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ABSTRACT

The Book Club project has a focus on research examining literature-based instruction with an emphasis on student-led response groups and this report describes the use of Book Club instruction within a special education resource room, in which elementary-level children incorporated the use of high quality literature, written and oral responses to literature, and student-led discussions. Specifically, the report describes the experiences of a group of five students (identified as learning disabled or educable mentally impaired) as they participated in Book Club at an urban school in a mid-sized midwestern city. The first phase involved a unit on folktales to help students explore both what to share and how to share within their small group discussions and to provide instructional support through modeling, teacher-led discussion, and written activities to help their oral response. The second phase, using a unit on disabilities, focused on furthering their progress and increasing their use of personal experiences in interpreting text. Student growth in literacy activities was noted through three areas: nature of the Book Club interactions, change in written response, and types of questions discussed. The types of instruction and modeling that helped the students grow confident in their literacy abilities are discussed. Appendixes list literature used and outline Book Club activities. (Contains approximately 35 references.) (Author/JDD)

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Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects was awarded to Michigan State University in 1987 after a nationwide competition. Funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, the Elementary Subjects Center is a major project housed in the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT). The program focuses on conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, and problem solving in elementary school teaching of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts. Center researchers are identifying exemplary curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in the teaching of these school subjects; studying these practices to build new hypotheses about how the effectiveness of elementary schools can be improved; testing these hypotheses through school-based research; and making specific recommendations for the improvement of school policies, instructional materials, assessment procedures, and teaching practices. Research questions include, What content should be taught when teaching these subjects for understanding and use of knowledge? How do teachers concentrate their teaching to use their limited resources best? and In what ways is good teaching subject matter-specific?

The work is designed to unfold in three phases, beginning with literature review and interview studies designed to elicit and synthesize the points of view of various stakeholders (representatives of the underlying academic disciplines, intellectual leaders and organizations concerned with curriculum and instruction in school subjects, classroom teachers, state- and district-level policymakers) concerning ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in these five content areas at the elementary level. Phase II involves interview and observation methods designed to describe current practice, and in particular, best practice as observed in the classrooms of teachers believed to be outstanding. Phase II also involves analysis of curricula (both widely used curriculum series and distinctive curricula developed with special emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications), as another approach to gathering information about current practices. In Phase III, models of ideal practice will be developed, based on what has been learned and synthesized from the first two phases, and will be tested through classroom intervention studies.

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Abstract

The Book Club project of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects has a focus on research examining literature-based instruction with an emphasis on student-led response groups. This report is an extension of that line of research with a particular interest in Book Club instruction within the special education resource room. The Book Club instruction moved beyond the controlled, teacher-led phonetic-based program the children had been using in their resource room to incorporate the use of high quality literature, written and oral responses to literature, and student-led discussions.

This report describes the experiences of a group of five students, identified as either learning disabled or educable mentally impaired, as they participated in Book Club, reported in terms of two phases of instruction. The first phase involved a unit on folktales to help the students explore both what to share and how to share within their small group discussions and provide instructional support through modeling, teacher-led discussion, and written activities to help their oral response. The second phase, using a unit on disabilities, focused on furthering their progress and increasing their use of personal experiences in interpreting text.

Student growth in literacy activities was noted through three areas: (a) nature of the Book Club interactions, (b) change in written response, and (c) types of questions discussed. By analyzing the students written responses and Book Club discussions, we discuss both the changes that were seen and more importantly, the types of instruction and modeling that helped the students grow confident in their literacy abilities.

Moving Literature-Based Instruction Into the Special Education Setting: A Book Club With Nontraditional Learners[1]

Virginia J. Goatley and Taffy E. Raphael[2]

Literacy instruction in special education programs, whether self-contained classrooms or resource rooms, has been shaped historically by our view that such students benefit from a philosophy of "slow it down and make it concrete" (Allington, 1991, p. 26). Such a belief stems from theories which argue that reading is a process made up of component subskills and that reading development for students with learning problems is most effective when these component skills are learned prior to engaging in the more complex, higher order thinking that characterizes mature literate persons.

The passage of PL94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, further complicated the issue of alternative views of instruction for students with such labels as learning disabled because of its required individualized educational plan. This plan promoted students working individually on needed reading skills, a pattern which prevails in typical special education classrooms today (Anthony & Anderson, 1987). Further, these students often have little or no experience with the role of writing for meaningful purposes and for real audiences. Like instruction in reading, students' work in writing is often decontextualized from the contexts in which it could and should be used (Englert & Raphael, 1987). Given this course of literacy instruction, the special education teacher's role is often defined in terms of providing the management structure and emphasizing specific skills determined necessary for individual students, rather than a more holistic approach.

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[1] A portion of this report will appear as a chapter titled "Nontraditional Learners' Written and Dialogic Response to Literature" in the forthcoming C. K. Kinzer and D. J. Leu (Eds.), *41st Annual National Reading Conference Yearbook*. Chicago: National Reading Conference.

[2] Virginia J. Goatley, doctoral candidate in educational psychology at Michigan State University, is a research assistant with the Book Club Project in the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. Taffy E. Raphael, professor of teacher education at MSU, is a senior researcher in the Center where she directs the project.

Like calls for reform of literacy instruction in regular education classrooms (e.g., Hickman, 1983), calls for reform in special education literacy instruction stress the importance of providing a social context in which students can participate in authentic literacy activities. Current research exploring alternative literacy instruction emphasizes the success special education students experience in understanding the purpose of stories, conceptualizing themselves as members of a literate community, and participating as readers and writers (Palincsar, Hric, Klenk, Anderman, & Wilson, 1991).

The role of collaborative dialogue is increasingly emphasized as an outlet for students to express the topics and questions which they consider to be important (e.g. Hepler & Hickman, 1982; Hickman, 1983; Strickland, Dillon, Funkhouser, Glick, & Rogers, 1989). Beach and Hynds (1991) note each reader's response to text will differ based on influential factors such as attitudes, knowledge of conventions, experiences, and contextual variations. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) stress there can be more than one interpretation of a text depending upon, "the background of the reader, the purpose for reading, and the context in which reading occurs" (p. 7). Therefore, students need to value their interpretation of the text and have the opportunity to respond by voicing their thoughts about it. Green (1990) suggests reading is actually a social process in which "reading as accomplished in and through the actions and interactions of [the] everyday life of a group" (p. 108). Accepting this as part of the reading process requires changes in the traditional reading instruction of reading a short story and answering comprehension questions. When interaction opportunities to discuss the text are provided, the student gains the advantage of hearing other viewpoints and raising questions about interpretation. Rather than limiting these literacy opportunities to regular education students, special education students deserve a similar experience.

Students in special education often face a reading instruction program focused on developing sight vocabulary and decoding skills as precursors to sustained interaction around connected text. While these skills are an important part of the curriculum for students who are having difficulty in learning to read, such a program postpones frequent and sustained reading of connected text, denying students the practice they need on authentic reading activities (Allington, 1977). Additionally, it does little to motivate the students to read and practice on their own. Given findings such as Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987) that show how important independent reading is for vocabulary development, it is not surprising that such children rarely acquire enough literacy skills to rejoin their peers in regular education.

