

Reader's Workshop

An Action Research Study

By

Linda Lee Herring

Concordia University Irvine, California

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Dr. Laurene Hofman

Approval

This action research study, Reader's Workshop, by Linda Herring, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's faculty advisor. It is accepted by the faculty advisor, as representative of the faculty, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master's of Arts in Education in the School of Education, Concordia University Irvine.

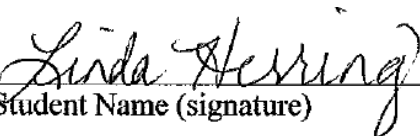
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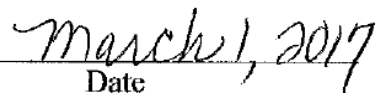
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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to analyze and explore the impact reader's workshop would have on struggling third-grade readers' fluency and comprehension as well as their engagement in reading. For four weeks, students participated in brief whole-group minilessons given through teacher read-aloud presentations. After, students practiced the new learning during extended periods of reading books that they selected based on personal interest and appropriate level of difficulty. During this time, the teacher conferred with individuals and/or small groups of students. Conferencing sessions provided opportunities for the teacher to glean valuable information about her readers and to give individualized print work lessons and/or comprehension skill and strategy lessons. After independent reading, students met with partners to discuss their reading or to jot notes about it. The triangulated data collected during the four-week intervention showed an increase in reading comprehension and fluency levels for all eight participants. The data also showed increased levels of enjoyment of and engagement in the act of reading. Finally, the author discussed plans for additional research and raised questions about adhering to school district instructional policies.

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Chapter 1

Problem

Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a key determinant in a child's educational development (Fiester, 2010; Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). For this reason, it is critically important that all students can read at grade level by the end of their third-grade year. Prior to third grade, the purpose of reading instruction concentrates on teaching students to be able to decode text fluently and to instill comprehension strategies. In other words, students *learn to read* in their first educational years. During third grade, there is a sizeable shift: Students are expected to *read* in order to *learn*. For example, students should use reading strategies and skills to learn new information in content areas such as math and science at an increasing level (Fiester, 2010). Further, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) require students to synthesize new learning at a much deeper level, or depth of knowledge (DOK) (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016). When students exit third grade with below-grade-level reading ability, a reading gap develops between their ability to read and the grade-level expectations. Reading gaps become more difficult to close over time, and they will likely continue to widen as struggling readers slowly become disengaged in academic learning (Lesnick et al., 2010). The level of third-grade reading proficiency is a significant predictor of future academic success: Students not reading proficiently by the end of third grade will likely continue to struggle with reading throughout their education (Fiester, 2010; Lesnick et al., 2010).

There was often a connection between students who struggled with reading and their socioeconomic level. Foster and Miller (2007) reported that when many students entered kindergarten, they were already at an educational disadvantage. McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, and McWhirter (2013) asserted that children from impoverished homes frequently lacked proper nutrition and health care. In addition, living in poverty created unhealthy levels of stress which impaired language development and memory in children. These factors negatively affected student performance at school (McWhirter et al., 2013). Therefore, children from low socioeconomic status may be predisposed to reading failure.

Other research indicated that approximately 36% of fourth-grade students in the United States read below the basic level, and about 75% of these students never reached proficiency in reading (Torgesen et al., 2007). According to *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2005*, the national average of fourth-grade students in public schools who were not eligible for free or reduced-price meals scored higher on high-stakes tests, on average, than students who were eligible. California's public schools were reported to have had 56% of all fourth-grade students who were eligible for free or reduced-price meals as compared to 40% of fourth-grade students who were not eligible. *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2005* reported statistics showing that California's fourth-grade students' performance matched the national average: Students who were not eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals scored higher, on average than students who were. These statistics provided evidence that a connection exists between low socioeconomic status and its impact on children's reading development (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005).

The effects of a reading gap resulted in a downward spiral in academic performance as students advanced through their middle and high-school years (Lesnick et al., 2010). Course expectations continued to become more complex and required higher levels of synthesizing written information (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016). Lesnick et al. (2010) maintained that high-school readers who struggled to decode and comprehend rarely achieved success at this level in their education. For these reasons, many students did not graduate from high school and even fewer entered college (Torgesen et al., 2007). Adults without a high-school or postsecondary education had to take lower-paying jobs, many of which placed them below the poverty level. Unemployment led to feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself, anxiety, depression, hostility, alcoholism, and drug use. Out of desperation, many sought the economic opportunities related to drug sales or other types of crime, and they were arrested and incarcerated (McWhirter et al., 2013). In summary, third-grade literacy is a key predictor of future academic, social, and economic success (Lesnick et al., 2010).

At the Principal Investigator's (PI) elementary school site this year, 33% of third-grade students were reading below proficiency as measured by the 2016-2017 Benchmark Assessment 1. According to the analysis of the benchmark test created by the school district, 19% of third graders scored below-grade level while 14% scored far-below-grade level in reading literature. Many of these third graders were at-risk of academic failure due to their reading deficits (Fiester, 2010; Lesnick et al., 2010). Research on the effects of implementing reader's workshop looked promising for these students. In one study, a class of second-grade students increased their independent reading level by 45%, or about five Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) levels,

over the course of the school year. This was compared to the expected four levels of growth according to the DRA (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008; Hudson & Williams, 2015). To make gains through the implementation of reading workshop, whole-group minilessons taught key concepts that were very engaging to students (Farris, 2011). Holding small-group and/or individual conferences was a way to target all students in their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Allen, 2009; Porath, 2014; Serravallo, 2010). During this type of work with children, teachers tailored their reading instruction to meet the individual needs of their students. For the practice of their new learning to be effective, students needed instruction on how to select books that they could read accurately and fluently during independent reading (Serravallo, 2010). The most effective way to increase children's reading fluency and comprehension was to provide them with ample time to read books they could decode easily and with which they made meaning (Allington, 2013; Calkins, 2001; Porath, 2014; Serravallo, 2010).

The desired outcome of this intervention was for struggling readers to achieve reading proficiency. Further, because a lack of motivation and engagement in reading was a large part of the problem, increases in both of these areas were important goals that the PI had for the struggling students. The ultimate goal of this action research study was for the most at-risk students to learn to value reading books as they became engaged readers.

The implementation of reader's workshop took place in the PI's classroom. A veteran of teaching third grade for 16 years, she is well versed in working with students who struggle with decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Her attention to detail was an asset in researching and conducting this action research study. The PI's

role was to plan and implement reader's workshop with her third-grade students. To develop a deeper understanding as data was collected during the intervention, the PI began an interim analysis. The interim analysis guided changes that needed to be made to ongoing data collection methods throughout the intervention. Finally, at the conclusion of the intervention, the PI interpreted and analyzed the triangulated data to present the findings of the action research study.

The elementary school at which this action research took place is located in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley in California. Agribusiness is a major economic base for this city as well as manufacturing, wholesale, and retail businesses. The school was built in response to the rapid growth of single-family tract homes and was in its fifth year of operation. The population of the school had swollen to over 932 students, and it had been designated as a Title I school. The demographics of the class were typical of the school. The largest subgroup was made up of Caucasian students at 43%. Next in descending order were Hispanic students which made up 32%. Asian American students comprised 14% of the class, and they were followed by African American students who represented 11% of the class.

Although more than half of the students in the class fell below-grade-level understanding on some summative assessment data, there were eight students who had been identified as most at-risk for academic failure, and they consistently scored in the far-below range for reading as measured by *Wonders* reading program selection comprehension assessments published by McGraw-Hill Education (2011). These students were unable to access grade-level texts without support, and most had moderate difficulty accessing the "approaching grade-level" texts that were provided in *Wonders*

reading materials without the support of small-group instruction. Of these eight students, two had behavioral problems in class and were unmotivated to read. Two of these students wanted to read well, but they lacked the language acquisition that was needed. They were recently tested by a language specialist and were found to remain at California English Language Development Test (CELDT) Expanding Level. One student is very bright, social, and until recently had difficulty in remaining attentive during lessons. She had shown reading improvement as her ability to attend to lessons in class improved and through the differentiation of her daily homework: With her mother's support at home, she was reading and responding well to second-grade curriculum from the same publisher of the third-grade curriculum. Her written work was extremely difficult to read due to the misspelling of simple words. She strung letters together in ways that made it nearly impossible for her teacher to read. Many times, she could not read or recall what words she had intended to write either. The remaining three students read more fluently than the others, and they typically scored higher on assessments.

Purpose of the Study

As previously stated, there was a large number of third-grade students at the school site of the study who have shown below-grade-level understanding based on assessment data. In large part, this was attributed to a lack of engagement using the core reading materials as required by the school district. Without engagement in reading lessons and independent practice activities, struggling readers were not successful in showing adequate understanding on summative assessments. Upon further reflection, part of the students' lack of motivation and engagement may have stemmed from the implementation and use of Direct Interactive Instruction (DII) that was mandated by the

district at about the same time that these students entered kindergarten. During the first years of the district's implementation of DII, it was expected that all teachers used this type of lock-step lesson delivery from the initial teaching of content through the independent practice of it. All too often independent reading time was missing in classrooms in order to make time for the type of strategy instruction that is found in scripted, packaged reading programs that teachers at the site of the study used as their primary reading materials. An unfortunate consequence of the implementation of DII was that small-group instruction disappeared from many classrooms, and teachers witnessed disengagement of their students in the process. This particular district mandate seemed to have taken teachers and their students in a direction that was opposite of the type of quality reading instruction that can happen in reader's workshop.

Ultimately, the purpose of educators of reading is to inspire and motivate students to become lifelong readers. The key features of reader's workshop naturally engage young readers in the art of reading, and students consider it to be a very enjoyable part of their school day. Teachers model reading strategies through engaging read-aloud presentations and then they share their thinking with their students during brief whole-group minilessons. When teachers show students how they make sense of the text by sharing their thinking as they read, reading strategies become less mysterious to children because teachers have made them visible to their young readers (Allen, 2009; Allington, 2013; Calkins, 2001; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013; Serravallo, 2010). Hudson and Williams (2015) purported the amount of time that teachers allow for students to read real books independently is the most reliable indicator of student reading growth and achievement. Reader's workshop provides students the opportunity to select books for

themselves, and this drives enthusiasm for reading (Atwell, 2007; Lause, 2004). The ability to self-select books makes students feel that their interests and choices are honored, and this lays the foundation for developing the skills necessary for lifelong reading (Atwell, 2007; Lause, 2004; Yopp & Yopp, 2001). Furthermore, struggling readers need to spend time reading texts at levels with which they can decode with ninety-eight to one hundred percent of words read accurately. When students select books that they can read with this level of accuracy, the books are considered to be “just right” for them (Allington, 2013; Boushey & Moser, 2012; Serravallo, 2010). Student-centered meaningful discussions and responses to books provide enjoyment and make learning fun (Calkins, 2001; Day, Spiegel, McLellan, & Brown, 2002; Serravallo, 2010; Yopp & Yopp, 2001).

Reader's workshop provides this opportunity to all students including struggling readers. It is the vehicle through which English learners can develop academic language fluency, and all struggling readers can close the gap to reading proficiency. Increased confidence in their reading abilities will prepare young readers for the rigors of the CCSS as they advance through the grades. Later, students will exit high school well prepared for postsecondary education and the limitless opportunities that lie beyond. It was with these deeply held beliefs that this action research study was designed. First-hand knowledge of the impact that reader's workshop had on all third-grade readers, those who struggled with reading and those who did not, gave the PI confidence to challenge district-mandated curriculum policies to enhance reading instruction for young readers.

Daily reader's workshop began with a brief five- to 15-minute minilesson presented through a read aloud. Initial minilessons set expectations for students during

reader's workshop. For instance, students had to know what each different part of the daily workshop should look and sound like and how they were expected to work within it. Effective classroom management during reader's workshop was imperative for maximizing student learning. Later, minilessons included the modeling of reading strategies. The goal of these types of lessons was for students to learn how to use strategies effectively in order to deepen their understanding as they read. Other types of minilessons taught literacy skills as taken from the CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA). Minilessons, through the use of teacher modeling, made strategy use visible for students and allowed them to utilize the strategy and/or skill in their own reading (Calkins, 2001; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013; Serravallo, 2010; Serravallo, 2015).

Following the initial whole-group minilesson, students moved into independent reading with books that were of their own choosing. During this time, the PI conferred with individual students. Through conferencing about the books they were reading, the PI was able to see the need to review a particular reading strategy/skill, or she found there was a group of students who shared the same need. Small-group instruction took place in that case. In other conferences, the PI took miscue analyses to determine the types of reading errors students made. The information gained through conferencing with students was used to drive instruction of future lessons. Finally, informal conversations between the PI and individual students about books they read served to increase their motivation and enjoyment of reading. Throughout the course of the intervention, the PI conferred regularly with each student (Allen, 2009; Calkins, 2001; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013; Porath, 2014; Serravallo, 2010).

The primary research question focused on the academic benefits of implementing reader's workshop in a third-grade classroom: How will reader's workshop impact independent reading fluency and comprehension levels in struggling third-grade students? Of secondary concern was the lack of engagement that the students displayed during reading which led to another question: What effects will participation in reader's workshop have on struggling third-grade students' engagement in reading? It was the researcher's belief that the implementation of reader's workshop would benefit all third-grade students.

Definitions of Terms

Common Core State Standards: Educational goals for what students are expected to know and be able to do in kindergarten through grade 12 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016).

Comprehension Strategy: Sets of steps that good readers use to understand the text (Serravallo, 2015).

Depth of Knowledge: A system of analyzing the levels of complexity of the Common Core State Standards used by educators in their instruction (Common Core Institute, 2013).

Direct Interactive Instruction: A type of lesson delivery aimed at increasing active student participation (Action Learning Systems, 2015).

English Language Arts: The Common Core State Standards that include all reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language strands (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016).

Expanding Level: Students have increased English skills in more contexts and can use a greater variety of vocabulary and linguistic structures that are appropriate for their age and grade level as measured by the California English Language Development Test (State of California Department of Education, 2012).

Miscue Analysis: An in-depth analysis of reading behaviors and text processing that gives detailed information about a student's reading ability (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008).

Reading Gap: The difference between a student's actual reading level and the reading level at which he/she should be according to their grade (Lesnick et al., 2010).

Reading Proficiency: Students demonstrate, at a minimum, the reading behaviors expected according to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016).

Zone of Proximal Development: The range between the actual developmental level of problem-solving competency and the potential developmental level of problem-solving with support from others (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 2011).

Conclusion

Many third-grade readers at the site of the study were struggling with the pressure to meet the rigors of the CCSS through the use of the district's base reading program. As a result, a reading gap began to develop that prevented these students from being able to read in order to learn new information across the content areas. Students who developed a reading gap were at-risk for future academic failure. Implementing a reader's workshop intervention was promising for these students. Through individualized instruction in reading strategies/skills and extended periods of time in which to practice them, students built confidence in their growing abilities to read. Being afforded the time

to engage in discussions with others about books of their own interest made reading enjoyable for them and moved all students toward becoming lifelong readers.

In the next chapter, researchers showed that the reader's workshop instructional model was the vehicle that taught countless disengaged readers to become readers who were captivated by their books. Through read-aloud presentations, minilessons, note-taking, and opportunities to discuss their reading with teachers and peers, students built self-confidence as they learned to use reading strategies and skills that ultimately enabled them to develop a love of reading.

Chapter 2

Review of Relevant Literature

Thirty-six percent of fourth-grade students in the United States read below the basic level, and about 75% of these students never reached proficiency in reading (Torgesen et al., 2007). At the site of the study, 33% of third-grade students could not make adequate meaning from age-appropriate curricular reading materials that were used in the school district as measured by the 2016-2017 Benchmark Assessment 1, so it was not surprising that they displayed a lack of engagement in them. These students were at-risk for future academic failure. However, there was another reading instructional model that held promise for all readers. More than 30 years ago, Lucy Calkins pioneered the concept of reader's workshop during her research and faculty membership at Teacher's College, Columbia University (Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, 2014). As the educational pendulum has swung from phonics-based reading instruction to whole-language reading instruction, the engaging properties of reader's workshop have remained constant: Children have found a love of reading (Calkins, 2001; Hudson & Williams, 2015; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013). There has been a great deal of research on the effects of reader's workshop in the years since its inception. This literature review compared and contrasted the work of experts in this instructional model. The purpose was to illustrate the effective and engaging properties of reader's workshop and the effect it has had on young readers. The highly-structured and predictable approach to reading instruction taught students to be fluent readers who built deep meaning as they grew into

lifelong readers (Calkins, 2001; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013; Serravallo, 2010). This review was the foundation of the action research study: guiding struggling readers to develop enjoyment in the act of reading by arming them with the strategies and skills necessary to make this happen.

The implementation of reader's workshop may differ slightly, but there were elements to the reader's workshop model that made it distinct from other reading instructional approaches. Experts have agreed within their research upon the same essential components of an effective reader's workshop (Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001; Hudson & Williams, 2015; Serravallo, 2010). Brief strategy or skill minilessons were presented during the whole-group time at the beginning of reader's workshop. Teachers used read-aloud presentations while modeling the strategy/skill to provide opportunities for students to see how readers process text. After, during independent reading, teachers taught different strategy lessons while conferring with individuals or small groups of students to meet their individual needs. Finally, students read books of their own choosing as they moved toward independence (Calkins, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2008; Serravallo, 2010). These combined elements resulted in a balanced literacy structure that taught young readers within their zone of proximal development, a level of development wherein an individual can accomplish a skill that is too difficult to reach alone but is attainable with the help of others (Serravallo, 2010; Vygotsky & Kozulin, 2011). Thus, this literature review was organized by these same essential components.

