instruction should focus on developing academic

vocabulary. Jacobs (2016) points out that second language learners typically pick-up *playground*

and *social* English rapidly. However, many times ELLs stumble to master the academic

language in English. Therefore, targeted vocabulary instruction is essential for ELLs for them to

grasp concepts, read a complicated text, and write succinctly (Jacobs, 2016).   To construct

meaning, readers must draw from background knowledge (which requires a substantial

vocabulary bank) and be able to apply comprehension strategies (Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015).

 Many times ELLs lack these skills. Therefore, focusing solely on words per minute of ELLs

most likely will not give an accurate measure of comprehension.

Defining Poverty

Low socioeconomic status (Low SES) and poverty are two synonymous terms, therefore,

they will both be used throughout this work. According to the United States Census Bureau, the

percentage of persons in the United States living in poverty from 2011 to 2015 was 13.5%

(2016). Petrelli and Wright explain two different types of poverty: relative and absolute. Families

are considered to be in relative poverty if their household income is less than half of the median

income for the United States. Absolute poverty calculates all monetary and non-monetary

income. The monetary and non-monetary income can come from governmental transfers, labor,

and capital (2016). In comparison with the countries of Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany,

Finland, Canada, Netherlands, and Luxembourg, the relative poverty rate of the United States

outranks them all. The absolute poverty rate comes in tied for third place with Germany. Only

Ireland and the United Kingdom have a higher absolute poverty rate (Petrelli & Wright, 2016).

From 2011 to 2015, the median household income of families living in the United States was

$53,889. Therefore, any family whose annual income is less than $26,944.50 is considered to be living in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2016).

According to Petrilli and Wright (2016), poverty is associated with single-parent families, young parents, higher rates of alcoholism and other substance abuse, child abuse, neglect, and criminal activity. These factors, along with lower test scores, are correlated with higher rates of high school dropouts. Parents who drop out have a higher chance of living in poverty than those who complete school (2016). Gorski, on the other hand, claims people living in poverty are constantly being stereotyped and it is more affluent people who have problems with alcoholism (2012).

The Effect of Poverty on Student Achievement

A relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance has been a focus of many academic studies (Lam, 2014). Petrilli and Wright agree that the relationship between the two is evident (2016). According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the achievement gap between poor and wealthy United States families is greater than the gap in any other OECD nation (Wallenstein, 2012). Many educators are becoming frustrated and feel the need to fight to close the gap is futile because the achievement gap seems to be widening and societal problems are out of their hands. However, closing the achievement gap is an important issue in education today (Sanchez, 2008).

Families who are more financially secure and do not struggle to make ends meet have a head start academically before starting school (Wallenstein, 2012). Families living in poverty have less access to prenatal care, and high-quality early education programs, such as preschool or full-day kindergarten, which could help support their children's language skills (Gorski, 2012).

Gorski states in his research that it is a typical stereotype that people of poverty do not value education because their involvement in the school climate is limited. In fact low-income families encourage their children to read and limit television time more than affluent families do, but since they are not able to take time off of work in fear of losing their job, have transportation problems, child care problems, or feel a class difference they are unable to make it to school more often to participate in functions for parents (2012). Low-income parents face financial stress which means extra non-essential expenses like private tutoring, summer camps, educational games, technology, and other educational supports are often outside the reach of what families can afford and provide for their children (Petrilli & Wright, 2016). The inability to provide extra outside resources for their children does not mean they do not value education. It just means they have to put more faith into the school system to support their child(ren)'s learning.

The Connection Between Poverty and Reading Fluency

In the United States, the majority of school children should exit the primary grades (kindergarten through third grade) knowing how to read. Unfortunately, many students are not exiting third grade able to read. There has been a discrepancy between students' reading ability based on their socio-economic status. Students with a lower status have been linked to having a lower chance of exiting the primary grades being able to read than those of a higher status. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP, collected data on fourth-grade students comparing scores for those eligible for free and reduced lunch and students who did not qualify. The results revealed that more than twice as many students who qualify for free and reduced lunch scored lower on the reading performance than students who do not qualify for free and

reduced lunches, fifty-eight percent of free and reduced lunch students scored below basic compared to twenty-seven percent of students who do not qualify scored below basic (Adler & Fisher, 2001).

Wallenstein described a difference between the amount of time that students living in poverty and students of higher socioeconomic status spend with literacy activities before starting school. The difference is an average of about 400 fewer hours. Having fewer hours of exposure to literacy can lead to the students reading and writing abilities to be two to four years behind grade level (Wallenstein, 2012). A smaller and less complex vocabulary is another reading skill that is unfortunately academically behind in students living in poverty compared to students who do not live in poverty. Less-developed reading skills are a strong predictor of reading proficiency in children living in poverty throughout their schooling (Gorski, 2012). If students are behind from the beginning of their education and do not learn to read independently and fluently in the early grades, catching up becomes a harder obstacle that seemingly becomes out of reach (Adler & Fisher, 2001).

It is important that even though children living in poverty might start out farther behind academically, it does not mean those students will forever be behind if correct measures are taken. Adler and Fisher (2001) list five key features of a reading program where a case study was done at a school that consistently outperformed schools in the state and district on reading achievement. The case study was completed at Emerald Elementary School where fifty percent of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch and the mobility rate of the school was forty percent. The reading program had a strong focus on student learning outcomes, multiple reading programs in every classroom, shared responsibility for student success, strong leadership at the

school and classroom levels, and veteran, knowledgeable, coherent, and committed staff (2001). Embracing these key features increased the reading performance of this low-income school and should be considered by other schools.

Conclusion

To close the achievement gap between ELLs and socially-economically disadvantaged students and their peers, there must be early, systematic direct instruction in the five key components of reading. While there is a lot of research on the need and value of early oral reading fluency instruction for native English speakers (Gyovai, Cartledge, Kourea, Yurick, & Gibson, 2009) the same cannot be said of limited proficient English learners. More studies need to be done to accurately measure how oral reading fluency affects ELLs' reading comprehension. On the research that is available, it contends that besides the traditional direct instruction that is given to developing word recognition, decoding skills, and words per minute, there must be an extra component for ELLs. This extra component is "academic vocabulary knowledge and skills" (Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015, p. 35). The findings of the literature have led this study in the direction of developing the reading component of oral reading fluency using the intervention of direct instruction with specialized vocabulary development and repeated reading using Reader's Theater. In Chapter 2 the researchers reviewed the literature that supports the project. Fluency was defined and discussed and intervention options were introduced. The relationship between poverty, English-language development and fluency were discussed as well as the benefits of having direct instruction for these students along with repeated reading through Reader's Theater. In Chapter 3 the intervention and methodology will be thoroughly explained as well as data collection and validity of the intervention.

Chapter 3
Methods

In the following section, the setting and participants of the study will be thoroughly

described, as well as the role of the researcher and data collection plan. There is also a detailed

description of the direct instruction of fluency skills and how Reader's Theater will be

implemented to support repeated readings to increase the participants' fluency. We will discuss

our ethical practices and the strength of our validity so that future researchers can perform the

intervention as well.

Setting

This action research plan took place in an elementary school located in a small district in

North County San Diego. The area in which this school is located is predominantly Hispanic

families who have low socioeconomic statuses. Most of the families live in small apartments

with multiple families living together. Every classroom in the school has basic technology and

access to Wi-Fi. In kindergarten and first the students have one-to-one iPad, and in grades 2-5

students have one-to-one Chromebooks. Students have access to many online learning programs

for blended learning opportunities such as Lexia, a core reading program designed to support

students in phonics and decoding skills, as well as ST Math, a math program designed to support

students with conceptual mathematical concepts based on the current math standards per grade

level.

Students are involved in a cohesive and extensive English Language Development

program where English language instruction is both designated and integrated throughout the

curriculum. Students receive 45 minutes a day of designated English language instruction.

Students also have blended learning opportunities in this program and use Achieve 3000 which

supports language vocabulary and grammar. Students also receive special education services based on needs such as language deficits and support in math and reading. The school staffs full-time speech and language specialists as well as aides, resource teachers for special education that pull students out of class to provide support services or come into the classroom to provide support services based on IEP requirements. There are a full-time counselor and assistant principal who support students with coping skills and bully prevention programs and discipline strategies through restorative justice.

At this school, there is a total of 748 students. Recent test scores for this school are as follows: 21% of students in grades 3-5 are scoring proficient or above in English Language Arts and 14% of students grades 3-5 are scoring proficient or above in math. Recent demographics for this school include Hispanic/Latino: 90.8%, White 4.1%, Black/African American 2.1%, Two or More Races 1.1%, Pilipino .9%, Asian .4% (School Accountability Report Card, 2015). According to the school accountability report card,94% of the student population is considered socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 60% of the students are considered English Language Learners (2015).

Student Participants

This study consisted of first-graders between the ages of six and seven years old, one boy and five girls. All students are classified as English-language learners. All students have a primary language other than English spoken at home. All participants are part of a general education class with one female teacher. All students involved in the intervention had moderate to significant gaps in reading fluency and were not performing at grade level. In order to fully implement the intervention appropriately, and also take into consideration the short time frame

for implementation of the intervention adequately, the intervention expert only worked with a

small group of six kids who have the same fluency struggles, accuracy, and rate scores as well as

students who have the same missing automaticity in high frequency word recognition. These

students were struggling with long vowel pairs and r-controlled vowels. They lacked

automaticity and accuracy when reading these word patterns. Also, the participants had gaps in

their prosody. They made long pauses when reading words with long vowel pairs and r

controlled vowels. By making sure the students are all at the same level, there was a stronger

case for the validity of intervention provided to these students.

Role of Researcher

There were three researchers involved in this project. This study consisted of one

intervention expert and two data analysis experts. The intervention expert was in charge of

implementing the intervention in the classroom. The expert selected students who had qualified

for the intervention based on scores from the pretest on DIBELS fluency tests with

comprehension questions and a prosody score on the DIBELS passage based off of a rubric.