Despite the growing interest in integrating special education students into mainstream literacy instruction and in demonstrating their success in engaging in holistic literacy activities, with few exceptions (e.g., Gilles, 1990), we know little about how such students will respond to current trends seen in literacy instruction in regular education classrooms--the move toward literature-based instruction (Cullinan, 1987) and a greater emphasis on student response groups (e.g., McMahon, 1992; O'Flahavan, 1989). The purpose of this study was to examine upper elementary special education students' response to a model of reading instruction that emphasized such instruction.

This report will provide information about the classroom context, participants, materials, instruction, and literature units. Then, a description of the research and data analyzed for the study will be discussed. The data for this study was collected two days per week over a four month period. It will be analyzed to look at how the nontraditional learners changed in both cognitive and affective responses to text as seen through their oral and written activities.

Methods

This study took place from January through May, 1991, in an urban school in a midsized midwestern city. In this section, we describe the context of the study, participants, curriculum materials and data sources, and the prodecures followed.

Classroom Context

The resource room in which the study occurred is in an urban school in a mid-sized midwestern city with a heterogenous population of African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian students. Special education (e.g., LD--Learning Disabled, EMI--Educable Mentally Impaired) resource rooms are maintained in the district and those students attending these are often separated from the literacy instruction provided in the regular classroom. For all special education students, the district has mandated Project Read, a phonetic-based approach emphasizing developing sight vocabulary, decoding skills, and fluency. The connected text that is present in the program is limited by the controlled vocabulary of the passages and the literal comprehension questions which accompany the teachers' manual. Reading group discussions are typically teacher-led using a standard question-response-evaluation interaction pattern (Mehan, 1982). Thus, the students in the program have few opportunities to react critically to text or ask questions of their own. While such reading instruction may help students develop some literacy skills, it does not support response to and critical thinking about text.

During the 1990-91 academic year, all students in the resource room from this study were learning from Project Read as required by the district. The second- and third- grade students were involved in additional literacy activities of the Early Literacy Project of Michigan State University (Englert, Palinscar, Raphael, Gavelek, 1991), while the fourth and fifth graders were mainstreamed into the general education classroom for content area subjects. Because of this schedule, the fourth and fifth graders participated in few literacy activities beyond Project Read.

When students did work together in their reading groups, the discussions were typically teacher-led with questions, response, and evaluation from the teacher. Student discussion did occur when they occasionally participated in cooperative learning (Slavin, 1983), author's chair (Graves & Hansen, 1983), and discussions with extra materials from the basal readers.

In January, we began to work with these students on an occasional basis to provide opportunity for greater emphasis on their own response and to develop critical thinking skills. Throughout winter and spring, the teacher eventually supplemented the phonetic reading program when other literacy methods (i.e., morning message, trade books, Book Club, journal writing) were used in conjunction with the Early Literacy Project. The teacher continued with modifications of the Book Club program after the formal study ended.

Participants

The five students who participated in this study were classified as either LD or EMI for reading and/or writing. The students attended their special education resource room for language arts and, with one exception, were mainstreamed into regular education classes for the other academic areas. They attend an urban neighborhood school with a heterogenous population of African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian students. Two-thirds of the students receive free lunch and many come from single-parent families. This particular resource room, one of three in the school, was selected because two of the children were from a general education classroom that was implementing the Book Club literature-based reading program. However, the two special education students could not participate because they received their literacy instruction in the special education classroom. The five students are Robert, Kaitlin, Cheryl, Hilary, and Rashad.[3] The daily school attendance rate for all of these students was poor. Thus, it was rare to have all of the students at school on any one day.

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3 All student names are pseudonyms.

Robert is an African-American fourth grader labeled learning disabled. In his own words, he says, "I am in special ed because of my reading and my attitude." This is his first year in a resource room. He was referred for testing due to his low reading level. He occasionally has behavior problems but generally tried hard and participated with this group of students. He is quite verbal and during initial conversations commanded a leadership role.

Kaitlin is a Caucasian, EMI, fourth-grade student who is often reluctant to participate in many school activities. She will sometimes try to do only the minimum to be finished. For example, she will often count the number of words she has written on the page or write in big letters to fill up the page quicker. She tends to be very vocal in telling her thoughts about an activity, particularly when she does not want to participate.

Cheryl is a Hispanic, LD, fourth-grade student. She has been absent from the group more than the other students and therefore has not had a much opportunity to interact about books in this manner. She tends to be quiet until asked by other students for her opinion.

The youngest in the group, Hilary, is a Caucasian, LD, third grader. She is good at decoding words but often has difficulty in comprehending passages. During her initial Book Club discussion, she came to the table prepared to read aloud, stating she knew all the words, but when ask to retell what she had read, she had little idea of the content. She is conscientious of her schoolwork and tries hard to please the teacher.

During the initial two weeks, Rashad, a fifth-grader, participated in the instruction. However, he then moved to the resource room with the other fifth-grade special education children. When scheduling conflicts became a problem, Rashad no longer participated in the Book Club instruction.

Literacy Instruction

The students met two times a week with one of the researchers to participate in a literature-based instruction program. The Book Club program (Raphael, McMahon, Goatley, Bentley, Boyd, Pardo, & Woodman, 1992), was selected as the intervention because it encompasses many of the instructional goals (i.e., student-led discussion groups, strategy instruction, literature-based, student questioning) not part of the students' current instruction. Book Club uses four components: reading, writing, discussion, and instruction. Reading involved reading connected text, varying daily to include silent, paired, oral, or teacher-led depending on the difficulty of the text. Writing was developed in reading logs, lined paper for writing, and blank paper for drawings and mapping. Daily instruction and prompts promoted activities such as character mapping, sequencing, questioning, critiquing, and synthesizing. Discussion consisted of the small student-led discussion group (i.e., Book Clubs) and whole-class teacher-led discussion (i.e., Community Share). Instruction focused on both what and how to share their responses with one another.

Curriculum Materials

The students read the story Two Good Friends by Judy Delton (1974), both before and after the folktale unit, to assess their abilities in reading, writing and speaking about text, and guide selection of additional curriculum materials (see Appendix A for a summary of books used). The literature selected for the folktale unit included, Tikki Tikki Tembo (Mosel,1968), The Painter and the WIld Swans (Clement, 1986), and Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears (Aardema, 1975). The theme of the second phase of the study was disabilities. Selections included The Balancing Girl (Rabe, 1981) and I Have a Sister, My Sister is Deaf (Peterson, 1977).

Writing materials included reading logs and think sheets. Reading logs were lined and blank paper stapled together for their written responses. Think sheets, adapted by Raphael & Englert

(1990) to describe written activities that encouraged note taking and later discussion rather than worksheets to be graded, included various response activities, such as a book critiques, synthesis, and compare/contrast.

Data Sources

Data collected include field notes of resource room observations (e.g., Project READ, morning message, small-group activities) prior to implementation of the program, a pre- and post-performance-based measure, a metacognitive interview, transcripts of audiotaped discussions, student interviews, videotapes, written work, and field notes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was both ongoing and conducted after the data gathering had been completed following methods described by Merriam (1991) and Bogdan and Biklen (1982). While collecting the data, the two researchers met weekly to talk about the study. In addition, one researcher met regularly with both the special education and regular education teachers of the participants to discuss emerging patterns, gather further insights about the students and reactions to the data, and to discuss ideas for refinement of the program. Together, these meetings provided a time for both teachers and researchers to (a) analyze data and discuss patterns emerging from the data, (b) determine further areas for instruction, and (c) focus on categories of patterns to influence further data collection. Triangulation of the data from field notes, performance-based measures, interviews, and transcripts provided the basis for interpretations. Following the data collection, the researchers continued analysis in terms of individual and group response. Both during and after the data collection, data was catalogued according to the patterns we found.