Minilessons in Whole-Group Settings

Boushey and Moser (2012), Calkins (2001), and Serravallo (2010) discussed the importance of the structure of whole-class minilessons. In each of these three studies, whole-group minilessons were the signal to children that reader's workshop had begun. Children gathered together from five to 15 minutes. During these brief lessons, teachers chose topics based on observations of their student readers. Whereas many experts suggested teaching one minilesson per day, Boushey and Moser (2012) espoused teachers may teach two or three whole-group minilessons per day. Student observations and ongoing formative assessment determined the appropriate number of minilessons that students received (Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001). Serravallo (2010) was a proponent of keeping whole-class minilessons to no more than seven minutes to allow students maximum time for independent reading practice. Regardless of the number of minilessons taught each day or the amount of minutes in which to complete them, educators who were knowledgeable in the implementation and facilitation of reader's workshop were in consensus about the importance of beginning each session with at least one whole-group minilesson (Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2010).

At the beginning of the school year, Boushey and Moser (2012), Calkins (2001), Hudson and Williams (2015), and Serravallo (2010) presented lessons that encouraged students to become engaged in the act of reading itself. Until students could engage in reading for extended periods of time, deeper-level reading comprehension strategies would not have been effective. It was imperative that students were more deeply involved in their reading because the use of comprehension strategies could not be accessed during superficial reading experiences. For this reason, initial lessons worked

toward developing students' ability to read independently for a prolonged period of time. After teaching stamina and engagement, Serravallo (2015) recommended giving lessons on print work and fluency before moving to comprehension strategy lessons. Unlike many experts, Hudson and Williams (2015) espoused the continuation of brief, daily phonics lessons in addition to the strategy lesson throughout the school year. All researchers agreed that once students had developed the ability to engage in reading with stamina, comprehension strategy lessons should be introduced.

When students became ready for comprehension strategy lessons, Calkins (2001), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), and Serravallo (2010) agreed that minilessons on plot and setting, character, vocabulary, figurative language, and theme were valuable in building comprehension of fiction. During nonfiction reading lessons, teaching the main idea, key details, vocabulary, and text features enhanced student understanding (Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2015). The inclusion of these types of minilessons provided skills to students and prepared them to master Common Core State Standards (CCSS) English Language Arts (ELA) standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016).

Harvey and Goudvis (2007), Keene and Zimmerman (2013), and Marcell, DeCleene, and Juettner (2010) were proponents of teaching students to use metacognition, the act of thinking about one's own thinking, during the initial whole-group minilesson. By modeling the use of metacognition for students, they claimed this helped students to see that comprehension is derived from a combination of reading the text and thinking about it simultaneously. Keene and Zimmermann (2013) described this process as one of becoming more reflective of one's own reading. Readers should make meaningful personal connections to their texts. As students became reflective readers,

they began to make *text-to-self* connections when aspects of the text reminded them of a personal experience. *Text-to-text* connections occurred when readers were reminded of other texts they had read. Finally, *text-to-world* connections happened when students thought of happenings in the world around them that were removed from their personal experiences. An illustration of this was when readers combined their knowledge of illiteracy to a text they were reading. This was a *text-to-world* connection since the readers did not actually have any personal experience with illiteracy (Keene & Zimmermann, 2013).

Other comprehension strategies taught during whole-group minilessons included visualizing and using sensory imagery, building schema, inferring, questioning, determining importance, and synthesizing (Farris, 2011; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013). The goal of all minilessons was for teachers to present lessons to students in ways that were transparent to them, so young readers understood how to use the new learning as they read independently. Children need to be able to understand teachers' thought processes in concrete ways during lessons for them to be meaningful (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Calkins, 2001; Farris, 2011; Serravallo, 2015).

Conferencing with Students

Unlike many traditional student formations, where teachers choose book titles for use with homogeneously-grouped students, groups were formed differently in well-structured reader's workshops. According to Allen (2009), Allington (2013), Calkins (2001), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), and Serravallo (2010), student groupings were flexible and dynamic, and they were based on a common need. For example, several students who needed instruction in a specific reading comprehension strategy were

grouped together for that day to take part in a lesson that was specifically geared for that purpose. Grouping students of mixed reading abilities together for lessons on specific comprehension strategies was appropriate because the use of the strategy applied to all books, regardless of its level of difficulty.

Conferring took place between small groups of students and teacher, or between individual students and teacher. Allen (2009), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), Porath (2014), and Serravallo (2010) discussed the benefits to holding conferences between groups of students. For the teacher, it was an effective way to give targeted instruction to more students each day. Student groups benefitted by building feelings of community as they shared thoughts about their reading. Perhaps the biggest benefit to holding small-group conferring sessions was the reading culture that was created in the process: Students were engaged and motivated by their participation in this environment. Allen (2009), Calkins (2001), and Serravallo (2010) compared and contrasted small-group conferences with individual conferences. They asserted that holding weekly individual conferences with students also had merit because teachers were better able to address individual learning needs due to the high level of focus on only one student at a time. The disadvantage of this type of conferring was the limited number of students that teachers were able to meet with each day.

Daily conferences with students were the cornerstone in effective reader's workshops. Allen (2009), Calkins (2001), Porath (2014), and Serravallo (2010) agreed that asking carefully considered questions was important for gathering information about students and their understanding of the reading process. The researchers' questioning typically sought information about students' strategy knowledge. This information drove

teacher decisions to provide brief on-the-spot or future strategy lessons. Hudson and Williams (2015), Serravallo (2010), and Souza (2011) emphasized the importance of allowing time for students to transfer new understandings to their long-term memories. To achieve this, students were released after brief conferencing sessions to provide them with the necessary time for the critically important independent practice.

Other teacher questions during conferences sought information about students' metacognitive processes, appropriate goal setting, growth patterns over time, and/or their application of specific skills and strategies. Calkins (2001), Miller (2013), Porath (2014), and Serravallo (2010) discussed the importance of helping young readers to develop a reading identity by helping them to become aware of their own likes and dislikes when reading as well as their reading strengths and weaknesses. Teachers carefully considered the quality of these "back-and-forth" discussions with their students because they provided very useful insights. Experienced teachers purposefully limited the amount of time they spent talking *to* students during conferences. When teachers dominated conferences during reader's workshop, they hindered the development of a true and inquiring community of learners, which was the very essence of reader's workshop. A traditional reader's workshop was one in which students were engaged in conversations about their reading, and their thoughts, questions, and understandings of their reading were supported through conferences with their teachers. Teachers had to be mindful to not control the conference, but to listen in order to learn about students' thought processes. By listening more and talking less, teachers more fully supported the development of instilling lifelong reading habits in their students.

During individual or small-group conferences with students who had difficulty with decoding or fluency, effective teachers had specific goals in mind (Allington, 2013; Calkins, 2001). Providing additional instruction to struggling readers in word analysis skills was well suited to small-group work. Students who needed more instruction received it, but other students' time was not spent on something with which they already had mastery (Allington, 2013; Fountas & Pinnell, 2008; Serravallo, 2010). In other situations, teachers acted as coaches by giving specific strategies to aid in one-to-one matching or decoding difficulties. Other times, teachers coached students with strategies for increasing self-correction or reading more fluently. Students also needed prompting to help them become more active readers who engaged more deeply with their texts (Allington, 2013; Calkins, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2008).

Building Independence

Allen (2009), Calkins (2001), Daniels (1994), Hudson and Williams (2015), and Serravallo (2010) agreed that independent reading was a higher predictor of reading success and achievement than any other factor. In reader's workshop classrooms, minilessons were presented in which comprehension skills and strategies were addressed, but then students were given a chance to put these new skills into practice as they read the books that they had selected independently. These researchers found a critical factor necessary for developing lifelong readers was providing students ample time to read numerous and varied books because it exposed them to an abundance of words and gave them different experiences with printed text (Atwell, 2007). Being able to pick up a text and read it with accuracy not only built foundational reading skills, but it allowed for greater comprehension. When readers created meaning from books, the overall

experience became more enjoyable for them (Allington & Gabriel, 2012). All these factors worked together to build reading stamina (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Atwell, 2007; Boushey & Moser, 2012). Conversely, in many classrooms, students struggled continuously with books that were too difficult for them. Calkins (2001) warned that this was a very damaging reading practice because it wasted valuable time when children were not making meaning as they read. Additionally, these readers did not show the same growth as those who read and comprehended books with ease (Allington, 2013).

A U.S. Department of Education longitudinal study of approximately 25,000 eighth graders found that they spent an average of 21.2 hours per week watching television. In sharp contrast, the same study revealed that teens spent a meager 1.9 hours per week involved in reading outside of school. Another report on a group of fifth graders showed similar dismal results: Ninety percent of them devoted less than 1% of their time to reading, while 33% of their time was spent watching television (Trelease, 1995). For these reasons, the independent reading portion of reader's workshop was the single most important part of the reading day because it may have been the *only* reading practice of the day for many students. The results of the studies by Boushey and Moser (2012), Calkins (2001), Hudson and Williams (2015), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), and Serravallo (2010) indicated that teachers should schedule 30 to 40 minutes of independent reading into every school day.

Several managerial support systems helped to ensure that valuable independent reading time was protected. Calkins (2001) claimed that the use of "bookshelves," which were no more than magazine boxes or gallon-sized ziplock baggies, prevented young readers from wasting time by shopping in the classroom library: Students had the

necessary reading materials with them (Atwell, 2007; Calkins 2001). Unlike most instructional reading programs, students in reader's workshop chose books based on their individual interests. Therefore, it was important that they knew how to select books they could read and understand independently. Students chose books that were at their independent level and could be read with almost one hundred percent accuracy (Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2010; Yopp & Yopp, 2001). Reading logs wherein students listed book titles, the pages they had read, and the dates they began and finished them were also included in the bookshelves. Another advantage of students' use of bookshelves was that they made monitoring student progress easier for teachers. The high visibility of the bookshelves themselves allowed teachers to easily check the book titles that students selected in an effort to stay apprised of their choices and progress (Calkins, 2001; Hudson & Williams, 2015).

Boushey and Moser (2012) and Calkins (2001) were proponents of teaching students to discover locations around their classrooms in which they were best able to focus on their reading. In these reading workshop classrooms, it was not uncommon to see students sprawled comfortably around the room while engrossed in independent reading. Calkins (2001) asserted that young readers were motivated when allowed to choose to either remain in their seats for their reading or to relocate to cozy reading nooks. Both experts agreed there was an additional benefit to this type of arrangement: It allowed for more physical space in which teachers could confer with students without distracting other readers since they were not in such close physical proximity of each other (Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001). Discussions about student seating were not found in a majority of the literature reviewed. Serravallo (2010) referred to sending

“students back to their seats” after conferencing, but it was in the context of conferencing, not seating arrangements. She did not discuss her views on student seating during independent reading.

Building Engagement

Cabral-Marquez (2015), Lause (2004), Miller (2013), and Yopp and Yopp (2001) agreed that engagement and greater success in reading were connected. It was only through active engagement that students had meaningful reading experiences, which fostered growth in reading. If the goal of classroom teachers was to provide a foundation for students to truly grow as readers who want to pick up books for enjoyment, then it was crucial for students to be fully engaged in the act of reading. Students needed to be given the opportunity for reading to be fun. Student engagement and the love of reading grew when students had the opportunity for choice and to be challenged in the way that reader's workshop provided. One of the most engaging elements of reader's workshop noted by these researchers was the opportunity for students to select books for themselves. Self-selection was motivating because it helped students to feel that their interests and choices were being respected. Daniel Pink (2009), a researcher and highly-acclaimed author who drew upon more than 50 years of behavioral science, affirmed this. He claimed that when people have the freedom to choose for themselves, they develop a sense of autonomy in their work. Whether at school or in the workplace, they have a greater capacity to build conceptual understanding, earn better grades, persist when faced with challenges, become more productive, and have higher levels of psychological well-being.

Response to Literature

Allington (2013) and Daniels (1994) claimed that allegiance to schools' core curriculum and basal reading instructional programs did not ultimately improve reading comprehension or build a love of reading. In their study, which focused on the use of basal reading programs, they found that many teachers stressed reading instruction that called for students to analyze literature, but they failed to ask students to make personal responses to it. Experts agreed that responding personally to literature must come first. Daniels (1994), Feezel (2012), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), and Serravallo (2010) asserted that reader's workshop provided students with opportunities to respond and interact with literature in meaningful ways: journaling, jotting sticky notes, discussions with peers, and projects were a few examples. As students interacted purposefully with reading, they also developed vocabulary in ways that were genuine (Keene & Zimmermann, 2013; Serravallo, 2010).

A natural response to literature during reader's workshop was the development of vocabulary. Boushey and Moser (2012), Feezell (2012), and Hudson and Williams (2015) supported the claim that the acquisition of vocabulary was something that students took ownership of through reader's workshop. Rather than having a list of explicitly taught vocabulary words, students became inquisitive and curious about the language they encountered as they read. In this way, students played an active role in their own vocabulary instruction because they chose which new and unfamiliar words to explore.

Allington and Gabriel (2012) and Keene and Zimmermann (2013) affirmed that conversation was tremendously important in reader's workshop classrooms. When students discussed literature with their peers, they were able to see and understand ideas

in a deeper way. They were able to practice their reading strategies authentically as they responded to the literature and shared their thoughts about it with others (Keene & Zimmermann, 2013). In addition to reading, when students had conversations about the texts they had read, their ability to make connections deepened and they became more confident, motivated, and successful as readers (Allington & Gabriel, 2012).

Assessment

Allen (2009), Boushey and Moser (2012), Calkins (2001), Fountas and Pinnell (2008), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), and Serravallo (2010) discussed how assessment data came in a variety of forms in reading workshop classrooms. Valuable information was gleaned by listening carefully to the depth of conversation that took place between students (Allen, 2009; Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2010). In journals, students shared their thinking as they read: This included confirmation of their predictions, and discussions of connections, character trait webs, and comprehension strategies or literacy skills used (Calkins, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2008; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013). Projects that required students to think creatively to portray characters or plot events gave information and also served to increase engagement and motivation in reading (Keene & Zimmermann, 2013).

Conclusion

Daniel Pink (2009) vehemently maintained that people become highly motivated when they are given the freedom of choice. The reader's workshop instructional model gives students this freedom of choice. Allen (2009), Boushey and Moser (2012), Calkins (2001), Farris (2011), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), and Serravallo (2015) have described a multitude of ways in which the highly-structured and motivating properties of

reader's workshop have given students voice and autonomy in their educations. They have illustrated how students advanced in their journeys as they became lifelong readers when they experienced reading through an engaging reader's workshop.

The intervention plan, as described in chapter three, was based on the research included in the literature review. Data collection strategies, including gathering student artifacts, observational, inquiry, and baseline data were described in detail, and connections to the research questions were made. Ethical research practices, as well as discussions of how validity was enhanced and how confidentiality was protected through informed consent, were also explained.

Chapter 3

Methods

Setting

The population in this city, located in the Central Valley of California, has grown by 3.9%, or 5,000 people, since 2010. As of 2014, the population was 129,281 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The population of the site of the study was over 932 students, but it was expected to drop in the 2017-2018 school year due to the opening of a nearby elementary school. The school district was in the process of redrawing school boundaries, and it was anticipated that the population of the site of the study would decrease by approximately 100 students.

As of April 2010, the city was comprised of the following racial groups: Hispanic/Latino, 46%; Caucasian, 44.3%; Asian American, 5.4%; African American, 2.1%; and American Indian, 1.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The racial diversity of the classroom reflects that of the greater community: Caucasian, 43%; Hispanic/Latino, 32%; Asian American, 14%; and African American, 11%.

All housing surrounding the site of the study had been built within the last eight years. Many homes were under construction. Tract homes in the area ranged from small, basic starter homes to larger, two-story homes. There were no custom homes built within the school boundary. There was also a large development of apartments and condominiums to the south of the school. According to the United States Census Bureau (2015), the average annual income per household in this city was \$52,899. The

percentage of this city's community that owns single-family homes was 59% and residents who rented accounted for 41%. The price of housing in the county increased by 5% in the last year (S.R. Herring, personal communication, November 19, 2016).

There was a large variance in the types of job occupations within the school community, as well as in the greater community. The school site was a Title I school and approximately 53% of students received free and reduced-price meals. There was a large proportion of wage earners who performed manual labor, service, and other low-paying jobs. There was a smaller proportion of professionals with higher earnings. The major economic contributors to the community were agribusinesses, manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers. Sixty-four percent of those working were classified as civil service occupations. The growing population of this community has also led to growth in new businesses (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

The percentage of high-school graduates in this community was 81%, and the percentage of college graduates was 21% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Social stratification stemmed from varying levels of education. Many people who possessed only a high-school degree, and especially those who did not, got locked into minimum wage, entry-level jobs. Many were unable to work their way to higher-paying jobs. Others, who lived in or near poverty levels, were unable to gain employment due to their inability to communicate fluently in English or they lacked other prerequisite skills.

The 2016-2017 English Language Arts Benchmark Assessment 1 summary data for the school site of the study as compared to an average of all schools within the school district showed the following results. The percentage of students at the site of the study who exceeded standards was 12% as compared to the district average of 5%. Students at

the site of the study who met the standards were 26% in comparison to the district average of 17%. Thirty percent of students at the site of the study nearly met standards as compared to the district average of 29%. In the not met standard category, there were 33% of students at the site of the study and 49% from the district average.

Data taken from the same benchmark assessment for third graders showed similar results. The percentage of third-grade students at the site of the study who exceeded standards was 37% compared to the district average of third graders at 18%. Third graders at the site of the study who met the standards were 30% in comparison to the district average of third graders at 33%. Nineteen percent of third graders at the site of the study nearly met standards as compared to the district third-grade average of 21%. In the not met standard category, there were 14% of third graders at the site of the study and an average of 28% of district third graders.