Students were given a Basic Phonics Skills Test (BPST) for accuracy and automaticity of word

identification. Then they received a high-frequency word test to assess the student's

automaticity. The last assessment administered was a questionnaire on student feelings and

attitudes on reading and reading instruction.

The intervention expert implemented the intervention for three weeks, collecting data

through observation notes and gave a post-test using the same tests on the pretest to determine

the effectiveness of the intervention. Once the intervention was complete, the other two

researchers completed the data analysis. They determined the effectiveness and validity of the

intervention based on the participating students' post fluency scores on the DIBELS passage with comprehension questions and rubric scores on prosody, their post scores on the BPST and high-frequency word list. The data analysis experts looked at the students' attitudes and feelings about reading to see if the intervention was effective in improving the motivation of students to keep practicing to improve their literacy skills.

The intervention Expert for this project has been teaching for six years at the same school where the intervention will be held. She has been teaching first grade for the last five years and is very familiar with the first grade Common Core standards. She is also very familiar with the population at the school, as she has regularly interacted with the students and parents. The intervention expert also lives in the neighboring community from her students and grew up in the same district. The teacher is aware of the student population at the school as well as the needs of the students who participated in the investigation.

Data Analysis Expert 1 for this project has been in education for sixteen years; all of which has been in the same school district. She has taught fourth and first grade and is currently teaching second grade. Data Analysis Expert 1 has also served as site ELL Coordinator and Resource Testing Coordinator for a two-year time span.

Data Analysis Expert 2 for this project has been teaching for six years. She has taught Kindergarten through third grade at the same school site and district in Northern California. Throughout the intervention, she was teaching first grade, the same grade as the intervention group. Having taught kindergarten through third grade gave Data Analysis Expert 2 a background experience in the importance of early reading fluency. She was also well versed in the Common Core standards for first grade.

Intervention Plan

According Sarah L. Hall, author of "I've DIBEL'D Now What?" reading fluency is a "neglected component of reading." (2006, p. 247) There are many reasons why a student has poor reading fluency. They can have low sight word recognition. They can have variations in processing words they know. Students can have poor decoding skills and stumble over words they do not know. Students may lack the skills of using context clues to identify words and finally students can have problems processing vocabulary and making meaning of words when reading (Hall, 2006, p. 248). There are also many different ways to address increasing fluency for students. Hall (2006) suggests partner readings, recorded readings, reader's theater choral reading, echo reading, and repeated readings. However, Hall states "repeated readings and partner readings are more efficient in improving fluency" (2006, p. 250). The goal of the intervention was to help poor readers develop their fluency because their reading tended to be labored and disconnected. They were focused on decoding at the word level which makes comprehension difficult (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). These students who struggle with fluency needed direct instruction on how to read fluently and need many opportunities for intense fluency practice incorporated into their reading program (Hudson et.al., 2005). Our intervention plan addressed the needs our research has indicated, and we want to provide that intense fluency instruction into our daily small group instruction where students will be given numerous opportunities to practice and develop their literacy skills as well as develop their understanding of the three main aspects of fluency which include accuracy, automaticity, and prosody.

Two Weeks Before Intervention

The intervention teacher administered all pre-tests. These pre-tests included a DIBELS fluency passage with comprehension questions. She also scored the students' prosody on the DIBELS passage using a prosody rubric from Rasinski's Multidimensional Fluency Rubric. Then the intervention expert administered the students BPST and found phonics patterns with which students struggled. After assessing the BPST, the intervention expert administered a high-frequency word test based on the student's current classroom list. Finally, the teacher administered a reading survey and determined the students' feelings and attitudes toward reading and reading activities. During this week, the teacher used the data collected to determine the appropriate participants for the intervention. Once the participants were determined, the intervention expert sent out informed consent forms to the parents and the students.

One Week Before Intervention

The intervention expert analyzed data from the pre-tests of the participants. She collected material such as reader's theater scripts that support the student's needs and interests. She also determined phonics patterns with which students would need direct instruction. According to Hudson et.al. decoding skills are the first part of reading fluency. Without accuracy, students could not make meaning and comprehend what they are reading (2005). She then determined a list of high-frequency words that the students struggled with and would provide direct instruction on during the intervention. Finally, she determined what kind of vocabulary would be necessary to discuss from the Reader's Theater scripts. Since these students are ELLs, they needed more vocabulary support to build comprehension. She then compiled the information and determined a thirty-minute block of direct instruction with Reader's Theater fluency instruction. (see Table 1)

Table 1: *Thirty Minute Intervention Plan*

10 minutes	Phonics decoding instruction
5 minutes	High frequency word instruction
5 minutes	Vocabulary instruction
10 minutes	Readers theater fluency instruction

Also, during the week before the implementation of the intervention, the intervention expert took time and discussed the different aspects of fluency with the student participants. Each day they discussed these characteristics and listened to the teacher model fluent reading skills while the students echo read the stories. The intervention expert also taught students how to read scripts during this week and explained how Reader's Theater worked so that during the intervention they were only focused on reading, building fluency and comprehension.

Weekly Intervention Plan

The following was the day-by-day intervention plan for the three-week intervention period. The schedule was as follows for each day for each section in the thirty-minute block: On Monday the intervention expert pulled her group of students for the intervention. The teacher started with a decoding lesson on one of the phonics patterns – such as long vowels or specific vowel teams – which the teacher noticed this group of students struggled with. During this lesson, the teacher re-introduced the pattern and asked students to practice decoding the word list using that phonics patterns. For high-frequency word instruction, the teacher picked two words from the high-frequency word list with which the students struggled. She re-introduced the words and had students practice them a few times. For the vocabulary lesson, the teacher picked two to three words from the Reader Theaters script, with which she felt students would struggle. The teacher introduced vocabulary by giving the definition, providing a picture, and using the word in a sentence to build context for the vocabulary. Finally, the teacher introduced the Reader's Theater script. On Monday the teacher and the students read through the script together. They discussed the story line and built context. The teacher helped students make connections with word patterns and vocabulary taught that session. Students read through the script one more

time with a partner before the end of the session.

On Tuesday the intervention expert reviewed the same phonics pattern. She asked students to decode a new word list with the same phonics pattern. She introduced two new high-frequency words from the assessment list that students did not know. She then reviewed the old words from the day before using flash cards. Students had to read and repeat the words with automaticity. Students reviewed vocabulary and definitions from the Reader's Theater script. During the Reader's Theater instruction students read through the script one time as a group. They echo read the script with the teacher one time. They then were divided into groups of two. The students then picked their characters and practiced reading their part in the script with their group. The teacher walked around and monitored their reading, provided assistance when needed and gave constructive feedback. The teacher made observation notes of fluency skills and motivation for reading.

On Wednesday the intervention expert reviewed the phonics pattern for the week. She had students decode a new word list with the phonics pattern. Students were given two new high-frequency words they struggled with from the assessment. She then reviewed all the words from the week using flashcards. Students had to read and repeat the words with automaticity. The teacher reviewed the vocabulary with the students. For Reader's Theater, the students and the intervention expert read the script chorally, discussing different prosodic features that she noticed they were struggling with the day before. Students went through and highlighted the words that had the spelling pattern for the week thus improving their accuracy and helping students pay attention to the pattern they were struggling with. Students were then sent to work in their groups and practice their scripts, making notes of the different prosodic features they

discussed as a group. The teacher walked around listening to the group's work, gave feedback, and took observation notes of progress and struggles.

On Thursday the intervention expert reviewed the phonics pattern from the week. Students decoded the word list with the phonics pattern. Students were given two new high-frequency words to practice from their list with flashcards. The teacher reviewed the other high-frequency words from the week. Students had to read and repeat the words with automaticity. The teacher then reviewed the vocabulary from the week. For Reader's Theater, students and the intervention expert circled all the punctuation marks in the script and discussed the importance of punctuation and how authors use their punctuation to tell readers how to read the sentences in the book. Then the students were partnered up with a different partner. One student was a stronger reader than the other. They read through the script together, working on different aspects of fluency. Then students got to work in their groups and practice for their performance on Friday.

On Friday the students spent five to ten minutes practicing their script with their group. Then the rest of the thirty-minute block was spent on performing their scripts in front of the class. The teacher took notes of prosody and other fluency components. This daily plan was implemented for three weeks. Each week had a different phonics pattern and each week had a new script with new vocabulary.

Data Collection Methods

Multiple measures of data were collected pre- and post-intervention. Multiple measures were collected to triangulate the data. Triangulating the data increases the validity by increasing the credibility and corroborating the findings (Hendricks, 2017).

Prior to and after the intervention process, each student was given four assessments and a questionnaire to find out their interest in reading. Two of the four assessments involved the same DIBELS passage (see Appendix A). The read both of the passages cold, meaning they had never read the passages before. A DIBELS passage is a short story for the students to read. The first assessment was to calculate their beginning words correct per minute (WCPM) and accuracy. They were given a passage to cold read and were timed for one minute. The intervention teacher marked the words read incorrectly to calculate their correct words read per minute and accuracy. After reading the passage, the students were asked a few comprehension questions (see Appendix B). The DIBELS passage was an end of first-grade reading level. The goal for the end of first grade is for the student to read 47 words per minute.

The second part of the assessment process went along with the same DIBELS passage as the first assessment. The students were rated on their prosody as they read. The intervention specialist gave each student a score from 1 to 4 on their prosody of the passage. A score of 1 meant they had little to no prosody as they read, a 2 meant they had a growing amount of prosody, a 3 meant a pretty good amount of prosody, and 4 meant a good amount of prosody.

The third piece of the assessment process was the Basic Phonics Skills Test (BPST) (see Appendix C). The test is a list of 65 words that assesses the students decoding and word recognition skills. The list assesses short vowels, consonant digraphs, blends, inflections, final-e, long vowel teams, r-controlled, other vowel teams, 2-syllable words, affixes, 3-4 syllable, and 3-5 syllable words. The students were given a point for every word read correctly. The goal for the end of the first grade is for students to be able to read at least 36 words correctly.