Procedure

There were two phases for the study (see Appendix B for a timeline of observations). The first phase focused on identifying students' awareness of how and what to share in discussions

and providing instructional support through modeling, teacher-led discussion, and written activities that helped develop their oral response. The second phase focused on further development of the students' response through modeling by more experienced students ways of interacting during student-led discussion, as well as specific attention during teacher-led activities to valuing their personal experiences as they worked toward interpreting the texts.

Prior to the start of the study, the students were observed in their resource room's morning activities, journal writing, and reading program. This provided information about their reading/writing abilities, social interaction, and curriculum materials.

Phase 1 included pre- and postintervention assessment measures, with the folktale unit as the intervention. The first phase began with the preintervention assessment in which students read and responded to Two Good Friends (Delton, 1974). This initial assessment included having a student do (a) silent reading, (b) write a response to the prompt "What did you think of the story?" and (c) write what was best about the story and what the author might have done differently. The following day, students were asked to write three things to share with their group about the story. They then held a Book Club, a student-led discussion. Finally, they wrote how their ideas had changed due to the discussion.

The students then spent six weeks, two sessions per week, reading and discussing folktales. The students chose the three books, Tikki Tikki Tembo (Mosel, 1968), The Painter and the Wild Swans (Clement, 1986), and Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears (Aardema, 1975), from a larger set of books of various reading levels. They then participated in activities to encourage both efferent and aesthetic responses to the literature. Using instructional procedures detailed by Pearson & Gallagher (1983), students were introduced to and used mapping, sequencing, question asking, predicting, idea writing, and critiquing to prepare for discussion. This included group activities such as developing a list of folktale characteristics, completing a character map, critiquing

the authors' purpose in The Painter and the Wild Swans, and question-asking modeled by the teacher during Community Share. The modeling of these activities helped students subsequently work on their own and create more elaborate written responses. Book Clubs were held twice a week for students to share their responses, initially with greater teacher support in how and what to share to facilitate interaction, gradually with students assuming more responsibility for leadership. For the final part of Phase 1, four of the five students (the fifth grader had moved) again read and discussed Two Good Friends following the same procedure as they had prior to the folktale unit, to monitor their progress in what and how to share, and to identify foci for future instruction.

Based on the information from Phase 1, the second phase was conducted. It appeared that the students could benefit from specific instruction and opportunity to discuss text to help them go beyond the text, include all members in the discussion, and bring in personal experiences and response to the conversations. The students were able to observe and ask questions of fifth grade "experts" from a general education classroom who had been using Book Club as their reading program. The special education students planned their questions to ask the experts and watched several short Book Clubs to critique positive aspects and to look for ways to improve the book clubs.

The remainder of Phase 2 involved a one-week session using the literature unit on disabilities, with sessions held daily for continuity. Community Share included listening to recordings of their own Book Clubs and talking about ways to improve their discussions, discussing their perceptions of Book Club, and developing a map of what should happen. Instruction included modeling opportunities for personal response. The reading and writing of Phase 1 continued, adding drawing and choosing a special story section to share, and Book Club discussions occurred each day.

Results

From this ongoing analysis, three areas were shown to have a significant impact on the Book Club discussions. These include (a) the nature of the interactions during Book Club, (b) the written responses (i.e., elaboration, support for oral response), and (c) the meaningfulness of the questions discussed.

Generally, Phase 1 analyses of the preintervention discussion revealed that students were able to (a) use the text as a source of information, (b) use their written response as a source for sharing ideas, and (c) formulate questions. However, there was need for improvement in specific ways: (a) elaborating written and oral responses, (b) facilitating interaction, and (c) responding to each other's questions. This became the agenda for the folktale unit.

Transcripts of discussion and writing samples from the intervention showed students progress over that period. After the six-week intervention, in both conversation and written work, improvements were seen in (a) their interaction with each other during discussion and related questions, (b) answering questions posed by others, and (c) elaborating on written work and using it to support the conversation. However, there were areas in need to improve was apparent: (a) including all group members in the discussion, (b) going beyond literal references to text to incorporate background knowledge, intertextuality, and personal experiences, and (c) moving toward aesthetic responses to text.

Phase 1

Nature of the interaction. The initial discussion about the story Two Good Friends provided information about students' ability to discuss text. While sharing occurred initially, the group quickly had difficulty deciding how to continue and little interaction developed despite their questions of each other. This exchange occurred a few minutes into the discussion:

Robert: (after a 14-second pause) I'm done. I want to hear Rashad's too.

Rashad: I just went. (10-second pause)

Robert: Go, Kaitlin.

Kaitlin: (Whispering to Cheryl) I always put those on my hands.

Robert: Oh boy. Go.

Cheryl: I already went.

Robert: Kaitlin, what are you doing? (Short pause) I'm getting mad here. Cheryl, read one of yours. All right, I'll read yours. (Takes Rashad's paper and silently reads it.)

Rashad: OK.

Robert: How did they get the houses? And why are they talking?

While the students seemed aware that talking should occur, they appeared unable to sustain a conversation. Robert showed early leadership by encouraging talk after he read his reading log, but eventually merely reads silently from Rashad's log. Further, the long pauses suggest students' difficulty with deciding "what" and knowing "how" to share.

During the intervention, progress was quickly seen in discussions where the students started to maintain a conversational tone. Analysis of the transcripts during the intervention revealed students' increasing awareness of the need to discuss their questions during their Book Clubs. The following discussion of Tikki Tikki Tembo occurred during week 2 of the intervention and illustrates how students started to focus on each others' questions and to address each in turn before continuing the discussion. Notice how students refer to each other directly by using the same words or phrases,[4] a pattern found in natural conversations such as those that occur among friends (Tannen, 1984) and that suggests that they were both attending to each other as well as building on each other's comments.

[4] Italics added by researchers to note repeated phrases.

Hilary: How did the boy fall in the *well*?

Robert: They was jump/ they was playing jumping on it/ it was on top of the *well* and running around and fell in.

Rashad: They was eatin' their rice cake.

Hilary: The mom told them to go get the *old man*.

Robert: Why? Because/ I guess the *old man* was (inaudible)--

Kaitlin: (interrupts) I think the *old man* was her husband.

Robert: (continues) cause he had a big old ladder he could help people.

Hilary: How did the *old man* help?

Robert: With the ladder.

During the postintervention discussion, the group began by taking turns reading the questions they had written in their logs, pausing briefly to insure each had finished what he or she had wanted to say. Once questions were on the table, they began a more interactive conversation, continuing the pattern that had developed during the intervention. This was seen both in the degree to which questions asked prompted discussion and the way in which students elaborated to support their points. In the following section of the discussion, Robert's question from his written work is addressed by Cheryl and Kaitlin, but then Robert continues to prove his point about how the Duck was mean, clearly not accepting the others interpretation of the story.

Robert: Why was the Duck so mean/ somebody tell me that// somebody tell me why was the Duck so mean?