There were special programs offered to students at the site of the study designed to extend and challenge students in a variety of ways. Participation in Odyssey of the Mind promoted collaboration and problem-solving for students in third through sixth grades. In Odyssey of the Mind, groups of students planned and practiced for competition with other students from around the region and state. Poetry and Prose challenged students who had an interest in language and performing arts as they prepared for annual competitions with other students from around the county. There were opportunities for third, fourth, fifth, and sixth graders to join a track club, many of whom would later participate on the competitive track team. Finally, participation in student council provided leadership opportunities to upper-grade students at the site of the study.

Participants

The students participating in this study were eight third-grade students. Of them, six were eight years old and two were nine years old. Two were girls and six were boys. Based on an average of the last three McGraw-Hill Education's *Wonders* reading program selection comprehension assessments, three students scored in the basic range of 60% to 75%. One of these participants had shown a recent and significant improvement in reading comprehension, fluency, and motivation. This was attributed to her ability to attend more fully during lessons and through the use of second-grade reading materials for homework. The remaining five students scored in the far-below basic range of 0% to 59%. Based on the *Wonders* program fall fluency assessment, one student scored at a proficient level, five students scored at a basic level, and two students scored at a far-below-basic level. One English Learner (EL) scored in the basic range with an average of 63.09% of questions answered correctly. His primary language was Vietnamese, and he was able to communicate fluently with his family using his native language. The second EL student scored in the far-below basic range with an average of 35.32% of questions answered correctly. This student was listed as "Spanish Only" according to school records. Personal communication with this student revealed that her parents speak to her in Spanish only, and she claimed to understand most, but not all, of what they say. She has very limited ability to speak with her parents using Spanish, and she communicates with her siblings in English. Therefore, this English learner is fluent in neither language. Both EL students were classified as "extending" according to their 2016-2017 CELDT results.

Of the eight participants in this study, four were Hispanic, two were Caucasian, and two were Asian American. One student has emotional and behavioral trouble that stems from his life prior to being adopted into his new family. He also suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). All of these factors significantly impact his ability to focus on learning in the classroom. Two other participants also have significant difficulty remaining focused during lessons and independent practice, but they do not have a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher has a multiple-subject California teaching credential, and she is a veteran teacher with 16 years of experience in teaching third grade. She served as both PI and Data Analysis Expert (DAE) in the action research study. Prior to the implementation of the intervention, there was another partner who would have served as the data analysis expert. For reasons out of the researchers' control, the other partner had to take leave of the study. Therefore, the researcher assumed the duties of both the PI and DAE. She collected baseline, formative, and summative assessment data during the course of the intervention using student interviews and conferencing, reading inventory questionnaires, observational records, and journaling. She examined participants' journals, self-assessment data, miscue analyses, reading fluency, and comprehension assessments using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The PI administered and collected Accelerated Reader diagnostic reports. The data was compiled, analyzed, and reported. Finally, the researcher presented her findings on the effectiveness of the study and the answers to her research questions to a panel of her professional peers.

Intervention Plan

Guiding students to be independent lovers of books is the single most important goal for teachers of reading (Calkins, 2001; Keene & Zimmermann, 2013; Serravallo, 2010). Reader's workshop has been shown to improve independent reading levels in young readers through its engaging, student-centered approach (Calkins, 2001). The reader's workshop model was grounded in the belief that children are motivated to learn about the reading process and are engaged in independent reading activities when their interests and choices are respected (Allington, 2013; Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001; Hudson & Williams, 2015). A reader's workshop intervention was implemented to answer the following research questions:

Primary Question:

How will reader's workshop impact independent reading fluency and comprehension levels in struggling third graders?

Secondary Question:

What effects will participation in reader's workshop have on struggling third-grade students' engagement in reading?

The daily reading workshop began with a brief whole-group reading strategy minilesson presented through a read-aloud presentation. During this time, the teacher modeled how she processed the text by sharing her thinking about it as she read. Calkins (2001) and Serravallo (2010) explained that it was through this process of sharing one's thinking that made the use of the strategy visible for students, so they could begin to use it during their independent practice. After, students moved to independent reading and response activities for a period of 30 – 40 minutes (Allington, 2013; Calkins, 2001).

While most students were occupied with silent, sustained reading (SSR), the PI conferred with individuals or small groups of students (Allen, 2009; Porath, 2014).

On most days, the PI conferred with two small groups of students and several individuals during the 30-minute independent reading period. During conferences, predictable structures and routines were followed which allowed students to know what to expect during conferring (Allen, 2009; Serravallo, 2010). During small-group conferences, the PI stated the purpose of the conference and then set the agenda by telling the strategy to be learned. The PI also gave a related compliment to foster the idea that the participants could learn the new strategy because they already possessed reading strengths that would allow them to acquire the new learning. Serravallo (2010) called this the “connect and compliment” part of the lesson. Next, the PI taught the strategy and quickly modeled its use. During the “engage” portion of the conference, students practiced the strategy that the PI demonstrated with their individual books (Serravallo, 2010). During this time, the PI gave one-on-one attention to participants that was tailored to their individual needs. The final step at the close of the conference was to “link” the work that students did in a small group to their independent reading (Serravallo, 2010). The PI restated what was taught during the brief conference and then encouraged the students to continue using the new skill independently. The goal was for readers to solidify the new understanding into long-term memory, thus building the number of reading strategies available to them during independent reading (Allen, 2009; Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2010; Sousa, 2011).

Initial engagement assessments revealed that all the participants needed development in reading stamina, focus, book choice, and monitoring for meaning

(Allington, 2013; Boushey & Moser, 2012; Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2015). Print work lessons were needed because several participants lacked strategies to be able to read the words in their books fluently. Lessons to increase fluency were needed to help participants be automatic and expressive readers who used proper phrasing to make meaning as they read (Allington, 2013; Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2010; Serravallo, 2015). The PI also determined that all student participants lacked skill in understanding vocabulary and figurative language as they read (Allington, 2013). Therefore, small-group and individual lessons on specific skills in these areas were also taught using Jennifer Serravallo's (2015) *The Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers* to guide lesson planning and instruction.

After SSR, students engaged in discussions about their reading with peers for a period of up to 10 minutes. Finally, they shared examples as written on sticky notes or in their response journals of their use of decoding and/or comprehension strategies in a whole-group debriefing session by turning to a partner and then taking turns explaining their examples. Meanwhile, the researcher moved among the students and listened to their descriptions. She made quick notes to be elaborated upon later during a lunch break or after school (Calkins, 2001; Serravallo, 2010).

Data Collection Methods

Gathering data from multiple sources provided validity and credibility to the study and enabled the researcher to gain valuable insights and answers to her research questions (Hendricks, 2016). Artifacts, observations, and inquiries were used to gain answers to research questions and the justifications for their use are discussed in more detail below.

Artifacts. Participant-generated artifacts were collected through the use of sticky notes and journal entries wherein students recorded examples of their use of comprehension strategies and/or skills during their independent reading and allowed the PI to monitor the growth and depth of participants' responses over time. Student-generated weekly reading logs provided quantitative and qualitative assessment data that was used to determine the trends and/or the progress in independent reading engagement as measured over the course of the intervention (see Appendix A). Finally, updated DRA and Accelerated Reader Star Test diagnostic reports were used and compared to those taken prior to the intervention as additional data to determine growth in reading comprehension. These types of artifacts helped the PI to monitor the participants' growth in both reading comprehension and engagement.

Observational data. Observations that were recorded by the PI in a Reflection Journal were used to answer the research questions (see Appendix B). Because the PI of the study was the classroom teacher, brief field notes were journaled during conferences with participants and during their independent reading and discussions. Later during lunch, the PI noted more detailed accounts of her observations of the participants that yielded information about growth in comprehension, fluency, and engagement in her Reflection Journal. Longer narrative accounts were written in her Reflection Journal about observations when there was a more direct link to either the primary or secondary research questions of the study.

A retired teacher who holds a Master's Degree in Language Arts with a focus in reading instruction and a reading specialist certificate completed the Engagement Inventory to provide unbiased observations and data at the beginning and end of the

intervention (see Appendix C). This type of unbiased data collection provided information about student engagement during independent reading growth over the course of the intervention and helped to answer the secondary research question.

Inquiry data. At the beginning of the intervention, each participant shared information about their feelings and attitudes about reading during an interview with the PI. The PI recorded participant responses, and it was used as baseline engagement data (see Appendix D). In addition, at the beginning and end of the intervention, participants completed a Self-Assessment of Reading survey (see Appendix E) wherein they were asked to rate their level of agreement to a variety of statements related to the act of reading by using a four-point scale. There were also questions that required students to assess their ability to decode and read fluently. Comparing beginning and ending versions of the Self-Assessment of Reading provided data about student perceptions of themselves as readers in terms of engagement and ability. In a final survey taken at the conclusion of the intervention, participants were asked specific information about their growth as readers as a result of their participation in the reader's workshop intervention (see Appendix F). Appendix F was designed specifically for use in planning the next instructional steps following the initial reader's workshop intervention.

Allen (2009), Allington (2013), Boushey and Moser (2012), Calkins (2001), and Serravallo (2010) all agreed that teachers can tailor reading instruction to match the individual needs of students during conferences, thus helping struggling readers to gain proficiency more quickly. Therefore, conferences with individual participants to set reading goals were held at the beginning of the intervention. In addition, conferences with individuals and small groups were held daily during the independent reading phase

of reader's workshop. Information gained through student conferences provided formative assessment data and drove decisions for differentiating lessons for individual students.

Baseline data. Computer-generated Accelerated Reader diagnostic reports that were taken at the beginning of the intervention were used for reading comprehension quantitative baseline data. Baseline DRA assessments that measured fluency and comprehension were given and then compared to a second DRA assessment given at the end of the intervention. DRA provided both qualitative and quantitative data. Participants' summaries of texts provided qualitative data, and the running record and miscue analysis portion of the DRA gave quantitative information. This type of inquiry data was useful in gaining insights toward answering the primary research question. Other baseline data considered was through the PI's prior observations of her participants. Her work in small-group settings within the regular classroom tier-two interventions over the previous four months had also provided valuable informal information about the participants' reading fluency and comprehension abilities and helped her to see growth in both of these areas.

To gather baseline data about levels of engagement of the participants, both qualitative and quantitative assessments were administered (Hendricks, 2016). Qualitative assessment data was gathered using the Third-Grade Questionnaire (see Appendix D). The survey sought information about how the participants felt about reading in general and asked participants to share feelings, experiences, wishes, and interests related to reading books. To obtain detailed information from the participants, the PI gathered the information through interviews with individual students and then

noted their responses. Because this was a time-consuming task, the PI interviewed most participants during lunch recess or after school. The participants of the study, as well as their parents, agreed to the arrangement, and the participants seemed to enjoy the interview process. The Engagement Inventory gathered quantitative baseline information about the participants' ability to engage in reading during SSR using a coding system over a period of time that was separated into five-minute intervals (see Appendix C). The narrative portion of the Engagement Inventory wherein notes were made about observations of the participants' provided qualitative data. As mentioned previously, the Self-Assessment for Reading provided quantitative assessment data using a four-point rating scale for each survey question (Appendix E).

Ethical Research Practices

The educational researcher was bound to protect the rights of the participants and guard against any possible harm that participation in this action research study may have caused. To ensure this, the PI informed participants and their parents of what their involvement entailed. In addition, the PI assured her minor participants, and their parents, that participants' confidentiality was to be strictly maintained before, during, and after the study was completed. No data was collected from the participants by the PI until written permission had been granted by both the participants and their parents (Hendricks, 2016).

Due to the nature of the reader's workshop action research study, data collection methods that increased validity were based on research of credible literature. Data collection methods were adjusted during the intervention as new information was gained through the ongoing reflective practices of the PI. Collaboration with a reading expert

was utilized and this helped to guarantee accuracy and minimized any biases held by the PI (Hendricks, 2016). At all times, the participants were treated with great care and respect. Through the literature review process, a valid study was implemented and the resulting data enabled the researcher to answer questions about how the implementation of reader's workshop affected struggling third-grade readers' growth in fluency, comprehension, and engagement in the act of reading.

Plan for increasing validity. The researcher's plan for increasing validity included the use of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility. Credibility was used to ensure that the results used to answer the research questions were accurate and truthful. This was enhanced with the help of an unbiased critical friend. She was highly qualified as a newly retired third-grade teacher who holds both a Master's Degree in Language Arts with a focus on reading and a reading specialist certificate. To collect unbiased data on levels of reading engagement of the participants during independent reading, she completed a checklist on two separate occasions: one at the beginning and another at the end of the intervention. She also participated in the interpretation of a variety of data collected to minimize any biases held by the researcher. Collaboration with the expert promoted ethical research practices (Hendricks, 2016).

Confirmability. Triangulating data sources and an extensive audit trail provided confirmability through a variety of data which made the results of the study more accurate and decreased researcher bias, and thus, helped the PI to answer the research questions. Data included student artifacts in the form of student reading response journals, book logs, and student sticky-note responses. Accelerated Reader computer-

generated reports and DRA assessments were collected at the beginning and end of the action research intervention. Observational data records included field notes, critical friend observations and debriefings, engagement checklists, and narrative accounts of observations with direct ties to research questions. Records of inquiry data included goal-setting conferences with students and individual and small-group conferences held during independent reading with students. Several student surveys and questionnaires were also collected. This collection of both qualitative and quantitative data further enhanced confirmability of the study, reduced researcher bias, and helped the PI to answer the research questions (Hendricks, 2016).

Transferability. In an effort to determine how the results of the study would be useful for teaching other struggling third-grade students, transferability was used. Through note taking and narrative accounts, detailed descriptions of the setting of the study were recorded in the PI's reflection journal. Detailed notes about the intervention were entered into the journal as well as observations, descriptions, and reflections that chronicled individual participants over the course of the study (Hendricks, 2016).

Dependability. The study was found to have dependability and was, therefore, useful to other teachers at the site. The audit trail that detailed the triangulation of data collection as well as the detailed description of the intervention, its purpose, and the results made this study both ethical and useful for other teachers in their work with third-grade students, including students who struggle in reading (Hendricks, 2016).

Confidentiality and informed consent. Careful plans were carried out to ensure that the action research study was ethical and protected the confidentiality rights of the participants. Every effort was taken to make sure that the participants, and their parents,

understood the purpose of the study and what participation in the reader's workshop intervention involved. In the Informed Consent Form, parents were notified of how the data that was collected would be used and that their child's identity would remain confidential. They were also made aware that their child's participation was voluntary, and that their child could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty for doing so. Parents signed and returned the Informed Consent Form thereby granting permission for their child to participate in the action research study. For one set of parents who were Spanish speakers, an Informed Consent Form was translated into Spanish. Two original copies were signed by the participants' parents: one for the parent to retain and the other was kept secure by the researcher in a locked file cabinet with other confidential documents. In addition to the Informed Consent Form obtained from parents of the participants, Student Assent Forms were obtained from student participants and were also kept secure. During this process, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and a brief description of the intervention was given. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions that they had about their participation in an effort by the PI to maintain ethical research practices and also to allay concerns participants may have had about their involvement in the study. Finally, to ensure that the rights and confidentiality of the participants were protected, participants were assigned random numbers as identifiers by the PI.

Conclusion

The reader's workshop instructional model was implemented in a third-grade classroom to study the effects it had on struggling third-grade readers. Students moved smoothly through each stage of the daily reader's workshop due to its predictable and

highly-structured nature. Instruction began with a brief whole-group read-aloud presentation and a targeted minilesson. Next, students moved to independent reading to practice the new strategy/skill as the PI held individual and small-group conferences. After, the class gathered together in a whole-group setting to debrief with their peers. Students discussed their books and the strategies/skills they employed while reading as the PI listened in on their conversations while making notes that guided future instruction. At the close of the daily reader's workshop, the entire class enthusiastically celebrated individual student successes by performing favorite classroom cheers. Finally, as students filed out of the classroom to enjoy their morning recess or lunch, the PI elaborated on her notes.

The effect that the reader's workshop intervention had on struggling third-grade readers is discussed in detail in the next chapter. Multiple sources of data were analyzed and displayed, and narrative accounts described how conclusions were reached that allowed the PI to answer each of the research questions. A brief discussion of continued research on the implementation of reader's workshop is provided, as well as how it may apply to third-grade students.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

A reader's workshop intervention was implemented with the researcher's third-grade class. All students participated daily in the four-week intervention. However, data was collected for use in this study from eight students who consistently showed below-grade-level understanding on a variety of assessments taken prior to the planning and implementation of the intervention. The research questions were developed out of growing concern over these students' lack of progress using the differentiated reading materials from the *Wonders* reading base program.

Primary Research Question

A thorough analysis of triangulated data, as well as a review of the Reflection Journal, has shown improvements in all participants' reading comprehension and fluency. This process has helped the researcher to answer the first research question, which was, "How will reader's workshop impact independent reading fluency and comprehension levels in struggling third graders?"

Developmental reading assessment. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) measured student progress in reading comprehension and fluency. Administering the DRA required the researcher to work one-on-one with each of her eight participants. During the DRA, students read three to four beginning paragraphs of a teacher-selected fictional story aloud. This first step ensured that the students could read the book fluently and with accuracy, and this helped the researcher to determine the appropriate DRA book

level for each student. Next, students made predictions about their stories and then went off to read the rest of it independently. After reading, participants returned to the researcher to retell the story in as much detail as possible. During this time, the researcher highlighted key events of the story that the students retold using the assessment forms. Later, the researcher scored individual retellings using a comprehension rubric to determine each participant's level of understanding.

The final part of the DRA asked students to read a passage from their stories aloud as the researcher administered the miscue analysis portion of the assessment. Important information about students' phrasing and fluency was derived from this part of the assessment. Students were required to have both a comprehension rubric score of three or four and also a minimum of 94% decoding accuracy to be considered proficient with a given DRA level.