The fourth piece of the assessment process assessed the students' knowledge of

high-frequency words (see Appendix D). It is important for the students to know these words

consistently and independently in insolation and in text. The goal for the end of first grade is to

be able to read 126+ words automatically.

Each of the assessment pieces helped to determine where the students reading skills were

lacking. The BPST is organized by phonics patterns. This allowed the data analyst to determine

what intervention skills needed to be implemented. Some student readers lacked short vowel

skills, where some had confusion with long-e words. For the students lacking the short vowel

skills, their group instruction was on short vowel words. The high-frequency word assessment

determined which high-frequency words were needed for small group instruction. The DIBELS

reading passage WCPM, comprehension, and prosody check also allowed for the data analyst to

group the students according to level.

The pre- and post-survey questionnaire (see Appendix E and F) given to each student

asked the questions that assess the student's attitudes and feelings about reading. It was not used

for grading purposes, but simply to determine the student's feelings about reading. The questions

on the survey were:

1. What do you like to read about?

2. What has helped you improve your reading skills?

3. How many days a week do you read at home and does anyone help you with your reading? If

so, how do they help you?

4. How has working in a small group helped you with your reading?

5. How do you feel about reading?

6. Why do you think reading is important?

Some of these questions were easier for the students to answer after the intervention. It was interesting to see how their responses changed.

Ethical Research Practices

Whenever human participants take part in an action research study, certain safeguards must be put in place and adhered to with full fidelity. In particular, when children are involved in a study, research must be carried out in a safe, respectful way that guarantees that children's wellbeing, rights, and dignity are honored at all times (Graham, Powell, & Taylor, 2015), In order to ensure the study was conducted in an ethical manner, numerous ethical research protocols were followed. First and foremost, the proposed action research study was submitted to the CUI Institutional Review Board (IRB). During this IRB application process, we had to demonstrate that there was a need for the study and that the benefits of the study far outweighed any risks (risk-benefit ratio) (Kim, 2012). Following that, site authorization from the principal was obtained for the intervention to be carried out. After written permission from the site principal had been secured, the next step was to get parent consent. The informed consent letter clearly stated that:

1. The study was part of the regular instructional day and that the researchers were only seeking permission to use the data collected on the participants.

 2. What the research study was about, what data sources (assessments) would be used in the study.

3. That participation in the study was totally voluntary.

 4. At any time the participant could withdraw from the study.

5. Participation in the study would be kept confidential.

6. Participation or nonparticipation in the study and the results of the data would in no way have any bearing on students' grades.

Additionally, student assent was acquired via a student assent letter. Moreover, steps were executed to guarantee all data was stored in a secured manner and students in the study were to be referred to by a pseudonym to maintain participants' confidentiality. All data documentation will be destroyed by May 6, 2020, as IRB requires data be kept for three years then destroyed.

Plan for Increasing Validity

It is crucial that action research studies have a high level of credibility and validity, which is whether the study is trustworthy or not. Hendricks (2017) states that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability make up "Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness criteria" which is used in qualitative research (p.64). This study analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data to reduce bias and increase accuracy in interpreting the data. Numerous strategies were implemented in this study to establish trustworthiness while investigating the questions of: will direct fluency instruction, and repeated readings increase ELLs' oral reading fluency rate? And what effect will Reader's Theater have on student's attitude about reading?

Member checks were one type of validity employed in this study as member checks are one way to reduce bias. This strategy allows for participants to verify if "their responses and experiences have been accurately, truthfully, and fairly captured (Simons, 2009, p.131)" (Hendricks, 2017, p.65). As both data analysis experts had no prior knowledge of the students involved in the study, it helped to reduce any bias, which in turn increased credibility. The researchers were collaborating consistently throughout the study and in particular on the data collected to verify that the data was interpreted in the same manner.

Triangulation of the data was another strategy used in this study. The use of numerous sources gives credence to the findings, thus increasing credibility (Hendricks, 2017). This study used many different assessments: reading survey, phonics assessment, a fluency assessment, a high-frequency word list assessment, measured prosody using a rubric, and recorded observation notes during the intervention. By using these different measures of assessment, the researchers were able to truly assess the validity of the intervention and determine the impact it had on the different aspects of fluency.

Finally, the researchers provided a thorough description of the setting, the participants, and the study. The goal was to give a substantial amount of details about the setting, the participants, and the intervention so that the study would be transferable and generalizable. Transferability is important, as it is the degree to which this study can be applied in other settings along with being one of the trustworthiness criteria in qualitative research.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Many measures were used to insure the validity and confidentiality of the participants in this study. Each researcher participated in an online training through the National Institute of Health (NIH). The NIH program assisted the researchers in developing their understanding of their roles and the appropriate procedures to use when working with human subjects. The researchers also had to fill out an application and submit it to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Through the application process, the researchers had to describe the setting, participants, and method of intervention in great detail. They had to submit proof of completing the NIH training and obtain approval from their advisor to submit the intervention plan to the Institutional Review Board. The intervention specialist also had to submit an application to the administrator

of the educational institute at which the intervention would take place. In this application, the researcher had to describe to the administrator the purpose of intervention, methods of intervention and possible benefits of the intervention. This application was also given to the IRB for final approval. Once approval was granted from the IRB, intervention began.

Many measures were taken to the keep our participants confidential. The first thing the researchers did was collect informed consent forms from the students and parents involved in the study. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and that there was no penalty for not participating in the study. Participants were also informed that if at any time they felt uncomfortable and no longer wanted to participate that they could excuse themselves from the study. While collecting the data and analyzing the data, the researchers used pseudonyms. By giving the students pseudonyms, the participants were more comfortable and confident in their participation in the study.

Some of the risks involved in this study included: possible failure in improving fluency skills; students might have hesitation when it came to reading; also, many students might not feel comfortable performing their scripts in front of the class. These risks were minimized by creating a comfortable learning environment for the students and giving them plenty of time to prepare for their performance on Fridays. Also, high expectations for the students were set, and they were provided with background knowledge about fluency and the purpose of the intervention. This would ensure success and make sure students were comfortable during the study and would perform at their best and give the most accurate results. In Chapter 3, the methods and intervention plan was explained as well the data collection process. In Chapter 4, the data will be analyzed and interpreted, and the results will be discussed.

Chapter 4

Data and Findings

The purpose of this intervention was to see if direct small group instruction and the use of Reader's Theater would increase the fluency of students in first grade who are English Language Learners and live in poverty. We measured the validity of the intervention with multiple methods of assessments. The assessment methods included a DIBELS fluency assessment and comprehension test, the use of a prosody rubric with the DIBELS assessment, a high-frequency word assessment to measure automaticity, and the BPST to measure accuracy. The last assessment we used was a survey to measure engagement and understanding of literacy development. Each of the assessment pieces pre- and post-intervention were completed through one-on-one testing between the student and Intervention Expert. The results were recorded on teacher created data forms by the Intervention Expert. There were separate forms for the reading survey, DIBELS DORF passage, comprehension questions, prosody rubric, BPST, and high-frequency word list.

The intervention lasted three weeks long. During this time, students participated in a 30-minute small group instruction. The 30-minute small group included high-frequency word instruction, phonics instruction, vocabulary development, and repeated readings using Reader's Theater. Results of the intervention emulate the results of our research. Students need direct instruction of fluency concepts to become a more fluent reader (Reis et. al., 2007). When it comes to repeated readings, students are more engaged with Reader's Theater and have a stronger motivation and understand the purpose related to the repeated readings because of the

performances at the end of the week (Rasinski, 2012). Also, students were reading with more

prosody due to reader's theater which also shows an increase in comprehension (Rasinski, 2012)

Results of the Reading Survey

The reading survey that was administered both pre- and post- intervention was very

opened-ended (see Appendix G), which was the intent of the researchers when formulating the

questions. However, the variance in responses made it difficult to create a rubric that would

encompass all the student responses. Despite this hindrance, a rubric was created that reflected

the students' responses. Here are the findings of the reading survey. Question one asked, "How

do you feel about reading?" Before the intervention started, all students expressed they felt good

about reading and that they liked/enjoyed reading. Although all students answered that they

liked reading, three students said that reading could be hard and/or tricky. The post-survey

results revealed that all students continued to hold positive feelings towards reading. In fact, two

out of the three students who stated on the pre-survey that reading was hard or tricky did not say

that on the post-survey.

The second question asked, "Why do you think reading is important?" In the pre- survey,

three of the students said that reading is important because it helps you learn, while one student

believed that reading is important because reading makes you smarter. One student remarked

that reading is important because it makes you a better reader and one student said that reading is

important because you know words faster, so you read faster. The students' pre- and post-

responses for question one remained the same.

For the purpose of the rubric, question three was broken up into three parts. Question

3(a) asked, "How many days a week do you read at home?" Five out of the six students in the

intervention claimed that they read five to seven times a week while one student claimed that they read three to four times a week in the pre-survey. In the post-survey, four out of the five original students who asserted that they read five to seven times a week at home answered question 3(a) the same in the post-survey. However, one student who had remarked they read 5-7 times a week at home on the pre survey expressed the read 3-4 times on the post-survey. Conversely, student C who had suggested they read 3-4 times a week on the pre-survey explained that they read 5- 7 times a week at home on the post-survey (see Table 2).

Table 2

Reading Survey Question 3a: Reading at Home Results

Student	Pre Survey Results	Post Survey Results
A	**5-7** times per week	**5-7** times per week
B	**5-7** times per week	**5-7** times per week
C	**3-4** times per week	**5-7** times per week
D	**5-7** times per week	**3-4** times per week
E	**5-7** times per week	**5-7** times per week
F	**5-7** times per week	**5-7** times per week

Question 3(b) asked, "Does anyone help you with your reading?" In the pre-survey four students suggested that either a parent and/or an older sibling helped them with their reading while two students stated that no one helped them with their reading at home. One student's response was that no one helped them with reading home on both the pre- and post-survey whereas, one student's response in the post-survey changed from a parent helping to no one helping. Finally, one student responded in the post-survey that a parent helps with reading at home and in the pre-survey, they communicated that no one helped them with reading.