Kaitlin: Well because he didn't want his clean/ his clean old house gettin' all dirty.

Cheryl: 'Cause he just got done cleaning his house.

Kaitlin: Yeah// and the Bear sat in Duck's rocking chair and asked Duck if he had anything to eat and Duck said no cause he was only cleaning/ so Bear said I have something/ he pulled into his pocket and brung out two cook/ two brownies and gave Duck one.

Robert: ...Listen, but he had/ put paper under there and um/ he could of cleaned up/ he could have/ he probably made Duck reai mad cause he was/ he was acting all mean / he didn't make his stuff at home then he put his feet on the table... (Robert continues).

Unlike earlier Book Clubs in which a question was asked, a student provided a simple answer, and the group moved on, this example reflects students' willingness to continue with a single point until it had been more fully discussed. Not only do Kaitlin and Cheryl provide their opinion of why the Duck was mean, Robert returns to his original question to provide an alternative to their opinion.

In looking at who had the opportunity to speak, or more importantly be heard by the others, Robert often received a response to his questions. However, Hilary was often a silent voice in the discussion. During the postintervention discussion, Robert, Kaitlin, and Cheryl maintain a discussion to answer a question about the location of the story while Hilary repeated one question six times before she was heard by the others or received any response.

Robert: Where was this at?

Hilary: *Why are they best friends?*

Kaitlin: It was at his house.

Robert: No it wasn't.

Hilary: *Why were they best friends?*

Cheryl: It was at Bear's house.

Hilary: *Why were they best friends?*

Robert: No/ what state was it you know.

Cheryl: What country?

Kaitlin: Were they in the country of Michigan or Oklahoma, Texas// Maybe they were in New York.

Robert: It was a state you know.

Hilary: *Why are they best friends?// Why were they best friends?*

Robert: Because they were/ you have a best friend don't you?/// That was a stupid question to ask.

Kaitlin: Because they like each other. Probably they live with each other then they just got another house.

When Hilary finally realizes her questions is heard by the others and receives an answer, she is unable to maintain a dicussion about the topic. Robert's reply to the end of the interchange, his pause for a few seconds, followed by a negative evaluation of Hilary's question may have suppressed her interaction. It is apparent that Hilary was not able to participate effectively and she seemed unaware of the conversational norm of letting the other students finish answering the question on the floor before introducing one of her own.

Written responses. During the preintervention written response, the students wrote minimally in their logs (see Appendix C). After reading the story, the students responded on paper to the prompt "What did you think of the story?" Answers included the following:

Robert: I like the story.

Cheryl: nies fun ok var frende [nice, fun, OK, very friendly]

Rashad: Bears goning to make a sear price duck with muffins and bear will tell duck to wipe is feet. [Bear is going to surprise Duck with muffins and Bear will tell Duck to wipe his feet.]

Kaitlin: it was fcome and sad. [It was funny and sad.]

Like their oral discussion, their written evaluations gave a general idea of their feelings about the story, but did little to explain reasons for their answer.

The students' minimal response was seen in their "getting ready to share" writing activity prior to the discussion . The written work was vague and provided little support for their

discussion. Cheryl prepared for the discussion by writing that she wanted to talk about the author, the illustrations, and the story. It is not surprising her contribution from her log was quick and the others forgot she had taken her turn.

To help the students get beyond writing simply "the author, the illustration, the story," the intervention focused on developing the students' strategies for comprehension which emphasized their writing as a support to the oral response. The students already demonstrated knowledge of how to do character maps, thus this activity was used to help with the transition of using writing to support the oral response. The students used character maps in the resource room as a comprehension strategy, with a large character map of Amelia Bedelia (Parish, 1963) noticeably seen on the wall in the resource room. Prior to making their own character maps, the strategy had been modeled by the teacher in the resource room, in addition to completing a character map for the mother in Tikki Tikki Tembo during the instruction component of Book Club. When Hilary and Robert[5] made their first character maps from Tikki Tikki Tembo they had an awareness of the characters in the story, including knowledge of gender, behavior, ethnicity, family, traits, and role in the story. (See Figure 1.) During the Community Share which followed their Book Club, the confusion of whether the boys were Chinese or white, was brought up and discussed.

Sequencing completed by drawing pictures and writing related sentences was another comprehension strategy used in the written work as a preparation for discussion. After teacher modeling and students working on a sequence together, the students completed on their own a sequence of the events for Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears in which story comprehension was dependent on knowledge of the sequence of events. Kaitlin responded to this by insisting she could not do it. With scaffolded instruction, or additional initial support that was eventually eliminated, she was shown how to use the book as a guide to draw the pictures, she dictated the