All participants grew one to two DRA levels during the course of the four-week intervention (see Figure 1). It should be noted that one DRA level is not equivalent to one point, and the numbering system that is used in the DRA is not consistent. The DRA reading continuum starts with levels A and one for beginning readers and ends on level 44 for more accomplished readers. In the intervention, the participants progressed within these levels: 18, then to 20, to 24, 28, 30, 34, and 38. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2008), students were expected to grow by four DRA levels in one school year.

One factor that helped the participants to develop their reading skills was the use of small-group and individual conferences, wherein minilessons provided additional instruction in word analysis skills, letter to sound matching, and other decoding difficulties (Allington, 2013; Fountas & Pinnell, 2008; Serravallo, 2010). Minilessons

that focused on helping the participants to develop comprehension strategies and literacy skills over the course of the intervention were also key factors in student growth in DRA. Teaching the participants fix-up strategies for use when they became disengaged in their reading also helped them to deepen their comprehension as they read (Allington, 2013; Calkins, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2008).

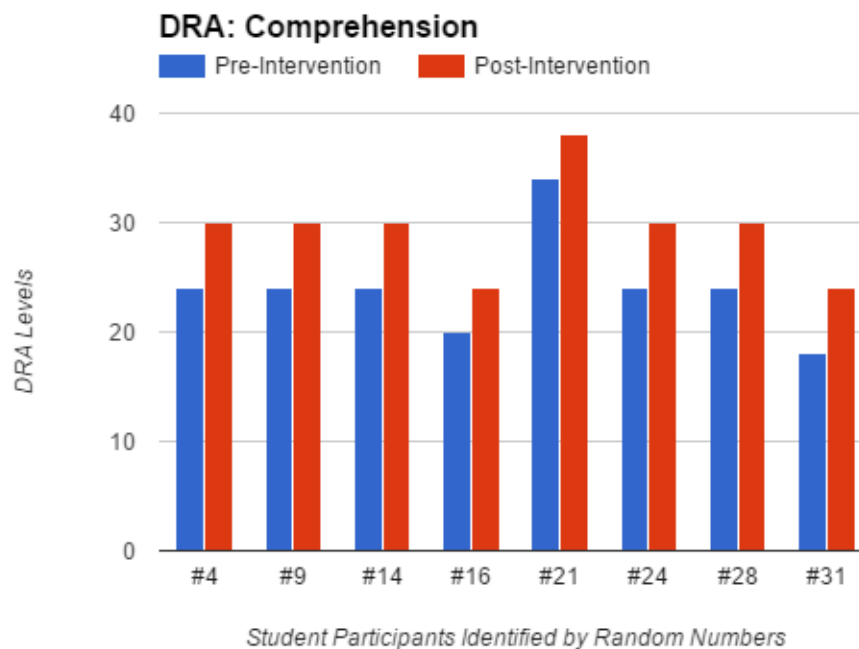


Figure 1. DRA level growth per participant.

In reviewing notes from the Reflection Journal, the growth of Students #4, #24, #28, and #31 was not surprising, as they were most consistently engaged in practicing reading strategies and skills during their independent practice each day. The same two levels of growth in Students #9 and #14 were more surprising given the researcher's consistent observations of their difficulty in remaining engaged during reading, as noted in the Reflection Journal. Students #16 and #21 each grew by only one DRA level. The Reflection Journal noted that Student #16 began to have an increased awareness of the

fact that his growth in reading would happen as he developed his ability to more consistently engage in reading appropriately leveled books of interest. Calkins (2001) warned that reading books that were too difficult was a very damaging reading practice because it wasted valuable time when children were not making meaning as they read. Additionally, readers who chose books that were too difficult for them did not show the same growth as those who read and comprehended books with ease (Allington, 2013). The researcher concluded that Student #16's difficulty in choosing appropriate books and in engaging in reading were the main reasons why he has continued to struggle in reading throughout his third-grade year.

The Reflection Journal showed that Student #21 had gone through periods of feeling lethargic during times when he should have focused on reading to create deep meaning of the text. In other Reflection Journal entries about conferences with Student #21, the researcher had witnessed him reading words incorrectly. It appeared that he did not always visualize the story as he read because when his miscues did not make sense, he continued to read on without noticing that there was a problem. At other times, he discussed his reading with the researcher with excitement and animation. It is possible that he would be able to increase his DRA level if he were to read the assessment on a day when he engaged in the story.

Self-assessment for reading survey. While the DRA provided the most useful information on the participants' growth in reading comprehension and fluency, the Self-Assessment for Reading also provided useful information (see Appendix E). The original document contained 11 questions: five questions pertained to engagement in reading, four questions regarded comprehension, and two questions referred to fluency. Students

responded by noting the number that most closely reflected their perceptions about the questions using a four-point rating scale with a 1 being strongly disagree and a 4 being strongly agree. Student participants answered all 11 questions; however, during analysis of the data, the researcher decided not to use the two questions involving nonfiction since the entire intervention worked with comprehension of fictional stories only. Average scores were calculated from each participant's pre- and post-intervention self-assessment in each of these three categories: engagement in reading, comprehension of reading, and fluency during reading. (More information about engagement was included in the section that addressed the secondary research question.)

Student #4 was very confident in her ability to comprehend what she read (see Figure 2). She was consistent in rating herself at a three in comprehension. Students #9, #21, #28, and #31 showed that their feelings about their ability to comprehend had improved. Student #9 showed the biggest change with an increase of 1.34 points. The other three students' increases were smaller: less than 1 point in each instance. The researcher had noticed a marked increase in the self-confidence of Students #4, #9, #28, and #31 as a result of their participation in reader's workshop. Serravallo (2010) noted that building the confidence of students can be accomplished during the "connect and compliment" part of every minilesson. She maintained that the compliment sends the message to students that they already possess the skills necessary for the new learning to occur, thus building confidence in their ability to achieve the new learning.

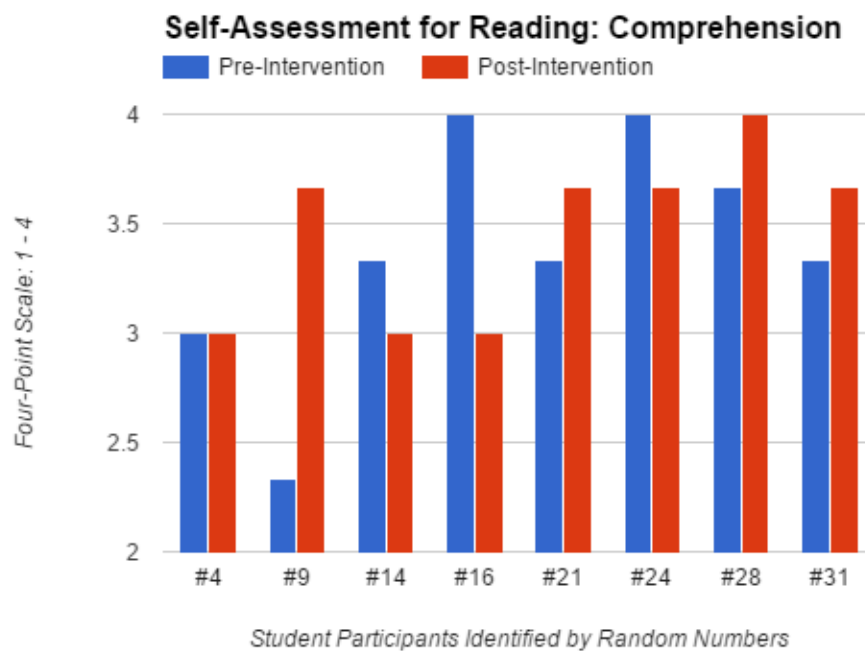


Figure 2. Change in participants' self-perception of comprehension skill.

Students #14, #16, and #24 revealed that their perceptions about their ability to comprehend decreased. Student #14's perception decreased slightly by a quarter of a point, and Student #16's rating decreased from a rating of four to a rating of three. For Students #14 and #16, this was likely due to their increased awareness that their difficulty in remaining engaged during reading negatively impacts their comprehension. Noting that Student #24's perception went down was surprising to the researcher, although it only decreased by about a third of a point from four to 3.66. As she reviewed her Reflection Journal, conferences with him have revealed his enjoyment of reading and his growing self-confidence in understanding what he has read. Unfortunately, Student #24 learned that his recent Accelerated Reader Star Test score dropped a little, and this may have shaken his confidence and compelled him to answer the questions on the Self-Assessment for Reading as he did. In hindsight, the researcher regretted giving students

updated Accelerated Reader information prior to administering the post-intervention Self-Assessment for Reading survey because she felt it may have impacted the way they rated themselves.

The Self-Assessment for Reading also revealed information about the participants' perceptions of their ability to read fluently (see Figure 3). Four participants' feelings about their ability to read fluently stayed the same from the beginning to the end of the intervention. Students #9, #16, and #28 were consistent in rating themselves as a four in fluency. Student #21, the strongest and most fluent reader of all the participants, consistently rated himself as a 2.5. Students #4 and #28 showed half-point increases: #4 rated herself as a three and #31 rated herself as a four. Students #14 and #24 showed full-point increases. Both Students #14 and #24 rated themselves at 3.5 in fluency. There were no decreases in participants' perceptions of themselves as fluent readers according to the Self-Assessment for Reading.

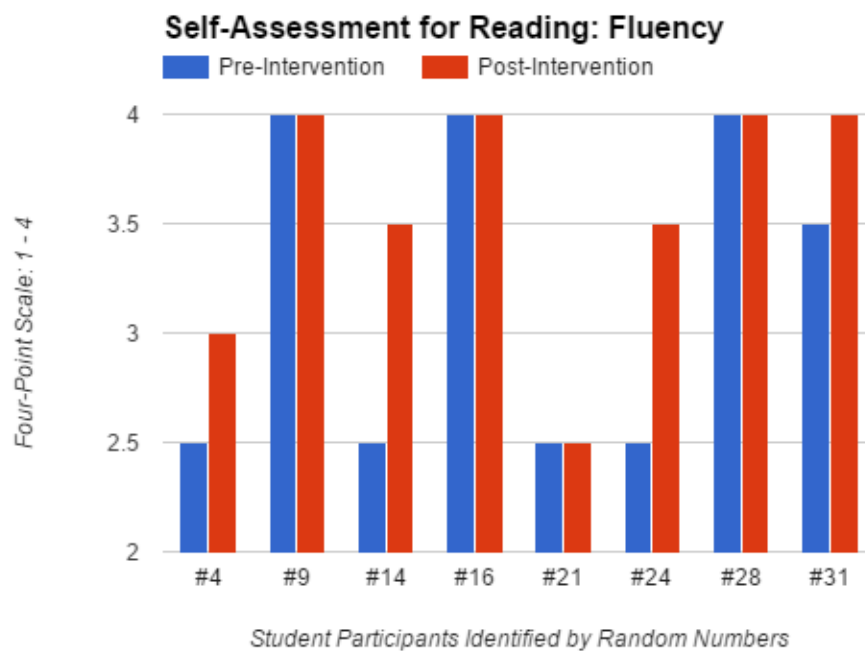


Figure 3. Change in participants' self-perception of reading fluency.

Accelerated Reader diagnostic reports. The researcher administered an Accelerated Reader (AR) Star Test to her entire class prior to the reader's workshop intervention. From the resulting student diagnostic reports, the PI collected baseline percentile rank scores for each participant. The week after the intervention had ended, all students took another AR Star Test. As noted in the Reflection Journal, the climate within the classroom was one wrought with disruptions and a lack of focus for so many of the students. The results of the students' post-intervention AR Star Test revealed that all students' percentile rank decreased, at least slightly (see Figure 4). When the participants learned that their AR levels had decreased, they were disappointed and wanted to retake the test. Unfortunately, only two students, #14 and #28, had time to complete a retest, and their second attempt showed slight increases from their baseline

percentile rank. It is not known if the other participants' percentile rank scores would have improved if they had retested.

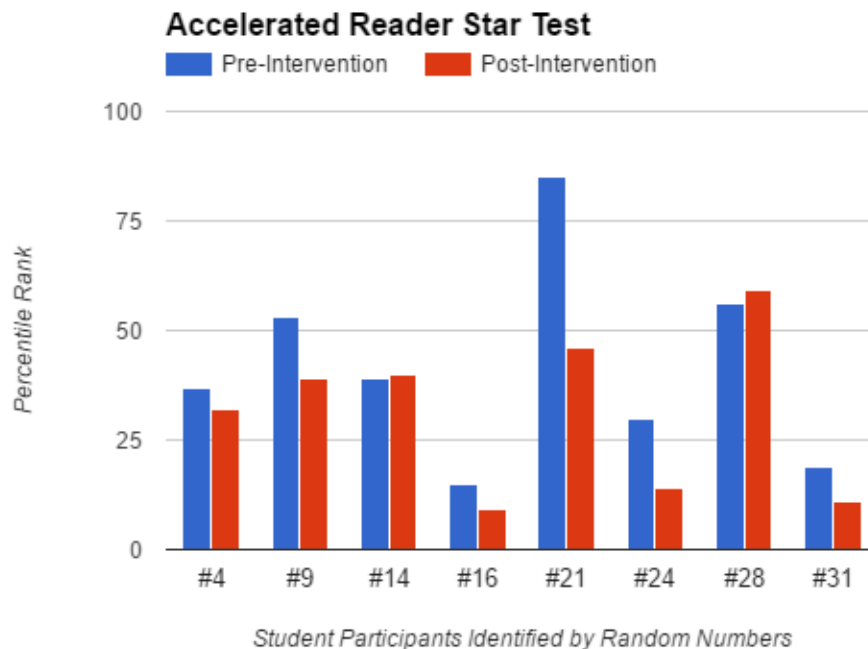


Figure 4. Growth in Accelerated Reader percentile rank.

One benefit from allowing participants to retest was the researcher's close observations of the types of questions that students were asked on the AR Star Test. From this, the PI ascertained that questions sought information about students' ability to use unknown words in context rather than questions more directly related to measuring reading comprehension and fluency. Therefore, the PI placed less emphasis on the AR Star Test results, and more emphasis on the DRA, in answering the primary research question.

Sticky notes and student journal entries. Daniels (1994), Feezel (2012), Keene and Zimmermann (2013), and Serravallo (2010) agreed that when students responded personally to their reading, their engagement and understanding of it was increased.

Furthermore, the experts asserted that reader's workshop provided students with opportunities to respond and interact with literature in meaningful ways: journaling, jotting sticky notes, and discussions with peers were a few examples that they gave. With this in mind, the researcher asked students to jot brief notes in their journals as they found evidence connected to the lesson of the day over the course of the first two weeks of the intervention.

About that time, the researcher grew concerned over a growing trend of students who were spending too much time note-taking and not enough time reading. As a result, the PI shared her observations of this with the entire class at the start of reader's workshop one morning. After explaining the importance of spending most independent time reading, the PI asked students to merely place a blank sticky note at places in their books where they wanted to discuss the events with their teacher during a conference or with their peers during their "brain break." Brain breaks occurred after 20 minutes of independent reading for a period of up to five minutes. During brain breaks, students met in pairs to discuss their reading with each other. As the researcher made her way around to hear different pairs' discussions, she was pleased to hear that most students' conversations were animated as they shared events from their books. Within five minutes, most pairs had departed to return to their seats for the final 10 minutes of independent reading. The resulting observational data collected by the researcher was valuable in answering both research questions. The PI determined that the students' excitement over sharing events from their books with their peers indicated both comprehension of their reading, as well as enjoyment of it. A negative aspect of the

change in note-taking was that it limited the researcher's collection of sticky notes and journal entries for use as student artifacts.

A relatively small number of journal entries were collected during the intervention. Being mindful of other lessons that needed to be taught at the close of each day's reading workshop, the researcher curtailed journaling activities to make time for teaching in other curricular areas. Those collected were responses related to individual student goals or to the minilesson of the day and provided some limited data to help in answering the research questions.

Secondary Research Question

A triangulation of data helped the researcher to answer the secondary research question, which was, "What effects will participation in reader's workshop have on students' engagement in reading?" Multiple sources of data were used to answer this question, but the researcher found it to be more difficult to answer than the primary research question.

For reasons not fully understood by the researcher, individual levels of engagement seemed to vary widely over the course of the intervention. A review of the daily Reflection Journal indicated that most participants were deeply engaged in their reading and eager to discuss it during conferences with their teacher and with their peers. Student #16 was the only student who had difficulty engaging in conversation with peers, and most teacher conferences centered on the importance of book choice. Student #16 never engaged in his reading to the point where he found enjoyment in discussing his reading with peers.

Engagement inventories. An analysis of the pre- and post-intervention Engagement Inventories revealed a decrease in engagement for five of the participants and an increase for three (see Figure 5). A review of the Reflection Journal caused the researcher to consider possible explanations for this. The class of third graders had shown an increased level of distraction and inattentiveness during the math block which had taken place after morning recess starting at 10:35 a.m. Because the class as a whole had been engaged in reading during reader's workshop starting at 9:00 a.m., the researcher changed the daily schedule by placing math at 9:00 a.m. and reader's workshop at 10:35 a.m. in an effort to increase productivity during math. The change in schedule did help to increase engagement in math lessons, but may have negatively impacted the reader's workshops.