Question 3 (c) asked, "How do they (the person responsible for helping at home) help you?" (see Table 3) In the pre-survey two students voiced that when they don't know a word, their parent or sibling helped them sound the word out; this remained consistent on their post-surveys. Meanwhile, Student F, who went from no one helping them read on the pre-survey to a parent helping on the post-survey, said that their "mom takes (them) to the library to get new books." Student B and Student E answered that the person helping them at home tells them the word when they don't know it. Student E response was the same on the post-survey. However, there was one very noteworthy comment on Student's B post-survey. They stated on their pre-survey that their parent helped them read by telling them any words they didn't now. However, on the post-survey, they communicated that no one helps them at home anymore because "I get confused when they help me." Student B's response is noteworthy as it proves the effectiveness of asking open-ended questions. This response could lead to another action research question. Such as, could hosting a series of three literacy nights improve parents' ability to assist their child with reading at home?

Table 3

Reading Survey Question 3c: Type of Reading Help Offered at Home

Student	Pre Survey Results	Post Survey Results
A	Help by sounding word out w/ student	Help by sounding word out w/ student
B	Help by telling unknown word	No one helps now because they confuse the student
C	No help at home	No help at home
D	Help by sounding word out w/ student	Help by sounding word out w/ student
E	Help by telling unknown word	Help by telling unknown word
F	No help at home	Mother takes student to library to check out new books

The next question on the survey asked, "What do you like to read about?" Five out of six

students enjoy reading non-fiction books about different animals. Student D enjoys reading

fiction series books as such as *Fly Guy, Curious George, Skippyjon Jones,* and the like. Students

A and B enjoy reading rhyming books and books that follow certain spelling patterns (take home

books based on the curriculum).

Question 5 asked, "What has helped you improve your reading?" On the

pre-survey, the students responded as follows: three said: "sound unknown words out", two

stated that" more time practicing reading," and one student revealed that "people helping with

their reading" was the most beneficial. On the post-survey five out of the six students responded

with the same answer from the pre-survey. Student D's response was the only one that changed

from the pre- to the post-. On the pre-survey they remarked that the sounding out words helps

them with their reading. On the post-survey they explained that practicing their reading by

looking at the punctuation helped with their reading. A correlation can be made between Student

D's reply and the instruction they received during the intervention.

Finally, the last question on the reading survey was, "How has working in a small group

helped you with your reading? On the pre- survey responses varied from two students stating

that the benefit in small groups is reading/phonics lessons, one student communicated that

working in a small group allowed them to focus better, another student said that the teacher show

them how to sound words out, and the last two students stated that working in a small group

allowed them more opportunities to read. On the post- survey, all students voiced that

reading/phonics activities were the biggest benefits from working in a small group. Several

students gave specific examples of the activities that were most helpful. Those activities were

learning different spelling patterns, reading punctuation marks, using the sound spelling cards to

help and learning the sounds that the long vowels make (see Table 4).

Table 4

Reading Survey Question 6: Benefits of Working in a Small Group

Student	Pre Survey Response	Post Survey Response
A	Reading/phonics activities	Reading/phonics activities
B	Easier to focus in a small group	Reading activities that help to sound out words and teach different spelling patterns
C	Reading/phonics activities	Reading/phonics activities
D	Opportunity to read more	Reading/phonics activities Ex: reading punctuation marks
E	Opportunity to read more	Reading/phonics activities Ex: Sound Spelling cards
F	Teacher shows me how to sound words out	Reading/phonics activities Ex: learning sounds of the long vowels

Instruction on Automaticity

As outlined in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) oral reading fluency is composed of three main features which are automaticity, accuracy, and prosody (Guerin & Murphy 2015; Hall, 2006; Hudson et.al 2005; Kuhn et.al. 2010; Rasinski, 2006). During the intervention, the intervention expert provided small group direct instruction to develop the students' automaticity by increasing their sight word knowledge. Before the intervention started, each student was given the "First Grade High-Frequency Word Assessment" to create a baseline. Once the baseline was established, the intervention expert provided five minutes of high-frequency instruction four times a week. Students made flashcards to practice the high-frequency words to increase automaticity. At the end of the intervention the "First Grade High-Frequency Word Assessment" was given again, and every student showed significant growth. On the pre-assessment Student A scored 187 and 198 on the post, Student B scored 160 on the pre-assessment and 198 on the post- assessment, Student C scored 160 on the pre- and 198 on the post-, Student D scored 173 on the pre- and 198 on the post-, Student E scored 186 on the pre- and 199 on the post- and student F scored 146 pre- and 193 on the post- assessment. These numbers represent the number of words the student could read within three seconds. The graph below depicts the growth each student made (see Figure 1).
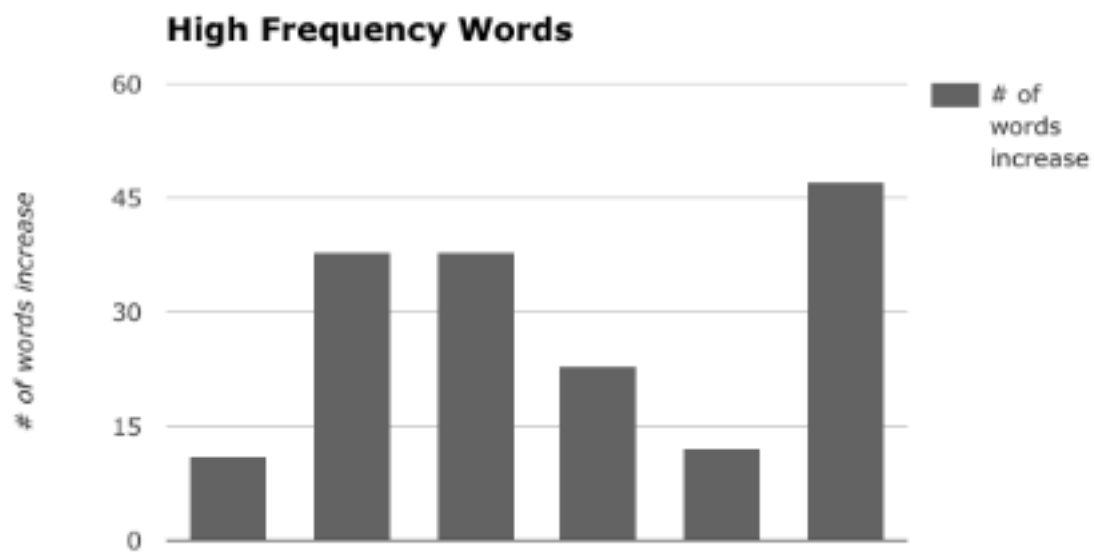
Figure 1. Increase of high frequency words post-intervention.

Instruction on Accuracy

Another component of oral reading fluency is accuracy. Accuracy is the ability to decode a word correctly. Students must decode words, determine the pronunciation, and the meaning of words to comprehend the text. According to Hall, readers can devote their attention to the comprehension of a passage when they can accurately read words (2006).   The researchers used different teaching strategies and assessments in order to triangulate the data. The Basic Phonics Skills Test (BPST), DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Passage assessment, and comprehension questions were three different data sources to measure accuracy.

Basic Phonics Skills Test (BPST). During the intervention, students received 10 minutes of phonics instruction four times a week. In particular, the phonics instruction focused on decoding skills to increase student accuracy. The BPST was used as the baseline assessment and then again as the post assessment. Table 5 breaks down each tested item and shows growth on each phonics skill (see Table 5).

As demonstrated in Table 5 all the students started the intervention already knowing the consonant letter sounds, consonant digraphs, and the five short vowel sounds. This is important as students must have these basic letters sounds to decode. Growth in long vowels sounds is important to note as it opens up students to a plethora of new words they can decode. Finally, growth in decoding words with an inflectional ending is very noteworthy as this is a very hard concept for English Language Learners. Growth in these two areas can have a very positive correlation with students' reading accuracy. Figure 2 shows the overall growth on the BPST II assessment.

Table 5

BPST Growth Between Pre- and Post-Intervention Assessment

Student	Consonant sounds	Consonant Digraphs	Short Vowels	Blending w/short vowels	Blending w/blends	Blending w/final-e	Blending w/long vowels	Blending w/r-controll ed	Blending w/OVD	Blending w/ inflections
A	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0
B	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	2	4	1
C	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	2	3	0
D	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	3
E	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	3	2	1
F	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	4	2
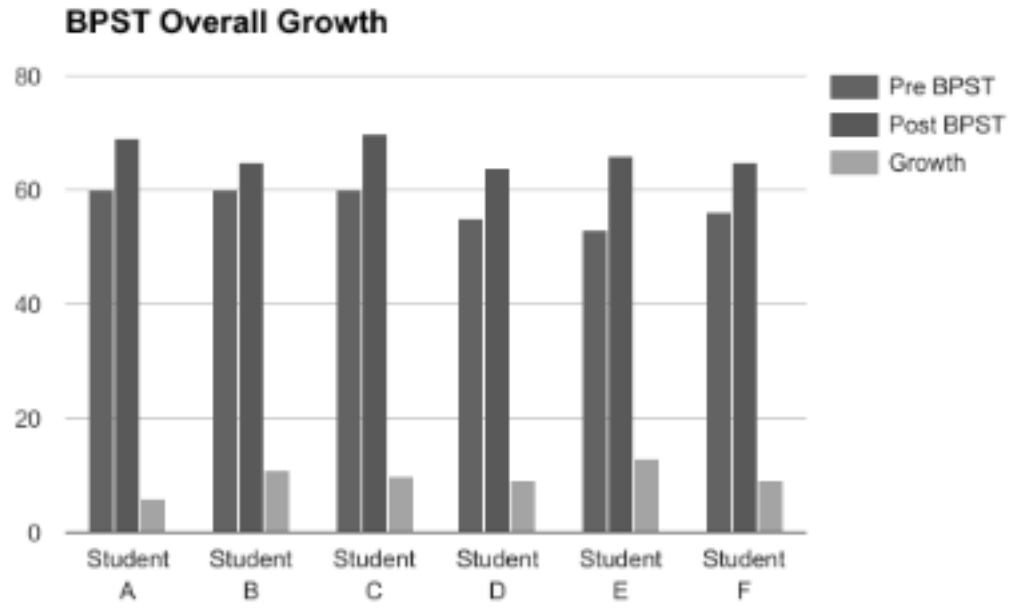
Figure 2. Pre- and post-intervention BPST results highlighting growth.