5 Kaitlin, Rashad, and Cheryl were absent this day.

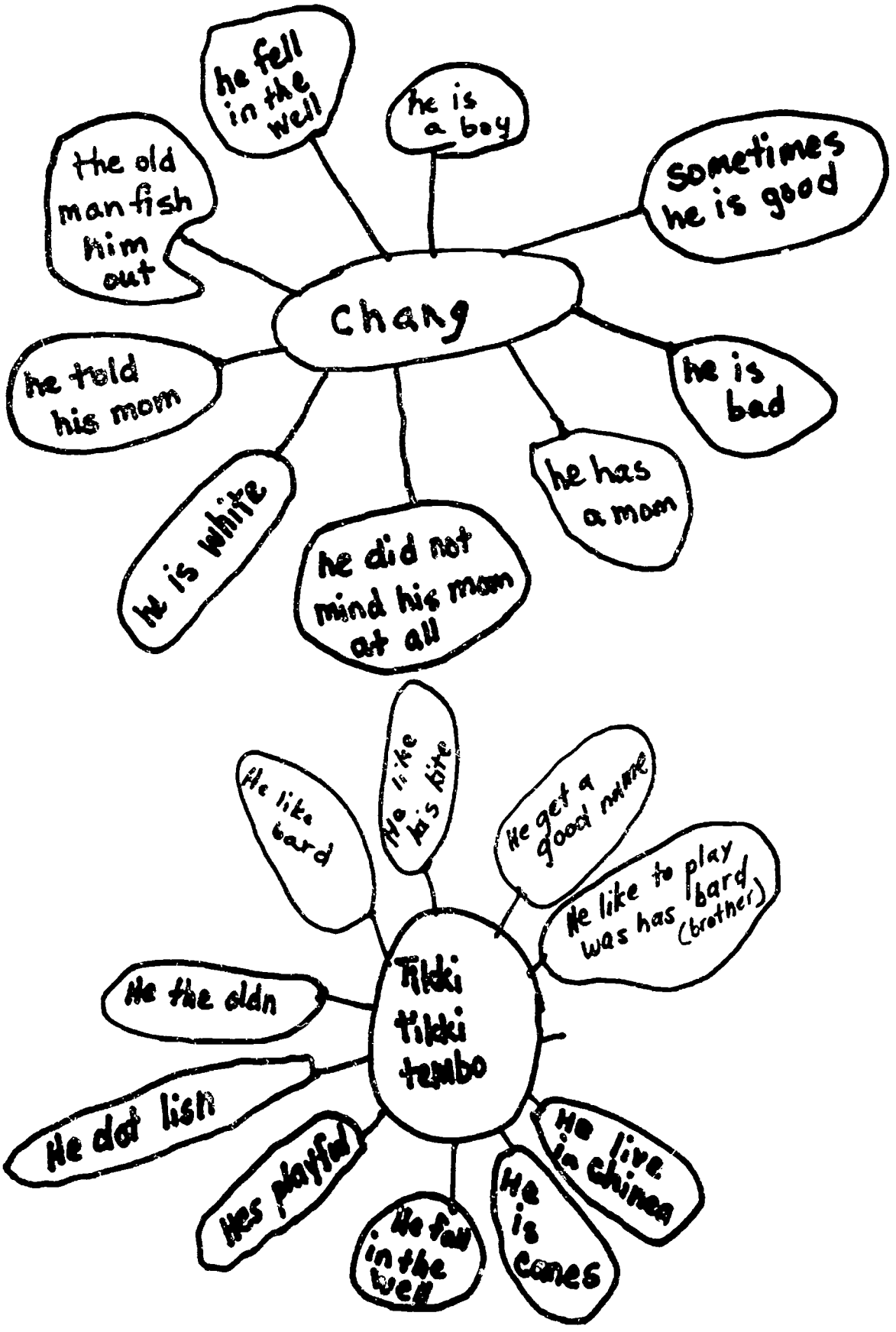

Figure 1. Hilary and Robert's character map.

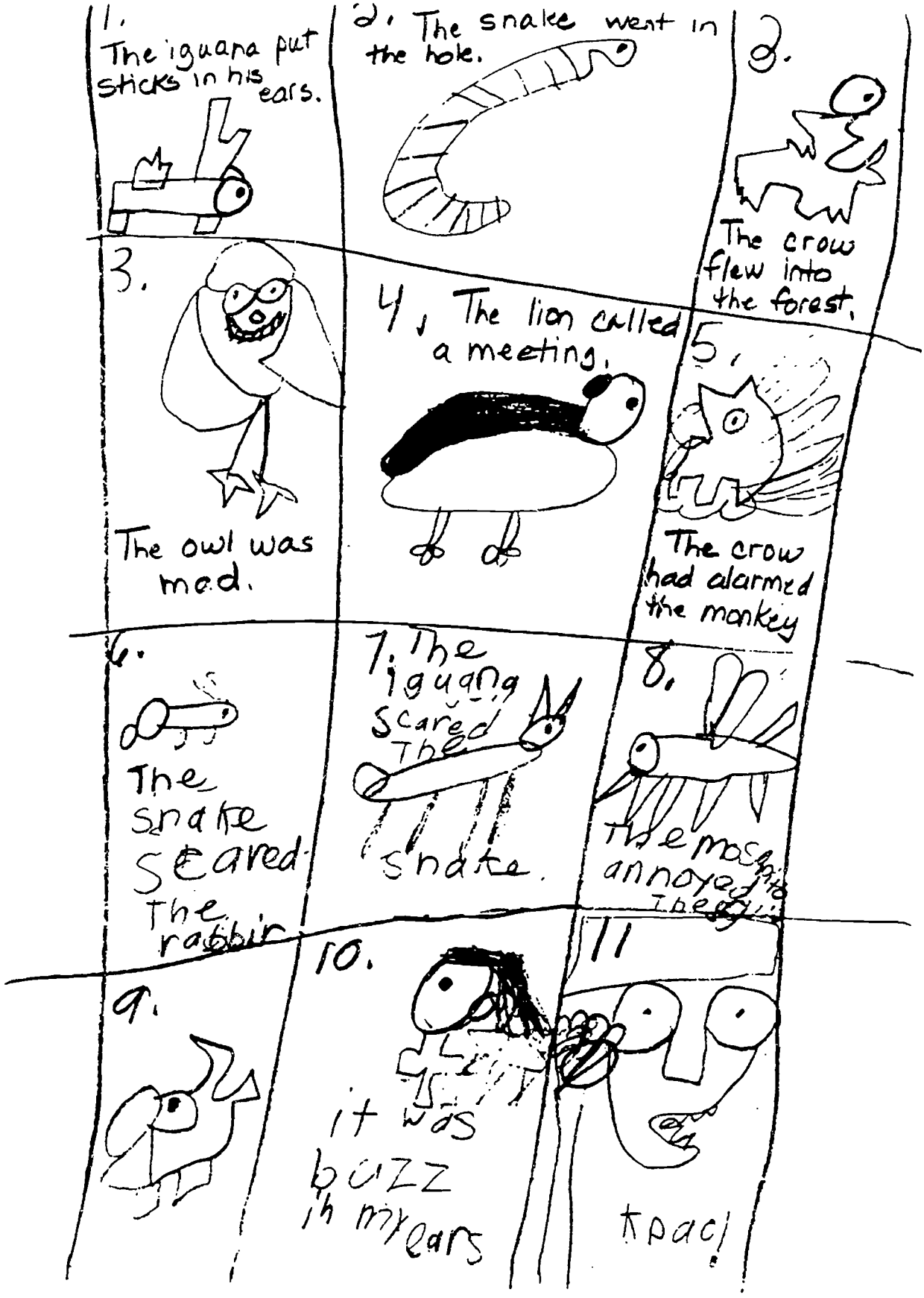

Figure 2. Kaitlin's sequence.

first six sentences, and finally she wrote the last six sentences on her own. (See Figure 2.)

By the postintervention discussion, changes in elaboration of thought were clear in their written work which critiques the story (see Appendix D). In January, Robert stated, "I like the story," yet by March he gave a reason for his evaluation: "I think that they wasys bust fard and thye like to thke afar igre. [I think they was best friends and they like to take up for each other]." Kaitlin's evaluations also were more elaborate over the period. In January she wrote "it was foome and sad. [It is funny and sad.]" By March, she wrote, "I thak that the story is good. and I like whin Duck and bear are friends and bear mad cucas for Duck. and Duck did bear's dish so they mast be friends good good friends. [I think that the story is good and I like when Duck and Bear are friends and Bear made cupcakes for Duck and Duck did Bear's dishes. So they must be friends, good, good friends.]" She not only provided an evaluation, but gave specific reasons for her thoughts.

Questions Discussed. In the preintervention discussion, students showed difficulty discussing each others' questions. Often, one student asked a question related to the story and received either no answer, or a short answer with no elaboration. For example, the following occurred in the middle of the discussion:

Rashad: How did they get newspapers?

Cheryl: How did they get glasses?

Robert: And how did, is this um// an animal world?

Rashad: Um,um,um

Cheryl: Ducks don't wear glasses.

Rashad: How did the houses get built so/so big?

Robert: How old are they?

While they had started to ask each other questions at this point, few were discussed by the others. Those questions eliciting response (i.e., Ducks don't wear glasses) were never elaborated into a conversation of more than a few lines. This problem occurred throughout the discussion.

During one section of the transcript, Kaitlin shows her awareness of the text having some of the answers to their questions. When she is unable to answer her own question, and the others do not provide a satisfactory answer, Kaitlin opens the story and reads to find the answer.

Kaitlin: What kind of food do they have in their house?

Rashad: (Interrupts) They got huge food in their house.

Kaitlin: (Flipping through story) Let's go back to the story to find the answer.

Robert: (Changing to a new question) Do to what um/.....