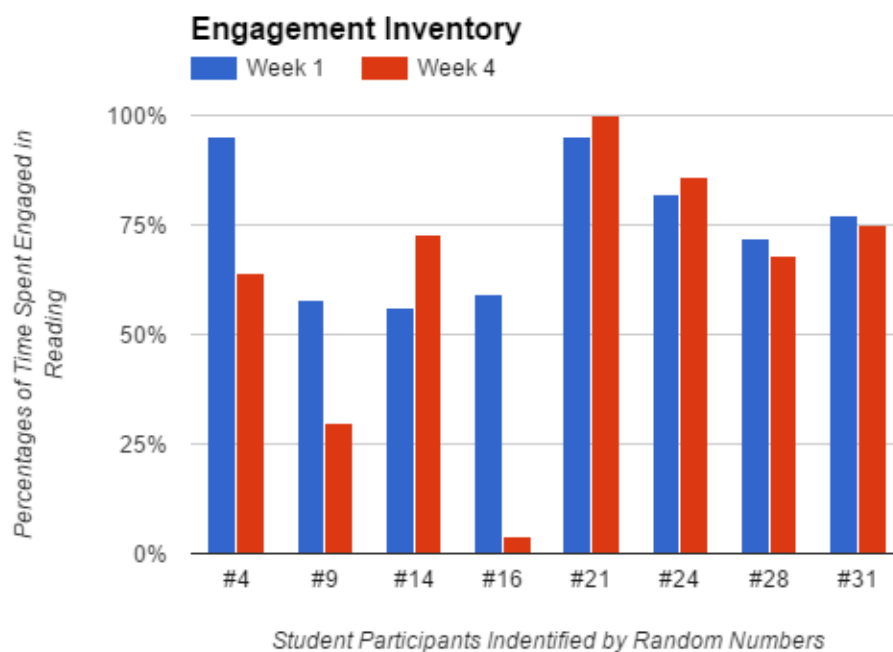


Figure 5. Percentage of growth in participants' reading engagement.

Another contributing factor may have been that the pre-intervention Engagement Inventory took place on a Monday, and it was also the first day students participated in reader's workshop and were eager about it. The post-intervention Engagement Inventory took place on the last day of the intervention before a three-day holiday for the students. Reviewing the Reflection Journal showed that the overall level of attentiveness and time-on-task for the class, in general, was at a low on the day that post-intervention engagement notes were taken by a critical friend, a trusted friend who provided knowledgeable and unbiased feedback about her observations of the participants (Hendricks, 2016). Further, a review of the narrative accounts noted in the Engagement Inventory: Description of Observed Behaviors discussed types of student behaviors during periods of disengagement in reading (see Appendix C).

Boushey and Moser (2012) and Calkins (2001) were proponents of teaching students to discover locations around their classrooms in which they were best able to focus on their reading. Student #14 routinely moved from his desk to a place that he had chosen, which was located in the back of the room, to increase his focus, and it appeared to be effective as he showed an increase in engagement as noted on the post-intervention Engagement Inventory. Student #28, whose level of engagement decreased by four percent, would have benefitted from moving away from his seat, especially on that particular day when there were lots of distractions around him. The researcher did not suggest to him that he should move in an effort to make the critical friend's task more manageable. The critical friend used a seating chart to identify each participant as she jotted her observations, so the researcher thought it best to have participants remain in their seats. The researcher believes that his level of engagement during reading would

have shown an increase, or at least stayed consistent with the first observation of him, if he had moved to a less distracting location in the classroom.

Students #4, #9, and #16 had the largest decreases in their levels of engagement. In rereading notes in the Reflection Journal from that day, the researcher believed that the overall climate in the class was a large contributing factor. The researcher's observations and notes in her Reflection Journal about Student #4 throughout the course of the intervention, showed her to be highly engaged in her reading. She had discovered the *Judy Moody* series and regularly engaged in conversations about her reading with her teacher. Therefore, the critical friend's observations of her were not reflective of her usual reading behavior. Student #9, who struggled with engaging in books long enough to finish reading them, found the *Big Nate* and *HiLo* graphic novel series to be of interest to him. Over the course of the intervention, he had excitedly reported the number of pages he read following the independent reading portion of reader's workshop. Cabral-Marquez (2015), Lause (2004), Miller (2013), and Yopp and Yopp (2001) were proponents of giving students the opportunity to select books for themselves. They claimed that self-selection was motivating because it helped students to feel that their interests and choices were being respected, and evidence of this was observed in all third-grade students in the class. Student #16 continued to struggle to engage in reading books that he had chosen, although he did make more appropriate choices than prior to the reader's workshop intervention. His medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder and other behavioral difficulties that stemmed from his troubled past were factors that prevented him from ever fully engaging in the act of reading for enjoyment.

Self-assessment for reading. Figure 6 shows a comparison of pre- and post-intervention Self-Assessment for Reading surveys completed by the participants. On the surface, the results showed that four students held the same perception of themselves in terms of their engagement during reading. Two students showed an increase in their self-perceptions, while two others showed a decrease. When data revealed in the surveys was triangulated with the PI's Reflection Journal entries about observations of and work with students during the course of the reader's workshop intervention, much more useful information was revealed and is described below.

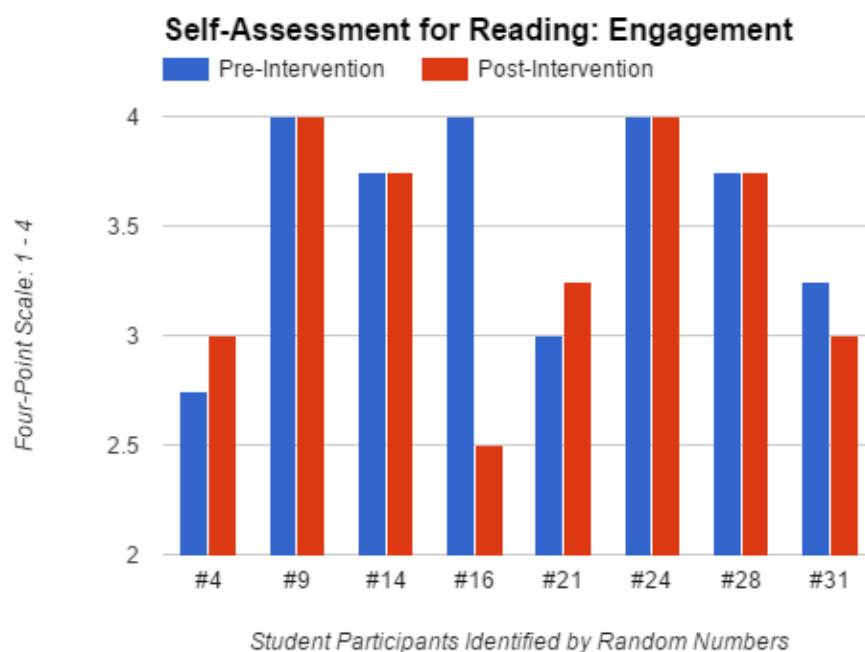


Figure 6. Change in participants' self-perception in reading engagement.

From the PI's review of the Reflection Journal, information about several participants stood out. For instance, Student #4's consistent enthusiasm over the books she was enjoying corresponded with the increase shown in the surveys. Student #9 and #14 had exaggerated perceptions of themselves as engaged readers, and they both

struggled to build reading stamina and engagement throughout the intervention. However, by the end of the intervention, they were both armed with strategies for re-engaging when they drifted out of their reading. This increased their self-confidence as seen in their responses shown in Figure 6. Student #16 had also grown in his knowledge that he needed to increase his focus and stamina while reading. This was reflected in the survey: At first, he gave himself the highest rating, but on the second survey he was more realistic of his reading-engagement shortcomings, and thus lowered his rating. It was by combining data that the researcher was able to see a more accurate picture of the growth in engagement of her participants.

Weekly reading logs. The students' use of Weekly Reading Logs served to increase their awareness about how engaged in reading they were during independent reading in class and at home, but they were not particularly useful in the determination of levels of engagement (see Appendix A). The researcher calculated the number of pages read during students' 30-minute blocks of independent reading in the first week of the intervention and found great inconsistencies in the number of pages individual third-grade students read from day to day. Believing that the inconsistencies were due to the newness of the method of recording for students, the researcher more consistently modeled how to fill in each day's reading using the pages she had read aloud each day during the minilesson as an example during the second week.

Data gathered at the close of week two provided useful information about the reading of Students #9, #14, #21, and #24. During private conversations with Students #9 and #14, wherein the researcher showed them the number of pages read during each reading episode, they were surprised and disappointed to see that at times they had only

read as few as two pages while at school and as few as one page while at home during 30 minutes of reading. This resulted in conversations about distractions and ways to become re-engaged when that occurred. At the conclusion of these private conversations, both students stated with conviction that they would increase the number of pages read during future independent reading. Student #21's data revealed some consistency when reading the same book title from school to home, and from day to day. At other times, he read from different books which made forming general conclusions more difficult. Student #24's data showed him to be the most engaged reader in terms of both pages read per reading episode and in his persistence in reading the same books over the course of the week. Data from the reading logs of Students #4, #16, #28, and #31 were least conclusive because recordings were either incomplete, incorrectly completed, or both.

On Monday of the third week of the intervention, the researcher led a class discussion about information that could be gleaned from the reading logs. Displaying several anonymous examples on the document camera, students were able to make generalizations about levels of reading engagement based on the information they saw in each example. This was a valuable conversation because it raised the class's awareness of the connection between the quality of the reading that they did daily and their growth in reading.

In a continued effort to correct problems students were having with the completion of reading logs, the researcher provided all students with two Weekly Reading Logs for the third week: one for use in school and one for use at home. Because a number of students in the class had lost their reading logs the week before, all students were instructed to keep the "school" logs in their book bags with their reading workshop

materials, and the “home” logs were to be kept inside their homework folders. In addition, another column was added to the reading log wherein students calculated the number of pages read each day so that they could monitor their own engagement more closely.

At the end of the third week, the PI collected and analyzed the reading logs. Due to inconsistent notations in each of the columns on most of the participants' reading logs, accurate quantitative data could not be gathered. The logs of Students #4, #16, and #31 were incomplete and showed a lack of understanding of how to use them and/or an unwillingness to consistently complete them. The logs of Students #9 and #14 showed they had more of an interest in tracking and improving the number of pages read, although comparing both students' school reading logs to their home reading logs revealed inconsistencies that caused the researcher to question the honesty and/or accuracy of them. Student #24 continued to be the most diligent in his use of reading logs, but inconsistencies were also found in the comparison between his home and school reading logs. The unnatural patterns found with Student #21's logs also caused the researcher to question the honesty and/or accuracy of their completion. Student #28's logs were missing. The participants' week four reading logs were completed in such a way that the researcher did not find any useful data in the analysis of them or in answering the research questions.

Serravallo (2010) discussed the appropriateness of using the type of reading logs used in this intervention, and she claimed that their use was appropriate for students capable of reading DRA levels 18 - 20 and higher. For the PI's lowest readers, it is possible that this type of record-keeping was too complex for them to make accurate

notations and may explain why valid quantitative data could not be obtained from their reading logs. In retrospect, information about all students' independent reading was more qualitative in nature, rather than quantitative, due to the inconsistencies found within the reading logs themselves. The biggest benefit of using the reading logs for students was their increased awareness of the connection that exists between engagement in reading, the number of pages read, and growth in reading comprehension and fluency. For the researcher, the biggest benefit was increased knowledge of students' reading tastes, habits, and stamina.

Third-grade questionnaire. The researcher conducted interviews with individual participants prior to the start of the intervention to obtain information about their views on reading, their reading preferences, and their habits while reading. Seven out of the eight participants stated that the only reading they did outside of school was to complete homework requirements. One student stated that he reads in the car during his frequent trips to Los Angeles.

Other student responses were vague, and the PI learned very few specific pieces of information about her participants as readers. Student #24 claimed he would like to read more at home, but because he considered his books to be written for much younger readers, he was not interested in them. Students #14 and #28 liked books that are funny or that have danger and adventure. Student #31 shared that she thinks the *Wonders* third-grade reading books "are scary because they're too big and too hard." It should be noted that participants' responses to some questions felt like students said them because they thought it was the "right" answer. As a result, the information obtained through the

Third-Grade Questionnaire had limited value in helping the researcher to answer the research questions.

Conclusions

DRA reading comprehension and fluency assessments and the narrative accounts written in the Reflection Journal about the PI's work with individual participants have been instrumental in drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of the reader's workshop intervention. The PI's Reflection Journal and the triangulation of other data sources have led the researcher to see an overall improvement in reading comprehension and fluency among all participants. An increase in reading engagement was easier to see in some participants than others. However, the participants that struggled the most with maintaining engagement in the act of reading were more aware of the importance of engagement by the end of the intervention, and they were using strategies to increase their engagement more consistently. Therefore, the researcher found that the implementation of reader's workshop had been very effective in increasing the participants' reading comprehension, fluency, and engagement.

The primary research question asked what effect reader's workshop had on struggling third-grade readers. Qualitative and quantitative data obtained with the DRA showed one DRA level of growth for two participants and two DRA levels of growth for the remaining six participants. The DRA was a thorough assessment that measured both comprehension through a detailed retelling of the story by the reader, as well as oral readings that allowed the PI to take miscue analyses of the participants' reading fluency. The Reflection Journal proved to be an invaluable tool in triangulating less straightforward data collections, and this process corroborated the growth in reading

comprehension and fluency as confirmed by the DRA. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the implementation of reader's workshop was extremely beneficial for struggling readers: All struggling readers exceeded the expected DRA growth rate.

The secondary research question asked how participation in reader's workshop would impact engagement of struggling third-grade readers. Ascertaining student engagement in reading was not easy to measure because there was no single, definitive piece of quantitative or qualitative data to answer this question. Using the Reflection Journal to triangulate data from the Engagement Inventories and other data sources was critical in revealing a clearer picture of student engagement than the Engagement Inventories and/or the Self-Assessment for Reading alone would have presented. Conferences with students about the books they were reading and the subsequent notes made in the Reflection Journal about them allowed the PI to make inferences about the quantitative data that was obtained. Through careful analysis, the researcher was able to reach the conclusion that all participants improved their ability to engage in the act of reading. Although the participants' ability to engage in reading varied widely, all students progressed in this area. Most of them were enthusiastic about their books, understood the importance of prolonged and engaged independent reading, used fix-up strategies when they found that their minds had wandered during reading, and they all felt more confident in their ability to read. This led the researcher to report with confidence that the participants were more engaged readers as a result of their participation in reader's workshop.

Recommendations for Further Research

The reader's workshop intervention was successful in helping develop all third-grade students' comprehension and fluency. Perhaps the most important of all was their increased enjoyment and desire to read. All students answered questions and wrote responses about their views regarding their participation in the Student Survey on Reader's Workshop (see Appendix F). Most third-grade students and all participants stated they thought they were better readers as a result of their participation in reader's workshop. In addition, all students stated that it had changed the way they felt about reading for school in a positive way. Most common comments included remarks about their increased enjoyment of reading.

At the conclusion of the intervention, the PI was left with feelings of satisfaction in knowing that all her students had benefitted from their participation in reader's workshop. The researcher has immediate plans to continue to use the reader's workshop instructional model with her group of third-grade students, and her research will focus on teaching nonfiction minilessons. The PI believes strategy and skill lessons on reading nonfiction will immediately support young researchers as they begin an upcoming life science unit.

Knowing that there is a district expectation that the *Wonders* base reading program will be utilized causes concern for the researcher because a key understanding of reader's workshop is that students should read books of their choice that they can understand and from which they can create meaning. The *Wonders* materials do not benefit struggling readers because they do not adhere to the key tenets of reader's

workshop. Additional research may help the PI to discover ways to satisfy district expectations while continuing to instruct readers in ways that are most beneficial to them.

Ideally, the implementation of reader's workshop would take place during the beginning of the school year when teachers set classroom expectations and routines with their students. Beginning lessons should work to develop student engagement in reading and to build stamina. Teaching students to jot appropriate notes about their reading would develop over time so the notes would be useful for both the students and the teacher. Beginning-of-the-year reading workshops would likely be shorter as students develop their reading stamina and engagement. As students engage in reading for longer periods, strict adherence to a period of no more than 45 - 60 minutes should be allocated to reader's workshop per day. This way all the key elements of a reading workshop are provided, but time is not taken away from other curricular areas. Finally, it was easy to spend too much time planning the minilessons to be presented at the beginning of reader's workshops and not enough time planning differentiated lessons for individuals and small groups of students. Developing an organized system for note-taking will help ensure that teachers work with students productively, thus providing all students with the most effective instruction as possible.

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Appendix B

Researcher's Reflection Journal**Week 1: January 9 - 13**

This week has been spent collecting parent consent forms. Parents are eager for their children to participate and consent forms were returned immediately. In addition, I individually explained my participants' confidentiality and rights to them, and they were happy to sign the student assent forms. These forms are included in a file for each participant, and they are stored in a file cabinet that remains locked when not in use.

My eight participants provided information about themselves as readers through personal interviews. They shared their likes and dislikes in book genres and reflected with me on both positive and negative experiences that they have had in reading. Information gleaned from most of my boys revealed that they prefer nonfiction texts or fictional texts that have lots of adventure. I also find that I must change my mostly negative feelings about graphic novels as this popular subgenre of comics is a particular favorite for many students. In addition, these interviews have inspired me to finish leveling my rather extensive classroom library. I spent about 30 hours during the last three days of winter break leveling all my fiction books according to Accelerated Reader reading levels. I chose this system of leveling because it is consistent with my school library's leveling system. Because I ran out of time and did not level my nonfiction section of the classroom library, I am planning to get most of this done later today and tomorrow.

I asked my entire class to complete a "reading self-assessment" that asked students to rate themselves using a four-point scale. Questions on this focused on their

feelings about reading books of choice in general, but it also asked them to rate their ability in using reading strategies for decoding unknown words and determining meanings of unknown vocabulary and figurative language. Other questions asked them to rate their ability to read fluently and to read with good understanding. My experience in asking students to assess themselves in various areas has shown me that they are usually pretty accurate about their own strengths and weaknesses. I was surprised by several of the responses from my struggling participants because they seem to consider themselves to be very highly skilled readers whereas I know them to be struggling with fluency and comprehension. It is good that they feel such confidence in themselves as readers, but I wonder if this will make my job in working with them easier or harder!