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Passage. The same DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Passage was given to the students pre- and post-intervention. This assessment measured the accuracy of student reading by identifying the number of words read correctly per minute. The intervention expert timed the students for one minute on the passage, *A Jump Rope Contest*. As the students read the passage, the intervention expert marked the words that the students incorrectly read, substituted, omitted, or took longer than three seconds to read with a slash. Then the accuracy of the reading passage was calculated by dividing the correct words read by the total words read.

Figure 3 displays a comparison of the words correct per minute of the student's pre- and post-intervention results and Figure 8 displays the growth and decrease of the student's WCPM. Figures 3 and 4 display that Student C is the only student who did not increase in WCPM after the implementation of the intervention. Student C decreased their word count by 3 WCPM, shown in Figure 4. Student A had the most growth, increasing a total of 21 WCPM. Following Student A in growth were Students D and E at an increase of 16 WCPM. Student F followed at an increase in 10 WCPM. Student B increased their word count by 8 WCPM.
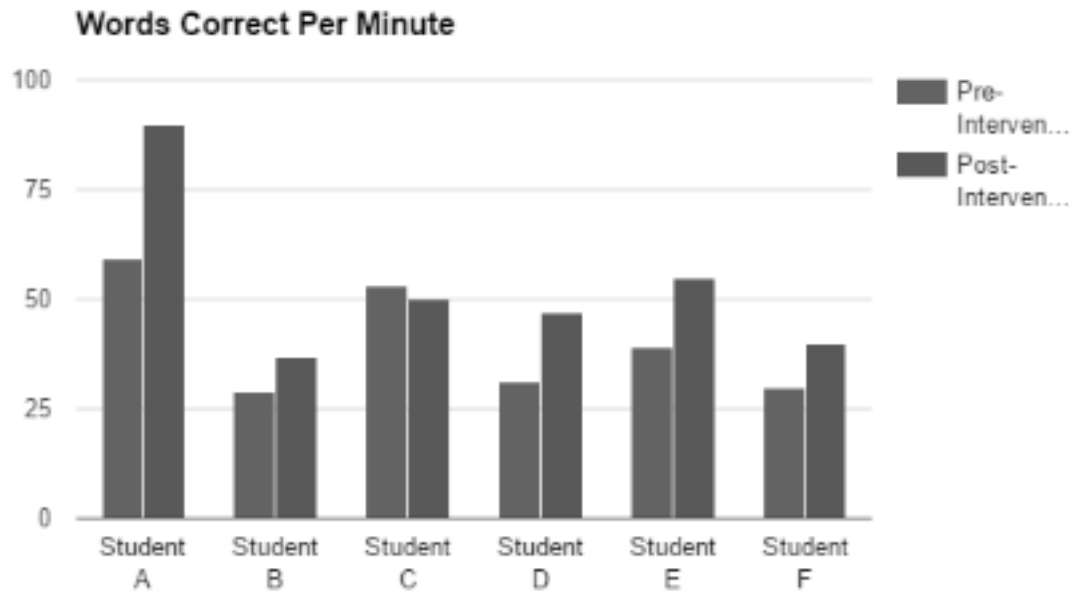
*Figure 3.*Pre- and post-intervention results of words correct per minute (WCPM).
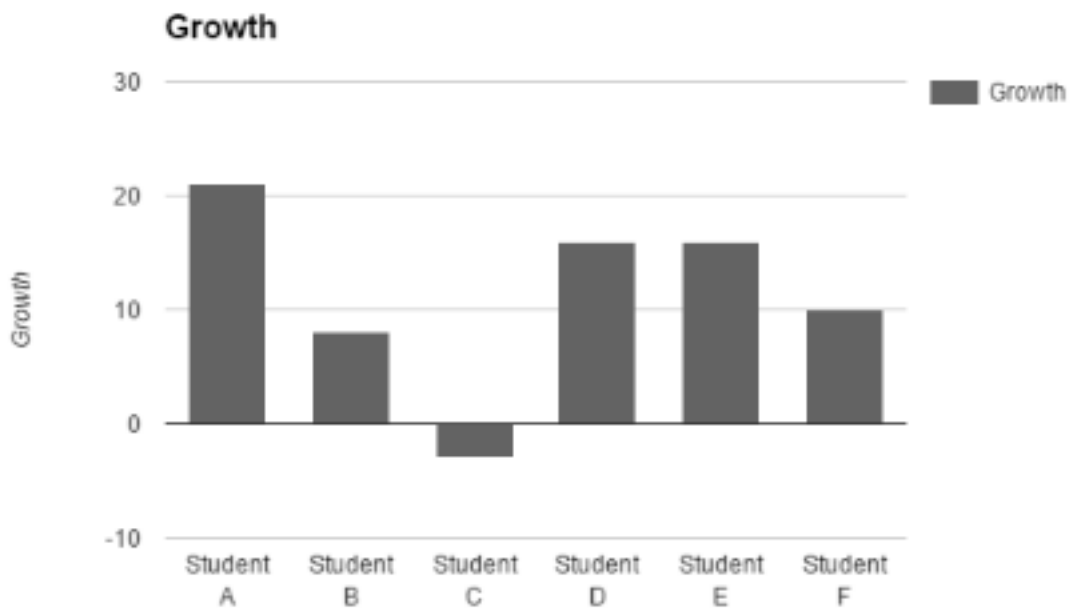
Figure 4. Words correct per minute growth between the pre- and post-intervention.

Although Student C decreased their WCPM, it is still a positive because their accuracy of the reading passage increased (see Figure 5). On the pre-intervention read, Student C read 53 WCPM at an accuracy of 91%. On the post-intervention read, Student C read 50 WCPM, but the accuracy of the read increased to 96%. Hall writes that achieving accurate and automatic reading are needed skills in order to devote time to comprehension. She also writes to read fluently a reader needs to read at a speed rapid enough to hold meaning until the end, but not so rapid that meaning is lost (2006). Therefore, it is justified that an increase in the accuracy of reading is as important than the number of words read per minute.

Figure 5 illustrates the increase in accuracy between the pre- and post- intervention assessment. Student A increased their accuracy from 92% to 96%. Student B increased from 85% to 86%. Student D decreased their accuracy by 1% from 88% to 87%. Student E increased accuracy from 90% to 93%. Student F increased their accuracy from 85% to 88%. The average accuracy percentage change was an increase of 2.5%.
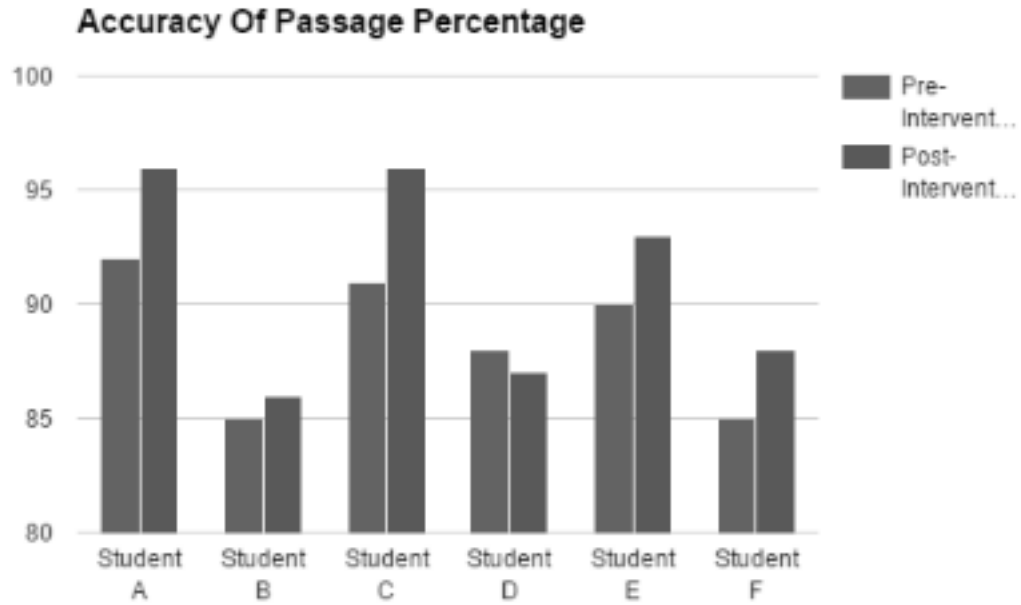
Figure 5. Accuracy of the DORF passage.

DORF Comprehension Questions. One goal of reading fluency is to increase student comprehension. When students are fluent readers, they can comprehend what they read well because they do not need to take extra time decoding what they are reading, which ultimately leads to forgetting what they had previously read.

The students were asked questions about the DORF passage, *A Jump Rope Contest*. Since the purpose of asking the questions was to determine the accuracy of the student comprehension, the students were given time to read the whole passage one time all the way through, completely untimed. When they had completed the reading, they were given five comprehension questions. Figure 6 shows the number of questions answered correctly on the pre- and post-intervention assessment. Tables 5-9 show the student responses to the comprehension questions.