Kaitlin recognizes her question about what kind of food the animals have in their house is answered in the story. She used a comprehension strategy to find the information in the text. However, the students never returned to answer her question.

The interaction represented on page 12 during the discussion around Tikki Tikki Tembo provides insights into students' growth in asking and responding to each others' questions. While five questions were asked in the example above, only two were asked during a comparable length of discussion by the second week of the intervention (i.e., How did the boy fall in the well? How did the old man help?). Yet, both questions asked were part of an extended discussion. However, despite such improvements, there continued to be strong ties between questions raised and the text and characters, a pattern consistent with previous reading instruction that focused on literal comprehension. Questions rarely elicited personal information or response to the story. This pattern was maintained on the postintervention discussion of Two Good Friends.

In addition to examining the postintervention transcript for continued interaction patterns, we

explored how changes in students' written response influenced discussion, in terms of (a) who asked particular questions, (b) which questions were discussed, and (c) the source of questions (i.e., written work, discussion). It is important to note that similar analysis of the preintervention revealed such general written responses (i.e. "the story, author, illustrations") that they could not be linked to the discussion. Table 1 displays the analysis of the postintervention transcript of Two Good Friends on March 23, 1991.

First, all of the questions asked from students' written work were discussed. Second, students' varied in use of their written work. For example, Cheryl relied more on her thoughts and questions based on the discussion than on her written comments, while Hilary relied on her written comments to guide her questions. Third, assuming leadership during discussion influenced or could be characterized in terms of questions that drew response. Specifically, Robert, who had demonstrated leadership since the preintervention assessment, had the opportunity to ask not only all of his written questions but also additional ones. Thus, the questions and subsequent meaning constructed seem to be influenced by both the written response and oral interaction patterns.

Phase 2

Based on the instruction in Phase 1, it seemed premature to end work with the group at this point: The students needed additional instruction and opportunity to discuss the text to help them go beyond the text, include all members in the discussion, and bring in personal experiences and response to the conversations.

To address the issues of what should happen in the discussion to help with the how to share problems, three students, Bart, Chris, and Lissa, from a fifth-grade room using the Book Club literature response groups (see McMahon, 1992) modeled four different Book Clubs for the resource room students. The resource room students appeared shy in front of the older students, saying little and giggling often, which were not typical behaviors of the group. However, the fifth

graders were able to summarize ways they thought the Book Clubs could be improved and what had worked well. In combining the responses of their evaluation of all four Book Clubs, each with a different intent for ways to improve, the students noticed the following:

Things to improve

1 Robert: They played pencils and they ain't supposed to.

2 Bart: Well you see what we're supposed to do is, we're supposed to read our log and we're supposed to ask questions if we have any, and you see what we did, she just read and said, and I just read it and said, and he just read, we're done. See we're supposed to ask questio.ıs..... Supposed to ask questions, you know keep a conversation.

3 Cheryl: Well, she kept, um, Lissa kept telling them when to read and when not to.

4 Bart: Yeah, she [Lissa] kept on cutting people off and, you know, not giving people a chance. Like Chris didn't even say anything, "All right that's enough. Now it's my turn," you know.

Things they did well

1 Robert: They each read from their log.

2 Hilary: They read good.

3 Hilary: They write good.

4 Cheryl: Um, answering, answering the questions.

5 Bart: We took turns, we asked questions, stayed on task, no interruptions.

By reinforcement from the fifth graders in summarizing ways to improve and by seeing the problems in actual Book Clubs, the resource room students were exposed to difficulties and possible solutions which occurred in their own Book Club.

In a discussion by the students a few weeks later, the resource room students showed some

Table 1

Postinstruction Transcript Analysis

	Questions Asked from Written Work	Questions Discussed from Written Work	Questions asked which were not written prior to discussion	Questions discussed but not written prior to discussion
Cheryl	0	0	6	2
Robert	3	3	3	1
Kaitlin	1	1	2	0
Hilary	2	2	0	0

internalization of the how to share concepts modeled by the fifth graders.

Robert: Why do we take turns? Why can't/ don't we just talk out?

Kaitlin: Because it won't be all right to talk out when everybody else is talking.

Cheryl: Then you can't understand that person/ what they saying.

Kaitlin: We like to talk about/ like/ if we had a Book Club/ and we had to write something down/ we could talk about it/ we could talk about each other/ like if/ like if we want to talk/ like if Cheryl asked what we're supposed to do we could tell her what we have to do.

Cheryl: Yeah/ like if Hilary was telling when Kaitlin was talking and they won't be able to hear/ to understand what they were saying.

Similarly, the students designed a map about their perceptions of Book Club, indicating purposes including to read, write, talk, taking turns, sharing ideas, listening, asking questions, answering questions, and talking about what they like to do. (See Figure 3.)

This emphasis during Phase 2 of instruction in what and how to share, with specific skills to improve, helped in the discussions during the disability unit the following week in April.

Disability Unit

During the short unit on disabilities, the students continued to show growth in the nature of the interaction, elaboration of written work, and the questions discussed. Further, they began to include their personal experiences in both their written and oral response, consistent with the emphasis during Community Share on relating the stories to their own experiences, prior knowledge, and personal feelings about the topics. For example, to prepare for reading and discussion of The Balancing Girl (Rabe, 1981), students examined the book's cover and made predictions about the content. Later, in his reading log, Robert drew a picture of a person and wrote "Cause they are special like we are." (See Figure 4.)

When Robert was asked why he decided to draw a picture, he said, "'Cause they are human beings too. 'Cause people like tease them, they are just like we are but only they can't do certain things that we can do. We special 'cause, everybody's special in the world."

Students' discussions started to include discussion about topics related to, but not specifically mentioned in the text. In the following, Kaitlin responds to two of Hilary's questions, using the text as well as her personal knowledge of the situation

Hilary: How long has she been handicapped?

Kaitlin: Probably about 28 days. Probably in the story it says how long she has been handicapped.

Hilary: How do you think she sits?

Robert: In a wheelchair like she usually do.

Kaitlin: She has to sit like this. (Shows a straight back.) Does she like being handicapped?

Hilary: No. 'Cause she wants to get out of the wheelchair sometimes.

Kaitlin: Well she must/ she can get this one/ it's in the back. 'cause my cousin has one. He is handicapped and he sets down and presses a button and he slides down on the couch so he can sit down.

Kaitlin shows evidence of internalizing from Community Share the relevance of one's own experience in interpreting character's feelings.