It was a challenge to gather baseline data using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) because it required prolonged periods while the entire class had to work independently and quietly. DRA testing provided information about reading fluency through the running record part of the test as well as information about students' understanding of what they read through the retelling portion of the test. This was not an easy task for my group of students this year, but it was good practice for what will come during reader's workshop starting next week! To help prepare them, I shared how our reading time would be different and what the expectations will be, and my class generally reacted with excitement. I also administered and collected other baseline data using an updated Accelerated Reader Star Test that students took using Chromebooks.

On Friday, my students were given gallon-sized ziplock baggies with their names written on them for their use in reader's workshop. Each team of students visited our classroom library to choose books from within their level. They were asked to have a

collection of four to five books in their baggies as their reading for next week. My students were given red pens, mini-notebooks, and a pad of sticky notes also to be included in their book bags.

My critical friend will arrive bright and early Tuesday morning to gather baseline data about my participants' engagement in reading. I find that I am both excited to start and surprisingly nervous too! I think this is because I want this to be an extremely successful intervention and one that will become a regular part of my work with children.

Week 2: January 17 - 20

Tuesday:

I gained permission from my principal to “step away” from using our base reading program during the intervention. One of the skill lessons that I will not be teaching using the base program focuses on determining the problem and solution in fictional texts. Because my students will still have to take the base program assessment on this standard in order to have shared common assessments with my grade-level teachers, I chose to teach the initial reader's workshop minilesson on this skill using chapter seven of *Because of Winn-Dixie* for my read aloud. My students are very engaged with this book which I had used as a read aloud last week after lunch recess.

Using chart paper, I created a graphic organizer taken from Jennifer Serravallo's *The Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers*. As I read aloud to my students, I stopped several times to share my thinking about the main character's problem and how it was made more evident through the introduction of another character in the story. After reading, I made appropriate notes on the chart.

Before students got to their independent reading, they were asked to make short notes as they found clues about their characters' problems similar to the way that I had modeled.

During the 20 minutes that students were reading independently, my critical friend observed my participants and completed the Engagement Inventory (see Appendix C). She also wrote detailed notes on individuals on a separate form. Her observations mirrored what I already knew about my students, and I am hoping to see much more engagement in the days and weeks to come! After 20 minutes, all students got up to find a partner with whom they shared a conversation about their characters' problems. After a brief three to four minutes, they returned to their seats for another 10 minutes of independent reading.

As my critical friend made her observations, I jumped into holding individual conferences rather than small-group conferences to start. I focused on my participants because I felt most confident in knowing exactly the type of coaching that they needed as readers having just gathered such detailed baseline data from them. Most of the coaching focused on increasing accuracy and fluency. I am trying to get into the habit of following the structure of connecting and complimenting, teaching, engaging, and linking in my minilessons and conferences. Clearly, I will need more practice to really get this down!

I had created two types of recording forms, both taken from Serravallo. For my initial conferences this week, I've chosen to use the one where all students' names are listed in a table with room for notes. I felt this would work best in helping me to keep track of students that I've conferenced with and those I have not.

Wednesday:

I was especially watchful for teaching points and areas to compliment in working with my students during their independent/conference time. As per Jennifer Serravallo, this is an important formative assessment, and it is easier than I had imagined that it would be. I'm seeing how this is the beauty of reader's workshop in that instruction is truly differentiated for the varying needs of individual students. Now the trick will be for me to speed up in order to confer with more kids each day... Meaning I need to begin pulling small groups of students, and I need to do it quickly.

It was evident to me today that I need to teach my next minilessons on being engaged in reading, as well as during the initial read aloud and minilesson! And I need to be very direct and to the point quickly as the class, in general, has a short attention span. Jennifer Serravallo and Lucy Calkins both discussed working on engagement lessons at the beginning of the school year, but being in the middle of the year, I was hoping to get more directly to the strategy and skill lessons. I definitely see the need to include engagement lessons because, without it, little learning will occur.

Thursday:

Today's engagement lesson, "Re-read to get back in your book!" went very well. I began the minilesson by sharing the fact that all readers sometimes find that their attention has drifted off during their reading to think of other things. Next, I demonstrated what this looks like during my continued reading of a chapter from *Because of Winn-Dixie*. My students seemed surprised to know that this can even happen to good readers and adult readers! I need to remember to include more of these types of personal stories in my minilessons because they can have a powerful effect.

Later in their independent reading, students noted both clues about the problem and/or solution and also marked places where they had to use the strategy of stopping when they noticed they had “drifted,” going back to the place where they read with meaning, and rereading from there. After 20 minutes, students used these notes as talking points during their pair-share brain break. As I listened in, it seemed that students were truly discussing these two points, and I was pleasantly relieved! It is a strange feeling for me to discuss their reading with them without knowing the story myself. It feels a little like riding a bike while blindfolded!

I’m feeling anxious because I’m spending too much time planning the initial minilesson, and I know I should be spending the lion’s share of my planning time for reader’s workshop on the small-group lessons. I have not gotten to all of my students in this short four-day week as I’ve mostly concentrated on my participant group because they are the neediest. To work to solve this, tomorrow I’ll confer with my next lowest group of readers individually. I’ll be on the lookout for similarities so I can put a lesson together for them on Monday. For them, it will no doubt be in the area of comprehension strategies. I keep telling myself that this will get easier!

Friday:

Today’s comprehension minilesson, “Fixing the Fuzziness” was successful. I am getting better at keeping the minilesson down to about 10 minutes, as intended, which is necessary because my class’s attention span on this rainy Friday was even shorter than usual! After demonstrating the lesson using the chart created from Serravallo’s strategies book, I remembered to employ the engage portion of the lesson by having students stay gathered on the carpet to read their own books for approximately four to five minutes and

then stopping them to complete a self-check using the chart. After giving them about a minute to reflect using the chart, students turned to a partner and took turns sharing the elements of the chart which included who ?, what ?, and where ?, a short description of the “movie” that played in their minds as they read, and shared any reactions or feelings that they had as they read. As I listened in to their discussions, I noticed that only a few students seemed to understand that the “movie” is supposed to play continuously in readers’ minds. It didn’t occur to me then, but how I wish I had discussed this observation in the reader’s workshop closure that is supposed to come after independent reading and conferencing. That would have been a powerful teaching moment to have had one of those students share examples from their reading of how their movie is always playing! I’ve noted this idea and will come back to it on Monday.

There is something else that I’ll need to think more carefully about: Should I allow students to select the same book that I’m using as a read aloud for my minilessons? The class library contains four or five copies that my students have discovered. After I leveled my entire library, students capable of reading AR 3.9 have found them! I’m torn because it seems to be engaging and supportive of students who have trouble engaging in reading. On the other hand, their discussions seem to be dependent on my teaching demonstrations and not on their own original ideas.

I had conferences with six non-participant students that sometimes show below grade-level understanding based on the base program. All were able to discuss elements of the chart with a clear understanding (although I haven’t read their books!) except for two boys. My plan for Monday is to pull two small groups: a participant group and a group that will include the two boys who do not seem to use the chart strategies.

We did not get to the class library today as I had planned, so this will have to happen on Monday prior to reader's workshop.

Week 3: January 23 - 27

Monday:

I opened today's minilesson by sharing how good readers continually and simultaneously play their movie version in their minds as they read. One student had shared with me that he reads a sentence and then stops to visualize it. I doubted that he really visualized in this way. Rather, I think he was trying to tell me what he thought I wanted to hear! And I had learned through conferring with others that several have difficulty in visualizing as they read. For this reason, I told them that the chapter I would be reading today would be surprising to them and to practice playing their "movies" as they listened. Then as I read, I shared my visualizations and how they were based on the text. One student shared that she pictured the dog spinning in circles, so we discussed how there was no text evidence to support the dog spinning in circles. When I reread that part, she changed her visualization to include the dog running through the hallway, back and forth, from one bedroom to another. This change was based on text evidence!

I can see why Boushey and Moser wrote that sometimes they teach two minilessons per day. Today, I felt the need to return to last week's "play movie" visualization strategy, but I also wanted to teach a lesson about what to do when readers encounter an unknown vocabulary word. This lesson was called "Insert a Synonym" and I modeled the use of this strategy during the read aloud while using the poster as a reference. Before dismissing the class to start reading independently at their seats, they read silently while still gathered on the floor for a period of three to four minutes. Their

instructions were to keep playing their movie and to insert a synonym at unknown words to keep making meaning of their reading. They were to use their sticky notes to jot the unknown word and the synonym that they substituted it with for sharing later.

Today I was able to see a much larger number of students. The first group included two of my participants and the focus of the lesson was on increasing their understanding of their reading. As I listened to each member read quietly to me and questioned them about their understanding of parts of it, I noticed that they kept on reading without stopping to use any fix-up strategies. Most of their misunderstandings were due to not understanding certain vocabulary as it was used in their books. In each case, I coached them to go back and reread, specifically looking for clues that would help them to understand more clearly. This furthered my resolve to continue work in unknown vocabulary.

The second group included four members of my participant group, and I gathered them for a print work lesson. Last week I had encouraged them to look at the endings of unknown words in addition to the initial letters/sounds. Today I added a minilesson about using a word they know to help them read a word that they were having trouble with. The word “gray” came up, and Student #31 commented that it started the same way as “green” does. I had given them a sticky note to use as a bookmark and reminder and it said, “Use a word you know” and the following words were written vertically one underneath the next: day, may, stay, play, clay. It was miraculous that the word they brought up was “gray” which fit in perfectly with my mini-lesson! They easily saw how to take the -ay ending and apply it to the gr- blend that they already knew. I know past

teachers have taught these things, but it seemed as if they were seeing these connections for the first time, and they went back to their reading feeling very successful! Go, team!

In addition to my two small groups, I conferred with two non-participant students one-on-one. With the boy who is a very fluent reader, I discovered that he had read “intuition” in his text prior to my work with him. I learned that he had no idea what it meant. In fact, he didn’t even notice that he didn’t understand what it meant! Yikes! He’s extremely bright, but also very ADD. I’ll follow him closely to get a better understanding of how often this may be occurring in his reading. In a one-on-one conference with an extremely bright girl, she had encountered “servitude” but had no strategies for making meaning of it. There was a very subtle context clue, but she did not pick up on it when I brought her attention to it. Checking in with these two students gave me ideas for future minilessons.

After today, I feel less anxious because I was able to get to know 11 of my readers on a deeper level. I feel better equipped to teach them as a result! It was a good day.

Tuesday:

Today’s minilesson was about “I PICK books.” I PICK was developed by Boushey and Moser (2006), and this acronym prompts students to use it as a guide when selecting books. After conferring with students yesterday about fix-up strategies for unknown vocabulary, I began to question whether they were truly choosing appropriate books. Our newest classroom poster prompts kids to peruse the book carefully including reading a portion of it to determine if they know 98% - 100% of the words. I showed how to count the next 100 words that were going to be read and then read them aloud accurately. Next, my students counted and marked the next 100 words they would be

reading and then read them silently. They were to keep track using their fingers of how many words they did not know. When finished, the class as a whole claimed to have read with nearly 100 percent, and a couple admitted having 2-3 unknown words. However, I am not convinced these claims are completely accurate... Tomorrow we will visit the school library, and I'll take our poster with us as we make our new selections.

During independent reading, I met with a group of four usually proficient readers to check in with their understanding of the problem in their books and the fix-up strategies that they were using regularly. Their reflections were adequate, but one student stood out. She is loving *Because of Winn-Dixie*. She is reading beyond where I am in my daily read aloud and followed a character's reflection of her grandfather during the Civil War. She was very moved by the description of the grandfather and wanted to tell me all about it. I have never seen this particular student so engrossed in a book! Score one point in favor of allowing kids to read the same books that I choose for reading aloud!

The class as a whole became distracted earlier during their independent time today, and I can't blame it on the rain! As a result, I did not pull a second small group but instead conferred with five individuals one-on-one. I'm trying to be more of a listener than a talker during these conferences to gain insights into who my students are as readers. What are their strengths and weaknesses? What are their preferences? I realize that I need to help them to understand and develop their own "reading identities." Tomorrow's mini-lesson may need to work toward this end.

Wednesday:

As a result of the lack of sustained engagement that I observed yesterday, the time normally spent on a minilesson was spent on all my readers setting personal reading goals. I decided to keep the 20 minutes and then the additional 10 minutes after the break because that is how the time is scheduled already. Next, I showed the class how to figure out how many pages they had read yesterday in reader's workshop by modeling the subtraction to find the number of pages read. (In some cases, I need to reteach subtraction with regrouping!) In other cases, my participants were surprised to find that they had only read four pages in 20 minutes! When asked if they thought they would be able to read more than that today, they responded that they were sure they could. I think this is a step in the right direction. Later after the independent reading, I asked students to update their reading logs and to also use subtraction to see how many pages they read today as compared to yesterday. I haven't seen their actual reading logs yet, so I have to take their responses with a grain of salt, but overall I think having gone through this process today helped to open some students' eyes to see a need for increased engagement in books and a need to decrease distractibility. I also see a need to revise the Weekly Reading Log to include a box for finding the number of pages read.

Getting back to the reading goals, I also asked them to set a "kinds of books" goal which was useful as we went to the school library later today. And of importance, they also set a "strategy" goal: They checked the strategy posters that have been created thus far and chose a strategy that they felt was the most useful for them.

I'm a bit perplexed about how to respond to my student participant #31. I have conferenced with her twice this week and both times she was reading books that were too

difficult for her in terms of reading accuracy and vocabulary. What is particularly disconcerting is that she is choosing these books whereas last week she was making very appropriate choices. I think she must feel pressure to read chapter books so she looks more like her peers, and I certainly understand this. In addition, she is choosing from the top of her AR range, and this just proves that AR leveling is not a perfect system! In my reading, I've been cautioned not to quell enthusiasm for reading by not allowing her to continue with these latest books, but I also know she is wasting valuable time by reading texts where she is not able to read fluently, accurately, and with good understanding.

I think maybe tomorrow I'll check in with a compliment about her excellent choices of last week and ask her how her understanding is in her current books. This will likely include listening to her as she reads, and I will likely find that she is still struggling. Hopefully, the right words will come to me so that she decides she's not quite ready for *Bad Kitty* books just yet... She'll probably need a refresher using the "I PICK" chart too.

I ended my professional day in a grade level PLC wherein we backward mapped our math and ELA curriculum with the upcoming district assessment in mind. The ELA discussion left me feeling very anxious as I have stepped out of this curriculum and feel pulled to get back to skill lessons to prepare for the benchmark. Most of me wants to ignore all of this and stay true to differentiating based on the individual needs of my students. But the other part of me knows my principal expects my students to perform well... I feel a bit like I'm operating on a wing and a prayer right now! I hope all those reader's workshop researchers really know what they are writing about!!

Thursday:

Knowing that my students will soon be taking the district benchmark assessment, I searched and found a great lesson from Serravallo's strategy book that could easily be adapted to fit what my kids need. The lesson focused on how the other characters in *Because of Winn-Dixie* influenced, or the effect they had on Opal, the main character. After telling my students why today's lesson was important, I refreshed their memories with our classroom "Cause and Effect" poster about which there were many "Oh yeah" comments from my students. Then I shared examples of cause and effect from what we already know about the story. I reminded students to continue to play the movie as they listened and to also be on the lookout for more cause and effect examples. Because I'm having difficulty sticking to a 10-minute minilesson and read aloud, today I gave some examples that I had noticed in the story and students gave a thumbs-up if they agreed instead of taking the time to make individual responses. Next, they stayed on the carpet and read from their own books with this same instruction in mind. After about three to four minutes, partners turned to share an example they had found before moving back to their seats to begin their independent reading. Today students merely placed a sticky note on the places in their books where they had found cause and effect relationships to be shared at the brain break. Later, upon listening to students during sharing or conferencing, I found that in many cases students were successful with this. I think it really helped that this was not their first exposure to this skill.

Two participants were not successful because they are not making meaning of their reading. Student #31 had chosen to read picture books rather than *Bad Kitty*. I was encouraged until I heard her read for me. The words crawl, knitted, tangled, and the

name Fortini were challenging to her. Her parents speak only Spanish at home, yet my student speaks very limited Spanish. She understands most of what her parents say to her, but I think communication between them is also limited. She communicates with her three siblings in English, and her oldest brother is the only child in the family who speaks Spanish fluently. She's caught in a world where she never fully understands either language. She is classified as CELDT level three... still. Another problem that I see through individual conferences is her lack of letter-sound recognition! I'm mortified that I didn't know this before and will consult a first-grade teacher today about next steps.

My other participant, Student #16, is better able to decode but is highly distractible throughout the school day. I'll need to put a motivation plan in place for him to increase his stamina. Another sizeable problem that severely limits his progress is his attitude. At his worst, he completely shuts down by refusing to look at or speak to me or others. I am encouraged for him because he has recently begun to enjoy friendships with a couple of classmates, and I have noticed his attitude is more positive than negative lately.

I've been feeling guilty because I had not gotten to my top readers until today. During our small group, I demonstrated how we can determine themes in fiction by paying attention to the surprising things that characters do or say. In other words, readers should watch for ways characters treat others which includes both good and bad treatments. Then I demonstrated what I meant by using an example from *Because of Winn-Dixie*. I had sticky notes for these four students ready to be used as both an example and a reminder. I'll check back with them in a day or two.

Friday:

The magic of Kate DiCamillo's *Because of Winn-Dixie* is working! It is noticeable, especially in the last two days, that students are really "playing their movie" during the initial read aloud of reader's workshop. I decided to stick with cause and effect relationships one more day before moving to another skill that my students will need for the upcoming benchmark test.