The number of correct responses shows unanimous growth in the area of comprehension. It is clear the students increased their attention to detail because the answers are more thorough and complete the second time around.
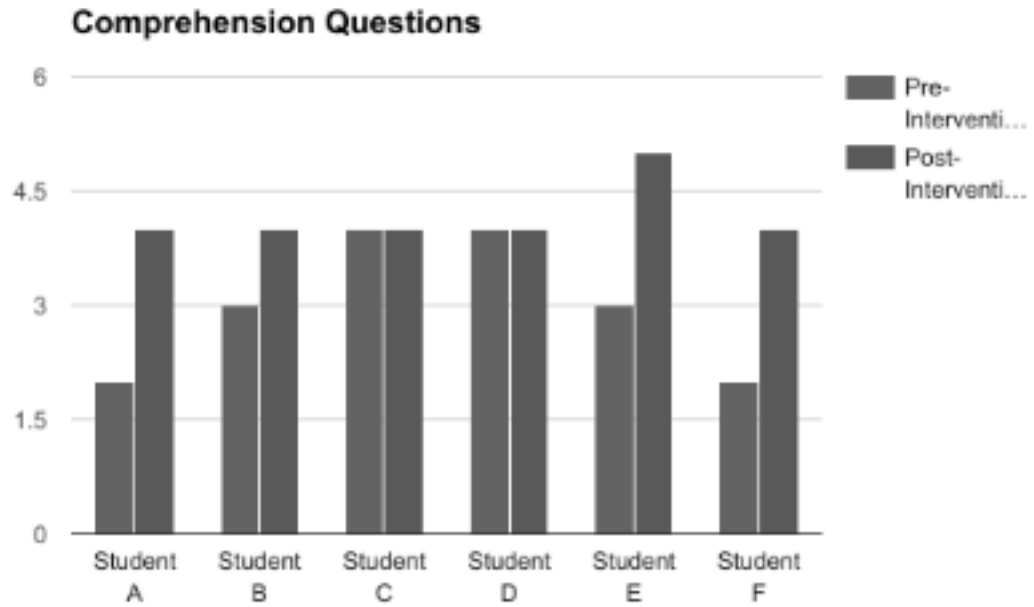
Figure 6. Results of correct answers to the comprehension questions.

Table 6

Comprehension Question 1

Question 1: Who are the main characters in the story?		
	Answer Pre-Intervention	**Answer Post-Intervention**
Student A	Kim and Ann	The main characters were Kim and Ann. There were 5 boys and 2 girls.
Student B	Kim and Annie	The main characters in the story were Kim and Annie.
Student C	Annie and Kim	The characters in the story were Anna and Kim.
Student D	Kim and Ann	The main characters were Kim and Ann.
Student E	Kim and Anna	The main characters were Kim and Anna.
Student F	Kim and Ann	The characters in the story were Kim and Ann.

Note: Correct answer--The main characters are Kim and Anna.

Table 7

Comprehension Question 2

	Answer Pre-Intervention	**Answer Post-Intervention**
Question 2: What was the story mostly about?		
Student A	It was about a jump rope contest.	The story was mostly about Kim and Ann and five boy doing tricks with jump rope, but they didn't do it together. They did it in parts.
Student B	The jump rope contest.	The story is mostly about Kim is trying to do a trick with Annie for the jump rope contest.
Student C	A contest	The story was mostly about Anna and Kim hoping to do good in the jump rope contest.
Student D	About a jumping contest	The story was mostly about a contest and doing a jump rope tricks.
Student E	They were playing a contest.	Kim and Anna were doing tricks for the contest.
Student F	A jump rope contest.	The story is about Kim and Ann going to a contest.

Note: Correct answer-- The story is mostly about a jump rope contest.

Table 8

Comprehension Question 3

Question 3: What tricks did the young children do?		
	Answer Pre-Intervention	**Answer Post-Intervention**
Student A	The skip	They jump roped.
Student B	They did spinning.	The young children skipped with the rope.
Student C	Jumped and skipped	The young children did jump and jumped over the rope. Their feet moved quickly.
Student D	They did some jumping. They were changing the ropes.	The younger children jumped and skipped rope.
Student E	They touched the ground.	They were playing with the jump ropes, doing tricks so they could win the contest.
Student F	They spin	The young children jumped and skipped.

Note: Correct answer-- The young children jumped and skipped rope in a circle.

Table 9

Comprehension Question 4

Question 4: What tricks did the boys do?		
	Answer Pre-Intervention	**Answer Post-Intervention**
Student A	The skipped rope	They used jump ropes to do tricks. They jumped all together in a row.
Student B	Roping, the boys moved their feet.	The boys has two ropes. They landed on their feet together.
Student C	They spinned and they jumped and skipped.	They jumped also.
Student D	The boys jumped over ropes.	The boys used two ropes to do tricks and they jumped and kicked.
Student E	Used two ropes	The boys used two ropes to do tricks. All the boys jump over the ropes.
Student F	They jumped	The boys did kicks and spins.

Note: Correct answer(s) include-- The boys used two ropes to do tricks, all jumped ropes at the same time, did tricks with kicks and spins, moved quickly.

Table 10

Comprehension Question 5

Question 5: How do you think Anna and Kim feel? Why?		
	Answer Pre-Intervention	**Answer Post-Intervention**
Student A	Happy because they won the jump rope contest.	Kim and Ann feel happy because they could maybe win the contest.
Student B	They were scared because Kim was a little bit nervous to do her trick.	They feel a little nervous but kind of excited to do it because she had a new trick to do.
Student C	They feel happy because they did good.	They felt sad because they were not going to win the contest.
Student D	Happy because the girls think they will win the contest.	Kim and Anna feel happy because they think they are going to win the contest.
Student E	They were sad because they didn't win.	The girls feel happy because they think they will win the contest.
Student F	Happy because they winned.	They feel happy because they think they will win.

Note: Correct answer(s) include answers such as-- excited, hopeful to win, proud of themselves.

However, the girls did not know if they won or not.

Reader's Theater Instruction on Prosody

Based on baseline research done before the implementation of the intervention, Reader's Theater was a tool found to help increase the prosody of reading. To have prosody with reading means that the reading is done with the use of a correct expression, volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. When reading, the reader should sound like they are talking to someone and not like a robot.

Each week of intervention the small group was given a passage to practice reading with a partner. Through the initial direct instruction, the intervention expert went through the passage with the students explicitly teaching vocabulary and intonation needed for the reading. Then the students would have time to practice with one another. The students were given different parts to read for the Reader's Theater throughout the week. It was important to give the students different lines to practice to make sure the students were reading the lines and not just reciting them based on memorization. If the students had memorized the lines, it wouldn't help them improve their fluency. On Friday, they would present their script to the class.

At the conclusion of the intervention, the Intervention Expert assessed the students' prosody using a rubric. The passage used to assess the prosody of the students' reading was *A Jump Rope Contest*. Each and every student participant increased their reading prosody from the pre-intervention assessment using the same passage, *A Jump Rope Contest*. The prosody scale was from 1 to 4, with a score of 16 being 100%. Student A, B, D, E, and F all increased by 2 points on the prosody rubric. Student C increased by 3 points on the prosody rubric. Figure 7 shows the comparison of prosody scores on the pre- and post-intervention readings (see Figure 7).

Prosody Rubric
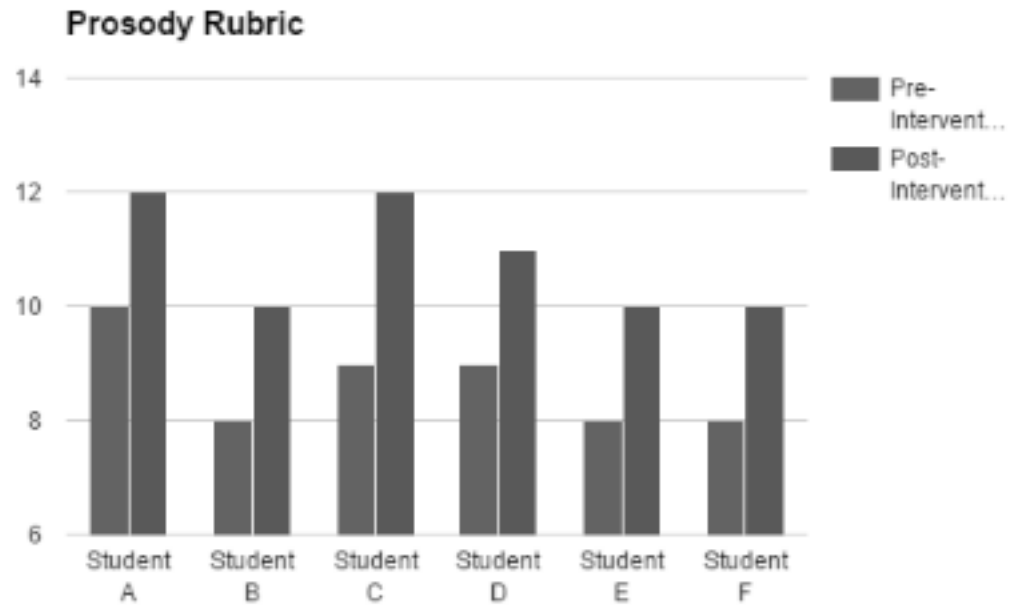
Figure 7. Prosody based on the DIBELS DORF passage.

Conclusions

The effectiveness of the direct instruction and repeated reading intervention is clearly positive. Out of the five assessments given to triangulate the data (DORF, comprehension questions, prosody assessment, high-frequency words, and BPST), there was growth on every single assessment. There were a few times when one student's score decreased, but just slightly. Although there were a few instances where a slight decrease on one assessment was the case for a certain student (example: Student C WCPM- see Figure 4), the student then showed growth in a different area. The increases for the students showed an overall growth in fluency which was the goal of the research.

The primary question of this research project was: *What impact can using direct fluency instruction and repeated readings with Reader's Theater have on the fluency rate of first grade ELLs and students living in poverty?* As the research project has concluded, the data have shown that ELL and students living in poverty increased the automaticity, accuracy, and prosody of their reading fluency due to direct instruction and repeated readings.