Discussion

This study sought to examine special education students' response to a model of reading instruction consistent with calls for reform in mainstreaming these youngsters, potentially into classrooms with literature-based instruction and student-led discussions (e.g., Gilles, 1990; Palincsar et al., 1991). The results support the hypothesis that not only are these students able to participate in such activities, but that they benefit from such instruction. Students in this study

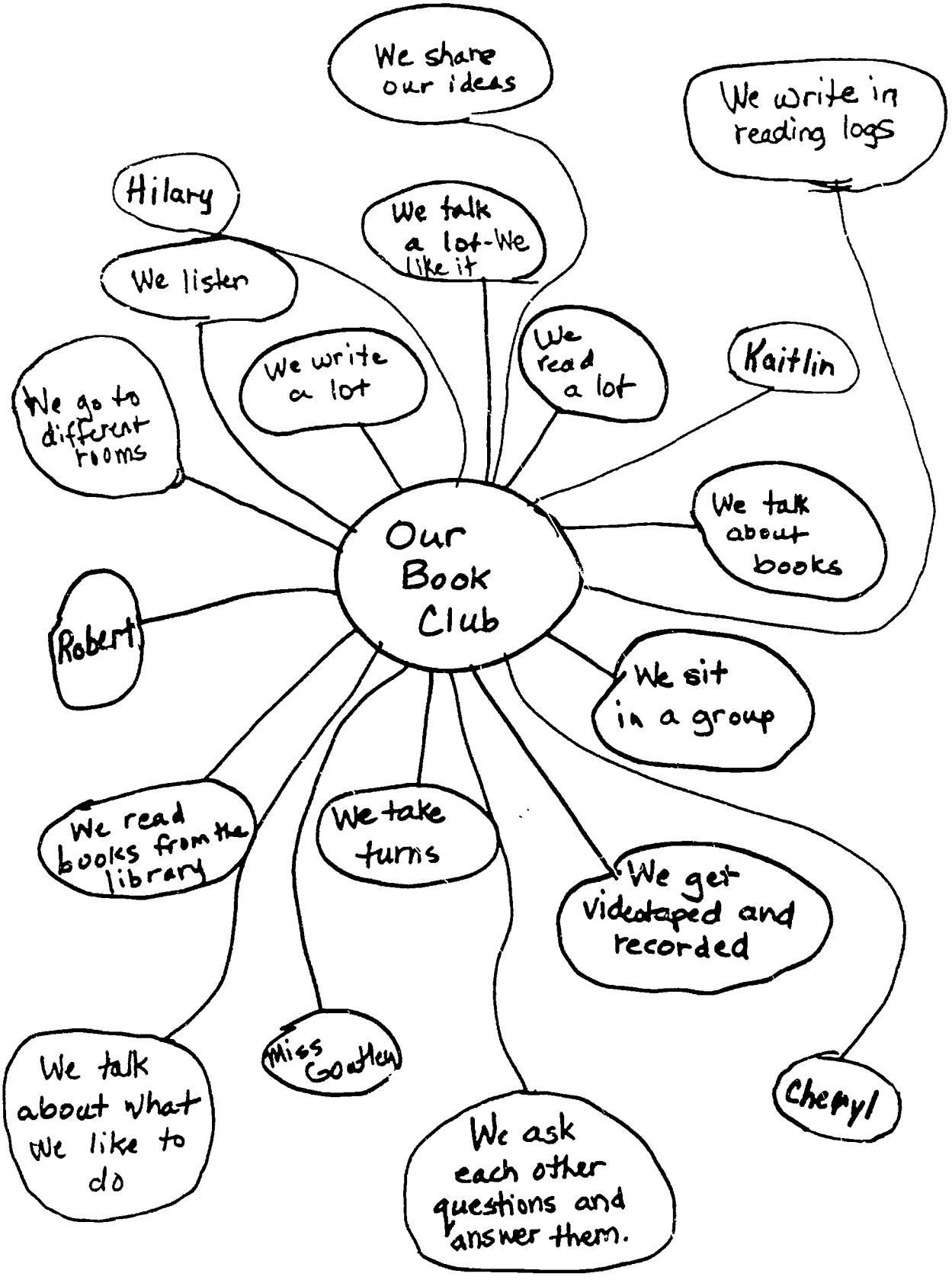

Figure 3. Perceptions of Book Club.

cause Thay are special like we are

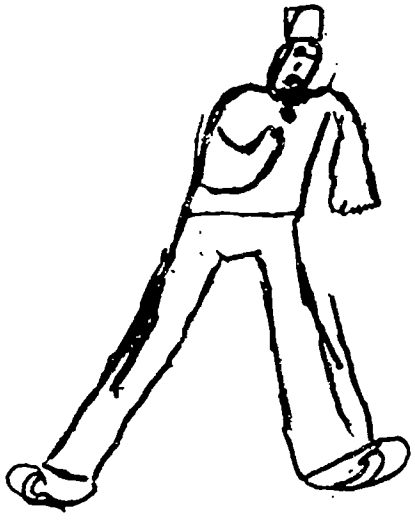

Figure 4. Robert's drawing.

moved from discussions that were largely superficial and procedural to discussions that mirrored conversation and that focused on information--text-based and personal--and personal response. Such findings support the argument against continuing the "slow it down and make it concrete" philosphy (Allington, 1991, p. 26) that has been the basis of remedial reading instruction for too many years, as well as provides data to support the observations of teachers such as Gilles (1990) who have seen their own special education students engage in discussion about literature and use their discussion groups for a variety of purposes.

Like students in similar programs in regular education (see McMahon, 1992; Raphael, 1991), these special education students needed extended opportunity as well as instruction in both what and how to share during student-led discussion groups, and such opportunities were encouraged over substantial periods of time. It is not unique to the students in this study that it took months of sustained efforts for conversations about text to assume natural interaction patterns with meaningful question asking and related discussion, conversations for which students learned to use writing as a tool to prepare for discussion.

The instruction that promoted students' growth required that the teacher assume a role beyond that of manager of a particular instructional system or transmitter of information characteristic of models of instruction based in behaviorism or information processing but one in which the social bases of learning (e.g., Langer, 1991) are emphasized. Such bases emphasize the importance of learning in interaction with others, in meaningful and functional situations, in situations in which there "is more than one right answer and where the answer that is given will need to be shared with and justified to other people who may disagree or misunderstand" (Langer, 1991, p. 18). Thus, this study also provides support for a sociocognitive approach to instruction such as articulated by Langer and others (e.g., Gavelek, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978), rather than the behavioral or information-processing models that often undergird models of instruction for special

education students.

It was clear that these special education students were capable of having student-led discussions which allowed them to set an agenda to answer their own questions and provide their own interpretation of the text, without relying on the teacher. The importance of their written responses in guiding the discussion was apparent. Through the use of reading logs and think sheets, the students had time to think about questions, ideas, and the content of the story they wanted to discuss.

The weeklong instruction during Phase 2 provided the students with the continuity that was lacking in initially meeting only two days per week during Phase 1. When using the literature-based program only two days a week, valuable time was spent reviewing to help the students retain the skills from week to week. A daily use of this instruction allowed for greater progress and less repeated instruction.

Finally, the students expressed their enjoyment of the program. They were thankful for reading logs to use over the summer, told their student teacher about Book Club the following fall wishing they could still be in it, and continually asked the researchers if they got to do Book Club again. This study is just a beginning for this particular group of students. Their progress was apparent in numerous areas. Given the short amount of time the students spent on the literature-based activities, they showed success in a literature-based, student-led discussion group program. Further questions still to be addressed include (a) how this instruction would need to be adapted for use within a resource room for all the students, (b) how these students would respond to the program if included in a general education classroom, and (c) what the impact on their literacy development would be if they were to continue this program an additional year, rather than returning to the skill instruction.