I met with only one small group that included my highest reader from the participant group. I got derailed today with a host of matters that needed my attention and diverted me from making more solid lesson plans. Also, a parent of a kindergartener at my site who is going into teaching was sent to observe in my classroom, and the conversations that I had with him further hindered my progress. As a result, all I accomplished with them today was to listen to their individual reading and have subsequent discussions of what was happening with their main characters.

In one of these conversations with a nonparticipant student, I was able to steer her toward determining a theme, or lesson, in her story. She was surprised and pleased when she found the theme about the importance of not being greedy. From my participant Student #21 who is a very fluent reader, I determined that he is engaged in his *Stick Cat* book because it is funny to him and I see him reacting during his reading of it. When questioned about his other book, *Dirt Bike Racer*, he stated that he is still reading and enjoying it, but decided to read *Stick Cat* today. Prior to reading more from Calkins and Serravallo, I would have been alarmed by this revelation, but now see it as an appropriate reading practice. I think this is a hard concept for me because when I read for pleasure, I stick with the same book from beginning to end... Unless, of course, I choose to abandon

it. I've made a note to check in with student #21 next week to see if he has gone back to *Dirt Bike Racer*.

Student #28 seems to be monitoring his understanding more! He decodes well, but he initially did not stop to make any fix-ups when he miscued or stopped making meaning, as evidenced when he could not adequately retell a DRA level 28 story. Today he stopped me to ask for help in understanding the term "idle conversation." As I scanned his text looking for context clues I noticed the word "tragedy" which I knew was related to "idle conversation." He didn't know either word, so I prompted him by asking if there had been something bad that had happened to a character in the story. He quickly flipped back to the previous page and discussed with me how a character's little brother drowned the previous year. The outcome of our conference was that he was able to see how the drowning related to the tragedy which was not a good topic for "idle conversation" of others. Student #28 is a hard worker who cares about his learning, so I am really happy with the changes that I see in his use of fix-up strategies!

In reviewing my notes from this week, I am pleased in that I feel that I have genuinely made good connections with all of my readers and have a better understanding of them as readers. I also noticed that my very quiet participant student, #24, needs more of my attention! He is always quietly on task, very rarely asks for help, and it is easy for me to let my attention be pulled to those squeaky wheels in my class. I've made plans to work more closely with him next week.

The books that I had ordered through Scholastic arrived yesterday, and I was able to level the lower-level books so they would be available for my participants today. Student #31 is excited to have chosen what seems like an appropriate choice AND it is a

chapter book! Later during a conference, she excitedly told me that she can understand the story! She read a short passage aloud and was able to read fluently!

Engagement continues to be a problem for Student #16. Taking an engagement strategy from Serravallo's strategies book, he and I decided to use what we are calling "_____'s Party Ladder." (If this works, it will be added as an appendix later.) Basically, he'll monitor the number of pages he's read and will move an arrow up the paper ladder every five pages read. When he reaches 10 pages, he'll stop for a predetermined brain break for a few minutes, and will then continue moving up the ladder. When he reaches the top of his ladder, the "party" will consist of a short celebration that he and I have agreed to. This will hopefully serve as a scaffold until he is able to read with engagement for prolonged periods of time on his own. Serravallo was careful to point out that teachers should not allow a child to become dependent on the ladder. Rather, it should serve as a means to an end: reading independently during the entire period.

Another huge issue with this student is with his book choices. I asked him to be the first one to choose from the new books before school today, which he did. This was the book he read during independent time today. I'm hopeful that after today's conference, he finally sees the importance of choosing books that he can read effortlessly and with which he can make meaning. After dismissal today, I noticed that he had replaced some of his favorite books from his desk that he *cannot* access back into the classroom library! This is a step in the right direction, and I hope his new attitude lasts. This student is perhaps my most fragile, and his moods can swing wildly making it very difficult to teach him anything.

Next week, I plan to meet in a small group that includes the other three members of my participant group. The mini-lesson will build on using knowledge of synonyms to increase understanding while reading.

Week 4: January 30 - February 3:

Monday:

It felt a little like I was starting all over this morning during the read aloud and minilesson. So many of my students were out of focus despite my efforts to bring them back. The minilesson, “What’s the Word’s Job?” was a lesson that required students to determine the part of speech an unknown word is in order to hone in on its meaning. Due to distractions with my students today, the lesson was probably lost on many of them.

I implemented the “_____’s Party Ladder” strategy with Students #9, #14, and #16. Students #9 and #14 seemed to take it to heart after I shared their last week’s reading logs and how during many 30-minute reading periods they read such low numbers of pages, both at school and particularly at home. They claimed that the books they are reading are good picks, but did not know why they were reading so few pages. I suggested that perhaps they were having trouble staying engaged in their books and introduced the idea of the “party ladder” to help with this. Both students were willing to give this new strategy a try and went off to read independently. Student #16 is extremely difficult to keep track of. He’s smart, elusive, and very good at avoidance tactics. I must make him see how critical it is that he puts in the appropriate independent reading practice every day if he is going to *begin* to develop his reading skills...

Student #31 was very successful with a phonics book that focused on the digraph -ch. We had a few minutes at the end of the reading period to work together. Her lack of

English vocabulary hinders her progress, but she is really showing how to insert a synonym to determine unknown words' meanings. As an example, she inserted "friend" for "chum" and "sat down" for "plopped." I've noticed she seems to have trouble with words containing short /u/ so I'll introduce another book from this little phonics set that works specifically with short /u/.

I decided to give students two Weekly Reading Logs: one to keep in their book bags for reader's workshop "school" reading and one to keep in their homework folders for "home" reading. I also added another space on the log in which students can figure out the number of pages they read. I want to increase their awareness of this while at the same time communicating that making meaning of their reading is the most important. I can see how students could miss this critical point and focus more on the number of pages read. That would be moving backward!

I continue to struggle with keeping the entire reader's workshop down to 45-60 minutes, and I must remember to note when the 30-minute and additional 10-minute independent periods begin so I know when they should end. I get so engrossed in conferences that I lose track!

Something else... In an attempt to curb students' use of independent reading time writing copious notes, I've been asking them to simply mark the spot where they employed a specific strategy or skill to be discussed with a partner during the brain break. Although they are spending more time reading this way, I don't have a good recording system of their progress other than the info I glean during conferring. I see that good appropriate note-taking is something that would develop over time in classrooms where reader's workshop has taken place from the beginning of the school year. For the

purposes of this action research study, I do feel that I am learning lots about my eight participants. Further, I am seeing how this type of differentiated reading instruction is far superior to my work with students using the base program. I think I need to cut myself a little slack by understanding that I, too, am feeling my way through and will develop my skill in facilitating reader's workshop over time...

Tuesday:

Today's lesson called "Where Am I?" went well. My students restocked their books prior to today's reader's workshop, and I knew that many of my readers would be starting new fiction books. The lesson called for readers to study picture clues, if any, and more importantly to pay attention to how authors tell their readers how settings can change from one chapter to another.

For this lesson I flipped back to *Because of Winn-Dixie*'s previous chapters, read a few paragraphs from each chapter beginning aloud, and students listened for clues to determine setting. They were asked to show a "thumbs up" during the parts when the author of *Because of Winn-Dixie* gave clues about the new settings. The majority of my class responded appropriately. After sharing about the poster, I read the next very short chapter of this book while students continued to practice the "Where Am I?" lesson as well as playing the movie in their minds. After, my students remained on the carpet to reread the beginning of the chapter they were on, or the beginning of chapter one for those with brand new books, being sure to look for clues that helped them to know about the setting. After a couple of minutes, they shared their discoveries with a partner.

One of my participants, Student #9, was starting a historical fiction about Hurricane Katrina from the *I Survived* series. As I listened to his conversation, I heard

him say that there were no clues in the book! I intervened at that point to ask him what the bolded text at the beginning of the chapter meant. He reread it aloud and still looked puzzled. I explained that in the *I Survived* series, the author often tells the reader when and where the historical event occurred by printing it in the way as it was done in his book. Together, we analyzed the date, location, and time that the author included at the beginning of chapter one.

Student #9 has great difficulty with tasks that involve inference or deeper-level thinking. He tends to take everything at face value without analyzing more deeply. He sees things in black or white, but does not understand gray areas where inference is needed. I'll need to monitor his understanding as he continues with this book because I don't want it to be a waste of his time. He frequently abandons books and is observed to be disengaged during independent reading. I've got to find a way to turn this around for him...!

I gave Student #31 the short /u/ phonics book and had intended to confer with her, but I did not. I'll be sure to check in with her tomorrow.

At the start of our day (prior to reader's workshop), I posed six questions using the document camera in order to help us to develop our reading identities. After, I noticed that 10 of my students stated that they did not understand how to use the "Summarize" poster. To fix this, I pulled three separate small groups of three-four children. Using the chapter from today's read aloud, I coached them into seeing how to use the strategies on that poster. They all felt that they could apply the same thinking to their chapters as they read them, and we agreed to meet again in a couple days in order to discuss.

Meeting with 10 kids, including Student #4, felt good today. I had felt a little at a loss as to knowing what my kids needed help with and my impromptu “reading identity” questions certainly helped to guide me. I’ll remember this strategy!

Wednesday:

The minilesson today was “Who’s Speaking?” I had noticed that many of my students were confused by the way that conversations are written in chapter books. The poster included a short conversation taken from *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Using the poster, I pointed out how readers keep track of who is speaking by using a combination of clues. This included noticing the speech tags when they were given and when characters use direct address when speaking to other characters. I also showed cases when a speech tag is not needed by pointing out how a new paragraph is started every time the speaker changes. I added this equation to the poster: new paragraph = new speaker. Before returning to their seats for independent reading, students read from their own books while practicing their new understanding of the lesson and after discussed it with a partner. Listening to several students’ conversations told me those students had understood.

In response to my students’ feedback from Monday, I pulled two small groups of nonparticipant students to reteach the vocabulary strategies “Insert a Synonym” and “What’s the Word’s Job?” In one case the unknown word was “parakeet.” That student claimed that the word was not used anywhere else (yet) in the text, and I did not see any context clues on those pages that would help to define it. Next, we determined that the word had to be a noun, specifically a thing, because of the way it was used in the sentence. My response was to tell them that it is okay to only understand this much about

the word as long as the word doesn't come up again. I explained that if it does, it could be an important part of the story and therefore she would need to know what it was in order to make meaning of the story. I asked her to let me know if she encountered the word again, and she agreed. (I did end up telling the group what a parakeet is!)

Student #28 continues to check in with me when he needs support in making meaning out of unknown words. Today's word was "hymn" and with coaching to find the context clues, the guitar playing, he arrived at the understanding that a hymn must be a song, which I felt was certainly close enough!

Student #31 and I conferred and continued work with the short /u/ phonics book as I didn't get to her yesterday. She's coming along nicely. I did notice that in today's reading, she encountered a word ending in -ch and she miscued by making the -ck sound. I should have waited longer for her to correct it, but my class had become quite restless during their brief brain break, and I needed to reel them back in...

Student #16 has been very oppositional today, and we didn't make any progress. I spoke to his mom through a friend who served as an interpreter after school. I explained that her son's reading progress is very slow due to the fact that he continues to either choose books that are too difficult for him or that he just plain refuses to read. She is supportive in that she understands that her son is extremely stubborn, but is not so supportive with reading and other homework at home. She agreed that she would make sure that the reading he does do at home will be recorded on the Weekly Reading Logs daily and returned to school.

Student #14's biggest problem is his ability to remain focused during independent reading. He is enjoying a little success using "_____'s Party Ladder." He took an AR

quiz on a book that he read and told me that he got 100% which is big news! Yesterday, he chose to move to a different location in the room in order to help with focus. I think he truly understands just how important it is for him to maintain focus while he reads, and that is certainly progress!

Thursday:

Today's minilesson was the first of two lessons on the theme in fiction. I modeled how it is helpful to think about "big idea" words that fit a text. (Later at the end of *Because of Winn-Dixie*, I'll continue with identifying the theme in a second lesson.) Today's lesson was well received by the class. Many students wanted to give examples from the read aloud of the words that I had chosen for the big idea words. :)

I also made bookmarks for each student, one for their school reading and one for their at-home reading. I got the idea during yesterday's reteaching of "What's a Word's Job?" and "Insert a Synonym" to two small groups of students. The bookmark is graphically organized to remind readers of the job of a noun, a verb, an adjective, and an adverb. After giving students their bookmarks, I modeled its use by trying to determine an unknown word's meaning taken from *Because of Winn-Dixie*. This is a very helpful strategy, but it may be beyond my lower readers/thinkers developmentally.

Student #31 is making excellent progress with the short /u/ book. She read it smoothly while conferencing with me today, and continued to use good strategies for finding the meaning of unknown words. She does need reminding to check the pictures for clues when she encounters difficulty, however.

Student #28 continues to seek my help with unknown words. Today he was able to determine, with my help, that the unknown word, beige, was describing his character's

mom's unsuccessful attempt at making brownies. He recognized that the description of beige brownies meant that the brownies did not turn out very well!

In the library yesterday, I had a conversation with Student #9 about how important that it is he chooses a book that interests him and that he is able to read smoothly and from which he can make good meaning. We also discussed how sometimes readers abandon their books for good reasons, but readers should not make a regular habit of it. He selected a graphic novel which is not my first choice, but if it catches his interest then it has done its job. I'll check in with him tomorrow.

I'm really proud of Student #4! She came to me and told me that she had been understanding the first several chapters of her book, but then she stated that the current chapter was not making sense. She thought she was going to need to abandon her book. She showed me where she was, and I noticed that there were lots of acronyms (like BFF for best friends forever). When I questioned her about them, she told me that they stood for words and then she showed me a necklace she was wearing that said LOL. "Like this," she said. I suggested that she go back and find the part where the acronyms first appeared. She flipped back until she found them, and together we read what the different acronyms meant. I shared with her that when I encounter acronyms in my reading, in order for me to make meaning, I read the acronym by substituting the actual words for the letters. I told her how I continue to read them this way until I become comfortable and knowledgeable of them. At that point, I shared, I can read the acronym as an acronym while still making meaning. She thought that seemed like a good plan, and off she went to reread. Later, she informed me that she understood the chapter and planned

to continue with the book. At the close of reader's workshop, I celebrated her success with the class, and we all gave her a cheer for her great work!

I'm becoming more convinced that Student #14's lack of focus is related to his poor vision. I knew he cannot see well at a distance, but I think he cannot see up close without straining either. The school nurse has already mailed a note home, but I fear it has been lost in the shuffle. His parents only speak Vietnamese, and he claimed not to know anything about a letter to his parents. His high-school sister does the translating for the parents. I need to make a phone call and try to connect with his sister. The more I think about this, the more convinced I am that this is really impacting my student's progress.

Friday:

After today's minilesson and subsequent conferencing, I was left feeling unsure of everything that I've been trying to accomplish for my eight participants as well as for my entire class. It is ironic that today's lesson was for my students to have empathy for their characters based on how other characters treat them. Ha! The many choices that my students made today are proof of why this particular grade level of children are somewhat famous among teachers at my site, and not in a positive way.

I had decided to try another tact with my three participants, Students #9, #14, and #16. The party strategy was not successful in increasing their engagement during independent reading. Instead, we met in a small group and I introduced another engagement strategy from Serravallo's strategy book. The basic idea is for each individual to determine how much reading they should do before they stop to reflect back upon their understanding. Serravallo claimed that giving students the power to make this

decision for themselves increases their motivation to read. Student #16 had a graphic novel and set the sticky every two pages as there was very little text on each page.

Student #14 had a *Weird School* book with lots of pictures so he set his after every page, and Student #9's book had fewer pictures and he set his every half page.

When I went around to check on their progress later, I discovered that Student #9 had switched books which told me he was not engaged at all with the first. Student #14 read while slumped over which was either due to not being able to see well or reading was drudgery for him. And Student #16 mostly roamed around the room knowing full well that it was unacceptable, but because I was busy with another group, I tried my best to ignore. I felt pretty defeated by the end of the period.

So after school when I had a quiet moment, I reflected on the progress of my eight participants. When I really thought about it, five students have taken my lessons seriously and are making improvements based on my conferences with them. Of my three least engaged readers, #9 and #14 want to improve in reading and have taken small steps toward this goal. Going into this action research intervention, I knew that Student #16 would present my biggest challenge, and he has. He comes to school each day with lots of baggage from his "previous life" and I cannot expect that he will change overnight. Having reflected in this way helps me to carry on with my reader's workshop work. And I'll try to not take it so personally when it doesn't go the way I'd like.

My reflections have led me to see that my implementation of reader's workshop has had to be a type of hybrid of a true reader's workshop. If I had implemented this at the beginning of the school year, I would have spent much more time building reading stamina and engagement. The vast majority of my class is engaged during independent

reading but not all. If I had worked through beginning-of-the-year engagement lessons, I would probably not be fighting them now. Also, there is the additional pressure of knowing that second-trimester benchmark assessments are coming up in another couple of weeks, so I'm squeezing in those skill lessons that they will be tested on. I'm trying to walk the line between giving the majority of my class the instruction they are capable of learning through the minilessons while differentiating for individual needs during conference lessons. I'm clinging to the knowledge that my students have spent the last three weeks learning good reading strategies/skills while having the gift of time to practice them in books of their own choosing.