The secondary question of the research project was: *What effect will Reader's Theater have on students' attitude about reading?* No definitive conclusions could be drawn in regards to the secondary question as only a single source of data was available to draw from since the reading survey did not specifically ask about Reader's Theater. On the reading survey, the question was presented as "how do you feel about reading?" To have more conclusive data for the secondary question, a separate question should have be asked on the reading survey. Students C and D did mention on their survey that reading (the Reader's Theater text) during the intervention helped them "read more like (how) we talk." They went on to say that reading (the

Reader's Theater text) "helps them look for punctuation and make our voice go up" which falls under prosody. All students stated on their pre-survey and post-survey that they enjoying reading. However, the researchers can not conclude that it is due to Reader's Theater.

The source of data that was collected on the secondary question came from the observations and notes taken by the intervention expert. In those notes, the intervention expert did note an increase in student confidence and excitement in reading the scripts from Reader's Theater. However, due to the fact that the researchers were unable to use multiple sources to arrive at any definite conclusions for the secondary question they refrained from doing so in order to keep all the results of the project trustworthy and reliable.

Overall, the results based on the interventions implemented were very gratifying to see. If the intervention was implemented for a longer period of time, it is predicted that there would be even more of growth in student reading fluency.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although our intervention was effective, there are always improvements we could make. One improvement that could be made is making sure that the groups were more homogeneous. The ability level of the students was more variant then we would have liked. While they all had similar gaps some students were better decoders than others, and that made it difficult to increase the accuracy of those students that needed it.

Also along those lines, it would be better to do multiple groups and use the whole class. Our focus was ELL students who live in poverty which encompasses most of the students in the intervention experts class. However, this intervention would be beneficial for all students, not just ELL students. Since there were limited number of weeks we chose to do a small sample size

of the class, but this limited our options for grouping appropriately and getting more accurate

data for the effectiveness of the intervention. This intervention is something that all students

would benefit from especially when it comes to reading with prosody. By using the whole class

and grouping students more appropriately, the intervention would be more effective, and students

would benefit from the process and gain confidence in their literacy skills.

In further studies, it would be very beneficial to teach students about how to perform in

front of other students. Students in first grade do not get a lot of experience with standing up and

speaking in front of the class presenting something. Many students were nervous and spoke in a

lower voice. They held their script in front of their face, and they stuttered over their words even

though they were able to read accurately and with prosody with their partners throughout the

week. Although the intervention expert tried to correct some of these issues during the

intervention process, there was not enough time to model and completely support the students

with their performance readings. The performance adds a different element to the repeated

readings and asks students to get out of their comfort zone, with more time performing the

students would do better and become more comfortable with the process, and some of these

problems would eliminate themselves.

Another recommendation for future research would be to add a question to the survey

about Reader's Theater. The point of the reading survey was to determine students' motivation

and understanding of reading and while there was important information about the participant's

engagement in reading it can not conclude that the student's engagement increased because of

Reader's Theater since there was not a specific question about Reader's Theater. In the future

posing a question about why the students are more engaged in reading would better help answer

the secondary question which asks what effect will Reader's Theater have on students' attitude about reading.

The last recommendation would be to make the intervention last longer than three weeks. Three weeks was not enough time to fully implement the intervention in the most effective way. It was not enough time to see the effect of the intervention on student's comprehension which is ultimately the main goal of increasing student fluency. The students were so engaged during this process. They did enjoy the scripts and enjoyed playing a part. They got to do something different than the traditional read a book and take it home to reread for homework. If the intervention expert had a little bit more time to fully help students understand the purpose behind the different aspects of the intervention and discuss why they need to practice their high-frequency words, why they need to practice their script more than one time there would be more buy in and the students would take ownership of their learning. However, teaching students about the purpose and helping them develop that ownership takes time. As stated before it would be beneficial to include the whole class and have more groups for small group instruction. This is an intervention all students can benefit from.

Teaching fluency is very important for the overall literacy development of all students. Our students who are ELL's and live in poverty are even more at a disadvantage. As researchers, we need to be aware of the different ways to engage and support our students. Making sure our students are getting that direct instruction of literacy skills, vocabulary development, and authentic reading opportunities through repeated reading will provide that support for our students and grow their literacy develop in ways that are purposeful and engaging for them.

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Appendix A

Name_____ Date_____

A Jump Rope Contest

It was the day of the jump rope contest. Kim and Anna were going to   15
compete. Kim was going to do a new trick. Anna was going to help. The   30
two girls watched as younger children took a turn in the contest. The young 44
children jumped and skipped rope in a circle. They were just beginning to   57
learn fancy tricks.   60

Five boys went next. They used two ropes to do tricks. All the boys jumped   75
over the ropes at the same time. Their feet moved quickly and in a steady   90
beat. The boys did tricks with kicks and spins. The ropes never stopped   103
turning.   104

"We're next," said Anna.   108

Kim hoped that she would not miss her new trick. Anna was sure that she   123
and Kim would do well.   128
First, Kim turned the rope and Anna jumped. Anna did some spins and   141
kicks. Soon it was Kim's turn to do the tricks. She passed the rope to Anna. 157

It was time for Kim to do her new trick. She jumped up and did a split in   175
the air. Then she pulled her feet together and touched the ground. Kim   188
hopped back up. She was proud that she had done the trick.   200

The girls were done, and they left the floor. "We did it!" Kim shouted. "I   215
think we can win this contest."   221

WCPM Calculation	
Total words read in 1 min.	
Errors (include skipped words)	
Total Words Correct per Minute	
Accuracy % (WCPM / Total Words Read)	

Appendix B

Name:_____   Date:_____

Comprehension question for A Jump Rope Contest

1.) Who are the main Characters in the story?

2.) What was the story mostly about?

3.) What tricks did the young children do?

4.) What tricks did the boys do?

5.) How do you think Anna and Kim feel? Why?

Appendix C

FLUENCY RUBRIC

NAME _____

	1	2	3	4
Expression and Volume	Reads in a quiet voice as if to get words out. The reading does not sound natural like talking to a friend.	Reads in a quiet voice. The reading sounds natural in part of the text, but the reader does not always sound like they are talking to a friend.	Reads with volume and expression. However, sometimes the reader slips into expressionless reading and does not sound like they are talking to a friend.	Reads with varied volume and expression. The reader sounds like they are talking to a friend with their voice matching the interpretation of the passage.
Phrasing	Reads word-by-word in a monotone voice.	Reads in two or three word phrases, not adhering to punctuation, stress and intonation.	Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness. There is reasonable stress and intonation.	Reads with good phrasing; adhering to punctuation, stress and intonation.
Smoothness	Frequently hesitates while reading, sounds out words, and repeats words or phrases. The reader makes multiple attempts to read the same passage.	Reads with extended pauses or hesitations. The reader has many "rough spots."	Reads with occasional breaks in rhythm. The reader has difficulty with specific words and/or sentence structures.	Reads smoothly with some breaks, but self-corrects with difficult words and/ or sentence structures.
Pace	Reads slowly and laboriously.	Reads moderately slowly.	Reads fast and slow throughout reading.	Reads at a conversational pace throughout the reading.

Scores of 10 or more indicate that the student is making good progress in fluency.   Score _____

Scores below 10 indicate that the student needs additional instruction in fluency.

Appendix D

Decoding and Word Recognition (Shefelbine)
California English Language Arts Content Standards: 1.4, 1.5, 1.10, 1.12, 1.13, 1.14

BPST II Basic Phonics Skills Test					Dates:		
Name:				Total:			/85
Consonant sounds							
(continuous sounds)	m s f l r n h v w z						
(stop sounds)	b c d g p t j k y x q						/21
Consonant digraph sounds	sh	th	ch	wh			/4
Short vowel sounds	i	o	a	u	e		/5
Blending words with:							
Short:	map	rip	met	rub	mop		
	lip	lot	zap	fell	nut		/10
Blends:	left	must	frog	flip	snack		/5
Final –e:	fine	rope	rake	cute	kite		/5
Long	soap	leak	pain	feed	ray		/5
r-controlled	burn	fork	dirt	part	serve		/5
OVD	coin	soon	round	lawn	foot		/5
Inflections	filled	letting	rested	passes	licked		/5
2-syllables	silent	ladder	napkin	polite	cactus		/5
Affixes	distrust	useful	unfair	hardship	nonsense		/5
3-4 syllables	volcano	potato	electric	respectfully	transportation		/5

With thanks to John Shefelbine

Appendix E

Name_____

First Grade High Frequency Word Assessment

Back to School	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
see	all	get	yes	or
the	call	open	all	second
is	also	that	were	two
up	until	this	picture	enough
have	look	air	been	even
I	not	jump	should	take
a	was	for	carry	be
there	what	out	begin	green
Unit 1	big	little	ride	every
	got	went	walk	could
can	to	will	we	always
on	ask	when	well	boy
am	just	girl	after	some
and	of	number	write	going
move	as	her	like	here
because	he	with	change	almost
why	his	other	make	watch
kind			you	
			go	
did	down	an	over	day
in	if	they	so	way
it	its	who	most	sleep
had	red	but	them	don't
him	help	do	another	my
said	end	learn	once	right
sit	then	she		too
at	six	animal		mother
has				father
follow				came
does				. me
again				
began				

+ _____/79   + _____/54   + _____/79   +_____/104   +_____/132

First Grade High Frequency Word Assessment (cont.)

Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 7 (continued)
no their find below only live give away	are brown how flower about around long our know want by	any from water many different between come young
saw something blue one great through school above talk	earth eyes into thought head idea before yellow	**Unit 8** both five would paper together pretty your
very under good now story family being leave	work people sentence old without sometimes	**Unit 9** four put where

+_____/157   +_____/190   +_____/200

(through unit 7)

Appendix F

Fluency Intervention Pre-Assessment:
Reading Survey

Name:

1. How do you feel about reading?

2. Why do you think reading is important?

3. How many days a week do you read at home and does anyone help you with your reading? If so, how do they help you?

4. What do you like to read about?

5. What has helped you improve your reading?

6. How has working in a small group helped you with your reading?

Appendix G

Fluency Intervention Pre-Assessment:
Reading Survey

Name:

1. How do you feel about reading?

2. Why do you think reading is important?

3. How many days a week do you read at home and does anyone help you with your reading? If so, how do they help you?

4. What do you like to read about?

5. What has helped you improve your reading?

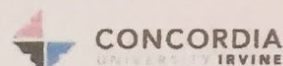6. How has working in a small group helped you with your reading?