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Appendix A: **Literature Description**
(see References for complete reference information)

Title	Author	Copyright	Summary
Two Good Friends	Judy Delton	1974	The book has two main animal characters, Bear and Duck. The two best friends are the only characters in the book. Duck has been cleaning his house and has no food in his house, while Bear has been baking cupcakes and has a very messy house. The two friends surprise each other, with Duck cleaning Bear's house, and Bear bringing Duck food.
Tikki Tikki Tembo	Arlene Mosel	1968	This Chinese folktale tells the story on the long names used for first sons and the problems which can occur. Chang must call his brother Tikki Tikki Tembo by a much longer name to show respect. However, when Tikki falls in a well, Chang has difficulty getting an adult to come quickly because he has to refer to his brother by his long name.
The Painter and the Wild Swans	Claude Clement	1986	Teiji, a painter who lives in Japan, sees a flock of white swans. He discovers from the old, the swans go to an island surrounded by dangerous ice chunks. He attempts to capture with paint the beauty of the swans. When going to the island, his boat capsizes and Teiji freezes upon after swimming to the island, eventually turning into a swan.
Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears	Verna Aardema	1975	By bothering an iguana, a mosquito starts a chain reaction among the animals in a jungle leading to an owlet getting killed by a monkey. In her grief, the Mother Owl does not wake the sun, so night continues through the day. To solve the problem, a meeting of the jungle animals is called. The mosquito hides and is not punished, but now has a guilty conscience, causing mosquitoes to buzz in people's ear asking if they are still angry.
The Balancing Girl	Berniece Rabe	1981	Margaret, a young girl who uses a wheelchair or crutches is in school. She is good at balancing many things. She sets up a domino chain for the school carnival. Tommy is in her class and almost knocks it down. Tommy's name is drawn from the hat at the carnival and he wins the chance to start the domino chain.
I Have a Sister, My Sister is Deaf	Jeanne Whitehouse Peterson	1977	A young girl tells the story of her deaf sister. She describes the similarities and differences in the experiences of her sister which those of her own. Discussed are situations involving thunderstorms, school, playing piano, and swinging.

Appendix B: Book Club Activities

Date	Book	Activity	Reading	Participants
Initial Observations Prior to Study				
1-10-91		Observe Project Read		
1-14-91		Observe Cooperative Learning		
1-15-91		Observe Project Read		
1-22-91 to 1-24-91		Metacognitive Writing Interviews		4: R, L, K, C
Phase One				
1-28-91	Two Good Friends	Getting Ready To Discuss	Silent	4: R,L,K,C
1-29-91	Two Good Friends	Book Club/ After Book Club Writing		4: R,LK,C
2-4-91	Tikki Tikki Tembo	Select Book/ Prediction		3: R,K,H
2-5-91	Tikki Tikki Tembo	Three Ideas To Share	Paired	4: R,L.K,H
2-11-91	Tikki Tikki Tembo	Character Map/Book Critique	Silent	3: R,H
2-19-91	Painter and the Wild Swans	Review Tikki/ Select Painter/ Prediction	Paired	4: R, K,H,C
2-20-91	Painter and the Wild Swans	Three Questions about Book	Read-Aloud	4: R,K,H,C
2-25-91	Painter and the Wild Swans	Free Choice	Read- Aloud	4: R,K,H,C
2-27-91	Why Mosquitoes Buzz	Prediction	Paired	5: R,L,K,H,C
3-4-91	Why Mosquitoes Buzz	Sequence/ Questions	Silent	5: R,L,K,H,C
3-5-91	Why Mosquitoes Buzz	Book Critique/ Folktale Synthesis	Paired	4: R,K,H,C
3-18-91		Interview with three girls		3: K,H,C
3-25-91	Two Good Friends	Getting Ready To Discuss	Silent	4:R,K,H,C
3-26-91	Two Good Friends	Book Club/ After Book Club Writing		4:R,K,H,C
Phase Two				
4-16-91		Deciding questions to ask BC experts		4:R,H,K,C
4-18-91		Observe role-playing by BC experts		4:R,H,K,C
4-22-91	The Balancing Girl	Drawing	Paired	4:R,H,K
4-23-91	The Balancing Girl	Character Map	Paired	4:R,H,K,C
4-24-91	The Balancing Girl	Special Section from Book/3 Questions	Read-Aloud	4:R,H,K,C
4-25-91		Book Club Critique/Perceptions of BC		4:R, H,K,C
4-26-91	I Have a Sister, My Sister is Deaf	Free Choice	Read Aloud	3:R,H,K
5-6-91	The Dentist	Book Critique	Silent	3: R,H,C

Appendix C: Written comments prior to the discussion on January 29.
The paper gave the directions:
1) First, go back and look over the story and what you wrote.
2) Second, decide on the things you want to talk about.
3) Third, list three things you want to talk about in your group.

Student Written Comments: Initial sentence is directly taken from their written response on the paper. The second sentence in parentheses is their oral reading of the sentence they wrote.

Cheryl-
a) the author
b) the story
c) The Illustrated

Robert-
a)how old are thte (How old are they?)
b) thow they teld got good friends (How did they get to be good friends?)
c)

Rashad-
a)how come the picter doas not have color. (How come the pictures does not have color?)
b) how did they learn how to cook. (How did they learn how to cook?)
c) how they learnd how to clean (How did they learn how to clean?)

Kaitlin-
a) the picheis (the pictures)
b) the author
c) the people

"What did you think of the story".

Answers included:

Robert:	I like the story.
Cheryl:	nies fun ok var frende (nice, fun, ok, very friendly)
Rashad:	Bears goning to make a sear price duck with muffins and bear will tell duck to wipe is feet. (Bear is going to surprise Duck with muffins and Bear will tell Duck to wipe his feet.)
Kaitlin:	it was foome and sad. (It was funny and sad.)

Appendix D: Written comments prior to the discussion on March 23.

The paper gave the directions:
1) First, go back and look over the story and what you wrote.
2) Second, decide on the things you want to talk about.
3) Third, list three things you want to talk about in your group.

Student Written Comments: Initial sentence is directly taken from their written response on the paper. The second sentence in parentheses is their oral reading of the sentence they wrote.

Cheryl-
- a) yie did Duck clen bar hose (Why did Duck clean Bear's house?)
- b) yie die Bare make Duck Pie (Why did Bear make Duck a pie?)
- c) yie bo Bare clan his hose (Why did Bear clean his house?)

Robert-
- a) wauy is the Dulce so mane (Why is the Duck so mean?)
- b) thie that have ene mar faree (Did they have any more friends?)
- c) war was the at (Where was this at?)

Hilary-
- a) What did they do to sher (What did they do to share?)
- b) Why are they best frends (Why are they best friends?)
- c) how old are they. (How old are they?)

Kaitlin-
- a) and blt they feet (And put their feet on the table)
- b) hy do you cnen your house (How do you clean your house?)
- c) his hose hon cane. (His house is so clean.)

"What did you think of the story?" Answers Included:

Cheryl:	a good story not fuun it's ok sumy wun wass like the story I like it a lot (A good story. Not funny, it's ok. Someone would like the story, I like it a lot.)
Kaitlin:	I thak that the story is good and I ilke whin Duck adn bear are friends and bear mad cucas for Duck and Duc did bear's dish so they mast be friends good good friends. (I think that the story is good and I like when Duck and Bear are friends and Bear made cupcakes for Duck and Duck did Bear's dishes. So they must be friends, good, good friends.)
Robert:	I think thit they ways Bust fara and the like to take you ogre. (I think they were best friends and they took up for each other.)
Hilary:	it was a good book. I think it was good story.