Week 5: February 6 - 10Monday:

I had decided to reteach the lesson "Summarize" from week 1. I initially chose it because my work with third graders has taught me that summarizing is difficult. In this lesson, students must consider what a character needs or wants, the problem, and how the other characters and events of each chapter affect that need or want. Using the five fingers on a hand, my class and I have established that the thumb and index finger represent the setting of the chapter and the characters who are present. The three remaining fingers represent three events that are significant to the problem of the story, or the resolution of the story. I usually do not ask for student feedback during minilessons in order to keep the time down, but today my students inserted themselves into this part of the lesson quite strongly. They were right on in their suggestions for those three remaining events of today's chapter of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. After, I sent them off for independent reading with the instruction to mark significant events with blank sticky

notes for easy referral afterward during their response writing. I've peeled back on the use of sticky notes because I found that many students were using too many valuable reading minutes jotting lengthy notes.

Meanwhile, I pulled two groups of three - four students, including Students #4 and #24, to reteach the "Insert a Synonym" lesson. I also worked with a group of nonparticipant students to reteach the "Empathy" lesson. I had started the day asking for written feedback on the strategy that my students felt was the most difficult for them, and these two groups were formed based on that. I've asked them to jot brief sticky notes at places in their reading where they used this strategy so we could discuss them during a follow-up conference on Wednesday.

I had a few moments in which to check in with Student #31. She brought her book back to read for me, and I was disappointed to see that it was not a good fit for her. There were too many unknown words for her to both decode and understand the meaning. I could hear Lucy Calkins whispering in my ear to not let her continue to waste her time on that book, but I just didn't have the heart to say it. Tomorrow I'll really zero in on this student's thoughts about the book. Maybe she realizes that it's too hard and just needs "permission" to abandon it...? I can only hope.

Tuesday:

Today's reading workshop was a lesson in frustration for me. I cut my minilesson short because so many of my tightly-wound tops were starting to spin out of control. Just as I was about to get them into independent reading, the computer technician entered the room and began working with the audio system. After much effort, my readers finally engaged with their books. As a result, I only met with two students.

As I listened to Student #31 read with me today, I learned something about many books that are currently being published in the second-grade level reading range. The books my participants gravitate toward are chapter books, they are somewhat silly in nature, and there are lots of illustrations throughout. Another thing that I noticed today was they seem to also have a lot of sarcasm, or at least lots of nonliteral language in them that take readers away from the main plot. This has been problematic for my struggling readers, and especially for my EL's because they must work hard to follow a simple plot in their books, let alone understand the nonliteral "wanderings" that these books seem to have. I'll speak to our librarian about this tomorrow to see if she can recommend any titles that might be easier for my participants to follow.

I conferenced with Student #21. He decodes effortlessly, but his comprehension is usually lacking. At the beginning of this intervention, I was excited for him because he engaged in two book titles right away. When we had conferenced, he spoke enthusiastically about the events that were unfolding in his books. Today when we conferenced, he was completely lethargic. He slowly lumbered over to the table where I was waiting. To get things going I asked him to read a little from his book. The word "answering" was included in the speech tag, but it was separated with a hyphen because it was at the end of a line of text. He read it as "an swearing" and then just kept on reading without out a clue that he had erred. When asked if it made sense, he defended the correctness of it and did not want to take a closer look. After much ado, I asked him to write the word on a sticky note to see what the word was. He sheepishly acknowledged the correct pronunciation at that point.

I also conferenced with several individuals including Student #24. We had a terrific discussion about a response to the lesson on having empathy for the characters in his book that he had written. I listened very intently to his very soft voice as he explained the event in his book and how the character's feelings first went from mad to happy. It was evident that he understood this part in his book very well!

Wednesday:

It was a much more productive day for my readers today. As I'm nearing the end of this intervention, I decided that I needed to know what my participants thought they needed help with next, so I held individual conferences with four of them.

Student #4 set a goal for inserting a synonym when she comes to unknown words. She'll continue to reread when she discovers that she has drifted off. This student has ADD and is not on medication. In the last couple weeks, I've noticed that she has struggled a bit more recently. I'll remember to ask her why she thinks this is...

Student #14 felt he really needs to continue his goal to reread when he has become distracted. He has gotten into the habit of sitting in the back section of the library. He holds his book down low and sort of leans down so that his head is directly over his book. I think he must be doing this in an effort to tune out distractions... I think this is his way of coping with distractions. Also, he excitedly announced as he departed from me that he had his eye appointment at Costco today! Progress!

Student #16 was on his very best behavior today. It stemmed from his learning that there was going to be a meeting that included his parents after school today. He didn't know anything about it, and was very curious about the purpose of it. I briefly explained that we had decided to meet in order to discuss other new ways that his

learning could be supported. I'm not sure if it was out of fear of getting in trouble, or pleasure at knowing how hard I was working to help him, but he was amazingly on task throughout reader's workshop and the rest of the day. When asked what he thought his new reading goal should be he replied, "I want to read like a third grader." When I asked for clarification of what he meant, he demonstrated two different ways to read the same line out of his graphic novel. The first way was slow and choppy, and the second was fast and smooth. I told him that I thought he had set an excellent goal, and we made plans for achieving it. I think what I've been telling him may finally be sinking in. He responded by saying something like, "You mean I'll get better by reading books that are easy for me?" This is progress too.

Student #28 has two new goals in addition to the continuation of solving the meaning of unknown words. He will look for small words or chunks within words to decode unknown words independently. He will pay close attention to ending punctuation in order to read more expressively which will help him to comprehend more deeply. We practiced reading sentences in his book that had periods, questions, and exclamations. He understood how they should be read differently, and went off to read by himself. Student #28 is so nice to work with because he really tries to apply the strategies that I teach him!

I had planned to meet with two groups from Monday, but I didn't get to them. I'll try to squeeze them in tomorrow plus my other four participants for their new goal setting. As my critical friend is coming Friday to conduct the last engagement inventory, I'll meet with my participants first so they are not disturbed by me on Friday.

Thursday:

Today's minilesson was part two of a previous lesson on the theme. I displayed the poster showing the "big idea" words that were connected to *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Using a new poster as a guide, I modeled how to determine possible themes by saying them in complete sentences. This novel is such a wonderful book and was easy for my students to tell the theme in statements, and they did so prior to leaving for independent reading.

I continued goal-setting conferences with my participants today starting with Student #9. After my discovery that so many of my newly purchased chapter books in the 2.0 - 2.9 range include sarcasm and/or nonliteral language that make comprehension more difficult for my struggling readers, I consulted the school librarian. She was aware of my dilemma and took me directly over to three new titles/authors in the library. I checked them out and Student #9 was interested in one entitled *Zombies*. After he joined me we chatted briefly about the books he was reading: a *HiLo* graphic novel and *Zombies* which he had not started yet. I asked him to read from *Zombies* while secretly hoping that he'd become intrigued and leave the graphic novel. (He did not, I found out later. I think he feels successful because he can read so many more pages in graphic novels than traditional chapter books.) Chapter 1 was entitled "Leo the Liar." The first short paragraph told readers that Leo claimed to have seen zombies walking down the street. The second paragraph, the only other paragraph on the page, told that Leo is a liar that loves to make up stories. As Student #9 got to the bottom of the page, I asked him what he learned about the story so far. He responded by saying that Leo had seen zombies and he pointed to that sentence in paragraph one. When prompted to tell me more, his finger

scanned down to paragraph two. His brows furrowed as he reread the part about Leo being a liar. He looked at me in a puzzled way, so I prompted him to tell what the chapter title might mean. At this point, he came to fully realize that Leo had lied about seeing zombies.

This is a classic example of Student #9. His understanding usually just skims the top surface of stories without creating deep meaning. When asked how I could support him with reading, he quickly recognized that he needed continued help in staying engaged in reading. I shared the story of my reading experience as a third grader by telling him how I used to drift off, too. I told him that he was lucky to be aware that he's doing it now so that we can begin to change that while he's still in third grade. He was surprised to learn that I didn't create any engagement fix-up strategies until I was much older! Later after independent reading, he reported excitedly to me that he had read 40-something pages! If graphic novels are the vehicle that will engage him, then thank goodness for them!

Student #21 decodes most text with ease, but today we discussed how his mind drifts when he reads which accounts for his poor comprehension. He broke into a big smile when I shared my story which was very similar: I could decode anything as a third grader, but my comprehension was poor. We discussed the difference between us in that my teacher never worked with me on engagement strategies so I went much longer with poor comprehension. From this, he set a goal to renew his practice of stopping when he realizes he's drifted. He'll back up to where he last made meaning and reread from there while playing that movie. We'll see.

Student #31 wanted more help in reading words. She had one of the books that the librarian had suggested to me, and it seems to be a really good fit! It looks like a regular chapter book with a plot that is easy to follow. As she read, she was quite smooth throughout most of the page. She became stuck on the word “frowned.” She had trouble decoding it and determining what meaning would fit. There weren’t great context clues although she gave it her best shot which is progress. She’s really improved in looking for clues! In the end, we renewed her goal to look for small words she knows in unknown words or chunks that she knows from other words. I jotted “How now brown cow?” which she read easily. She readily saw how they all had -ow- in them and then applied that understanding to read frown correctly. My job with her will be to remind her to use these strategies as she reads because she tends to forget them!

Friday:

There was a noticeably increased level of excitement from the moment the tardy bell rang this am. (To put it nicely!) It was a rainy Friday, the Deputy Dollar Store was to be open at 10:20 a.m. recess, and some students were to attend the AR celebratory party at the end of the day.

The first lesson of the day was building division concepts, and I found it to be very difficult to keep the students’ engagement in the whole-group part of the lesson. Also during this time, I needed to deal with the report of bullying between two of my students, and I had asked for some help in getting to the bottom of it from personnel trained in working with kids on these issues. He came in the middle of an already shaky math lesson which didn’t improve my students’ ability to focus. As students came in after 10:20 recess, I quickly realized the lack of focus had not improved any...

The minilesson built upon yesterday's lesson of the theme. Students were asked to think about possible themes as they listened to me read the final chapter of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. After, we were in agreement that the themes we had discussed yesterday were right on target. Once again, I asked students to jot "theme seeds" on a sticky as big ideas about their reading occurred to them. Later, only a small number of my most reflective students had jotted their seed ideas... This is not surprising to me as this type of thinking is definitely on a much higher level. I'll need to check in with those students as they develop their ideas for themes in their books.

My critical friend had arrived prior to starting the reader's workshop and did a very thorough job of sweeping her eyes from one participant to the next as she noted her observations on the end-of-the-intervention Engagement Inventory checklist. Unfortunately, Student #24 was absent again today so I do not have post-engagement data about him, although he is one of my most engaged readers of my eight participants. Also, I still want to meet with him in order to set a new reading goal.

Today, I felt off my game... I had planned to pull two small groups of nonparticipants, but due to the energetic vibe in my classroom, I decided not to. I did not want to pull any of my participants for a conference while my critical friend was collecting engagement data, so I checked in with a couple individual students about which I had growing comprehension concerns. The first student showed me an area of her book where she was having difficulty following the conversation between the characters. Together, we read and discussed each short paragraph as we studied the clues the author had given such as the speech tags and the examples of direct address within the quotations. I was rather surprised that this student was having such difficulty following

this in her book, and must remember to check in on her again soon. The other student's difficulty seemed to stem more from being unsure how to sound out words, specifically vowels and vowel teams. Her new goal is to remember to say vowel sounds using either their long or short sounds to help her decode unknown words.

Today marks the end of this action research intervention, and I was left feeling frustrated and ineffective whereas I usually have more positive feelings about the day's reading accomplishments. As I look back on the overall intervention, I believe it has been a really good experience for all of my students, especially for my participants. Even if there are not any huge gains in reading ability, most of my participants are armed with many more skills and strategies than they had at the beginning. I'm anxious to begin the next part of this project: analyzing the data.

Week 6: February 14 - 17

It took everything I had within me this short four-day week to collect final data from my students. Monday was a non-attendance day for students, and Tuesday my students came in extremely excited because it was Valentine's Day. Whew! I did not even attempt to collect the needed information on Tuesday.

In the three remaining days, I administered an end-of-the-intervention DRA from my participants, and the entire class took their monthly AR Star Test. I was elated to find that all my participants grew one or two DRA levels, and many of them are now in the beginning third-grade range. Then my elation was dashed when every single participants' AR Star Test score slipped backward!

Over the past days, I've been mulling this over in my mind, and I've reached a couple of conclusions. The DRA more closely matches the reading instruction my

students have received through reader's workshop. The DRA calls for students to read a short story, make initial predictions based on the beginning paragraphs, read it independently, and then give an oral detailed retelling of the story at the end. It also requires students to read a passage from it aloud, so teachers can take a miscue analysis as they also observe strategies that readers use as they read.

I'm not the type of person who tends to make excuses, but this will sound like I am! As I have said in previous journal entries, my class is somewhat famous among the administration at my site for having lots of impulsive kids who struggle with remaining attentive in class. This is true of many of my bright kids as well as many of my lower kids. On the day that they took the AR Star test, I had a bad feeling about the level of focus that my class had on that day, but decided to give it anyway because my entire class was at least *present* that day... which is unusual. I tend to have lots of absenteeism, especially lately. In other words, I believe my participants, like many of my nonparticipants, were not as focused as they could have been. For this reason, I asked a couple of my participants if they would like to take the AR Star Test again. Because they were disappointed in their score, they eagerly agreed that they would like to try it again. This was late in the week, so only three of my participants had the opportunity to retest. Student #14's score improved slightly from last month's score. Student #28's score improved more significantly which is more consistent with his progress that I have seen during the course of the intervention. Student #4 started a retest but did not have time Friday afternoon to finish, so we had to stop it. It was a bad time to retest, she was not terribly focused, and I do not know how reliable the outcome will be. I do know that she has made tremendous growth in her ability to comprehend and in her use of strategies.

I had the opportunity to really see the types of questions that were asked, however. I observed about five or six of the questions by looking over her shoulder as she tested. The questions were all similar in that they required her to read a couple sentences and then to choose from four answer choices, the word that best fit with the passage. The test is adaptive, so based on the correctness of students' answers, questions become easier or more difficult. This was good for me to see because it helped me to conclude that the DRA is more indicative of students' understanding of books they read. I have come to see it is a more reliable indicator of student comprehension and fluency. This will help me to answer my primary research question better than the types of questions I saw on the AR Star Test as those questions tended to focus on words' meanings within context.

I do plan to let my other participants retake the AR Star test as their scores were disappointing to them, and I hope they will be happy with their result. However, either way, I'll put more stock into their DRA scores.

I also collected a post-intervention "Self-Assessment for Reading" survey (see Appendix E). As I compared each participant's responses at the beginning and at the end of the intervention, there was generally an improvement in their perceptions of themselves as readers. I can conclude that they have an increase in their self-confidence as readers which I believe will serve them well. I have always thought that having self-confidence is a huge factor that leads to success for individuals!

I also collected a "Student Survey on Reader's Workshop" from my entire class (see Appendix F). This survey required my students to explain their feelings in each of the seven questions. Responses of my participants were also generally favorable about

reader's workshop, and all participants felt that it has helped them to grow as readers and would like to see reader's workshop continue as a regular part of each day.

Finally, my critical friend generously offered to come back in order to observe Student #24 who was absent when she came last. After handing the completed Engagement Inventory to me she shared her observation that my class, in general, seemed to be only a bit more engaged than what she had noticed last week. However, compared to the rest of the day, it was definitely the most peaceful time of the day!

Appendix C
Engagement Inventory

Student 4					
Student 9					
Student 14					
Student 16					
Student 21					
Student 24					
Student 28					
Student 31					

✓ = engaged in reading

R = reacting to reading

S = smiling while reading

W = looking out window

T = looking at me, the teacher

C = looking at clock

O = other; not engaged in reading

Engagement Inventory: Description of Observed Behaviors

Student 4:

Student 9:

Student 14:

Student 16:

Student 21:

Student 24:

Student 28:

Student 31:

Appendix D

Third-Grade Questionnaire

Date: _____

1. When you hear it's time for reading, how do you feel?

2. Do you read outside of school? Explain why?

3. Can you remember a positive experience with reading? Tell me about it.

4. Do you have any negative experiences with reading? Tell me about them.

5. If you could request anything to be part of the classroom library, what would it be?

6. What types of nonfiction do you like reading? What topics interest you?

Appendix E

Self-Assessment for Reading

Date: _____

Rate your ability to do the following reading tasks. Your honest answers will help me figure out the best ways to teach you. Write the number that best fits how you feel on the line.

1 = I strongly disagree; 2 = I disagree; 3 = I agree; 4 = I strongly agree

- _____ 1. I look forward to DEAR time in class.
- _____ 2. I look forward to DEAR time at home.
- _____ 3. I enjoy reading by myself.
- _____ 4. I like to read fictional stories by myself.
- _____ 5. I understand fictional stories when I read by myself.
- _____ 6. I like to read nonfiction by myself.
- _____ 7. I can understand nonfiction when I read by myself.
- _____ 8. I can use strategies to sound out words I don't know.
- _____ 9. When I read out loud, my reading flows smoothly.
- _____ 10. I can use clues in the text to find the meanings of words that I don't know.
- _____ 11. I can use clues in text to understand metaphors, similes, and other figurative language when I read.

Appendix F

Student Survey on Reader's Workshop

1. What have you learned about reading as a result of being involved in reader's workshop?

2. After participating in reader's workshop, do you feel you are a better reader, a worse reader, or about the same kind of reader you were before working in reader's workshop?

(Circle one) Better Worse Same

Explain why you feel this way.

3. Has participating in reader's workshop changed the way you feel about reading for school?

(Circle one) Yes No

If you circled yes, explain how it has changed the way you feel about reading for school.

4. Has participating in reader's workshop changed the way you feel about reading for fun?

(Circle one) Yes No

If you circled yes, explain how it has changed the way you feel about reading for fun.

5. What activities during reader's workshop have been most helpful to you?

6. What activities during reader's workshop have been least helpful to you?

7. Is there anything else you would like to say about reader's workshop? If so, please explain here.