Appendix H

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IRVINE

AUTHORIZATION FOR AN EDUCATION INSTITUTE
TO SERVE IN A CAPSTONE PROJECT

Title of the Project: Fluency Instruction with Repeated Readings and Reader's Theater
CUI Student(s) in Project Team:
   CUI Students(s) Employment Affiliation(s):
   CUI Student (s)' Phone Number(s) & E-mail(s):

   CUI Student(s)' Capstone Advisor: P
CUI Capstone Advisor Phone # & E-mail:
Location(s) of Educational Institute(s) where Project will Occur:

Purpose(s) of the Project: The purpose of this research was to determine if specific, direct fluency instruction done in 30 minutes blocks five times a week along with repeated readings using Readers Theater could increase English Language Learners and socially-economically disadvantaged students' oral reading fluency rate. Increasing the fluency of young readers is very important as there is a direct correlation between fluency and comprehension.

Procedures to be Followed: Students participating in this intervention were given pre assessments. They had a DIBELS assessment with comprehension questions and were given a score for prosody feathers from a rubric. They also were given a Basic Phonics Skills test and a high frequency word test. Last students were given a reading survey to determine their attitude toward reading and their understanding of literacy development. Participants in the intervention will work with the teacher for 30 minutes every day. During this time students will spend 10 minutes on phonics and decoding, five minutes on high frequency word instruction, five minutes on vocabulary development and ten minutes on readers theater. Each week students will study a new phonics skills, each day students will be getting two new high frequency words and each week students will get a new reader theater script with vocabulary words to support the script. During the week students will reread the script chorally, in echo reading, partner reading and finally on Fridays students will perform the script for the class.The teacher will make notes of prosodic features during the performances. At the end of the intervention students will again be assessed using the DIBELS passage, prosody rubric, Basic Phonics Skills test, high frequency words test and the reading survey. Researchers will use the data to assess the effectiveness of direct fluency instruction with repeated readings using readers theater.

Time and Duration of the Project: The intervention will be thirty minutes five days a week for three weeks starting March 1st and continuing through march 15th

Benefits of the Project: There are many benefits to this project. If this intervention is successful students will have an understanding of fluency and fluency features such as automaticity, accuracy and prosody. Students who participate in this intervention will also be exposed to a

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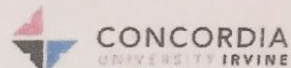
different type of literature that most child are not exposed to which is reader's theater. They will learn how to read a script and they will learn about how to interpret meaning from the script. The greatest benefit we will hopefully see in our students is an increase in developing their prosody skills which is something that many students have a hard time doing at this age. Finally we hope that students will develop a new found love and motivation for reading understanding that reading can be for fun and will be more enjoyable for the students as they continue to build their literacy skills.

Persons who will have access to the records or other documentation: ~~████████████~~
~~████████████████████~~.
Date when the records or other documentation will be destroyed: May 6th

---Authorization----------------------------------

I understand that participation in this project is confidential. Only the CUI students working on the project, collaborators, and capstone advisor will have access to students' identities and to information that can be associated with their identities.

The results of the Capstone Project may be presented publicly at CUI, to the PI's colleagues at his/her site, or to the PI's cohort and may be selected for publication in the CUI library.

Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form:

__X__ I give permission for my educational institution to participate in this project.

_____ I do not give permission for my school to participate in this project.

~~████████████████~~   2/22/17
Signature of Principal or Appropriate Administrator   Date
~~████████████████~~

Printed Name of Principal or Site Administrator

Appendix I

Informed Consent Form

Authorization for a Minor to Serve as a Research Participant

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s),

I will be conducting a study in our classroom to determine if direct fluency instruction along with repeated readings using Readers Theater will increase your child's oral reading fluency rate. I am writing to ask permission to use the data I collect from your child during this process. Participation in the study involves regular classroom activities. You can contact me at any time regarding your child's participation. My ███████████████████████████ ████. The principal of the school has already approved the this study.

The purpose of the study is to increase the oral reading fluency rate of the students in my class which will in turn help with their reading comprehension. The study will take place at █████████████████ and will last for three weeks. Participants in the study will receive thirty minute small group direct fluency instruction five times a week. The thirty minute block will focus on high frequency word recognition, phonics and decoding skills, vocabulary development, and Readers Theater. During the the study, I will collect various forms of data to determine whether the study was successful. Possible types of data I will collect include: reading survey, decoding and word recognition assessment, first grade high frequency word assessment, one minute timed DIBELS fluency passage with comprehension questions, prosody reading rubric, and observational notes.

Benefits of participating in this study may include: increased high frequency word knowledge, reading with expression, increased vocabulary knowledge, increased oral fluency reading rate, increased reading comprehension, and improved confidence in reading. Only ██ will have access to the data collected in this study. Your child's participation in this project is strictly confidential. Only I, █████████████████████ will have access to your child's identity and to information that can be associated to your child's identity. All data documentation will be destroyed by May 6, 2017.

Use of the data from your child is completely voluntary. Participant or nonparticipant in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's grades. Furthermore, you may contact me at any time if you do not wish to have your child's data included in the study. Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form.

☐   I give permission for my child's data to be used in this study. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form. I have read this form and understand it.

☐   I do not give permission for my child's data to be included in this project.

_____   _____

Student's name   Signature of parent/guardian

_____

Date

Appendix J
Formulario de consentimiento informado
Autorización para que un Menor sirva como participante en la investigación

Estimado (s) padre (s) y / o tutor (es),

Estaré llevando a cabo un estudio en nuestro salón de clases para determinar si la instrucción de fluidez directa junto con lecturas repetidas usando el teatro de lectores aumentará la tasa de fluidez de lectura oral de su hijo. Estoy escribiendo para pedir permiso para usar los datos que recojo de su hijo durante este proceso. La participación en el estudio incluye actividades regulares en el aula. Puede ponerse en contacto conmigo en cualquier momento con respecto a la participación de su hijo. Mi número de teléfono es (760) 631-3458 ex. 41106 La directora de la escuela ya ha aprobado el presente estudio.

El propósito del estudio es aumentar la tasa de fluidez de lectura oral de los estudiantes de mi clase que a su vez ayudará con su comprensión de lectura. El estudio tendrá lugar en Foothill Oak Elementary y durará tres semanas. Los participantes en el estudio recibirán instrucción de fluidez directa en grupos pequeños por treinta minutos de duración cinco veces por semana. El bloque de treinta minutos se centrará en el reconocimiento de palabras de alta frecuencia, las habilidades fonéticas y de decodificación, el desarrollo del vocabulario y el teatro de lectores. Durante el estudio, recogeré varias formas de datos para determinar si el estudio fue exitoso. Los posibles tipos de datos que serán estudiados incluyen: encuesta de lectura, decodificación y reconocimiento de palabras, evaluación de palabras de alta frecuencia de primer grado, pasaje de fluidez de DIBELS de un minuto con preguntas de comprensión, rúbrica de lectura prosódica y notas observacionales.

Los beneficios de participar en este estudio pueden incluir: aumento del conocimiento de palabras de alta frecuencia, lectura con expresión, aumento del conocimiento de vocabulario, aumento de la fluidez oral, mayor comprensión en lectura y mayor confianza en la lectura. Sólo Keeghan Gelrud, Chevonne Coronado y Shelley Pacheco Rodríguez tendrán acceso a los datos recogidos en este estudio. La participación de su hijo en este proyecto es estrictamente confidencial. Sólo yo, Chevonne, Shelley y el Dr. Webb tendremos acceso a la identidad de su hijo y a la información que pueda estar asociada a la identidad de su hijo. Toda la documentación de los datos será destruida antes del 6 de mayo de 2017.

El uso de los datos de su hijo es completamente voluntario. Ser participante o no en este estudio no tendrá absolutamente ningún efecto en las calificaciones de su hijo. Además, puede ponerse en contacto conmigo en cualquier momento si no desea que los datos de su hijo estén incluidos en el estudio. Por favor marque la casilla apropiada abajo y firme el formulario.

☐ Doy permiso para que los datos de mi hijo sean usados en este estudio. Entiendo que recibiré una copia firmada de este formulario de consentimiento. He leído este formulario y lo entiendo.

☐ No doy permiso para que los datos de mi hijo sean incluidos en este proyecto.

_____   _____
El nombre del estudiante   Firma del padre / guardian

_____
Feche

Appendix K

Student Assent Form

Authorization to Serve as a Research Participant

Dear Student,

I will be conducting a study in our to classroom to determine if direct oral fluency instruction will increase your oral fluency reading rate and help increase reading comprehension. I am asking your permission to use the data I collect from you during this process. Participation in this study involves only regular classroom activities. You may ask me questions at any time about this study. Our principal, ▉▉▉▉▉ has already approved the study.

The purpose of this study is to help you become stronger readers by increasing your oral fluency reading rate which will in turn help with your reading comprehension. The study will take place at ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ and will last for three weeks. You will receive thirty minute small group direct fluency instruction five times a week. The thirty minute block will focus on high frequency word recognition, phonics and decoding skills, vocabulary development, and Readers Theater. During the study, I will collect data different forms of data to see if small group direct fluency instruction was successful. Possible types of data I will collect include: reading survey, decoding and word recognition assessment, first grade high frequency word assessment, one minute timed DIBELS fluency passage with comprehension questions, prosody reading rubric, and observational notes.

Benefits of participating in this study may include: increased high frequency word knowledge, reading with expression, increased vocabulary knowledge, increased oral fluency reading rate, increased reading comprehension, and improved confidence in your reading skills. I will not include your name in any report about this study. You have the right to ask me not to include your data in the study or to tell me later if you no longer want your data included.

If you agree to let me use your data in the study, please print and sign your name below.

I give permission for my data to be used in this study.

_____   _____

        Student's printed name   Student's Signature

_____

            Date